

BILVAVI

**MY
HEART
ASKS**

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

PARSHAS VAYEIRA 5782

ISSUE 212

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AFGHAN REFUGEES IN AMERICA

QUESTION

1) America recently took hundreds of refugees from Afghanistan and brought them to New Jersey, about 20 minutes from Lakewood. It is reputed that among these refugees are those who were part of the Talibans, the group of terrorists who waged war on America and destroyed the Twin Towers in Elul 5760 (September 9, 2001). The government here made a statement that these refugees will only be held in captivity temporarily, and soon after they will be freed and they will become American citizens and add to the diversity of America. I was thinking: **Here we have Ishmaelites, and not just any Ishmaelites but terrorists, who have been received here by America, and maybe this is a fulfillment of the prophecy that in the End of Days there will be a partnership between Edom and Yishmael** who will join forces against Klal Yisrael? Is there some more meaning to this recent event?

ANSWER

Yes. This is the power of the “end”, in which there will be a connection of Esav and Yishmael, and it is the root of the war of Gog and Magog, which will be a war within the nations themselves, besides for how they be will fighting against Klal Yisrael.

QUESTION

2) Is this reason to leave America and move to Eretz Yisrael?

ANSWER

It is another reason to.

SHOULD I MOVE TO ERETZ YISRAEL 5782

QUESTION

For a while already I want to move from America to Eretz Yisrael. I want to leave it all behind and come to live in Eretz Yisrael, and my wife now is also thinking about it....and I think I can sell my house here and buy a house in Eretz Yisrael.

However, I would feel so bad taking away nachas from my parents and in-laws because they love seeing my children and now they won't be able to see them anymore. I feel like I don't have the heart to do this to them. My wife is also very close to her family here. My parents would probably

be very upset if I decide to abandon them and take my kids away from them, and they would accuse of being ungrateful to them after everything they've done for me, for financially supporting me, etc.

My marriage is not in the greatest shape and I'm afraid that moving to Eretz Yisrael will only put more pressure on my wife and she won't be happy, and I'm afraid of what that will do to our marriage. Also, my wife is concerned that my kids won't know Lashon HaKadosh and that they won't settle down here in the schools in Eretz Yisrael.

On one hand I really feel that the will of Hashem is to leave everything here in America and go live in Eretz Yisrael, and if not now, then when? And I'm afraid that if I wait longer, it will be too late chas v'shalom. So I think I should move to Eretz Yisrael because if that's what Hashem wants from me, then I should plunge ahead with it because nothing bad comes from doing ratzon Hashem.

Certainly there will be difficulties but we believe that if this is really what Hashem wants from us, then we have nothing to be worried about. On the other hand, maybe it's my yetzer hora telling me to move to Eretz Yisrael, and maybe it's because I lack stability in my soul? I don't know what Hashem wants me to do. I have davened a lot about this to Hashem but I still wasn't zocheh yet to clarity on what Hashem wants from me to do....there are other factors too...

ANSWER

Cry to Hashem about this, until your wife turns to you and asks you "Can we move to Eretz Yisrael...?"

SHIDDUCHIM - GOOD GIRL WITH INTERNET

QUESTION

If a boy and girl are dating and they are compatible in their *ruchniyus*, but the girl owns a laptop with filtered (Net-Free) internet which she uses for her learning and for work, is this a reason for the boy to say no the *shidduch*?

ANSWER

You need to find out well why she owns a laptop, which sites she is able to connect with, and the level [amount of time] of how much she uses it. Find out also if she uses it only for work or beyond

work purposes. And, find out if she is aware at all of the dangers [of owning an internet-capable laptop even though it's filtered].

SHIDDUCHIM – IF THE BOY SMOKES

QUESTION

If a certain bochur is reputed to have a good heart and has *yiras shomayim* but he smokes, is that a reason to reject him in a *shidduch*?

ANSWER

If there is nothing else you are concerned about him, then this [smoking] is not something to be concerned about.

APPROACHING MARRIAGE

QUESTION

1) Can a 21-year old bochur start shidduchim (dating)?

