

**BILVAVI**

# **MY HEART ASKS**



**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

**Parshas Ki Savo 5781**

## Sefarim For Yomim Noraim

### QUESTION

I am searching for a sefer, or perhaps several sefarim, which can give me a greater understanding of the *Yomim Noraim*. I am not looking for a *sefer* that gives *chizuk* (inspiration) or a *sefer* of *mussar shmuessen*, or ideas. I am looking for a deep sefer which analyzes *Yomim Noraim* and takes it apart. Also I am not yet on the level of learning *Kaballah*, because I am still young, and I have no relevance to that kind of learning.

### ANSWER

1. *sefer Pachad Yitzchok* (ספר פחד יצחק על ימים נוראים)
2. *sefer Tallei Chaim* (ספר טללי חיים על ימים נוראים)
3. *sefer Beis Ginzai* (there are some sections there which deal with Kaballah, so you can skip those particular sections.) (ספר בית גנזי)
4. The *sefarim* of Rav Shlomo Brevda zt"l (ספרי ר' שלמה ברוודה זצ"ל)
5. *Sefer Bnei Yissocher*, in the section "*Maamarei Chodesh Tishrei*" (ספר בני יששכר - "מאמרי חודש תשרי")
6. The *shiurim* of R' Moshe Shmuel Shapiro zt"l [*sefer Afikei Yam*] (שיעורים של ר' משה [ספר "אפיקי ים"] שמואל שפירא זצ"ל [כגון ספר "אפיקי ים"].)

## Delta Virus – To Vax Or Not To Vax?

### QUESTION

Now because of the new variant of corona and the “vaccinating” situation which creates a lot of questions, I am feeling stressed and afraid: What does Hashem want us to do now? How does He want us to go about this current situation? I don't want to take the vaccine because there's a lot of bad things I hear about it, and also my wife is expecting and she's not required to take the corona vaccine, because we can actually see that the vaccine doesn't work. But maybe Hashem wants me to take the vaccine? And if Hashem wants me to take the vaccine and I don't take it, that will haunt me always because I will feel that I acted irresponsibly and

endangered my family. What are we supposed to do in this situation? What empowering message can the Rav tell us for this current period we are in?

## ANSWER

As long as the *halachah* isn't clear and there are differing views of *Poskim* on a matter, each person should abide by the view in the *Poskim* that he follows, with the intention that "I am doing what Hashem wants." If he does so with that intention, he is praiseworthy and he is not held responsible for any detrimental results, and Hashem will do what's good in His eyes.

Everything has become confusion today, and we need to hold onto *p'shitus* and *temimus*, to go simply and earnestly with Hashem's plan, and along with this we need to hold strong onto learning Torah in-depth, each person according to his own ability, from the strongest and innermost connection within him to Hashem and His Torah. That is a person's portion on this world – to grab hold of Hashem and His Torah, and that is what becomes his portion for all of eternity.

## Torah Learning Vs. Connecting To Tzaddikim

### QUESTION

There is a well-known concept of "connecting to the *tzaddik*" which is written about in the *sefarim hakedoshim*, such as in *sefer Noam Elimelech* and others. Does of all *Klal Yisrael* need to take this path? Also, how does one actually connect to a *tzaddik*? Does it have to be a *tzaddik* who is still alive, or can it also be a *tzaddik* who has passed away? And is there a collective *tzaddik* for all people to connect to, or does each individual have a specific *tzaddik* to connect to?

### ANSWER

1. Moshe received the Torah at Har Sinai and passed it onto Yehoshua. Therefore, there are two "bridges", so to speak, between the Jewish people and their Father in Heaven. One "bridge" is Moshe, who represents the *tzaddikim*. The second "bridge" is the Torah. On a general note, the path of *Chassidus* leans towards the "tzaddik" as the bridge [between Hashem and the Jewish people], and the Lithuanian [*Litvish*]

path leans more towards using the Torah as the bridge [between Hashem and the Jewish people].

2. One can connect to the tzaddik through the “garments” of the soul [action, speech and thought]. By way of action, one connects to the tzaddik by doing what the tzaddik says to do. By way of speech, one connects to the tzaddik by speaking about the tzaddik and by saying the tzaddik’s Torah teachings. By way of thought, one connects to the tzaddik by contemplating the tzaddik’s way of thinking and to the general approach of the tzaddik’s Torah teachings.

One can also connect to the very essence of the tzaddik’s soul, by way of the middos (character traits) and mochin (mind) of the tzaddik. One connects to the middos of the tzaddik by connecting to the middos of the tzaddik, especially by connecting to the primary trait which the tzaddik clung to throughout his life. One connects to the mochin (mind) of the tzaddik by connecting to the inner essence of the tzaddik’s Torah teachings, by connecting to the “universal unity” that is revealed in the tzaddik’s Torah teachings. Finally, one can connect to the very innermost essence of the tzaddik’s soul by attaching one’s emotions and thoughts to the neshamah of the tzaddik.

