

**BILVAVI**

# **MY HEART ASKS**



**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**  
**Parshas Ki Teitzei 5781**

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## Avodah Before The Geulah

### QUESTION

Are we able to be calm and serene now, through having bitachon and relying on Hashem that He will send a big awakening to Klal Yisrael before Mashiach so that all of us will be deserving of Mashiach? Or is that just ignoring the grave danger we are in due to the spiritual dangers we find ourselves in now?

### ANSWER

Yes, in addition to the responsibility and burden that is upon each person, according to his ability, to remove the *tumah* [internet] from him and reveal *kedushah* [holiness, *mesirus nefesh*].

## Can We Create A No-Internet Mentality In Our Society?

Does the Rav think that just as we need to create programs of self-awareness where people can learn about the soul and its abilities [as the Rav has been teaching about for two decades], so too there is a need to create some kind of curriculum or education where people can learn about how we absolutely must lead an Internet-free life, why Internet is evil no matter how many good things come from it and how they can develop the *mesirus nefesh* to keep away from it at all costs, etc.? Can we create such an education?

### ANSWER

Yes, but the focus would have to be on connecting to the good and the holiness that's available today: To connect to the 50<sup>th</sup> level of kedushah (holiness) today, and not to only talk about how bad the Internet is. Because if our main discussions are simply on how the Internet is bad, or if we overdo these kinds of discussions, it can actually cause a person to fall even more into it [just by thinking all the time about how it's

evil]. That is why our main focus needs to be on connecting to the good to replace the Internet: To connect to the 50<sup>th</sup> level of kedushah that's available today.<sup>1</sup>

## Is There A Bilvavi Group?

### QUESTION [#13679]

Is there a group of people who do any inner work on themselves or who get together to do any *avodas Hashem* based on the material of the Rav? Is there any inner circle of students of the Rav, or those who follow the Rav's guidance, that I can join with?

### ANSWER

Every *yachid* (individual) must work alone! That is the light in the end of days – the light of the Yechidah, from the word *yachid* (individual).

## Logical Emunah Vs. Simple Emunah

### QUESTION

It seems that the *Rishonim* (early Torah scholars, spanning 10<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries) would “prove” *emunah* (belief in Hashem and in His Divine Providence, etc.) using logic, science, and philosophy. Later, the *Acharonim* (later Torah scholars, who spanned 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries) shunned this study and forbade people from learning it. For example, the *Gra* said not to learn *Shaar HaYichud* of *Chovos HaLevovos*, because *emunah peshutah* (simple, unquestioning faith in Hashem) is a more preferred approach to *emunah* as opposed to “proving” *emunah* through philosophy. 1) First of

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: In a different response, the Rav explained that there are different ways of how to connect to the 50<sup>th</sup> level of kedushah today and thereby be empowered to withstand the test with the Internet. (1) *Emunah peshutah*, simple faith in Hashem. (2) *P'shitus and temimus*, following the Torah simply and loyally. (3) Learning a comprehensive approach of all areas of Torah and *avodah* when it comes to any matter. This is called holy “complexity” which can counter the complex plans of the Other Side, the evil complexity. (3) Believing in *Ain Od Milvado*, as explained in *Nefesh HaChaim Shaar III*.

all, what I want to know is: What exactly is intellectual, logical, philosophical *emunah*?  
 2) Also, which approach in *emunah* is indeed more preferred – logical, intellectual *emunah* or “simple” *emunah*, *emunah peshutah*?

## ANSWER

1) Philosophical, logical *emunah* is attained by: (1) Thinking of a concept and also the opposite of that concept. One should understand what the existence of the concept implies, and also understand what the absence of that concept will mean. (2) Think about all the factors involved in each thing, what each matter is comprised of, and bring proofs to it. (3) Reflect about each thing on a conceptual level as well as on a practical level. (4) See what prevents or brings about the actualization of something, the performance of any concept, how it operates, and its purpose.

2) A person has a mind, called the *mochin*, and he also has the root, the *shoresh*, of the mind. There is a verse, “*Wisdom, from where is it found?*” Wisdom has a higher source to it. It is the *p’shitus*, the *temimus*, the *emunah*, the non-intellectual belief in Hashem, which powers the mind’s wisdom. (*Keser/emunah* is the root of *Chochmah*/thinking). The philosophers were mainly using their minds, whereas the *Pashtanim* (those Sages who took the simple, surface approach to Torah) and *Mekubalim* (those sages who studied the hidden parts of Torah) were using *ohr pashut*, the simple, undifferentiated light. The *Pashtanim* were using the lower aspect of this *pashut*, this simplicity, while the *Mekubalim* were using the higher aspect of this *pashut*/simplicity.

Every person would need to clarify his *shoresh neshamah* (soul root), in order to know if his approach to *emunah* should be logical and intellectual *emunah*, or simplistic, unquestioning *emunah peshutah*. However, in the later generations, the light of *p’shitus* is shining, because the light of Mashiach are radiating more strongly with the closer we get to Mashiach, as the *sefarim hakodeshim* revealed. Therefore, in our times the main light is the source of the wisdom, which is *ayin/emunah/p’shitus*. Besides for this however, it is anyways not recommended for a person to take the route of



philosophical emunah, because people's minds are smaller today and they can become easily mistaken.

## Temimus Vs. P'shitus

### QUESTION

1) The Rav mentioned in a *derashah* (“*Living A Life of Neshamah*”) that the level called *p'shitus* is higher than *temimus*. What is the difference between these two levels of simple faith in Hashem? Is *temimus* a level where one's “I” walks earnestly and simply with Hashem, where one is aware that “I don't want to sin because that is not my true will”, and “I don't ask questions on Hashem's conduct” – it is self-nullification to Hashem but it involves our “I” – whereas *p'shitus* is when a person is divested of the “I” altogether, the place in the soul (or perhaps above the soul) where there is no “I” at all?

### ANSWER

*P'shitus* is the level of *hiskalelus*, being integrated with Hashem, in which one becomes “included” in the Creator, as it were. In contrast, *temimus* is to “Be wholesome with Hashem”, it is when one's “I” walks with Hashem (so you were right in your assumption of what “*temimus*” is), it is to move after one's root.

### QUESTION

2) Is *p'shitus* the same thing as *bittul*, nullifying the “I”? Or is it even higher than *bittul*?

### ANSWER

When one moves towards *bittul*, he is moving towards *p'shitus*. When one reaches *bittul*, that is *p'shitus*. Understand that there is a difference between *bittul*, nullifying oneself, with one who is already *batel*, already nullified.

## QUESTION

Which *sefarim* discuss *p'shitus*? Can a person work on the level of *p'shitus* at whatever level he is at, or is this a high level which most people cannot reach?

## ANSWER

I don't know of a sefer that discusses it openly. It is a matter which 'sparks forth' from the words of *Raboteinu* (lit. "our rabbis", meaning the Sages and the holy books), it is like a spark, like the rays of the sun, and when Mashiach comes, this spark will shine the afternoon sun.

Some people are already born with this "spark", and it is upon them to expand it further. But for most people, this power is hidden from them, and they can reach it either through ascending to higher levels until they can touch upon this "spark", *p'shitus*, or, they can reach it through *mesirus nefesh* (giving up their will for Hashem).

# P'shitus On Rosh HaShanah

## QUESTION:

What are the main thoughts to think about on Rosh HaShanah and during the davening on Rosh HaShanah?

## ANSWER

....Rosh HaShanah is the beginning, and on this day, the beginning point becomes revealed. So it is upon a person to connect himself to the very first, beginning point in the soul, which is called *p'shitus* (simplicity), As a hint, it is better when a shofar is *pashut*, extended. From becoming connected to one's *p'shitus*, one becomes connected to Hashem in *p'shitus*. Thus the inner aspect of the avodah of this day is to become connected in the depths of the soul to a simple sense of Hashem, which is above all logic. One must go back and forth between his higher mode of *p'shitus*, his simple



connection with Hashem, and then to his lower mode, thinking complex thoughts of Who created the world and for what purpose, so that we can accept His rules.

## Wealth In The Times of Mashiach

### QUESTION

1) What is the Torah's perspective on wealth and honor? In the Rosh Chodesh blessings we ask for wealth and honor. If we have money, we can accomplish a lot and we can become more powerful, without having to be dependent on others for money, we wouldn't need to feel dependent on rich donors. Everyone gets their way, and anyone can make anything happen, through money – for better or for worse. I am asking this question in particular because I am aware that different Gedolim from all types of Jewry, between the Litvish, Chassidish, Sefarim and Ashkenazim, brilliant Torah scholars, Chassidic Rebbes and tzaddikim, all had a different mentality about this matter. Is there a general mentality to have towards wealth and honor, or is every case meant to be judged separately, and does it depend on one's mazal or personal avodah in life?

2) Also, as a related question, the Rambam says that in the times of Mashiach, we will not be lacking in any way, we will have plenty of food and money and everything we need, and there will be as much luxuries and comforts as the amount of dust in the world, there will be no more hunger and no thirst, nothing except a hunger to hear the word of Hashem. Will this all happen instantly or will we have to do any efforts to get to that point?

### ANSWER

1) The duty upon us is to become connected to the “light of Mashiach”, which is the light or the revelation called *achdus*/unity, or *echad*/oneness. And we must await Mashiach's revelation. At the time of Mashiach, it will be like when pairs came to the Teivah (the Ark) of Noach, on their own, and Noach didn't have to run to get them. And it will be like those husbands who are *zocheh* that their wife comes to them, such

as Yitzchok Avinu, who didn't have to go out to look for a wife. So too, in the times of Mashiach, wealth and honor will come to everyone without having to bother to get it, as an automatic byproduct of the great light of Mashiach. Chazal taught, "Do things for the sake of their Maker, and in the end, honor will come." It will be the same in the times of Mashiach.

2) The "light of Mashiach" is essentially the light of *bitachon*, a level that is above the curse of effort that was placed upon Adam HaRishon, because it will be a return to the level of before the sin of Adam HaRishon, when there was no need to make any effort.

## Davening With Peshitus

### QUESTION

How does a person utilize the heart during *davening*?

### ANSWER

With *temimus* (earnestness) and *p'shitus* (simplicity). To daven with a simple sense of Hashem, a palpable recognition of Hashem, and with pouring out the heart when talking to Him.

## Kaballah Instead of Gemara

### QUESTION

Lately when I learn Gemara my learning feels dry to me and I don't have that much cheishek (enthusiasm) when I am learning Gemara in-depth. I have a big interest in delving into Kaballah and into the inner dimensions of Torah. Does that mean the time has come for me to mainly learn *Kaballah* and *pnimiyus haTorah*?

## ANSWER

You need all the parts of Torah together. *Chas v'shalom* to abandon the words of Abaye and Rava, the Gemara. You will always need to learn both Gemara with *iyun* (in-depth) and *bekiyus* (non-analytical learning to cover more ground). It seems that you didn't yet find your personal share in learning Gemara, and that is why you feel like your learning is going dry. But the truth is that learning Gemara is "living waters" that can bring you back to life.

## Summary of Fixing Middos Through 4 Elements

### QUESTION

Can the Rav summarize how each of the bad *middos* (sadness, laziness, lust, idle speech, conceit, anger) coming from the 4 elements (earth, water, wind and fire) can be repaired through using their opposite elements?

### ANSWER

The opposite of *gaavah*/conceitedness (a trait that comes from fire) is: humility and feeling lowered, which is rooted in the element of water, because water descends downwards from a high place to a low place.

The opposite of anger (a trait that comes from fire) is: patience, which is the element of earth – the ability to remain unfazed and unreactive (at least not that easily).

The opposite of idle speech (a trait that comes from wind) is: silence, which is the element of earth, to be unmoving.