ANSWER

As long as he can remain immersed in his learning and he won't be having sinful thoughts, and as long as one's age isn't making it harder for him to be considered for a shidduch, one is allowed to wait on starting shidduchim

QUESTION

2) What tools does a bochur need before starting shidduchim, especially with regards to where he's holding in his learning and in his maturity in general?

ANSWER

Before marriage, it is ideal if a person first has a strong connection to his Torah learning, to the point that he knows he can hold strong in his learning after he gets married when he will have more responsibilities on his mind. He also needs to be able to come out of himself so that he can be able to connect with another human being. And he also needs the ability to be able to build together a life of being together with another person.

MY THERAPIST AND REBBI WANT ME TO GET ZOOM

QUESTION

My marriage needs help and my Rebbi advised me to use a certain marriage counselor, and both by therapist and my Rebbi wanted to me to install Internet service in our house for Zoom only so that we can do therapy sessions over Zoom. I have never brought internet into my house, and although I listened to my Rebbi's advice to use this therapist, I refused to listen to him when he tried to convince me to install Internet connection in my house for this purpose. He happens to have a smartphone (I'm sure it doesn't have internet on it...) and it seems that he doesn't understand the severity of this issue. He feels that this isn't an issue to bring Internet service into the house for this purpose, he just said get the best filter. I am doing the therapy sessions over the phone. My therapist keeps pressuring me to get Zoom because she feels that the therapy will be more effective if she can see us, and my Rebbi feels the same way. What is the Rav's view? I'm so torn about what to do.

ANSWER

Do it outside the house! There is no need to do it in the house specifically. You can find a private and quiet place where you can take care of this.

EXPECTATIONS IN MARRIAGE & PARENTING

QUESTION

1) Does a couple need to sit down together and tell each other what they expect from the other, in a non-demanding way and just from an understanding that "I have a certain need for such and such, and therefore I need you to act towards me based on my personal wishes."

ANSWER

1) First a couple needs to figure out if their expectations or wishes from each other are proper wishes from the other, because it's very possible that they are not being realistic or they have exaggerated their wishes from each other in a way that can't be met by the other. It would be proper if they wouldn't have more than three wishes from the other spouse, and they should each choose what's most important to them personally.

QUESTION

2) Also, can a couple do this only if they already have a very strong, loving relationship with each other (meaning that they have already revealed “intrinsic love” towards the other) or even if they don’t?

ANSWER

2) A couple doesn’t need intrinsic love in order to ask each other to fulfill their wishes. They just need to have an open and developed relationship with each other, and they need wisdom of life.

QUESTION

3) And if a spouse if the more emotional type can he or she tell the other what he or she wishes from the other, or is it better not to do this?

ANSWER

3) That should be very avoided.

QUESTION

4) Also, are they supposed to just have emunah that they need to accept the other’s personality even if it’s not exactly as the other spouse hoped for, and they should just get rid of their expectations and wishes from each other? Or can they certainly have wishes from each other and they also need to work on their emunah along with this?

ANSWER

4) It depends on how much emunah they have. There is never total emunah, and therefore they can combine both emunah and expectations from each other, as you guessed.

QUESTION

5) Is the concept of “intrinsic love” between spouses expressed also on a physical level and basic emotional level of nefesh habehaimis, or is it a neshamah connection because they share one neshamah?

ANSWER

5) Regarding wishes that parents would like to see from children, they should only hope and wish that the child will act according to ratzon Hashem. They should also work on themselves to minimize any wishes they have from their child.

QUESTION

6) Can a parent ask their child what they would like to see from their child, what their hopes are from him or her? Or will this just pressure the child?

ANSWER

6) It is rooted in the neshamah and it can spread a bit to the body.

QUESTION

7) If a person is very emotional and especially around his family, and he acts childish around his children when he plays with them, but when he's alone with himself he realizes that he needs to act more mature like an adult, but it's hard for him to be mature when he's around his children, how can he work on himself to make himself more mature when he feels like acting childish around his children?

ANSWER

7) He should halt himself every so often while he is around people, to return to his inner world.