3. It is possible to be connected even to a tzaddik that has passed away,

## Healthy Eating

### QUESTION

I do not make a deal out of food that much, but I make sure to have certain foods and drinks when I eat breakfast, which doesn’t take up much of my time. I just eat a quick breakfast and then I’m done. Is there anything wrong with this kind of rushed eating, since I’m not eating normally and I’m just eating and drinking enough to stay healthy?

### ANSWER

It sounds like you are eating in order to stay healthy. What is wrong with this?

### QUESTION

What I want to know is: Is this a lack in elevating my eating?

### ANSWER

If you are referring to how you eat during the weekday, and not Shabbos, there is no problem with this. It is totally fine. However, you need to know for sure if it's indeed coming from a reason to stay healthy, as opposed to a motivation to become physically slim. You need to know for sure if you're eating less because you are indeed keeping away from physical indulgence, or if it's just coming from a desire to "look good" [which is not a holy desire].

### QUESTION

I make sure to eat only healthy foods, and I educate women on how to eat healthy foods, by informing them of how necessary it is to eat healthy and how to avoid the unhealthy foods which are so common in our generation. Since the Rav said that we shouldn't make such a big deal talking about food, how much should I talk with others about the need to eat healthy food, and how much shouldn't I talk about it? It seems from the Rav that the main thing is not about what you eat, but about how you eat. So what is the amount of time that I can spend talking to people about what to eat?

### ANSWER

This is a very, very good question. There's a problem in our generation where people talk a lot about health, but it does not come from a balance between the physical and the spiritual. In fact, it has become like a form of *avodah zarah* (idol worship), where people emphasize physical health so much, to the point that they only care for their physical well-being. The *Chovos HaLevovos* has a term for this: "They made their stomachs into their own gods." When the body becomes the central aspect in people's lives, this is what causes people to talk about health so much and to make such a big deal out of it, because the physical body is their priority, and therefore, much effort is expended by people to make sure that the body is being well taken care of. After all, they see their body as the main thing in their life.

Therefore, when we want to speak about health with others, we need to have the appropriate balance between a concern for our body and our soul. We can inform others of what the healthy foods are and what the unhealthy foods are, and to guide them to eat the right foods, but not as a purpose unto itself. The reason why we need to keep our body healthy is because it is the *kli* (vessel) which contains our *neshamah*, and we need to maintain our “vessel” and keep it strong, so that the light of our *neshamah* can shine properly within us.

If a Jew does not have this perspective towards health and he\she is a health practitioner, then his attitude towards health is no different than a gentile’s outlook, for a gentile can give over the very same health education. If a person teaches other people about how to stay healthy, he\she must be clearly aware of the reason of why he\she practices this: the Torah’s view of health is that our body needs to be a proper vessel to maintain the spiritual effects of our *neshamah*. When the focus is purely on physical health and there is no awareness that we are a *neshamah*, this is purely the gentile attitude towards living, and it is not the way for the Jewish people.

### QUESTION

In today’s generation, where food is out of control and people overeat, just for the sake of taste and enjoyment and for no other purpose, how can we raise our children to make sure that they shouldn’t eat too much nosh and candy? Are there guidelines of nosh that we should try to formulate, like what to give out and what not to give out to them, and what the limitations should be?

### ANSWER

This is a very good question. In today’s generation, you can find no less than 1000 different types of candy in the stores, all with a *hecsher*. It is a giant ocean of desires. To simply tell a child, “Don’t eat all of this stuff!” will not do much for the child. There is really a deeper issue we need to address when it comes to all of this. We need to train a child to understand that we have a body as well as a *neshamah*, and that our need for taste is actually a spiritual need that comes from the *neshamah*, only, it is often channeled in the wrong direction; and that when we pursue physical tastes, we prevent ourselves from tasting the spiritual. The same is true vice versa – the less we pursue physical taste, the more we can taste of what is waiting for our *neshamah*.

Therefore, our task in *chinuch* (child education) is really a task to bring to them to live more spiritually, and part of this includes experiencing spiritual enjoyment and tastes. To tell our children not to eat so much is perhaps a little bit helpful, but it will not do much for them. Instead, we need to emphasize to our children what a life of *ruchniyus* (spirituality) is like, and to explain to a child that pursuing physical gratification prevents us from experiencing the taste and enjoyment of *ruchniyus*.

We must know that there is a spiritual kind of taste, which is pleasurable to our *neshamah*, and there is also physical enjoyment and taste, which prevents a person from tasting the spiritual. A person has the free will on this world to choose what kind of taste he wants to have – either to taste of the spiritual, which is of the higher realms of our existence, or to taste the physical, which is of the lower realms. That choice is what we need to convey to our children.