The opposite of lusts (a trait that comes from water) is to use the element of fire, by burning up and destroying one's desire for something.

The opposite of sadness (a trait of earth) is: joy, which uses the element of fire.

The opposite of laziness (a trait of earth) is: to use the element of wind, the ability to move lightly and easily.

## How To View Evil People

### QUESTION

Since Hashem created evil and He put evil people in our world, and there is nothing independent from His control, how should we view evil people? Are they to be seen as an independent force from G-d that we need to reckon with or are they to be seen in the context as part of Hashem's will? Asking the question in a different way, when we speak to our children about the wicked people of history, such as Haman, Amalek, and the other reshaim of history, do we need to stress "*Yemach Shemam!*", may their name be blotted out! Or do we need to just say generally that Hashem will eventually erase all evil in the world, with no special mention of wishing for their name to be erased forever? Whenever we mention to others about the evil people of history, in what context should we speak about them, and especially when we educate our children about these evil people?

### ANSWER

Hashem wants them to be erased and destroyed: "For I will surely erase Amalek." But we should recognize that they are all messengers of Hashem to bring us to our *shleimus* (completion).

## Machlokes In Eretz Yisrael Before Mashiach

### QUESTION

What is the inner attitude to have about the big *machlokes* in Ponovezh Yeshivah, which has enveloped Eretz Yisrael for the last few years? It is hard to understand how

such a prominent Yeshivah can have so much infighting amongst so many prominent people. Is there something more inner that was behind it?

## ANSWER

In the final generation, the concept of *ra* (evil) is unleashed from its potential and it becomes fully activated, as the *Daas Tevunos* speaks about at length. It becomes released everywhere, and this heavy amount of evil is to counter and prevent all the holiness [which will be when Mashiach arrives] so that there can be an equal counterbalance between good and evil.

However, *machlokes* is rooted in *kedushah*, because there is “one Torah” for the entire Jewish people, which extends from one Torah into two parts to the Torah: The Written Torah and the Oral Torah. That division is the root of all *machlokes* within Torah. This division extends further, where there can be two aspects within one matter: “2 *dinim*”, two different *halachos*, for each matter of the Torah. The division goes even further and then becomes either a *safek* (doubt) or a *machlokes* (argument), beginning with the very first *machlokes* in *Klal Yisrael*, which was about doing *semichah* on *korbonos*. All of that is the root and the extension of *machlokes* when it comes to *kedushah*, but when *machlokes* extends into the lower realms that are less spiritually refined, it becomes an actual *machlokes*, a heated divisiveness between people, and it draws its strength from the concept of *machlokes* that exists in Torah, in *kedushah* [because the *kelipos*, the side of evil, nurses its vitality from *kedushah*].

Chazal said that at first there is disagreement between Torah scholars when they argue about Torah together, and they become enemies to each other, but eventually they come to love each other. However, that is only when they are *zocheh* (meritorious), but when they are not *zocheh*, they remain enemies with each other. And this becomes manifest in their physical worlds, in the form of bad *middos* and unleashing their unrefined aspects of character at each other. When *machlokes* gets ugly like this, it is really rooted in the *machlokes* of the brothers versus Yosef. The brothers were so divided against Yosef that they couldn’t talk to him and they threw him into the pit

lined with snakes and scorpions [to let him be killed there]. It is this kind of *machlokes* between people that prevents Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben Dovid from becoming connected with each other, which delays the *Geulah*. However, at its deepest root, even such a *machlokes* is rooted in a *machlokes l'sheim shomayim*, it is for the sake of Heaven – it is just that the *machlokes* “branches” [down into the lower worlds, where it becomes turned] into the opposite of *l'sheim shomayim*, where it nurses its vitality from the *alma d'piruda*, the disparate world that we live in, which are the lower realms of Creation.

## The Hidden Havayah

### QUESTION

1) Our entire perception in Hashem (in *atzmus*, in His essence) is not actually in His actual *atzmuso* but to perceive His Name, for “No thought can comprehend Him at all”, and the most we can comprehend of Hashem is His most essential Name that is unified with His essence. Is His most essential name the name of havayah (H-V-Y-H) יהו"ה or is it the name that He will be known in the future which is אהי"ה Ehyeh (E-H-Y-H)

### ANSWER

The name of *havayah*. Chazal taught that before creation, “He and His name were one alone”. The name of אהי"ה Ehyeh “I will be” connotes that there is something else besides His name, hence it cannot be His primary essential name.

### QUESTION

Although “No thought can comprehend Him at all”, does that only mean that our thoughts cannot grasp Him, but through our heart we can indeed comprehend His essence?



### ANSWER

The heart can recognize and feel the existence of His “hidden *havayah*”.

### QUESTION

Can the heart feel the Infinite Light, which is His revelation, or can it feel even *atzmuso*, His actual essence?

### ANSWER

Same answer as before. However, it is not possible to grasp His actual *mahus* (concept) because it is undefinable. However, the level below that is the *ohr EinSof*, in which we can define what *ohr* is, and what *EinSof* means, and what the Ten Hidden *Sefiros* within the *ohr EinSof* are.

## How Do I Know Hashem Loves Me?

### QUESTION

I have gone through so much challenges and suffering in my life and I am continuing to go through so much. I might know that it's all from Hashem and that it's all for my good, but how do I know that Hashem still loves me?

### ANSWER

It would be worthwhile for you to sit down and write everything that's going good in your life, all the good parts of your life. Then think into it, about what Hashem has given you. Think about it, then verbalize it. Then, start thanking Hashem for each detail. From then onward, your avodah is to have emunah without understanding how everything that happens to you is all for your good. We can partially see and understand how certain things were for our good, but there will always be parts of our life in which we cannot see and understand how they are for our good too. In order to ‘digest’ that everything that happened to you is for your own good, it won't help if

you try to understand it intellectually. You need to strengthen and internalize the emunah, the belief, that everything Hashem does is good!

## I Am Jealous of The Rav

### QUESTION

I just wanted to let the Rav know that I simply envy the Rav, I am very thankful for all the time and energy spent on these questions and I hope Hashem sends every form of great salvation to the Rav.

### ANSWER

Chazal state that being jealous of those who learn Torah makes you wiser!

## Fear of Being Abandoned

### QUESTION

Due to previous negative experiences I had in which I felt abandoned by parents and others who were close to me, I keep having continuous fears of being abandoned. How can I remove these feelings from my heart?

### ANSWER

Whenever a person is emotionally dependent on another person, he can feel abandoned by that person. There is an external solution to this problem, which is by improving the relationship with one's parents, and then you can feel that even though you felt abandoned by them you can still feel that they were with you all along, and that they didn't leave you in how they felt about you. Even though they did actions of abandoning you, by dwelling on your emotional closeness with them and how they are emotionally close to you as well, like this you can feel that they didn't abandon

you in the emotional sense – because you have strengthened the emotional connection to them.

However, there is also a more inner solution to this. (1) Strengthen your own inward connection that you have with your self. To the extent that you do that, you will be less emotionally dependent on others. (2) Strengthen your connection with HaKadosh Baruch Hu: *“For He will not abandon His nation”*, and then a person can feel how *“I have never seen a righteous one who was abandoned [by Hashem.]”*

## Will We All Become Breslev Chassidim In The Future?

### QUESTION [#13959] [b]

In sefer Chayei Moharan it is taught by R' Nachman of Bresslov that in the future, everyone will become Breslev chassidim. What does that really mean....?

### ANSWER

It means that in the future, everyone will comprehend the *“Chochmah”* within the *“Radla”* (*reisha d'lo isyada*, unknowable head).<sup>2</sup>

## The Rav's Answers

### QUESTION

When the Rav answers people's questions is it a general answer for everyone or it a specific answer to the one asking it? It seems that the answer to a question depends on who is asking it, because sometimes we need to know who is asking the question or at

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<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere the Rav has explained that Breslev teachings are *Chochmah d'Radla*, whereas Chabad teachings are *Binah d'Radla*, and Mashiach will the fusion of both and the all-inclusive path of every path together: *Keser d'Radla*.

least feel out his personality and then answer accordingly. Or maybe the Rav's answers are always universal?

## ANSWER

The answer to any question is subject to change, depending on the place where it's being written, the time in which it is being written, the shift of emotions/thoughts within the soul, and also it depends on the one asking the question. Therefore, while all of the answers are in the category of Torah, chochmah, they are not a ruling as to what to do practically. That is why sometimes the same question can get different answers.

If you have a particular reason to clarify this matter, you can write down the information you have and I will try to think about it, *bli neder*. Without the information, it is hard to know what's true and what's false.

## Erev Rav In The Soul

### QUESTION

1) Is the Erev Rav aspect in the soul (or the "spark of Erev Rav" in the soul) found at the point where there is total evil, which is below the animal soul, or is it found within kelipas noga within the animal soul that is mixed with good and evil?

### ANSWER

The Erev Rav aspect of the soul mixes everything within it: The Nefesh Elokus, the kelipas noga, and the three impure kelipos, containing all of them at once within it. There are 5 types of Erev Rav and the acronym for them is Nega Ra (evil affliction): Nefilim, Giborim (Warriors), Anakim (Giants), Refaim, Amalekim (Amalekites). They are called Nega, the opposite of oneg (holy and good pleasure), and Ra, the opposite of good. Noga is the opposite of Nega.

### QUESTION

2) What are the characteristics of the Erev Rav in the soul and what are the characteristics of the evil that's found in the soul?

### ANSWER

Erev Rav in the soul is a mixture of all every characteristic, while the ra (evil) in the soul varies depending on what kind of evil it is.

### QUESTION

3) In the future after the Geulah, and in Olam HaBa, when the Erev Rav parts of our souls will be destroyed and only our “Jewish” parts will remain, does that mean that in the future those who were more purified will “exist” on a greater level, whereas those who were dominated by the Erev Rav parts of the soul (who didn't separate themselves from the 50<sup>th</sup> level of impurity) will not be “existing” as much, because there is very little “Jewishness” in their soul?

### ANSWER

Yes!

### QUESTION

4) Will the Erev Rav – the Israeli government – first disappear before the war of Gog and Magog?

### ANSWER

We are already found within the war of Gog and Magog! This is the war with the Erev Rav.

### QUESTION

5) What does it mean that the “Erev Rav includes the souls of Amalek and Yisrael together”? If Erev Rav is the worst of Amalek (or the other way around, that the Amalekites are the worst kind of Erev Rav), and the souls of Yisrael within the Erev Rav are not really part of Klal Yisrael but goyim who are part of the Erev Rav/Amalek, then what does it mean that the Erev Rav includes souls of Yisrael and Amalek?

### ANSWER

The Erev Rav is a mix of everything, and in every Erev Rav there is also a part which includes a soul of Yisrael. Therefore he can sometimes have a status of a Jew, like if he is born from a Jewish mother, within his soul there is a Yisrael, and therefore he has the status of a Jew, he has a Jewish body, and his soul has a part in it that's Yisrael.

### QUESTION

6) If an Erev Rav soul inside a Jewish body is still part of the Erev Rav (and not part of the Jewish people) then how it can be that halachically he is a Jew but in the inner dimension he is really Erev Rav? How can that be – how does it make sense that there is an inner reality here (the fact that he is an Erev Rav soul) which totally contradicts the halachic reality (the fact that he has the halachic status of a Jew)?

### ANSWER

See answer to previous question. He has in his soul a part that is a Jewish soul.

## Exile Again

### QUESTION

Is it true that we will become enslaved again as we were in Egypt? If yes, what kind of servitude will it be? And are there any sources for this?



## ANSWER

In Egypt we were enslaved to the Egyptians, and the Erev Rav was there. Now we are exiled to the Erev Rav themselves, and that is the slavery and servitude we are in – it is a servitude to the rule of the Erev Rav over us. This is what the *Gra* has written, and see *sefer HaTekufah B'Saaras Eliyahu* [of R' Elya Weintraub zt"l].