MY HUSBAND ISN'T SPIRITUAL OR GROWTH-ORIENTED LIKE I AM

QUESTION

Here's a case where there's a couple who have been married for many years, have married off children already, and they Baruch Hashem live a Torah-*dig* life together. But the husband and wife have very glaring different personalities. The wife is mainly "fire" and the husband is mainly "earth". The wife [is very growth-oriented and] likes to learn sefarim, especially the sefarim of the Rav shlit"א, but the husband has no interest in inner growth like this. They actually have a peaceful relationship, but they aren't deeply connected with each other. Rather, it's like they are each living their own separate lives from the other, each of them involved in their own little world. The wife [being the more proactive one in the relationship] has two choices in front of her:

(1) Either she can really work on herself and get more in touch with her own inner world, and just do everything she's supposed to be doing in order to run the home, and she can just paste a smile on herself all the time to her husband and not even ask him to grow together with her. She can be passive and refined towards him. (2) Or, her second option is that she can ask her husband that they should work on themselves together and learn about the inner world, together, and, she will

ask him to be more sensitive to her needs and care about their relationship more. She will ask him that she wants to see a change in their home, that is should become the loving and warm atmosphere that she's craving. (She has tried to do this for the last 20 years by asking her husband to be more proactive and to invest in their relationship, but she hasn't gotten anywhere).

Which option should the wife take to improve her marriage – the first option or the second option?

ANSWER

She should take the first option [She should only work on herself and on her own inner growth, and she should not try to get her husband more involved in her growth].

DAVENING ABOUT WICKED PEOPLE

QUESTION

Should we daven that Hashem should take away *reshaim* (wicked people) like Lieberman *yemach shemo* or should we instead daven that these *reshaim* should do *teshuvah*?

ANSWER

Besides for *tzaddikim* who are very immersed in their *avodah* of *tefillah*, all other people should simply daven in general that Hashem should obliterate all evil from the world, without getting into the details.

I NEED A LOT OF QUIET WHEN I LEARN

QUESTION

1) The more of an internal person I've become, the more quiet I need. I love to learn in a quiet place, especially in my house with no one around. But I know that I really need to learn in the beis midrash. But if I learn in a packed Beis Midrash where everyone is learning and the voice of Torah resounds throughout the Beis Midrash, it becomes like static and the noise doesn't bother me, I still get distracted from all the many people that are there and I stop focusing on my learning. For that reason I like to learn in a quiet Beis Midrash, but the problem there is that any small sound will bother me a lot. I love learning in an absolutely quiet Beis Midrash but then as soon as I hear a person learning and talking or humming, I get annoyed and I can't focus. I don't know which of

these distracts me more. What does the Rav advise [learning privately in my house where I have quiet, or learning in a Beis Midrash]?

ANSWER

It is better to learn in the Beis Midrash.

QUESTION

2) What about if a person learns better with a laptop, and all day he can sit and learn peacefully on his laptop, whether he's learning with it in his house or in the beis midrash? Is this not recommended, because usually a person learning all the time on his laptop doesn't audibly voice his learning, plus his family just sees him all day learning on his laptop and it looks to them like a person staring at a screen every day?

ANSWER

He should make sure to learn at least for some of his time from an actual sefer.

LEARNING P'SHAT

QUESTION

How can I enjoy learning pshat when I'm not that drawn to learning pshat? I would rather be learning other areas of the Torah, such as derush and sod.

ANSWER

You need to be able to enjoy the intellect of the Torah, and to enjoy the clarity of just knowing the Torah's information and thinking. And that is besides for connecting to the Torah on a level that goes beyond reason and logical understanding.

UNSUCCESSFUL

QUESTION

I have tried thousands of times to start improving in my avodas Hashem and to live my life according to what Hashem wants, yet I still find myself totally broken. My learning and my davening is way below par and I keep falling into doing the biggest aveiros. Is there some small piece of advice that can help me? Maybe there's a sefer I should learn or maybe there's something I can to help me begin have some derech in avodas Hashem and overcome my yetzer hora? Or maybe

my avodah on this world is to be unsuccessful and to keep falling in to my yetzer hora again and again [and to hold strong in spite of my failures and just keep trying my best]?