Understandably, we will not be able to convey this information 100% to our children. We are only speaking of percentages. It is an inner way to live life, which we can bring our children into slowly, but this does not happen in a day or two. It is also not just about the issue of food, but about how to live life in general. We need to train ourselves, and our children, to live a more inner kind of life. We need to slowly show a child how he needs to choose between pursuing the physical vs. the spiritual. The point is not to tell him what to eat and what not to eat. Rather, we need to convey the message to the child that it takes several years to work on ourselves when it comes to this, and to deepen our sense of taste, so that we can reveal a taste in the spiritual. If the child gets the message correctly, we can then do appropriate *chinuch*.

So it is really a very good question, and it is a big problem which our generation struggles with, where there are so many different kinds of indulgence everywhere we turn.

## QUESTION

So is the Rav saying that there is nothing we can practically do about this, and it is just that we need to have the proper hashkafah (perspective) about it?

## ANSWER

A young child is not at the point of desiring so many candies and nosh, but as a child gets a bit older and he begins to want things, we can start training him to choose between living a more hedonistic kind of life versus a more spiritual kind of life. Again, it is not about telling him what to eat and what not to eat, but to help him decide and make the right choice, of what kind of life he wants to live.

How should we help him choose? This is what we should ask him: “Do you want to live a life of *gashmiyus* (pursuing physical gratification)? Or would you rather live a life or *ruchniyus*? Do you want to be a person who chases after *gashmiyus* or do you want to be a person of *ruchniyus*?” If he says that he does want *ruchniyus* over *gashmiyus*, then we can guide him slowly and in steps from there.

For example, on Shabbos when giving out candy and sweets to the children, we can tell a child to put aside one candy and not eat it. If he gets a full bag full of nosh, tell him to put aside one candy that he won't eat. Don't tell him not to want it. Instead, train him into the inner perspective that we have described here. Again, the point is not to tell him how to behave. The point is to bring him to a certain awareness, a more mature perspective towards life, where he thinks about the spiritual and he chooses between *gashmiyus* and *ruchniyus*.

## QUESTION

Can we also get others to follow these principles, and not just to use them for our own children?

## ANSWER

If a person is in charge of a shul or school, where children bring in nosh and candy, the person in charge can try to set guidelines about what can be brought in to *shul* school and what should not be brought in. It's really impossible to control this, though, because there are so many children in these places, and we can't control all the *nosh* that comes in. But it would be good if one community would set guidelines about these things. The message behind it, though, should be clear: Life is not meant to be *hefker* (free to pursue whatever desires we want). The fact that everything today has a *hecsher* on it is a lifestyle that is totally *hefker*, and it doesn't make sense.



## QUESTION

If a person feels hungry, could it also be because his soul is feeling hungry, and the body intercepts this message and translates it into a hunger for food?

## ANSWER

That can certainly be possible, but in order to discern this, we would have to explain this point more in-depth. Most people are not aware to the messages that their *neshamah* is sending them. In order for a person to recognize if a desire is coming from the *neshamah* or not, he would have to know how to identify that the desire is coming from the *neshamah*, and that the desire of his *neshamah* for more spirituality is merely being clothed under the “garment” of a physical desire for food. But I did not speak about this point in this class, because most people do not pay attention to the sounds of their *neshamah*. It is certainly possible, though, for a person to identify his hunger as a spiritual hunger that is coming from his *neshamah*, and that it is being translated by the body into physical hunger. But this is a much higher level of *avodah*.<sup>1</sup>

# Inner Child Therapy

## QUESTION

There is a kind of therapy today called “Inner Child” therapy, which is very popular. Without getting into all of the details, it is a kind of therapy where a person learns how to recognize his “inner child” which lives deep within him, to speak with this inner “child”, to ask questions from the inner child, etc. Through this, a person can slowly heal issues in his soul, through the internal connection that is created with one’s “inner child”. I have heard that there is a source for this in the words of the Gra, but I don’t know exactly where the source is. Is this true? And if it is an appropriate path to take, what are the boundaries of using this therapy?

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<sup>1</sup> The Rav has also spoken about how to elevate our eating in the shiurim of *Fixing Your Water*.005 and *Tefillah #081 – Eating With Holiness*.

## ANSWER

A person develops throughout his life like a structure that is being built. Therefore, every step of life that a person went through is not simply a part of the past, which has gone, but a part of his development.

Just as a structure is first built from the foundation, and the stronger the foundation, the stronger the structure will be – even the slightest error in building the foundation can prevent the entire structure from being built – so is a person’s childhood the foundation of a person’s lifetime, his “structure” which his life stands upon. Therefore, there is certainly a valid place for “returning” to one’s childhood and sorting it out, and to repair it.