# A Deeper Perspective On The Corona Vaccine

## QUESTION

- 1) The Rav had explained during the first wave of corona that the coronavirus was a physical manifestation of the “*Keser*” on the side of the *kelipah* (evil), and that we have now entered the time period in which we are meant to use the *Keser* on the side of holiness, which is to access our *Yechidah*, the deepest part of our soul where one is alone with Hashem. In light of this, how should we view the vaccine, which the whole world is talking about? Is there a deeper perspective towards the vaccine, and is there something deeper that we are supposed to be learning from it?
- 2) And what is our *avodah* during these times?

## ANSWER

- 1) The light of the *Keser* “shines between the cracks”, meaning that it comes and goes, it appears, disappears and reappears in a cycle of *ratzu v'shov* (progressing and regressing). That is why the vaccine is able to partially “conceal” the light of the *Keser*.
- 2) Our *avodah* now is to hold onto the revealed light of the *Keser*, and to see it becoming clearer and clearer to us....

## Travelling Abroad To Kivrei Tzaddikim

### QUESTION

Is there an *inyan* (a concept) to travel to graves of *tzaddikim* who are buried in *chutz l'aretz* (outside of Eretz Yisrael), such as the *kever* of the Baal Shem Tov, and other *tzaddikim*? Or should I should *daven* by graves of *tzaddikim* buried in Eretz Yisrael?

### ANSWER

It is better to *daven* [by the graves of *tzaddikim*] in *Eretz Yisrael*. However if there is a certain guarantee that davening by the grave of a certain *tzaddik* will be beneficial to you, or if your soul feels very attached to a certain *tzaddik*, or if the *tzaddik* was part of your ancestry, or if you are connected with the *derech* (path) of the *tzaddik*, this connection is a valid reason to go *daven* by his *kever*.

However, you should weigh out the pros and cons involved. Will you gain more holiness from it, or will you encounter tumah (inappropriate sights) as you go to these places? Will you be better off staying in *Eretz Yisrael* rather than dealing with the spiritual challenges involved with traveling to the gentile countries? There are spiritual challenges involved just by travelling there, as well as in your stay there. Sometimes a person travels abroad to daven by the grave of a *tzaddik* but he slowly becomes “a person of the big world” out there, because he becomes familiar with the world. Sometimes a person has a subconscious motivation deep down in him to journey to other places precisely for this reason, and sometimes a person is completely not aware of this motivation, and at other times a person is more aware of this subconscious motivation.

## Q&A - On Mussar vs. Chassidus

### QUESTION

(1) What is the difference in concept between the approaches of “Mussar” and “Chassidus”? (2) Is there a necessity to learn sefarim of Chassidus? (3) Why was there opposition towards Chassidus? (4) Is there still place today for opposition towards Chassidus?

### ANSWER

(1) *Mussar* is rooted in the “left” line [in Kabbalistic terms]. The word “*mussar*” connotes *gevurah*, strength. It reflects the statement of the Sages, “The left hand pushes away”. On a subtler level, *mussar* is rooted in the number “5 *gevuros* (emanations of strength)” within the sphere of “*daas*”. The Gra states in the beginning of *Mishlei* that *mussar* is rooted in *daas*. Specifically, it is the “*daas*” that differentiates (*daas ha-mavdeles*) and decides (*daas ha-machraas*).

In contrast, *Chassidus* is rooted in the “right” line. The word “*chassidus*” is from the word “*chessed*”, kindness. It reflects the statement of the Sages “The right hand draws close.” Chassidus is also rooted in *daas*. On a subtler level, it is rooted in the number “5 *chassadim* (emanations of kindness)” within the sphere of “*daas*”, and specifically, its role is to connect different views together (*daas hamechaberes*).

Within *Chassidus*, the views of Chabad and Bresslov specifically are a [different] *daas ha-mis-hapeches*, using *daas* to “overturn” knowledge [and uncovering an “opposite” or “inverted” view]. The view of Bresslov specifically is rooted in the verse, “*Wisdom, from where is it found?*”, which refers to the aspect of *chochmah*\wisdom of the “*Reisha D’Lo Isyoda*”, the “Beginning which is not known” (the 231 sources of higher understanding), while the view of *Chabad* is *binah*\understanding, represented by “*Sefer shel Beinonim*”, the “book of those in between”, which is the aspect of *binah*\understanding of the *Rdl*”a.

Generally, all other views of *Chassidus* are rooted in the number “5 *chassadim* (emanations of kindness) that are within “*daas*”, which is the inner dimension of the *middos*\character traits.

The root of the *avodah* of “*mussar*” is to rectify oneself as a proper “vessel” (*kli*), via self-purification. It entails purifying the character traits of the “animal soul” (*nefesh hebehaimis*). It is based on the teachings of the Remak [Rabbi Moshe Kordovo, author of *sefer Tomer Devorah*]. By contrast, the root of the *avodah* of “*chassidus*” is to increase spiritual light, as a means of purifying oneself to become a proper “vessel”. It reflects the statement, “A little light can banish much darkness.” It is the spiritual light of the *neshamah* (Divine soul) which purifies the body. It is rooted in the teachings of the Arizal. Even more so, it is rooted in the illuminations (*ohros*) of “*tohu* (emptiness)” through vessels (*keilim*) that bring about rectification (*tikkun*).

*Mussar* is the spiritual illumination of the 6,000 year era, corresponding to the 6 Orders of the Mishnah. *Chassidus* is the spiritual illumination of the Next World within This World, a taste and resemblance of the World To Come available within This World. This is why the holiness of Shabbos is central to *Chassidus*, for Shabbos is a semblance of the Next World.

*Mussar* is rooted in “inner light” (*ohr pnimi*), corresponding to the “left ear”, “left nostril”, and the “left side of the mouth” of Primordial Man (*Adam Kadmon*), which also corresponds to the spiritual realms of *Beriah* (lit. “Creation”, which corresponds to the power of thought, Torah learning, and the “*neshamah*” level of the soul), *Yetzirah* (lit. “Formation”, corresponding to the character traits and emotions, and to the “*ruach*” level of the soul), and *Asiyah* (lit. “Action”, corresponding to deeds and *mitzvos*, and to the “*nefesh*” level of the soul). Whereas *Chassidus* is “enveloping light” (*ohr makif*), corresponding to the light of the Infinite (*ohr EinSof*), and also corresponding to the “right ear”, “right nostril” and “right side of the mouth” of Primordial Man (*Adam Kadmon*), and also corresponding to the spiritual realm of *Atzilus* (lit. “Emanation”, corresponding to attachment to G-d, *emunah*, and the “*chayah*” level of the soul).

*Mussar* is a path “from below to above” (*m’sata l’eila*), via entails effort and exertion to climb to higher spiritual levels. This is why the Vilna Gaon refused to hear Heavenly revelations, as Rav Chaim Volozhiner writes in the introduction to *Sifra D’Tzniyusa*. In contrast, *Chassidus* is a path “from above to below” (*m’leila l’sata*) - it is an approach of Heavenly revelation (*giluy*), and it is in the category of “gift” [attaining higher spiritual levels as a “gift” from Heaven, as opposed to effort and exertion to acquire higher levels].

(2) [*Chassidus* was opposed] because it was a revelation of Heavenly light on This World that could not be properly contained within the “vessels” below [on This World]. At the root, this was really the “light of the Infinite, which nullifies all limitations”, as the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes about [in Shaar III]. It was a light which nullifies the normal definitions of “vessels”, and the result of this is “Great is love, for it destroys rules”, meaning that when a great spiritual revelation cannot be properly contained in a vessel, the light oversteps the limitations of the vessels, and sometimes it will even interfere with the bounds of *halachah*. That is why there was much opposition towards *Chassidus*: because the challengers of *Chassidus* wanted to make sure that the Heavenly revelations would remain within their proper boundaries of their respective vessels, so that the revelations could be kept at some restraint and not cause any ruination to the “vessels”.

(3) The secret of wholeness (*shleimus*) is when there is all-inclusiveness. However, each aspect must remain in its proper boundary. In every argument, each of the sides enters into the other side’s domain [resulting in strife]. Only when each person stands in his proper place [respecting the place of the other person’s view] can there be peace.

## Advice To Strengthen Torah Learning

### QUESTION

What is the advice on how one can learn Torah during a time where he feels like he’s in the dark, when he isn’t understanding his learning and he doesn’t feel connected to

HaKadosh Baruch Hu? I know that the Sages state that “*Mitzvos* are not given for the purpose of gaining enjoyment”, and that a person has a responsibility to perform the *mitzvos* [regardless of how he feels]. But how can a person strengthen his Torah learning and have exertion in it, and to learn *lishmah* [for the sake of Torah learning], during a time when he feels a general sense of darkness?

## ANSWER

It mainly depends on the approach that one has towards the *mitzvah* of Torah learning, from the start. A person has the abilities of thinking and emotion (intellect and heart), which he uses to connect to information. Whenever a person wants to connect to something, the connection must come from the appropriate source. The *mitzvah* of Torah study is about learning the wisdom of Hashem. At first when a person learn Torah, a person does not connect to the Torah through his heart. Rather, one first connects to Torah using his intellect. One simply connects intellectually to Hashem’s wisdom. Certainly one also gains a true connection to HaKadosh Baruch Hu through Torah learning, for “Hashem and His wisdom are one”, but when one begins learning Torah, he does not begin his connection to HaKadosh Baruch Hu from his feelings and heart. When a person merits to connect to the Torah through his intellect, by developing an intellectual desire to know the wisdom of the Torah, for Hashem’s deep wisdom, only after that can one also merit a “heart” connection [to HaKadosh Baruch Hu through learning Torah].

Thus, at first when one begins to learn Torah, he must intellectually connect with the words of Torah, and it is not the appropriate time yet to become involved with feelings of closeness with Hashem.

If a person first approaches his Torah learning by using his heart and emotions, it will not be a proper connection to Torah. It will also cause his intellect to be subservient to his heart. What will happen? At a time when his heart is opened to the spiritual and he feels the light of Hashem and he feels a connection to Him, his intellect will be working properly, but when his heart is not opened, his intellect will also be



weakened, and it will be difficult for him to understand his learning. This is all because he is taking an “emotional” approach to Torah learning, which should have been preceded instead with an intellectual connection, not an emotional connection.

In contrast to the above, when a person has gained an intellectual connection for the actual words of the Torah, and his intellect desires Torah, his thinking will naturally work better, and he will be able to be stronger in his Torah learning and have exertion in it, even when his heart isn’t opened. Furthermore, a person who has such a connection to Torah learning will merit that which is described in famous words of *sefer Eglei Tal*, “The main *mitzvah* of Torah study is to be joyous, happy, and blissful in one’s Torah learning. Then one’s Torah learning will be absorbed in his blood, and after he enjoys the words of Torah he becomes attached to the Torah. This is not a problem of “Mitzvos were not given for benefit.”

Clearly, even when a person has gained an intellectual connection to the Torah, there will be times when his thinking is clearer, and times when his thinking is not as clear. However, those times of unclear thinking will be a lot less. The actual loss of the clear thinking will also be on a far lesser level than a person who doesn’t have an intellectual connection with Torah learning. When a person has gained an intellectual connection to Torah learning, his Torah learning will be much more consistent, because his intellect has become more stable and settled. This is in contrast to emotions, which are always changing.

During a time when one inevitably loses some clarity in his thinking, he should learn Torah on his current level. Sometimes a person needs to learn slower, and to make sure he understands each step of the Gemara, before proceeding to the next step. One can also write down the steps of the Gemara or whatever he’s learning about, and organize the material he’s learning in writing. This will require patience on his part. The more a person gains awareness to himself and of the changes to his state, the better he will understand how he can align his efforts in Torah study based on his current level and capabilities, and in turn, he can gain more patience towards himself.