ANSWER

Learn 2 halachos a day, and fulfill them, practically speaking. It would also be very important for you to get to become close with a Torah personality and to talk with him, and he should be that you enjoy talking to.

I'M FLOUNDERING

QUESTION

Lately I feel a lot of darkness in my life. I found myself out of control and falling into all kinds of bad *middos*. Sometimes I get really lazy, sometimes I get really angry, sometimes I become really sad, and sometimes I find myself having inappropriate desires and all kinds of other bad *middos*. I feel like I've lost my inner balance.

I also feel that I'm missing the *yiras shomayim* that I used to have. I don't know if my issue is that I lost my *yiras shomayim* and that I need to regain it, or if my issue is that I've become generally imbalanced and I need to get a balance in my soul. Or maybe my problem is that I'm not talking enough to Hashem about my problems. The wonder is that I think all the time about Hashem and how I can serve Him better. It's just that lately I'm slackening off in keeping *halachah* properly. For example,

I don't push myself to finish all of Shacharis or to go daven with a *minyán*, because I just want to be serene and calm and I don't bother to exert myself to keep to a *halachah*. So lately I am lacking in basic *yiras shomayim*, and I find myself easily losing control of all my *middos*. I feel broken and I daven a lot to Hashem that He should return me to complete *teshuvah*, and I even cry about this sometimes, yet I still find myself in darkness. What does the Rav recommend me to do?

ANSWER

Take a few small points and work on them consistently. The main difficulty you are having is that you are being too excitable and reactive when you get emotional, and that causes you to lose your consistency.

MY REBBI DOESN'T UNDERSTAND ME

QUESTION

I have a Rebbi who knows me personally for several years and he also has keen understanding of people and how the psyche works. But I suspect that we have a very different *shoresh neshamah* (soul root) which doesn't match mine. Now he has begun to give me more detailed guidance. I had a certain problem for many years and now the problem got worse. The question is: I have no idea if I should continue to get guidance from this Rebbi for the problem I have, due to the glaring discrepancy between my *shoresh neshamah* and his. What can I do about this?

ANSWER

Continue to seek his guidance only when it comes to matters that don't contradict your very nature, so that you can be able to gain his Torah perspective on things, but you don't necessarily have to carry out his advice practically.

INCONSISTENCY

QUESTION

Now, about the problem I having. My problem is that I can't keep to a schedule for that long. I don't keep to my learning sessions for that long and neither can I deal with anything for that matter, for that long. I don't get anywhere in anything, and I feel like all of my *ruchniyus* and growth is all just shaky, unstable and temporary which is gone after some time. What does the Rav advise?

ANSWER

Take one small point to work on and try to keep going at it.

IRREGULAR HEARTBEAT FROM REALIZING THE TRUE REALITY

QUESTION

I was reading material of the Rav and in middle of the reading I had the clear awareness of the spiritual world and that it is the true place and the true world, and that the reality in front of us on this world is not the true reality and that we are not living in the true reality. Then my heart was pounding quickly and I had to go to the hospital to check it out, and after some medication my

heart stabilized. But there may have been other factors that may have caused this, because I know that the Rav says that people who remain with Internet won't be by the Geulah and once I asked the Rav about what to tell people who don't want to give up their Internet use and the Rav told me that I can't say anything to people who don't want to hear anything about this. As a result of that I cannot be relaxed at all, because I see my friends going to their eternal destruction *chas v'shalom* and I am helpless to stop it. (1) [Since I had irregular breathing and had to be hospitalized], do I need to do teshuvah? And if yes, how? (2) Can the Rav daven for me? My name is....

ANSWER

Strengthen yourself with the *emunah* (faith) that Hashem is running His world according to His understanding, as it were, and not according to the way we understand. We cannot comprehend logically all of the evil that is found in our world today, and all of the profound, encompassing knowledge that it involves. The possuk says, "*Your faith at nights*". Only from pure and clear *emunah* can we be calmed and feel reliant on *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* that He is doing everything according to His infinite thoughts. *Refuah shelaimah!* (May you have a speedy recovery!)