There is a danger to this, however, because when one may “fall” back into his childhood in the process, if he doesn’t go about this in the right way. “Returning to one’s childhood” needs to come from an inner place in one’s soul, and it should not be done in a superficial manner. Therefore, the primary way to return to one’s childhood is by accessing one’s *temimus* (childlike earnestness), which is the nature of the child. The more earnest one becomes, the more powerfully he can return to the child perspective within him.

After a person has reached his “child perspective” [through accessing his *temimus*], there are several practical ways by which one can “return” to this place in the soul [of the child’s perspective].

- 1) **Action:** One way to return to childhood is in the **active** sense, by playing the games that one enjoyed as a child, or by revisiting the places one grew up in and played in, or studied in, or by reading the books that one read as a child, etc. Through these actions, one returns in his soul to his childhood state. However, this is a spiritually unrefined way, and it can bring a person down from his current adult level to his childhood level. Although one would be trying to repair his childhood, he would be “falling” back into his childhood [by playing childish games], and this is a spiritual downfall for him.
- 2) **Speech:** One can also talk about his childhood experiences, and thereby return, on some level, to this place [of the child’s perspective] in his soul.
- 3) **Hearing:** One can listen to songs that he heard when he was a child.

4) **Memory:** By merely remembering one's childhood, one can awaken the memories of his childhood. This uses the soul's power of memory (*zocheir*). An even more powerful experience is when one uses the soul's imaginative faculty to vividly remember and pictures that have been imprinted on one's soul since childhood. This is called the soul's power of *shoimer*. This can be achieved either by looking at pictures of childhood, or by using one's thoughts to vividly picture one's childhood.

5) **Imagination:** By way of the power of imagination, one can "return", in his imagination, to his childhood. This is a fundamental power in the soul, because a child's imagination is very powerful. When one enters into his imagination, he is entering into an ability of his childhood, and in that way he draws himself closer, in a visceral way, to his childhood.

6) One can directly enter into to the very first "**beginning point**" he felt as a child.

7) One can return to what one **learned** as a child, such as what he learned in Chumash, Mishnah, Gemara, etc.

When one returns to his childhood in the aforementioned ways, or at least by using some of them, his *avodah* now is to experience his childhood in the proper way. Whenever any negativity becomes "triggered" from any childhood experiences, he should remind himself of the proper, "mature adult" perspective which he has now acquired, and reframe his perspective towards the situation.

Along with this, one also needs to clarify what's bothering him since his childhood, and to deal with it accordingly. One can do so by speaking about the issue and also repair the issue by making actual, practical changes regarding the issue. Just speaking about the issues alone, without making actual changes, can feel relieving, but it is not yet the complete repair to the issue. One needs to speak about the issues of his childhood and also to make actual changes of repair. One also needs to sort out his childhood by applying his "mature adult" perspective to whatever bothersome situations he went through in his childhood.

Understandably, the [following] words here are brief, but they are the fundamental roots, based on inner wisdom, as explained in the writings of the *Arizal*. There are three "states" in a person's life: the fetal state, the nursing state, and the intellectual state (*ibbur*, *yenikah*, and *mochin*). All of these comprise the first stage of maturity of one's life (*gadlus rishon*). These stages span one's childhood, beginning all the way

from one's fetal state, all the way until one has reached intellectual maturity. After one traverses this general first stage of maturity, one begins his second stage of maturity (*gadlus sheini*), where one returns to a semblance of his fetal state – he begins a new stage of “childhood” [immaturity] within his adult [mature] state. This “childhood” state sorts out all that one has experienced since childhood, from the time he was completely immature, with a re-framing of the childhood experiences, through a “mature adult” perspective. This newfound maturity [the mature adult's perspective applied to one's childhood experiences] is called one's *gadlus sheini*.

## Gemara In-Depth Vs. Feeling Closer To Hashem

**QUESTION** Why is Gemara in-depth the deepest kind of connection a person can have with Hashem? I feel closer to Hashem when I learn *Mesillas Yescharim*!

**ANSWER** Is learning *Mesillas Yescharim* a connection with Hashem or with the Torah? [The answer is, with Hashem). We must love Hashem, but we must also love His Torah. There must be *ahavas Hashem* (love of Hashem) and there must also be *ahavas HaTorah* (love of the Torah). They are not two separate matters, and they must become interconnected.

**QUESTION** There are people who don't feel a deep connection with Hashem when they learn Gemara, and they only feel it when they learn sefarim that talk about *avodas Hashem*. So what should they do when they have extra time to learn? [Should they learn Gemara, or should they learn about *avodas Hashem*?]

**ANSWER** When Rav Aharon Kotler zt”l first came to America, he had to convince parents to send their children to Yeshivos and learn Torah. They asked him, “What will come from our children? Will they become a Rav, a Rosh Yeshivah, a Dayan?” He told them, “Your child will become someone who learns Torah. That is what will come from him.”