There are also situations where a person may need to learn “easier” material than what he is used to learning.

All of these factors will vary, depending on one’s current situation, and depending on who the person is. Therefore, whenever one implements any of this advice, it should first be carefully weighed and considered by the person to see if he should use this advice or not, so that it isn’t coming from a desire to just [‘take it easy’ and] be lazy, and so that this shouldn’t lead to any slackening off from Torah study, *chas v’shalom*.

To summarize, the advice here is that a person needs to establish the proper approach towards learning Torah in general. That is how a person can merit to exert himself in Torah study and reveal his unique part in Torah, with the help of Hashem.

This path of connecting to one’s Torah learning is not a short one. Many ups and downs will come along the way, just as with everything else that is inner and true, which a person is trying to acquire. But if one tries hard and he davens to Hashem for help, without giving up, of him it is said, “If one says “I tried and I found”, believe him.”

[For additional resources on the topic of “connection” and “*lishmah*” in Torah learning, refer to the *shiurim* on *Nefesh HaChaim shaar IV*, on the beginning chapters of *Nefesh HaChaim: Gate IV*, Chapter 2].

## Ahavas Yisrael: Start Loving Or Stop Hating?

### QUESTION

If a person unfortunately feels a lot of hatred for others, and he hates anyone who disagrees with his views, etc. and now he wants to work on *ahavas Yisrael* (loving a Jew), can he work simultaneously on removing his hatred as well as on increasing his love for other Jews? Or does he first need to remove his hatred and only after that he can awaken in himself a love for other Jews?

## ANSWER

The Rambam (*Hilchos De'os* 2:2) describes the way of fixing character faults: “What is the way for them to be healed? If one has an angry temperament, we tell him that if someone strikes him or curses him, he shouldn’t feel any excitement towards the other. Have him practice this for a long time, until the anger is uprooted from his heart.” The same rule applies to fixing all negative traits: if one is at one extreme, he needs to go to the other extreme, and behave like this for a long time, until he eventually returns to the good path, which is the “middle point” between the two extremes of each character trait.

With regards to the issue you are asking about, hatred – since the opposite of hatred is love, the way to heal the negative hatred is by working on acquiring love [for another Jew].

However, if you find this impossible to do, you can first keep your focus on ridding yourself from hatred, and along with this, you should also try to work a little bit on loving another Jew.

## Anti-Social

### QUESTION

When I feel that I have entered “within myself”, I feel calmer, relatively speaking. Then I feel all kinds of things. As a result, I find that I can’t deal with the world afterwards, because it’s much easier for me to be alone, then to be around people....

### ANSWER

When one has a soul that is more sensitive, inner, and higher, one will have more difficulty in the area of being involved with others on this world, for our world is a place that is coarse, superficial, and shallow. That is why a person needs to acquire in his soul a deep and subtle love for all [Jewish] souls. On a practical level, one should

have some minimal connection with another person who shares a closer soul root to him. Although this kind of person will feel a distance from others and it will feel very difficult for him to connect with another, that is precisely the person's *tikkun* (soul repair).

## Appreciating Marital Challenges

### QUESTION:

What is the meaning of “ezer k'negdo”, that a wife is a “helpmate” who “opposes” the husband?

### ANSWER:

We are taught by Chazal that there are two approaches to this. One approach is that it is only if a person merits this, he merits a wife who helps him. Another approach is that a person realizes that even though his wife opposes him, that itself helps him; just like a person realizes that “*I place Hashem is opposite me always*” – that when Hashem is opposite him, Hashem helps him by “opposing” what a person wants – so can we understand that although one's wife appears to be opposing him, this itself is a “help” for him. So the husband should nullify himself to the opposition, and realize that he needs it, in order to become improved.

All challenges are meant to complete us. A man's soul is rooted in the element of water, and a woman's soul is mainly from fire, and we know that water and fire oppose each other. Marriage brings these two opposites together; the word *shomayim* (heaven) is a combination of the words *aish* (fire) and *mayim* (water), because in Heaven, opposites can unite in harmony. So too, although a man and woman are of opposite natures, they can still have a harmonious union together, when they live correctly. But without having this essential understanding towards marriage, they fall from the “*shomayim*” and into the *eretz* \earth....

## Are Children Naturally Rebellious?

### QUESTION

Is there a way to get a child to want the true will of the soul (the desire to do Hashem's will) and to act in a more mature way?

### ANSWER

A child contains two parts. One part of a child is that his\her *yetzer hora* dominates, for it is written, “*The inclination of man is evil from his youth.*” The Sages use an expression, “Like a child running away from school”. There are many other such statements in our Sages which describe the natural immaturity and rebelliousness of children. Children do not have *daas* (mature understanding), and they are easily overcome by a *ruach shtus* (spirit of folly). On the other hand, the Sages state that the world stands on the merit of the “frivolous chatter” of children – since they are pure from sin, their Torah learning is purer.

A child contains contradictory aspects. On one hand, a child is pure and innocent. This is the quality of *temimus* (earnestness). On the other hand, children lack *daas*, which hampers their ability of self-control. Therefore, the natural evil inclination of man is more dominant in children, because it is unfettered. But because they haven't yet sinned, they resemble the level of Adam before the sin, which was the level of the *Eitz HaChaim*. The inner essence of a child is close to the level of the *Eitz HaChaim*, but in their external behavior, they do not have that much control over their evil inclination, and that is why they are usually more rebellious by nature. This is a very complex matter.

## Dependency of Yeshiva Boy

### QUESTION

There's a boy who feels a tremendous emotional dependency on one of his friends in yeshiva. Because of this, he is also experiencing problems in his personal holiness, because he fantasizes about how much he "loves" his friend, and he feels actual physical desires towards him. In this case, the "friend" in question doesn't even know that his "pursuer" is fantasizing about him and having lustful thoughts about him. Would this boy need to work on "cooling off" the friendship? Or does he need to use the love and dependency that he feels towards his friend as a parable for love towards the Creator? Can he use these intense feelings of dependency as a parable of feeling dependent on the Creator? If that is the case, can he continue his "warm" friendship that he has with the friend he is pursuing, and it is just that he would need to daven to Hashem to be saved from feelings of dependency and physical lust that he has for his friend?

There is a letter from Rav Shlomo Wolbe zt"l about such a case and he wrote that the boy should learn *b'chavrusa* (as a Torah study partner) with his friend, so that their bond becomes spiritual, and with the power of Torah, the situation can be repaired. However, there is a letter from Rav Shach zt"l about such a case where he says that the two boys need to be separated and be put in different yeshivos, and if that doesn't work, the "pursuer" has to leave the country, so that the other boy isn't in spiritual danger from him. Perhaps that was a more severe situation, but I am not aware of the details. What is the Rav's view about this matter?

### ANSWER

The more powerful the attachment is, the more it should be cooled off. If the attachment is weaker, one should learn how to connect and disconnect from his friend, in a cycle, back-and-forth.

## Becoming A Mashpia (Educator)

### QUESTION

When can a person know if the time has come for him to spread and teach Torah to others?

In relation to this question, if an *avreich* (*Kolel* student) has the energies and talents to teach Torah to others, how should he view his Torah learning, since he is ready to sit and learn Torah for all of his life, *b'ezras Hashem*? Does he need to make sure that he fills his soul's need to teach Torah to others, since he has the energies for this, or, should he avoid thinking about this at all, and just concentrate on his learning? Should he try to devote some time even now in teaching Torah to others? Or should just he remain fully focused on learning Torah and he shouldn't think about this?

### ANSWER

A person is comprised of three parts: 1) What he receives from others. 2) His own self. 3) What he gives and influences upon others.

Those are three stages of a person's life. At first a person needs to receive [Torah education] from his parents and teachers. After that, one can gradually build and develop his own character. When one grows up and matures, he can eventually be of influence to others. Compare it to the difference between a child and an adult – a child cannot bear child, but when he grows up and becomes an adult, he can bear children. A person is considered to be like a child as long as he relies on his parents for support, when he is still in the first stage, being a “receiver”.

So a person needs to see if his first stage, “receiving”, was traversed properly. If it was, then a person's main task now is to build and develop his character, outwardly and inwardly. On the outward level, one needs to be consistently immersed in Torah study, firmly planted in the world of Torah learning. On the inward level, a person needs to develop a deep connection within himself to the holy Torah and to its Giver.

After that, one can be of influence to others, from the immense spiritual light that he has gained. When a person is helping and influencing others, he also gains personal blessing from this.

There is a famous analogy of the Maggid of Dubna that illustrates how one can be of influence to others only after he has developed himself first: When a cup isn't yet filled to the top and we pour it into another cup, the second cup will become filled but the first cup will lose some liquid. Instead of making the first cup lose some liquid, we should fill the first cup all the way until it is overflowing and it spills into the next cup, so that it will still be a full cup, even after spilling into the next cup. [So too, one should only influence others if he is first spiritually 'full', where he can then be beneficial to others without compromising on his own growth, as opposed to influencing others before one is spiritually 'full', where he will stop growing if he tries to influence others].

However, sometimes a person did not yet complete the first part of his life – the necessity to receive from others – and in many cases, a person also did not yet develop his personality yet. He may seek various teaching positions, though, because he is feeling peer pressure – he will feel that he is one of those “unsuccessful” people in the eyes of his friends, if he doesn't get a position. Or, alternatively, he may not be finding *chiyus* (vitality) and *sippuk* (satisfaction) from within himself, and he hopes that by teaching others, he will find that vitality or satisfaction he is missing. Or, sometimes he may be seeking a teaching position because he is really running away from his own self. It may also stem from a desire for honor, power, money, or other self-serving factors. Therefore, a person needs to examine his motivations deeply, when he seeks to teach and influence others: Why do I want to do this? Then, he can know how to act accordingly, depending on the circumstance.

When a person has not yet developed his character – whether it is because he hasn't received enough [knowledge] from others or whether he has not yet built his personality – if he tries to teach and influence others in this deficient state, it is a sign of a flaw in his character, and he will not be able to influence correctly.



However, there does exist a need in the soul to influence others. Sometimes, even a very deficient person can help his situation by teaching and influencing others, because he is inspiring and strengthening himself by helping others learn. This is a very common occurrence nowadays. Without going to teach others, a person may find it too hard to work on himself and overcome his weaknesses. It is within his *bechirah* to choose, if he will be very devoted to working on himself, or if he will begin influencing others.

If one does choose to influence others rather than work hard on himself, one will need to balance his daily schedule. He will need to set aside time of the day where he tries to fix his weaknesses. One needs to be very careful that he shouldn't run away from himself in the name of influencing others. Firstly, a person who is involved with influencing others may become bombarded by all kinds of responsibilities, as part of his job. Even more so, he may stop growing, because he may no longer want to receive more knowledge from others nor work on developing his character any further.

This does not only apply to one who began to teach and influence others without first working on himself enough. It is also true for someone who was properly developed before teaching others. Such a person also needs to set aside time every day to continue his personal growth. This must be done for all of his lifetime. A person always needs these three aspects – receiving from others, building his own character, and influencing others. It is just that the balance between these aspects is different with each person, and also depending on the period a person is in. But the common denominator between all people is that a person should never be in a position of teaching and influencing others in a way that totally uproots him from his own inner world, *chas v'shalom*.

The secret of the success of those who are very in touch with their inner world is because on one hand, they are deeply immersed in their own inner world, but they also know how to [leave their private growth and] be of influence to others, giving others all their best.