HEALING A CURVED SPINE

QUESTION

What is the remedy for a curved spine?

ANSWER

(1) Eating a piece of fish in honor of Shabbos. This is because a kosher fish has a spine, while a non-kosher fish has no spine. See *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 83*. (2) Take a straight *lulav* which a blessing was made on during Succos, and keep it next to your bed. (3) Be careful to bend your spine and straighten up during Shemoneh Esrei during the appropriate places.

ANXIETY VS. YIRAS SHOMAYIM

QUESTION

What is the difference between a healthy and constructive kind of fear or concern that one might fall into doing an *aveirah* (sin) versus an unhealthy kind of fear or concern which is not constructive? When does being afraid of not doing enough *teshuvah* become unhealthy? We find terminology in *Tosafos Kiddushin 31a* that a person should be "worried and pained lest he transgress

and sin”, which seems to imply that a person should constantly be worried that he might do an *aveirah* and that it’s not just a small thing but a big concern that envelopes our life constantly.

ANSWER

One needs to weigh out his thoughts carefully: What does Hashem want from me? After a person does that, he will become calm, because he becomes aware that his main fear is that he is afraid of going against Hashem’s will [and he has made himself concerned about doing Hashem’s will]. As it is well-known, the Brisker Rav had great *yiras shomayim*, but as soon as he finished doing what [he knew] Hashem wanted from him, he became very relaxed and serene.

MESSAGES AFTER NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE

QUESTION

A friend of mine was in a car accident and had a “near-death experience” after being declared clinically dead. He awoke and later told over what he saw in the upper world, and he had several points to share. This is what he learned when his soul rose up:

- (1) It was revealed to him there that most of the *aveiros* that are considered more serious are the *aveiros* that involved not guarding one’s eyes and not being careful with one’s *kedusha* (personal holiness). (Is that really true?)
- (2) He was allowed to go back down to the world and remain alive because he did a lot of *chessed*. (Is there such a thing?)
- (3) He saw above that a relative had died because someone cursed him. (Can a person die because of a curse?)

ANSWER

There are many courts above in Heaven, and they are generally known as the “24 heavenly courts”. For every level that the soul rises to up above, there is another heavenly court for that level.

The episode which you are mentioning was all a verdict that was issued from the first level of these 24 Heavenly courts, which the soul encounters upon leaving the world. The verdict that one receives depends on the various *dinim* (judgments) that comprise that level above which his soul has risen to. That is the general view on all such experiences that are reported.

Regarding the question about chessed saving from death, yes, there is such a thing that *chessed* saves from death. The Gemara (*Rosh HaShanah 18a*) says that kindness and truth atones for sins.

And regarding the question about if one can die from a curse, it is certainly possible for a person to die from a curse, but it depends on the one who gave the curse as well as on the one being cursed. (Refer to *Shaarei Teshuvah* in the section of *20 Ikarei Teshuvah*, in the section on “regret”).

DAVENING FOR MY CHILDREN'S NEEDS

QUESTION

1) What are things we should be *davening* for when we *daven* for our children? And, is there an order of preference what to *daven* for when I *daven* for my children, i.e. first to daven that they should have *yiras shomayim* (to be G-d fearing), secondly to *daven* that they should have good *middos*, then to *daven* that they should have *hatzlachah* (success), then to *daven* that they should get a good *zivug*, etc.?

ANSWER

Daven that your children should be *zocheh* to completely reach their unique share on this world. At all times, *daven* for whatever they need right now.

I WANT TO LEARN & TEACH ABOUT THE SOUL

QUESTION

I want to learn about the soul and how to do therapy on people, and I want to write sefarim and books about the human soul and the psyche, so that I can help people. But I don't really know what I want. I am aware that the Rav says to learn about the 4 elements in order to know about the soul, but I want to know what this is and how I can learn about it.

ANSWER

It's not clear why you have a desire for this, though we know that part of it is because you want to help people. But you need to have a calmness and a desire to recognize your own personal soul, and after that you have done inner work with yourself you can think about what to after that in the future.