We need to change our perspective towards our life. Hashem gave us 24 hours a day so that we can devote our time to Him and to His Torah. There is a curse given to mankind called “*parnassah*” (having to earn a living), and we need to deal with that curse. But we must know what the essence of life is; we need to breathe what life

actually is. Learning Torah is not something that takes up your time. It is your soul itself; it is a very

**QUESTION** It's hard for me to open up a Gemara, because it doesn't get me to feel close to Hashem. So how can I practically spend my time on learning Gemara? It is similar to the previous question, that people don't feel a bond with Hashem when they learn Gemara.

**ANSWER** The *sefarim* bring a question: Who do you love more, your father or your mother? Hashem and the Torah are like our father and our mother, and to decide which of them we love more is like choosing if we love our father more or our mother more.

If someone feels like he's not enjoying his learning, I have the following stories to tell you. There were two people I met last week. One person came to me and told me that he had to leave Kolel in order to go to work. He told me, "I had no choice." I said to him, "Maybe it's true that you had no choice and you needed to go to work. But did you at least *cry* on the day you left behind the Gemara?"

I met another person here whom I hadn't seen in about 10 years. I said to him, "*Nu*, what's with you?" He said to me, "*Baruch Hashem*, I have become an expert in *Shas*." As I conversed with him, he mentioned to me that he's thinking about a certain business he is pursuing. I said to him, "If you know *Shas*, how can it be that you're thinking of going into business?!" He told me, "I learned all my years only for the sake of *kavod* (honor)."

If a person doesn't feel enjoyment in learning, did he ever *cry* about that, that he doesn't have feelings of enjoyment in his learning? The Gemara says that if a student didn't see success after 5 years of learning, it is sign that he's not seeing blessing in his learning. Did you try for 5 years to learn before you decided that you aren't enjoying learning?

Compare this to a person who loses his appetite for food, so he decides not to eat anymore. Should he stop eating just because he doesn't have an appetite...?

**QUESTION** Many people learn Gemara in-depth but they don't come to feel the closeness with Hashem that are described in these [the Rav's "Bilvavi"] *sefarim*.

**ANSWER** It is because those people only have Torah in their life, and no Avodas Hashem. Torah without Avodas Hashem doesn't lead to success, and neither does Avodas Hashem without Torah.<sup>2</sup> We need both – we need both our “father” and our “mother”.

Is there anyone who has an easy time making a living? Well, why should Torah and Avodas Hashem come any easier to you? The Alter of Novhardok once said that if a person would try to establish a Yeshiva as much as when he tries to set up a living, he would be able to build 100 yeshivos. (He himself built many yeshivos.)

Torah and Avodas Hashem doesn't come easy. But life is not easy. We have free will in how we will live our life and how we will use our energies. There is no such thing as anything successful that was easy. If a person uses his energies entirely for *parnassah*, he'll be wiped out by the time he opens up his Gemara. Not just with regards to having time for learning; he has used up all his soul's energies when it comes to work, so he won't be able to learn Torah properly.

But if one changes his perspective and decides that he will mainly channels his energies towards learning, he will be able to exert himself properly in Torah. Man has the power to choose between a life that contains real vitality to it, or to live a “dead” kind of life; it is written, “*I have placed before you life and death, and you shall choose life.*”

**QUESTION** When it comes to making a living, I know how to set up a business and learn how to make it work. But when it comes to learning Torah in-depth, where do I begin? How should I devote my learning Torah time to learning with *iyun*, when I have very little basic knowledge of Torah and I haven't even gotten to the first step [just reading the Gemara and having a basic, simple understanding of it]?

**ANSWER** Are you willing to pay someone to help you learn Gemara *b'iyun*?

**QUESTION** Yes, I do have someone who teaches me how to learn *b'iyun*, but my *chavrusa* is way ahead of me; he understands it way better than me, and I see that he is enjoying his learning, but I don't have that enjoyment.

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to Tefillah #050 – How Learning Gemara Bring You Closer To Hashem and Tefillah #107 – Balance In Your Avodas Hashem.

Basically, there are people who are missing *hadrachah* (guidance) in learning, and they don't feel enjoyment and success in their learning.

**ANSWER** If you will allow me, I will split up this question into different parts. When it comes to “knowing how to learn”, generally, if someone **didn't** learn in Yeshiva and he wants to know how to learn, he should hire an *avreich* to pay him and be his personal trainer to teach him to how learn. After doing that, if someone wants to taste enjoyment in his learning, there is one secret he should know: besides for exerting ourselves in Torah, we must cry to Hashem for success. If you cry earnestly to Hashem, you are guaranteed success.

**QUESTION :** If I have 2 hours a day to myself, should part of it be spent learning Gemara, and the other part of it should be spent learning a sefer? Or should part of it be spent taking a walk in hisbodedus and asking Hashem “Please help me”, and the other part of the time should be spent in Gemara, and another part of the time should be spent on learning sefarim?