Practically speaking, generally a person should not seek a place where he can teach and influence. Rather, one needs to daven to Hashem from the depths of the heart: that if he feels a need to teach and influence others, and the need arises for him to do so, that Hashem should enable this to happen, in a way that is pleasant, and not in a way which causes *machlokes* (dissension) among others. For if there is any *machlokes* involved in trying to get any position, a person should run from it as if he is running away from a fire.

In the meantime, a *kolel avreich* should be immersed in his soul in the word of Torah learning and *avodas Hashem*, along with *davening* to Hashem, as explained above. One should try as much as he can not to think about this [gaining a teaching position], on his own level (as each person is on a different spiritual level).

## Beginning To Fix Bad Middos

### QUESTION

Should we begin to work on our bad *middos* (character traits) when we discover them? Or should we leave that for later?

### ANSWER

Absolutely do not begin to work on your bad *middos* right away. You have just started to get to know yourself, and before you discover lots of good in yourself, it is detrimental for you to work on your bad *middos*, because you will become overly focused on the bad in yourself and you are unaware of the good in yourself. You would be working on yourself with a lowly view towards yourself. Only after discovering lots of good about yourself can you begin a healthy kind of self-improvement. You must begin from a place of finding many good points in yourself, and if you have not yet found any good in yourself yet, you must keep looking for it. If you still cannot find any good about yourself, ask someone else to point out to your

strengths. Either way, you can only begin self-improvement after you have found a lot of good parts about yourself.

## Changing A Stubborn Person

### QUESTION

What can we say to a person in order to help him take a different course of action, when the person thinks he is doing the right thing and really he is not?

### ANSWER

First we need to get the person to open up his inner world and to help him become aware that not all actions that people do are true to who they are. The first step is to get him to simply become aware of this, and then we can further work with him.

## Changing Unwanted Behavior

### QUESTION

Many people feel “stuck” in their life in certain areas, whether in spiritual areas or in material matters, and they aren’t succeeding in changing any unwanted habits, whether it comes to things they need to take care of, or whether it comes to things that they just want to simply stop doing. My question is, how can a person succeed in changing an unwanted habit?

How can a person begin to change even when it comes to even the simplest matters? For example: If a person wants to begin running [and he doesn’t feel like it], what can he do [to come out of his lethargy and get moving]? What can a person do to stop the habit of smoking? Applying this to the spiritual, if a person wants to be consistent in keeping to a certain Torah study session, how can he begin changing? If a person

habitually commits a certain sin, what can he do in order to stop, especially if he feels that he simply can't overcome these negative habits?

## ANSWER

Generally speaking, there are two root ways of self-work. One way is through taking the “all-inclusive” approach (*kelalus*), and it is also known as *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice). The other way is through specifics, known as *peratus* also known as *hadragah*, progressing step-by-step.

In the first way, *kelalus*, a person firmly establishes a mental conviction, in his intellect and heart, that he is making an absolute decision to change. He makes up firmly in his mind that he will have the boldness and strength of character to change his behavior. Sometimes a person can employ the use of other external “anchors” which will make him feel somewhat obliged and forced to keep to his decision. For example, if a person wants to become serious about learning Torah, he may decide firmly that he will not eat or go to sleep that day unless he has fulfilled his quota of Torah learning. This approach is extreme, and “many tried to do it but did not succeed”, as it was said of those who tried to be like Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

The other approach, *peratus*, is where a person makes smaller goals for him to accomplish, which require only a bit of willpower and minimal exertion to accomplish. Each day, the person examines if he has fulfilled this small accomplishment. This also entails making use of various external “anchors” that will make him feel personally obliged to fulfill his goals. Realistically speaking, he should use “anchors” that speak to his particular personality and his current level. Using this approach, one makes gradual progress, getting further and further – progressing slowly, but with consistency.

It should be emphasized, however, that if a person is trying to overcome a sin which he commits habitually, G-d forbid, then there is no advice which can help a person go against Hashem. The only thing a person can do for this is to try with all his energy, with sensibility [to overcome the sinful habits].

## Children Anger

### QUESTION

I need advice from the Rav about how to handle my 5-year old son. Baruch Hashem, we have merited a son who has many qualities. But this past year, his behavior has taken a turn for the worse. We have three children and he is the second child between two daughters). At first we simply thought he likes to be very competitive with others, in all areas. For example, he would get up first in the morning so he could be the first one dressed. He would also make sure he is first to take a bath at night. In any area, he always wanted to be the first. We were not aware to what extent his competitiveness went, though. At the end of this year's school period we received his report card, and it said that he didn't behave well. He had much more opportunities to be competitive with all the other children. At school, he was lifting up chairs to threaten the other kids and make them scared, when he would get angry at them. Lately in the house he also hasn't been treating his two sisters well. He gets angry over the smallest issues and he starts screaming and hitting them.

I would be happy to receive advice from the Rav on how we can be helped in our situation.

### ANSWER

1. Think about what could be causing these changes in your child's behavior. When you get to the root reason that is causing the issues, then you can deal with the root of the issue.
2. Increase your love towards him. Give him plenty of hugs, and show other signs of love to him.
3. Create an atmosphere of humor with him, in the proper balance, so that you can decrease the tension in the atmosphere with him.

4. On one hand you need to show parental authority towards him, but you also need to form a friendly relationship with him. That is how the Chofetz Chaim acted towards his children.

## Victim of Other Children

### QUESTION

There's a certain child who is often a victim of other children in the grade, who enjoy angering him. This child has a hard time controlling himself, and when others anger him, he gets angry back at them. What is a practical advice on how to help this child control his angry retaliation at others?

### ANSWER

Rav Kaduri zt"l gave advice as follows: Train the child that whenever he feels angry, he should remind himself of something funny, which will cause him to laugh. Then his anger will subside very quickly. There is also additional advice which is a more gradual kind of change: To train the child to minimize his anger a little bit each time. The child can be trained to slowly minimize his anger with each time he gets angry, to the point that he eventually doesn't get angry at all.

## Giving Attention to Children

### QUESTION

How can we enable a child to listen better and to become more involved? How can we get a child to form a bond of communication [with a parent], as opposed to the child communicating through crying or fighting? This is how my child is acting [so how can I change this?].

## ANSWER

Your main relationship with your child should be through giving her attention when she is talking to you, and not when she is crying to you.

# Jealous Toddler

## QUESTION

We have 2 daughters who were born to us, one after the other (Baruch Hashem). Our older daughter is 1 year and 10 months, and our younger daughter is 9 months. Ever since the younger daughter was born, our older daughter has been having “jealous” outbursts, with incessant crying and by making very specific demands, to get exactly what her younger sister is getting. We think this will only be a passing stage, but in the meantime, our home is becoming thrown out of balance. How should we react to these outbursts that our daughter is having at such a young age?

## ANSWER

You need to relate to her in a deep, genuine relationship with her which will touch upon the deepest point in her soul. You need to give to her in several ways, and to give to her things that are appropriate for her age.

# Perfectionist Child

## QUESTION

My daughter is often dissatisfied with herself. For example, she draws a picture, and afterwards she wants a new paper to draw on, and she says that the first picture she drew did not come out nice.

### ANSWER

Show her the nicest thing that can be said about a particular thing, and express this to her with genuine emotion.

## Setting Boundaries for Children

### QUESTION

How can a parent enable a child to form a healthy dependency with the parent, so that the child won't "test" the parent and try to discover what the parents' limits are?

### ANSWER

It should be done mostly with pleasantness, and you should set very "small" boundaries for your child to keep to - but you should be firm about them.

## Teaching Children How To Love

### QUESTION

How do we teach children to become opened to loving others, to converse with others, to include others in a game they are playing, to help others, and to let others have their way?

### ANSWER

By telling them a story of another who acted that way, making it experiential for them.



## The Talkative Child

### QUESTION

There are some children who are very talkative and they love to form relationships with people. How should we raise such children, and what exactly do they need to understand about where they need to draw the line when they converse with people?

### ANSWER

Usually, at a young age, we can't educate a child exactly on how much he should or shouldn't talk. Rather, we need to create for him inner, deep content in his life. To the extent that a person gains inner, deep content in living, one's conversations will be more developed. Certainly, there is also a separate issue if a child becomes too mature in his conversations with others. But it is impossible to tell a child who is 7, 9, or 11 exactly how he needs to speak. Rather, we need to give him inner content in his life. The more inner content he gains, and with the more his inner content increases, his conversations will reflect the quality of his own inner world that he has reached.

Teenage girls talk much more. When the time is ripe, try to have a deeper conversation about this topic [about gaining inner content in life], but don't demand it of them.

## Dealing With Fears

**QUESTION:** *Is fear ever a good thing? For example, I live in a place in Eretz Yisrael where we need to protect our cars from rocks that Arabs sometimes throw at our cars, and sometimes there are life-endangering situations here which cause us to have real fear. Is this a constructive kind of fear to have?*

**ANSWER:** *The only thing a person must ever be afraid of is the fact that he fears anything besides Hashem. That is something to be truly afraid of, and it is the only pure fear*

which exists. Either we fear Hashem Himself, or we fear anything that is besides for Hashem – which essentially causes us to have the fears. Whenever we experience a fear, like when we feel fear from the Arabs, we should view it as an awakening to remind us that we are not afraid enough of Hashem, and that is why we have become afraid of something. It is an awakening to us that we are not close enough to Hashem; because if we would really feel close with Hashem, there would be no reason to fear anything.

Again, let me emphasize that this is not a mere intellectual definition. If a person would really believe that Hashem is close to him, he would not be afraid. When you are found with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, there is no fear there. So if a person experiences a fear, it is a reminder to the person that he needs to be afraid of the fact that he is not close enough to Hashem. That is why a person becomes afraid of the Arabs!

**QUESTION:** *So if it is not a good kind of fear to have, is the fear showing us that something in ourselves needs to be fixed?*

**ANSWER:** Correct. Every situation can be used for good. When someone is afraid and he needs to be calmed, either we can tell him, “Don’t be afraid” [which is a superficial approach], or, we can tell him, “This fear that you are having – use it to awaken in yourself a holy kind of fear, the fact that you don’t feel close enough to Hashem.” However, this only calms a person when he is in fact upset at the fact that he is not close to Hashem. If he doesn’t care, then telling him to be afraid of his lack of closeness to Hashem will not do anything for him, because he doesn’t fear it. Only if a person is afraid of not feeling close to Hashem, can he be calmed when he is afraid of the Arabs, that the source of his fear is just a reminder to him, that he is not close enough to Hashem.

**QUESTION:** *When using the power of imagination to relive the past fearful experience, won’t this cause the fear to happen? Isn’t there a concept that thinking and imagining about the fear cause the fear to actually happen in reality?*

**ANSWER:** That is a very good question! Indeed, it is possible for a person to “cause” bad things to happen when he imagines about them; the Sages say that if a person worries obsessively about poverty or other forms of suffering, the poverty or the suffering will chase after him. Therefore, we don’t try to deliberately imagine bad things.

Our intention here is that if a person is in any case experiencing fears in his imagination, we need to face this imaginary fear by bringing out into the open and then uprooting it with thoughts of *emunah* in Hashem and Hashem’s love for us. If a person is not having a problem with fears, we are not encouraging him to use these ideas; we are only discussing here a person who is afraid of something in his imagination, and since this is the case, we need to get him to redirect his thoughts. When a person is afraid, he is suffering from his imagination, which means that he is lacking in *emunah* and in a feeling of Hashem’s love, and it is the kind of person who needs to attack the imagination in the way we have described here.

So we are not encouraging a person to deliberately imagine something fearful and to increase his *emunah*. Why should he, if he doesn’t have the fears? We are only addressing here someone who already has fears and we want to help such a person face those fears that he is in any case having. So you have asked a very good question.