DOING CHESSED

QUESTION

If a person has an affinity for *chessed*, what kind of *chessed* should he be involved with, and how much should he be involved with doing *chessed*?

ANSWER

- (1) Generally a person should be aware that often there is certain mistaken notion about *chessed* is to do “big things”, like creating/organizing a very big organization, whether it is communal, national, or international. But we need to know that there are not a small amount of cases, being involved with these great big organizations actually has a costly price on the cleanliness of a person’s *ruchniyus* – enough said. And it comes along with many other issues as well.
- (2) Therefore if one really desires to do *chessed*, he first needs to figure out what he is drawn towards. He should know: “What am I good at? Where does my uniqueness lay? One should figure out what his general uniqueness in, and then he should figure out if his uniqueness lays in *chessed* in particular. He should daven to Hashem to give him what his appropriate portion in *chessed* is. For just as a person has a special part in Torah, so does a person have a special part in *chessed*. If a person didn’t purify himself enough and he isn’t *zocheh*, he becomes involved in *chessed* even though it isn’t really for him to do.
- (3) But in any case, until a person figures out what his personal portion in *chessed* is, it would be proper that one should do *chessed* only when it is requested of him to do *chessed*, and he should then do it discreetly and with devotion to what he is doing. Besides for this, to the extent of one’s *emunah* one should turn to others to offer his help, but it would be better to wait, amidst *tefillah* and *emunah* that Hashem will present him the portion in *chessed* that’s appropriate for him.
- (4) One should always clarify what his motivation in doing *chessed* is. Is it coming from a desire to be good to others? From a love for another person? From loving Hashem? From wanting to do the will of Hashem? All of those are pure motivations, but there can also be ulterior motivations, such as the desire to be honored, finding self-fulfillment and personal satisfaction, being able to be in charge or in control, or a desire to fill an empty void in himself, either because he is bored or because he feels inwardly empty.
- (5) One always needs a balance between *chessed* and learning Torah. One has to be immersed in learning, and if he wants to do *chessed* he can add on doing *chessed*, but he has to mainly be immersed in learning. Never should his *chessed* cause him to be taken away from being immersed in

his learning. One needs the inward balance between the three main pillars of our *avodah*, which are Torah, *tefillah*, and *chesed*.

PURPOSE OF THE DA ES SERIES

QUESTION

In the sefarim of the Rav which explain the soul from the perspective of pnimiyus haTorah (such as Getting Ready For Your Redemption, Reaching Your Essence, Torah Way To Enlightenment, Getting To Know Your Self, etc.), is this more important than learning Kaballah, Chassidus, Gemara, Halachah? Is it not as important? Or is it at least just as important? Will learning these sefarim bring me closer to Hashem than the above?

ANSWER

These [*DaEs*] sefarim are the keys to understand the ways of our sages throughout the generations in a way that is clear and organized.

REWARD FOR LEARNING THE DA-ES SEFARIM

QUESTION

I love learning the “Da Es” sefarim of the Rav, they are such enjoyable sefarim. If a person learns these “Da Es” sefarim will he get the same s’char (reward) as regular Torah learning?

ANSWER

If he learns it for the sake of Torah, then yes!

THE BILVAVIPEDIA SERIES

QUESTION

What is the style of the “Bilvavi-Pedia” series [on Machshavah and Avodas Hashem]? Which part of *PaRDe”S* (*Pshat, Remez, Drush, Sod*) in the Torah is this series coming to explain?

ANSWER

It combines all parts of *PaRDe”S* together.

BEYOND THE EIN SOF

QUESTION

What does it mean that *hilyuli* (ether) is the secret of the undifferentiated *havayah* (reality or existence), which seems to imply that *hiyuli* is the spiritual reality of the Creator? How can this be, if *hiyuli* is the void (*chalal*) that was left over from the infinite light (*ohr EinSof*), and the Creator left a ray of infinite light (the *kav*) that remained even after the void?

ANSWER

The “true *Havayah*” of Hashem is above everything!!! It is above even His infinite light (*ohr EinSof*), as the *Leshem* explains. Getting subtler, His “true” *Havayah* is above even His “hidden” *Havayah*, for His “true” *Havayah* is above any concept of being hidden or revealed. Understand this well.