**ANSWER** What is your goal? Where do you want to get to in your life?

**QUESTION** I don't even know what my goal is and where I am supposed to get to. But I still yearn to be close to Hashem.

**ANSWER** Do you want to be in Gan Eden, or in Gehinnom...? What will you do in Gan Eden? In Gan Eden, there is only Torah learning going on, for 24 hours a day. If you don't gain an enjoyment in your learning already on This World, what will you do there? There is just 24 hours of learning there; no sleep, no work; what will you do? If a person doesn't have enjoyment in his learning, for what purpose does he live for...?

**QUESTION** If I feel more *sipuk* (fulfillment) when I just read through many pages of Gemara and reviewing them (*bekius*), or to learn *Mishnayos*, or to keep reviewing a certain *masechta* - is that also a proper way to get a deep bond with Hashem, just as much as a person who learns *b'iyun*? After all, there are people who learn Gemara *b'iyun* and they don't cover enough ground; they spend half a year on 5 pages of Gemara, and they don't feel fulfillment from this kind of learning!

**ANSWER** Imagine if a person only gets married to a woman so that he can have children; he didn't want a wife, he just wanted children...The Torah is not just a tool you use to get to Hashem – it is also a goal unto itself. Therefore, one who only learns *bekiyus* (a quick reading of the Gemara, where you can cover more pages of Gemara) won't be able to gain a connection with the Torah. A person should learn both *iyun* and *bekiyus*, but not only *bekiyus*. The deep connection with Torah is gained only through learning with *iyun*.

**QUESTION** What about working people, who don't have 3 consecutive hours a day to learn Gemara with *iyun* - we only have an hour before davening, and an hour at night?

**ANSWER** Are in you in a jail???

**QUESTION** : Is it still effective to learn Gemara for 3 hours a day in-depth, even if it's not 3 hours in a row?

**ANSWER** It's better to have 3 consecutive hours of learning in-depth, but even if it's not consecutive, it's still better than nothing.

**QUESTION** I don't have any 3 hours of the day at all, to learn. I only have one hour before davening and one hour at night, so I don't have the time to get into the Gemara properly.

**ANSWER** For what purpose is our life for...?

**QUESTION** I am not yet actually on the level of accepting that my life is only about wanting what Hashem wants and to only learn Torah, and not have to any of my own personal *retzonos*. But I still want to be in such a situation in which I can earn a living yet also be close to Hashem, to do Hashem's will and to learn Torah.

**ANSWER** I didn't dream for one second that my words will be accepted 100% and that a person who hears them will become willing to totally change. So why I am saying all of this? It is so that at least once in your life, you should still hear the truth. Also, if you can actualize the words here even 10% - and even that much I not expecting - then even that would be a big shift towards the right direction.



**QUESTION** I understand that most of one's time to himself should be spend on learning Gemara b'iyun (and the remaining extra time should be spent on Halacha and on learning about Avodas Hashem), but still, even if I know what I have to do and I am actually doing that, I am not yet feeling a connection with Hashem through learning.

**ANSWER** If you just close your Gemara at the end your learning session and you come back the next day to your Gemara to get back into it again, then I agree with you that you won't find learning Gemara enjoyable. You keep splitting apart your learning, and there is a constant interruption in your learning like this, because in the way you are going about your learning, you never think about what you're learning throughout the course of the day.

Instead, prepare for yourself a question in your learning to think about during the day – for example, throughout the day, contemplate something you learned about in the Gemara. This will give you a taste of enjoyment in your learning. Experience with this shows that it is a tried and tested solution to give you enjoyment in learning. There are other methods of advice too which can help you, but the question one must first ask himself is: if he's willing to even start.

## Mussar & Chassidus - External & Internal

### QUESTION

It is often said that a person shouldn't turn the study of *mussar* (ethics) into the main part of the day. Instead, one needs to spend most of his time learning Torah. Is this also true regarding the study of *chassidus* [that it should not become more important than one's Torah learning]? After all, studying *chassidus* is a study of the *pnimiyus* (the inner dimension of Torah) of Torah...

### ANSWER

*Mussar*, at its inner essence, is a wisdom. This is stated by the Ramchal in the beginning of *Mesillas Yesharim*: "Fear of Hashem is a wisdom [to learn about], and it, alone, is wisdom." Similarly the *Gra* writes in the beginning of *sefer Mishlei* that the

sefer *Mishlei* is entirely *mussar*, and at its root, it is *daas* (understanding, or wisdom). *Chassidus*, at its inner essence, is also a wisdom. The root of *chassidus* is in the spiritual area of *chessed*, which corresponds to the *kav yemin*, the “right line”, which also corresponds to *chochmah*, wisdom. This is especially true about the very innermost depths of *chassidus*, which corresponds to the secret level of wisdom, *razin d’razin*, the “secrets of the secrets”.