**QUESTION:** *We see that when the people were making the Golden Calf, they came to Aharon HaKohen about what they should to do, and he was afraid of what would happen, so he gave them the idea of bringing together all the jewelry and make the Calf, to stall for time, because he feared for his life. So even Aharon HaKohen had fears of possibly getting killed. Why didn’t he just use the method of dealing with fears, as described in this class?*

**ANSWER:** Aharon HaKohen was afraid because he saw them kill Chur for opposing them, and he feared that they would do the same to him. Are you asking how it is possible that even our *Gedolim* and the biggest *tzaddikim* can become afraid? Is that what you mean to ask?

**QUESTION:** *What I mean to ask is, why didn’t Aharon HaKohen just use the method that the Rav has explained here, in order to solve his fear of getting killed.*

**ANSWER:** The answer to this is because even the greatest *tzaddik* is not always completely attached to Hashem in total *d'veykus*, and for this reason, there is room for fear even in the biggest *tzaddikim*. This is known as the concept of “*tzeil haguf*” (“body shadow”) – since even the greatest *tzaddikim* ultimately have physical body, there is always some part of a *tzaddik* that is not attached completely to Hashem, and this is why there is no *tzaddik* who is perfect.

Yet it is always possible for a person to *minimize* his fears, using the method described here in this class. Although we can never totally uproot all of our fears, there is a very big difference between someone who has is consumed by fears with someone who has greatly minimized his fears.

There is also one more kind of fear which we did not speak about in this class: fears caused by sinning. We find that Yaakov Avinu was afraid of Esav, even though Hashem promised him that he would not be harmed, because he was afraid that perhaps he had sinned in the interim and that he was no longer worthy of Hashem's protection. However, in order for this kind of fear to be holy, a person needs to be balanced out with feeling Hashem's closeness. If one feels that Hashem is close by, then it is valid for him to fear the effects of sin. But if one does not feel this closeness, then fearing the effects of the sin is not a holy kind of fear.

**QUESTION:** *So is this something else we need to fear (to fear the effects of sin)?*

**ANSWER:** Yaakov Avinu had this fear, of being afraid of the effects of a possible sin. But even this fear that he had was ultimately stemming from the “*tzeil haguf*” (“body shadow”), from the physical body of a *tzaddik*, the part which is not completely and perfectly attached with Hashem. But Yaakov Avinu had a balance between the inner layer of the soul (which contains no fear, for it is part and parcel with Hashem), and the outer layers of the soul, which fears sin. If a person does not feel enough closeness with Hashem, he will be dominated by more fears, fear of sin included. If a person becomes more connected to Hashem and he feels closer to Him, he is calmed on the inside, and the outer part of the self which feels the effects of fear will stay in balanced

proportion. This is the kind of fear which our *tzaddikim* had. They had a fear of sin, which was equally balanced with a great feeling of closeness to Hashem.

**QUESTION:** *When a person fears the effects of a sin, does this fear exist even in the inner part of the soul which only feels closeness to Hashem? Or does it exist only on the outer layers of the soul that experiences fear?*

**ANSWER:** The inner part of the soul feels a complete closeness with Hashem, so it is not possible in that point to feel any fear of sin, because the inner part of the soul is above the point of sin. Therefore, when a person feels this part of the soul where he is completely attached with Hashem, there is no fear of sin, because there is no possibility of sin there.

**QUESTION:** *So whenever a person feels a fear, it is a sign that something is wrong and that he needs to improve in some area? Does it mean that he has sinned, or that he is not close enough yet to Hashem? Fear is thus entirely a symptom that something is wrong?*

**ANSWER:** You have defined it correctly. If a person is feeling a very intense fear, it is a sign that something is amiss. But if you keep feeling an alternation between fear and feeling close to Hashem – in other words, at the same time that you feel calmed by the knowledge that Hashem is near you, you are stilling experiencing a fear – this is called *pachad d'kedushah*, “holy fear”. If you do not feel that you are moving back and forth between these two feelings, it is a sign though that something is wrong [and that you need to work on your relationship with Hashem].

**QUESTION:** *Is it possible for one to have fears that come from his previous gilgul (soul reincarnation)? And if it is possible, is a person allowed to take away his fears by going to a hypnotizer?*

**ANSWER:** Yes, it is possible that one's fears come from a previous *gilgul*. Rav Chaim Vital said that his Rebbi, the *Arizal*, said that some of his fears came from his previous lifetime. Whenever the *Arizal* heard that someone had been killed, he felt fear, and he

said that this was because in a previous *gilgul*, he had been one of the Ten Martyrs who were killed by the Romans.

As for going to a hypnotizer, this is not the ideal solution to solve our fears. First of all, you have to do your research on the hypnotizer in question and find out if he is a real *ben Torah*, who genuinely observes Torah and mitzvos. But even if he is a *frum* hypnotizer, there is a more inner issue involved with turning to hypnosis in order to deal with our fears: it would only be removing the outer garments of our fears, and it would not be uprooting the fear at its root. We want to get to the root of the fear and uproot it totally, as opposed to just removing its symptoms. The inner solution to fears which we have said here, which gets to the root of fear, is: that there is a deep place in our soul where we can feel close to Hashem and that we are with Him. This soothes our soul from all fears.

## Dealing With Tzedakah Collectors

### QUESTION

There are many different people from *Eretz Yisrael* who come here collecting for various causes, such as to pay off their debts, or for an upcoming wedding, etc. How should I deal with them - especially when they keep nudging me to give them more money? Even when I tell them I don't have anything on me to give them, they still pressure me, asking me to pay through a credit card. In general, I become anxious from these collectors, when they don't leave me alone and they want to talk to me more and ask me to give them more money. They disturb me during *davening* or they stand near the door, and even I tell them that I have nothing to give them, they still continue to ask me for money, as if I must be rich. Then I feel guilty that I couldn't give them anything.

Sometimes they come to my house, one after the other, and often they come in the same car. Six collectors or more can keep coming to my door, one after the other. For philanthropists, this is bigger issue, because a lot of money is expected from them. But

even people who don't have a lot of money are often bombarded by door-to-door collectors who come, one after the other, to the same house. By the time the third collector comes to my house, I have nothing left to give him, because I just gave to the first two. And sometimes they act disrespectful. For example, I know of a certain person who tries to give \$20 to every collector who comes to his door, and he saves his *maaser* money for this cause. Once he only had a \$10 bill, and when he gave the \$10 to the collector, the collector reacted with surprise: "Only \$10?? I was told that in this house, nobody walks away with anything less than \$20."

So what is the right way to handle these *tzedakah* collectors?

## ANSWER

Establish clear boundaries [when giving *tzedakah*], but do it in a pleasant and graceful manner. When you give away money to others, it should be done out of a spiritual desire to be magnanimous to others, which is a trait of the *nefesh Elohis* (G-dly soul) of a Jew, as opposed to a mere desire to take off the pressure and guilt that's on you, which is a reaction of the *nefesh habehaimis* (animal soul). Carefully and calmly consider how much money you should give away. Try to determine the amount of money that Hashem expects of you to give for another, and after you have reached the conclusion, establish clear boundaries of how much you will give and where to draw the line of your giving. But even when you keep to your boundaries, do it pleasantly and gracefully.

## Different Ways of Tzaddikim

### QUESTION

1) In the sefarim of *Chassidus*, as well as in the earlier *sefarim*, it is mentioned many times that the purpose of life is *d'veykus* (attachment with Hashem). Did all *tzaddikim* throughout the generation agree to this, or were there other *tzaddikim* who held that

the purpose of life is to fulfill all of the 613 *mitzvos*, and mainly the *mitzvah* to learn Torah?

## ANSWER

1. The purpose of life is always *d'veykus* with Hashem, and it is just that there are several angles to this, which are all needed: (1) To connect to Hashem out of *emunah peshutah*, simple faith in Him, with a simple sense of His reality, which is called “the Infinite”. (2) To connect to Him by way of His garments, which is the Torah, which enables a person to become “one” with Hashem so to speak, since Hashem and His will and wisdom are one. (3) To connect to the middos of Hashem, by emulating His compassion, etc. (4) By revealing Him on this world, through doing the mitzvos. This is the lower aspect of *d'veykus* in Hashem, which is to listen to Him. All of the above are the different form of *d'veykus* in Hashem.

## QUESTION

2) The *tzaddikim* throughout the generations disagreed with each other, both in areas of Torah as well as in areas of how to serve Hashem. There is a well-known fundamental that this was because they had differing soul roots (*shorshei haneshamos*). When the *tzaddikim* disagreed with each other's views, was it because they each had a clear knowledge that the other *tzaddik* was presenting a view according to his unique soul root? Or was it instead that each *tzaddik* held that the other *tzaddik* was totally wrong?

## ANSWER

It depended on the situation. Usually, a *tzaddik* whose soul root was in *ohr pnimi* (internal light) did not recognize this concept [of validating the other *tzaddik*'s view], whereas a *tzaddik* whose soul was rooted in *ohr makif* (surrounding light) was more aware of this concept [of validating the other *tzaddik*'s view in spite of their disagreement].



## QUESTION

3) How is it possible for a *tzaddik* to have an influence on his students, or a *Rebbe* on his *chassidim*, and draw others in to follow his own way? How did the *tzaddik* or *Rebbe* know that this was good for his students or *chassidim* [since every person has a different soul root]?

## ANSWER

Either it was because [the *tzaddik* or *Rebbe*] knew through *Ruach HaKodesh* [that his teachings were appropriate for his students and *chassidim*], or it was because he had *emunah peshutah* that if Hashem directed this person to him, it was the will of Hashem that it should be this way – this was the approach of the Chazon Ish.

## QUESTION

4) In certain sects of Jewry, there is a view of “My way is the right one”, and that anyone else who isn’t part of their following, or anyone who isn’t a *chassid* of their own *Rebbe*, is deemed as someone who doesn’t serve Hashem. I am talking specifically about those who are following a statement that was said by any of the true *tzaddikim* or *Rebbes* of the past. How it is possible that a *tzaddik* should say that someone needs to attach himself with his Torah teachings? Aren’t there many ways to serve Hashem, as we see from the 12 different tribes, who are called the “12 tribes of G-d”, who each represent a different path of serving Hashem?

## ANSWER

Each *tzaddik*’s intention was, that his particular approach was the “gateway” that was all-inclusive of the 12 general paths in serving the Creator. This is well-known. [Therefore, each *tzaddik* held that] anyone who didn’t become attached to his all-inclusive “gateway” would merit [only] a “diffused” light (*ohr prat*), without a “collective” light (*ohr kolel*).

## Dreaming of A Tzaddik

### QUESTION

If a person has a dream about a *tzaddik* who was already *niftar* (deceased), what does this mean for a person?

### ANSWER

If the dream didn't happen due to any external factors that caused it, it is either an illumination that comes from the soul of the *tzaddik*, or it means that the *tzaddik* bears the person's soul root. Alternatively, it can happen when a person is very connected to the Torah teachings of the *tzaddik*, or because he is very connected to the *middos* (character) of the *tzaddik*.

## D'veykus While Learning Torah

### QUESTION

In sefer *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh* (Part One), the Rav says in parenthesis that “*d'veykus* (bonding with Hashem) is only for outside of the time of one's Torah learning.” However this wasn't explained in the sefer [Can the Rav elaborate on what this means]?

### ANSWER

The view of *Chassidus* is that a person should interrupt his learning every so often, for a bit of time, and remind himself of *d'veykus* with Hashem, so that he shouldn't forget about Hashem while he is learning. This is written in the sefarim which record the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov. The view of the *Nefesh HaChaim* is that a person should interrupt his learning only when he feels that his fear of Hashem has become weaker in his heart.

## Emotional Release

**QUESTION:** I always thought that releasing your emotions is not a good thing, but the Rav has explained that it's a good thing to do. What is the proper perspective about releasing emotions? Is it a good thing or not?

**ANSWER:** There is a *mitzvah* of the Torah of *ahavas Hashem* (to love Hashem) and *yiras Hashem* (to fear Hashem), which is a release of positive emotion. However, because there are also negative emotions, people are often cautious about releasing their emotions in general, out of concern that this will cause them to release their negative emotions. But this is a mistake. If a person tries to keep his negative emotions inside, he will stifle them, and at a certain point, they will explode outward. The proper perspective is to deal with these feelings, in the proper way. We should never completely release all of our negative feelings at once. Rather, we must deal with each of these negative feelings, slowly, and one by one. But we should never let negative emotions fester inside ourselves, because usually they will explode outward some time later.

**QUESTION:** The Rav explained a method of revealing the emotions by way of using the intellect. But we know that it is also possible to reveal the emotions by way of the emotions themselves. Is the approach explained here by the Rav the only way in which the emotions can be revealed from their potential state?

**ANSWER:** There is never any one way in a person's *avodah*, whether it concerns the work he must do with his own personal soul or whether it comes to man's task in serving his Creator. There is certainly a way to reveal the emotions by way of the emotions themselves. However, the way we mentioned here is not just a way to reveal the emotions by way of the mind. It is rather a way to reveal the emotions from the existing emotions, by way of the mind. So it is not just using the mind, and it is rather like a middle path between the mind and emotions.

There is certainly a way to reveal the emotions by way of the emotions themselves, and there is an advantage as well as a disadvantage to this method. The advantage is that it is a more direct approach, going straight to the emotions, as opposed to dealing with the issues on an external and superficial level; it is an inward kind of approach. But the disadvantage of this method is that usually the person who reveals his emotions through becoming more emotional will become emotionally dysfunctional. The emotions will be off-base. A person then has to make use of his mind to stabilize his emotions, and indeed, this can work.

However, here we have presented an opposite approach: Instead of exposing the emotions in a way that will lead to problems and then taking care of them with the mind, the approach we explained here is to use the mind and emotions together, to release the emotions through the mind and emotions together. The emotions are being opened through the mind.

Practically speaking, however, if a person feels however that the approach of working with the emotions directly will work better - which is often the case with women, who have a stronger amount of emotion – then the way to go about this is as follows (briefly): Identify an emotion, and focus on it. This further reveals that emotion, with the more you concentrate and focus on it. However, even when using this approach, which uses the emotions directly, you will still need use your minds to carefully scrutinize your emotion, to make sure that the emotion isn't going too far, to make sure the emotion doesn't get thrown out of whack, and to maintain clear awareness to the emotion.

**QUESTION:** If one has emotions that are very strong, it probably won't help to use the mind to maintain emotional regularity, since this kind of person has an intense experience of emotion, and he has only a superficial experience of his intellectual mind. Will such a person be helped by using his mind to direct his emotions (since this kind of person can only use his mind to deal with the external surface of his feelings, and not the depth of his feelings)?

**ANSWER:** This is a subtle question and I will try to answer it as precisely as possible. If someone has a strongly emotional personality, he identifies his emotions as his “I”, whereas his intellectual abilities are deemed by him as external and superficial. When he uses his intellect to deal with his feelings, he will feel as if he is using an external, superficial ability to deal with his “I”, and therefore he will find his intellectual abilities of little value, when he tries to deal with his emotions. He will feel that he is not getting through to the depth of his emotions. But he can become deeper than this, and he can learn to identify his power of intellect as his “I”. When one has that self-perception towards himself, he will feel that using his intellect to deal with his emotions really does get to the depth of his emotions.

**QUESTION:** If a person has two different kinds of strong emotions and he wants to reveal these emotions, should he deliberately place himself into an emotionally charged situation which would reveal those emotions more?

**ANSWER:** Certainly a person can have more strong emotions than one, but he has less awareness to the other emotions, and more awareness to a particularly strong emotion than he has for his other emotions. But there certainly exist other strong emotions in a person.

As for the question if a person should deliberately place himself into situations that would reveal his other emotions, it depends. If it is an extreme situation, the general response to this would be no. If it is not extreme, then sometimes, he may place himself into such situations. That is one way of *avodah*.

Another way of *avodah* is to begin to work with the strongest positive emotion that is already revealed, and then a person will become more aware of his emotions, and this will make him aware of his other emotions as well.

These are two options to take. To repeat, one should only place himself in normal situations which can reveal his emotions, and he should not place himself into abnormal, complicated situations in order to reveal his emotional side, because that is a dangerous path to take.

**QUESTION:** Can a person place himself into a situation which is not extreme, in order to reveal his emotions more?

**ANSWER:** Anything which causes you to have a strong emotional experience is not something that is recommended. If Hashem has placed you into that situation, then you need to utilize that situation to its fullest, but in most cases (with some rare exceptions) it is not recommended to place one's soul into a situation which would cause him to become strongly emotional. Only situations which cause you to have a subtle experience of your emotions, is recommended.

## Emotions

### QUESTION

What is the relationship between the *middos* (character traits) which the Rav elaborates upon in *Getting To Know Your Feelings* and in *Getting To Know Your Soul*, with the emotions that we recognize, such as anger, sadness, joy, fear, etc.?

### ANSWER

The *middos* described in “*Getting To Know Your Feelings*” and in “*Getting To Know Your Soul*” are the core *middos* of the soul. All other *middos* are a product of various integrated forces in the soul. For example, anger is a product of a desire (*ratzon*) which hasn't been actualized. *Ratzon* (desire) is an actual character trait of the soul, whereas anger is a result of a *ratzon* that hasn't been actualized. The opposite of anger is joy, and joy is a result of something that has been actualized. Joy is a product of *binah* (contemplation), when a person understands something based on something else, which actualizes the potential of the raw knowledge. So joy can only result from contemplation. Worry is also a product of a desire that hasn't been actualized. Fear is called *pachad*, but it is also called *yirah*, and *yirah* is synonymous with *gevurah* (strength). Fear places some restraint on *yirah*. All of the emotions are a “branch” of something else in the soul, and we need to see the root of each particular emotion.

## Falling Into A Trance

### QUESTION

There is such a thing as hypnosis, or a “trance”. Unlike hypnosis, a “trance” is where a person remains aware of his surroundings. [In either case], a person’s conscious can be neutralized, and another person can communicate directly with the person’s subconscious and alter the person’s thinking patterns. A person may even be able to do this alone. (There was even a person who succeeded in entering such a state while he was having a root canal, without being numbed, and he was able to communicate with the dentists who were operating on him). Is this a physical power, or is it the subconscious?

Also, when a person contemplates about *elokus* (G-dliness), does this mean that he needs to fall into a hypnotic state so that he can reflect properly?

And if I contemplate on how to detach from my physical senses, will I be able to get further into my soul?

### ANSWER

Yes. But there is also a higher level than the subconscious, which is called *havayah* [your very point of existence]. You are able to [reach a sensing of G-dliness] by divesting yourself from material. According to the teachings of Chabad, this is referred to as “Those who serve Hashem in their souls.” There is also an additional level, where one can sense both the physical and the spiritual, simultaneously. This reflects the statement, “The *tzaddik* who unifies together Heaven with earth.”

There is a well-known story with the Baal HaTanya and the “Mittler” Rebbe, that once a baby was crying [while they were in the middle of learning together], and the Mittler Rebbe didn’t hear, but the Baal HaTanya heard the baby crying [he asked the Mittler Rebbe if he heard the baby crying, and the Mittler Rebbe responded that he didn’t hear, because he was engrossed in his learning. The Baal HaTanya told him,

“Even when you are immersed in Torah, you should be also able to hear a baby crying.”] Understand this well.

## Social Anxiety

### QUESTION

Through *hisbodedus*, I feel that I have entered into the “inner world” that the Rav describes. I have begun to take this journey within, and I have been prompted to do so because I have social fears – I am afraid to be with people. Whenever I speak with people, I become very anxious and it is hard for me to keep a conversation flowing. When I *daven* or learn, I feel that I have entered into the inner world and this elevates my avodas Hashem, but in spite of this, I feel anxious when I speak with people. Is there a way for me live in the inner world and still carry a conversation with other people, without becoming afraid? (By the way, I don’t even know what’s causing me to be afraid.)

### ANSWER

Since you do not know right now what exactly is causing you to be afraid, let’s present here a practical way to go about this issue, without getting into the deep subtleties of the human soul.

1. Firstly, make a list of people whom you are not afraid to speak to, and make sure to speak to them, with the awareness that you are not afraid of talking to them. Through doing this, you will become stronger in the area of speaking to others.
2. Write down a general list of all the people that you speak to regularly, as well as the people you speak with only sometimes. Then decide which of these people is the easiest to speak to, which one is the second-to-easiest person to speak to, etc. and which of these is the most difficult person to speak to, second-to-most difficult, etc. Then begin to speak to the person on this list whom you find easiest to talk to, and



make sure to speak to all the people on the list, until you eventually talk to the most difficult person on the list.

3. If possible, try to get hold of a picture of someone whom you find it uncomfortable to talk with, and speak to the person in the picture, in a closed, private room. Keep repeating the same thing to the person in the picture, and speak confidently. Keep doing this until you feel more confident with yourself.

4. After doing the above, go to the person whom you find it uncomfortable to talk to, and talk to him, in the same way that you spoke to the picture of him. Continue with this approach towards this person, and with anyone else whom you find it difficult to speak with, and do so gradually.

5. Come up with a few general phrases and sentences that you want to say to a person, and practice reviewing it with yourself, until you feel confident in what you are saying. Say those words to most of the people you encounter, and slowly you can add more words and phrases to your “list” of words that you say to people.

## Figuring Out My Worst Middah

### QUESTION

I am learning “Getting To Know Your Feelings” and I see that I need to need to work on all of the *middos* (character traits). In what order should I work in? How can I know what my worst *middah* is (the “garments” that my soul inherited from my parents’ personalities), which is my main task on this world?

### ANSWER

Generally speaking, the *middah* (character trait) that a person stumbles in the most is his worst middah and the one he has to mainly fix. The *middah* that a person finds the most difficult to fix is the root of all his bad middos. On a more specific level, it is recommended to hear the *shiurim* on “The Four Elements – Self-Recognition” and

also the “Fixing” series. Slowly as you clarify your personality, with assistance from Heaven, you can understand and recognize what your main work will be.

## Finding The True Tzaddik

### QUESTION

I have a question on the topic of the “true *tzaddik* that is in every generation”, which is oft-discussed in the sefarim of Rebbi Nachman of Bresslev and his student, Rebbi Nosson. Being that I am a Bresslever *chassid*, how can I actually find the true *tzaddik*?

It’s known that in every generation there is a *tzaddik* like Moshe, who was the true *tzaddik*. Rebbi Nachman writes in *Likutei Moharan* that merely looking in the *sefarim* of *tzaddikim* is not as effective as hearing the Torah teachings from the *tzaddik*, and the *Moharash* said that in every generation there is a student, or there are several students, who are well-versed in the Torah teachings of Rebbi Nachman, and that these people are true *tzaddikim* of the generation. But how can I find the true *tzaddikim* who have the aforementioned criteria?

Rebbi Nosson of Bresslev said that the *yetzer hora* lets a person to get close to all of the *tzaddikim*, but it will not let a person get close to the *tzaddik yesod olam* (the true *tzaddik*). If there is a person whom people say about him that he is the true *tzaddik* of the generation, but there is also a lot of *machlokes* (disagreement) about him, how can I discern the truth about him? After all, all of the holy brothers of Yosef HaTzaddik were opposed to him, and even Moshe Rabbeinu was opposed. So how is it possible for me to know if a certain person is the true *tzaddik* that I must get close to, especially if there is much disagreement about him?