Thus, the intended meaning [of not spending too much time learning either *mussar* or *chassidus*] was referring to the “external” part of *mussar* and *chassidus*, but not to the “internal” wisdom that is within *mussar* and *chassidus* [which may be studied for a lengthier amount of time, since it is in the category of wisdom].

## My Husband Is Slacking Off In Ruchniyus

### QUESTION

If a married woman is more spiritual than her husband - who doesn't want to learn Torah or daven - how should she approach her marriage? What should a wife do in this situation? The husband doesn't like it when the wife keeps pushing him to be more spiritual. And what should the wife do when their 12-year old son also doesn't want to learn Torah or daven? The son will usually imitate his father's behavior. The husband grew up “Chareidi” and that is what he looks like, but he doesn't enjoy davening or learning, and he does the bare minimum - and sometimes he doesn't even do the bare minimum. He will skip through most of davening in the morning when he's not in the mood, which happens often. He has no problem with coming late to shul and sometimes he will daven quickly in the house and he won't go to minyan. He almost never learns Torah in the home. The set of Shas (Gemara) he received for the *chasunah* (wedding) is still completely new and unused, for the last 15 years. He has a daily shiur at the shul he goes to, which is about an hour long, but he will skip going to the shiur whenever he isn't in the mood of going. My children will never see him learn if this is the way he stays.

My question is, what is my role, as a wife – in this situation, where my husband is sorely lacking in *yiras shomayim* (fear of Heaven) and in Torah learning and in davening – am I supposed to do anything about this? If yes, then what is it that I

should do? And, in addition to my question, since this situation is very saddening to me, is there any sefer I can learn which will strengthen me with inner joy?

### ANSWER

A woman should become strong and stable through developing her own inner world.

Through the inner joy that she will get [from developing her own inner world] she can be of influence to her environment, but she should do so with subtlety.

She should express unconditional love [to her husband and child].

She should daven and cry for the other person [who needs help], but not in front of the other person.

She shouldn't speak about the topic to the other person.

She will need to do a lot of inner work when it comes to having emunah [faith in Hashem] and savlanut [patience].

She should recognize that all Jews are called the children of Hashem, and therefore Hashem will do [to them] whatever is good in His eyes.

She should not blame herself about anything she can't do.

She should accept the suffering with love.

For any step of improvement that her husband makes, she should express great, deep joy about it.

Through this [contemplating the *tagim* of the Hebrew letters], one reveals the intellect from its potential state to its active state. Through this, one can arrive at “simple, non-analytical reflection”. This is not referring to actual “simplicity” itself, but to simple, non-analytical **reflection**.

The “*Inner Silence*” series which explains *hisbodedus* is partially based off this concept of **simple, non-analytical reflection**, albeit the fact that the series does not elaborate on how to reflect on the various combinations of Hebrew letters and words.

## Practically Being Aware of Hashem Always

### QUESTION

Can the Rav please explain how we can practically fulfill the mitzvah of *Shivisi Hashem L'negdi Tamid*, “I place Hashem opposite me, constantly?”

### ANSWER

[The mitzvah of Shivisi Hashem, to feel Hashem always, can be fulfilled in the areas of one's thoughts, speech and actions.]

#### In Thought:

(1) According to the external method, one can either visualize these words [*Shivisi Hashem*] in his soul, or one can visualize the words as they appear in a sefer Torah, and every so often a person should mentally visualize the words, or by looking at the parchment of a sefer Torah with these words on it, until it has become imprinted on his mind and he is consistently thinking about it, to the point that one can naturally visualize these words [*Shivisi Hashem*] and keep returning to this thought many times throughout the day. When this is done correctly, a person is then able to visualize “from within”, the four-letter name of *havayah*, and then one can constantly envision it in front of him, because he has now revealed the nature of the soul. The more complete level of this is when one can naturally envision the four-letter name of *havayah* and it appears as white letters. On the less complete level, the name of *havayah* appears to a person in different colors.

It is written in *Shaar Ruach HaKodesh* [a sefer of Rav Chaim Vital which records the Arizal's teachings], “If the letter appears before his eyes in the color of black ink, he can know that he is at the level of *Asiyah*. If the letter appears red, he is at the level of *Yetzirah*. If the letter appears white, he is at the level of *Beriah*. If the letter has a white glow enveloping it and it is shining outward, one is at the level of *Atzilus*.”

(2) The more inner level [of fulfilling the mitzvah of *Shivisi Hashem*] is by having a palpable sense of the reality of Hashem. There are four levels to this. The first level is when senses that Hashem is distant from him and that He sits in heaven, but that He is aware of all of his actions. (Refer to commentary of *Metzudas Dovid* to *Tehillim*

16:8). A higher level than this is when one feels how Hashem is next to him, that he is present all of the time in Hashem's world. This is described by the Rambam in *Moreh Nevuchim*. A higher level is when one feels that Hashem dwells within him, as it were, since it is written, "And I will dwell amongst them." The highest level is to sense a oneness with Him, to feel that one is a "portion of G-d above", and as it is written, "For a portion of G-d is with him."

### In Speech:

(3) One fulfills this *mitzvah* by way of speech when one is always speaking about Hashem, and when is constantly speaking with Hashem. Chazal derive from the verse "Shivisi Hashem" that any blessing which does not mention Hashem's name is not a blessing. Rashi explains that this is because "In all my deeds, I place a fear of Him in front of my eyes." This is further elaborated in sefer *Shaarei Kedushah* (III:4)

### In Action:

(4) Besides for the above, it is proper for a person to make reminders for himself of Hashem. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 24a) teaches, based on the verse of *Shivisi Hashem*, that a king always takes a sefer Torah with him. The Rambam says that for this reason, we also put a *mezuzah* on our door and we attach *tzitzis* to our clothes, to remind us of Hashem wherever we are. Through looking at our *tzitzis*, we can always see the *Shechinah* in front of us. Similarly, the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (Berachos 2:3) teaches that when one would go to relieve himself in the lavatory and he was wearing *tefillin*, he would remove his *tefillin* and place it in a bag which he would place above his heart. The reason for this was based on the verse, *Shivisi Hashem L'negdi Tamid*. These are different actions which help a person fulfill the *mitzvah* of *Shivisi Hashem*, to be aware that one is always in front of Hashem.

## Should I Learn Or Earn?

**QUESTION** Isn't there such a thing as the concept of "Yissocher and Zevulun", that Zevulun goes to work so he can support Yissocher's learning? So why can't we all be like Zevulun, and our purpose in life is to perhaps work so we can support others' learning? Perhaps that is my tafkid (role) in life?

**ANSWER** Reichman (the famous wealthy supporter of yeshivos), once asked Rav Shach, “Who has more *Olam HaBa*, me or you? I uphold the entire world of Torah, while the Rosh Yeshivah teaches the Torah.” Rav Shach responded, “I don’t know which of us has more *Olam HaBa*. That, only Hashem knows. But one thing I know for sure: I do enjoy This World, because I learn Torah and teach it my whole life, but you don’t have real enjoyment on This World at all.”

Once I met a person who works for many hours a day, and I asked him, “Why do you work for so many hours a day?” He told me, “Because I want to be able to have a lot of money to give *tzedakah* with.” I said to him, “Why didn’t the Chofetz Chaim think of that too? Why didn’t he go to work so he could give *tzedakah*?”

I’ll tell you another story. There was a student of Rav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro, a great Rosh Yeshivah in Eretz Yisrael. (As a side note, if you want to know how to learn Gemara *b’iyun*, you should peruse his *sefarim*, which are called “*Shaarei Shemuos*”). One of his students learned by him in Yeshivas Beer Yaakov, and then he moved to America. He was learning for a few years and then he felt he had to go stop learning and go to work. He called Rav Shapiro and asked him if the Rosh Yeshivah agrees with his decision. Rav Shapiro said to him, “Absolutely not. There is nothing to discuss.” Rav Shapiro is one of the people in the generation who knows how to do the “Goral HaGra” (a mystical tradition on how to search for an answer to problems by opening up a special kind of Chumash). He only did the “Goral HaGra” for communal purposes, and he would never use it for private issues of people who came to him. The student asked Rav Shapiro if he could make an exception for him and perform a “Goral HaGra” for him to let him know if he should continue to sit and learn or instead go to work. Rav Shapiro responded that he only uses the “Goral HaGra” for communal issues, not for personal issues of an individual. Rav Shapiro was the fundraiser for the Yeshivah for half of the year (and Rav Wolbe took him over for the other half of the year); when he came to America to collect for his yeshivah, the student came to him and told him, “Now that I’m driving the Rosh Yeshivah around and enabling him to collect money, I should have the status of a community, not an individual.” In the end, Rav Shapiro agreed to make for him a “Goral HaGra”. He opened up the Chumash and the possuk said, “*For six days you shall work, and on the seventh day, you shall rest.*”

It sounded like the “Goral HaGra” was saying that he should go to work. But that’s because this person **wanted** to go work! For Chazal say: “In the way a person wants go in, he is led.”

If Eliyahu HaNavi comes and tells you that your soul is from the tribe of Zevulun, you can act like a Zevulun. [Otherwise, you can’t assume that your *tafkid* is to be like a Zevulun].

### QUESTION

It’s not that I want to go to work; I just want to know, how do I know that my *tafkid* in life is to be like Yissocher? Maybe my *tafkid* is to be like a Zevulun.

### ANSWER

I wasn’t answering you personally. My answers are not directed at anyone personally. They are general answers which describe a concept. The questions I ask back at the questioners are also not directed at anyone personally, and neither are my answers to each person here meant to address anyone on a personally.



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