### ANSWER

The more a person purifies his being, he gets closer to understanding who the true *tzaddik* is.

## I Focus Better When I Learn Alone

### QUESTION

If a person is able to focus better when he learns alone, what is the recommendation for him to do?

### ANSWER

Usually such a person needs to divide his time between learning alone and learning with a chavrusa or around other people. Each of these kinds of learns has its gains and drawbacks. Part of one's time can be spent learning alone, and that is the time for one to make use of his power of focus. But when one only learns alone, the Gemara says that a sword should be put to his neck, for he is called an enemy of the Torah scholars, when he only learns alone. That is why a person also needs *dibbuk chaverim*, to converse in Torah with others. There are people who are more focused when they learn with others, whereas other people are more focused when they learn alone. It depends on the particular soul makeup of the person. Each person needs to recognize his soul, in order to know how much time he needs to learn with others and how much time he needs to learn alone.

But generally, the advice is for one to divide his time between learning alone and learning with others. How much time for each? That is a more delicate question, and it is different with each person.

## Free Will & The Subconscious

### QUESTION

1) Is the “subconscious” synonymous with one's true *bechirah* (free will)? The Rav describes that one's subconscious contains the personality makeup which one receives from one's parents, and that it contains memories from previous lifetimes, and from one's past. Are these factors which cause a person to choose certain things in his

current lifetime? It would seem that these factors are not the deepest part of the person, and that they are closer to the physical side of one's life.

2) What about the concept of going “above” one's conscious (as the Rav describes) – is this the beginning of the revelation of one's *neshamah*? Does it include all of one's lifetimes, one's comprehension in Torah, and one's ability to see patterns on the forehead?

## ANSWER

1) In one's “subconscious”, all one's past is contained, and it consists of the many complex factors of the reality that is in one's soul. When one uses his power of *bechirah* (free will), on a very basic level, he is using a power contained in the “animal” level of the soul, no less than how an animal chooses to do something. There is a more inner motivating factor behind one's *bechirah*: the G-dly “spirit” contained in the soul. Even if a person is not conscious of it, it influences his free will.

2) When one goes “above” one's conscious, this is the free will of the *neshamah* which is choosing to do the will of its Creator, as it was made to do at the time of its inception and when it stood at Sinai. Ever since then, the power of free will is experienced on the “Ruach” level of the soul. It can be experienced either in (1) the “Ruach” level within the “Nefesh” of the soul, or in (2) the “Ruach” within the Ruach of the soul, or in (3) the “Ruach” within the Neshamah of the soul, or in (4) the “Ruach” within the Chayah of the soul, or in (5) the “Ruach” within the Yechidah of the soul.

In every person, according to his level, there is a conscious and a subconscious level within one's comprehension. Above one's comprehension is the area “above” the conscious. Every person, on his own level, has *bechirah*, on a conscious level as well on a subconscious level.

## Getting Past A Negative Childhood

### QUESTION

Is there such a concept as “*tinok shenishbah*”, a “captive child”, with regards to one who suffered from negative experiences from his/her parents, family members, or community? And if yes, what is the person’s *avodah* (inner work) then?

### ANSWER

Any concept can be manifest either on a complete level, or on a partial level. For example, a person can either become completely and totally incapable, wounded, or he becomes partially incapable. Death would be an example of being completely incapable, whereas illness is an example of becoming partially incapable. The same thing applies to the concept of *tinok shenishbah* (the “captive child”). On the total and complete level, a *tinok shenishbah* is a Jewish child who has been captured by gentiles and is raised like a gentile, with no knowledge of his Judaism. There is also a “partial” level of *tinok shenishbah*: whether in the external sense, or in the qualitative sense. On a subtler level, every person to some extent is in the category of “*tinok shenishbah*”, externally and qualitatively speaking.

We will provide 3 different ways in how a person can repair the issue [the fact that he is a “*tinok shenishbah*” in the sense that he is a wounded child because of his negative childhood experience]:

1. “Filling in the missing parts”: One should try to fill all of the missing “parts” which he didn’t get in his/her childhood – both in the “amount” of what he/she still needs, as well as in the qualitative sense.
2. “Repairing the experiences”: One should try to “return” to his/her childhood [via the imagination] and “re-experience” all that he remembers from his childhood, with a more inner and more precise perspective than until now.

3. “New beginning”: One can become like a newborn baby, like one who has newly converted to Judaism, like a *baal teshuvah* (penitent) – by reaching into the deepest place in oneself, and from there, to begin again anew.

## Getting Through A Dismal Period

**QUESTION:** *What is an example of a good point to hold onto when we are going through difficult times?*

**ANSWER:** Good question. There are two opposite powers in the soul: despair, and hope. When a person is in a going through a dismal period and he despairs, and he is too accepting of the despair, he is weakening the “fire” of his hope. The only thing a person needs to do, in order to access the power of *tikva*/hope, is for a person to know that “I will soon return to the way things were.” Practically speaking, a person should understand that his soul needs to go to “sleep” sometimes, just as the body needs sleep [meaning that the soul isn’t able to perform at it best, during a dismal period].

**QUESTION:** *So when a person is awakening the power of hope, there is nothing specific which a person needs to hope for?*

**ANSWER:** You only need to be on the proper level to do so, to have hope that you will certainly return to the way things were before, and that you can certainly succeed. This doesn’t meant to simply say “I hope” superficially, but to feel truly confident that Hashem will certainly help you succeed.

**QUESTION:** *If a person gets sick and is physically not able to do anything, and he doesn’t even have a minute or two minutes a day to work on the idea of increasing the power of “hope”, is there anything she can do, to grow right now?*

**ANSWER:** If he doesn’t have 2 minutes, he can still find half a minute for this.

**QUESTION:** *The sick person can only think about hope, but he has no one to work on it together with and speak about. For example, he was used to learning every day with a chavrusa, and now that he is ill, he has no one to verbalize his hope with.*

**ANSWER:** So he can do it while learning alone.

**QUESTION:** But there are days when an ill person will find even this too difficult for him to do.

**ANSWER:** He still has a second or where he can find time to work on this – in spite of the fact that the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) is very strong.

**QUESTION:** *If a person's ratzon (will) dries up, how can he get it going again?*

**ANSWER:** During a dismal period, a person should not focus on action (*maaseh*) that much, and instead he should focus more on maintaining whatever willpower (*ratzon*) he has acquired until now. It will be too difficult for a person to “create” a *ratzon* now for more growth, now that his will for growth has stopped. But this much, he will still be able to do.

**QUESTION:** *I have learned that a person needs to keep doing what he needs to do and to keep serving Hashem, even when he doesn't feel like it and he has no enthusiasm or will to serve Hashem. For example, a person should daven to Hashem even if he doesn't feel particularly enthusiastic about davening right now. But according to what the Rav is saying here, it sounds like we need to keep awakening our emotion and will.*

**ANSWER:** Only a person who has reached a very high level of *pnimiyus* is able to do so. A person will never build his inner world if he serves Hashem without feeling. If a person has already developed his *pnimiyus*, then he is able to have times in which he serves Hashem even when he doesn't have any will. But for most people, it is not a proper approach to always serve Hashem without any feelings.

**QUESTION:** *But perhaps the approach (of action over emotion) would work better for women, who are usually more action-oriented.*

**ANSWER:** Actually, it is the opposite. Since women are more usually emotional than men, they need to work more with their emotions, than with trying to act when they don't feel like it. By contrast, men, who are less emotionally inclined than women, are better equipped to do what they have to do even when they don't feel like it. But this doesn't either mean that men to need to act robotic and mechanical, with no feeling in what they do. Everyone needs to open their hearts. This should not be about "doing what you have to do even when you don't feel like it."

**QUESTION:** *Do we have any way of knowing when these "good times" or "bad times" will come?*

**ANSWER:** We do not have any control of when they come and go, but the more a person works on himself, the less the "bad times" will come, and the less intense they will be. But there is almost no one in the generation who never goes through these "bad times."

**QUESTION:** *During a dismal period, a person wonders if he's going on the right path or not. How can person indeed know if he's going in the right path?*

**ANSWER:** During the "bad times", it is too difficult for us to know if we are going on the right path or not, so we will have to wait for the "good times" when we can think more objectively. During a dismal period, if a person feels that he needs to improve in certain areas or take a different path, it is usually coming from an unhealthy place in the soul, from feeling down and broken. So in order to analyze one's path, one will need to wait for the dismal period to pass, and analyze his path later, when "good times" return.

**QUESTION:** *How do you know if you're going through those "Bad Days"? Can it be that for two hours a day that you're going through "Bad Days?"*

**ANSWER:** "Bad Days" ("Days of Hate") can last well beyond 2 hours or half a day. They can go on for several days, and sometimes they can even go on for several weeks. Sometimes you can feel physical aches from them. But if you feel like you're in a



dismal period for more than a few months already, that's a sign that there is a problem. Then it is not just a period of "Bad Days" anymore – it is a sign of depression.

**QUESTION:** *Why does our soul need to go through this state of "sleep", or "Bad Days"? And is there any way we can prolong our periods of "Good Days?"*

**ANSWER:** Hashem created the world that everything needs sleep, even our soul. Since our soul needs sleep, we need to also go through "Bad Days." There is nothing we can do about it. But the more we work on ourselves, the longer our "Good Days" will last.

## Getting To The Innermost Point

### QUESTION

How can a person reach the "innermost point" in the soul? Can the Rav explain to us a simple approach of how to do it?

### ANSWER

Figure out which point is the most open for you, personally. Then keep expanding the point that you're already opened towards. The point you are already opened to is the "small opening that I found" [an expression used in the Gemara in Tractate Kesubos 9a] which you can keep expanding, in order to get to your innermost point.

This is a very important and fundamental basis: To establish that the main part of your *avodah* is to expand upon the point that is already open to you. Otherwise, you would be trying to creating a "new opening", which is very difficult.

Besides for this, there is also a way for certain individuals: To use the power of *mesirus nefesh* [completely dedicating the soul to service of G-d].

## Going Above Time and Space

**QUESTION:** The Ramchal elaborates on the concept of *yichud Hashem* (making Hashem One on this world) in the sefer *Kelach Pischei Chochmah*<sup>3</sup>, and how *yichud Hashem* is the state of the next world and that it becomes revealed to a person on the Next World, according to how much a person tried revealing His oneness on this world.

However, it is not clear to me from his words if a person can actually sense this Oneness already on this world, and also it's unclear to how *yichud Hashem* is a person's reward on the Next World and what it is.

**ANSWER:** The *Sefer Yetzirah* says that everything exists on three planes: In a place, in a time, and in one's soul. *Olam, shanah, nefesh* – world, time, and soul. Anything that can be found in a place can also be found in a certain time and also in the soul, and vice versa. So just like there are periods of time which span the six centuries that are called This World (*Olam HaZeh*) as well as Gan Eden, the times of Mashiach, and *Olam HaBa* (the Next World), so do these times exist in our own soul. It is just that the actual time periods can only be reached when those times will arrive. But in our own souls, we are able to reach it all – today! Our soul can access an experience of Gan Eden, Mashiach, and *Olam HaBa*. The Ramchal himself wrote different *kavanos* (specific intentions) of how a person can reach a degree of Gan Eden. Not only that, but the Ramchal also wrote that for a *tzaddik* who perfects himself on this world, Mashiach has already come for him. Meaning to say, that the *tzaddik* has reached Mashiach in his own *neshamah*. It is the same with every other level as well. A person can reach it all while he is on this world, in his *neshamah*. This is because the *neshamah* is above time and space, and therefore it is able to go above time and space.

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<sup>3</sup> Translated into English as “138 Gates of Wisdom”



Questions in all spheres of life in general  
and the *nefesh* in particular  
are welcome in the Q&A system  
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