IS THE RAV AVAILABLE TO SPEAK

QUESTION

I lost my wife recently. Can the Rav please give a *shiur* in my house in honor of my dearly departed wife, *l'iluy nishmas* her? There will be a widely attended audience who are eager to hear the Rav speak. It would be a huge benefit to me personally and to many other people.

ANSWER

For a long time already I have become very busy between learning, writing, delivering the weekly *shiurim*, and writing responses to all the questions that come in. I am being very careful not to add on anything, so that I should not lose the proper balance. I am hoping you will understand.

May it be the will of Hashem that you should know of no more pain.

UNDERSTANDING THE RAV'S PATH IN AVODAS HASHEM COMPIATION OF SEVERAL Q&A

QUESTION I want to understand a little more about who the Rav is. Which “crowd” does the Rav belong to? Who is the Rav [or guiding figure] of the Rav? What “type” is the Rav? I am asking this because when I learn the Rav's sefarim with others many times they will ask these kinds of questions.

ANSWER Unfortunately I cannot really answer your question. Rav Yitzchok Hutner said (in the biography called *Sefer HaZikaron L'Pachad Yitzchok*) that it is difficult for him to talk about himself. I suffer from the same thing. It is very difficult for me to write about myself, and in fact, even just writing that alone is difficult and uncomfortable for me. And the very question of “what kind of crowd do I belong to” is something that I am totally uncomfortable with. If you want to understand what “type” I am, you can discern this from my sefarim and especially from the q&a (printed in *sefer Sha'al Libi*) regarding the material written in my sefarim.

QUESTION How did the Rav reach so much clarity in *avodas Hashem*, the complexity of the soul, and the understanding of *pnimiyus haTorah*? How was the Rav so successful in *avodas Hashem*, which for most people is so difficult and filled with failure and lack of clarity (even to those who seek truth)? How did the Rav go through so many sefarim without becoming confused? How did the Rav grow so much and become so pure, whereas the rest of us are still groping in the dark and constantly falling into *aveiros*, bad *middos*, and major mistakes in how we think and act? Did the Rav ever go through a lot of darkness and confusion in life in order to get there....?

ANSWER You have asked a very difficult question! If only I would be *zocheh* to all that you have described. Out of *hakaros hatov* to you I will answer you a little, although it is against my nature [to talk about myself].

You ask if I have went through difficult experiences in my life, and the answer is: Yes.

You asked if I can go more into detail about it, and the answer is as follows. My main difficulty started from childhood, when I couldn't stand *sheker* (falsity). Because of this, I suffered a lot in my soul [emotionally], and I also suffered from just being on this world, which is called the “world of falsity”, by having to be involved with people where I was exposed to so much falsity from others. And this was tremendous suffering for me!

In addition, in my teenage years when I became more mature, I suffered when I began to recognize and feel that there is an iron wall that separated between me and the internal light, the light of the *neshamah*, and the Infinite Light of Hashem.

Besides this, I suffered greatly from the “empty space” in the soul which makes a person feel hollow inside, as it says in the verse “*And also the soul is not filled*”. This is the greatest suffering that I recognize.

In addition to this, my heightened sensitivity also caused me to suffer a lot, because “Increase of knowledge is an increase of pain.”

After I got married, now more than 20 years ago, I suffered from a lot of humiliation [from others] as a result of giving *shiurim* and producing *sefarim* and trying to benefit the public [which caused others to react strongly to me and be opposed to me], and all that this entailed, which was a lot.

Besides for this, though, my main suffering is due to the contradicting aspects in my soul, which need to be balanced. And as a result of these imbalances, I also suffer from physical aches.

QUESTION 1) Who is the “Bilvavi” sefer especially catering to? 2) What type of audience did the Rav deliver the classes to upon which the sefer is based on? It is targeting kolel people or working people? 3) Also, what is unique about this sefer which isn’t included in *sefer Mesillas Yeshtarim*?

ANSWER 1) It is a sefer that is speaking to the simple, earnest part of every Jew’s soul. It is meant to fulfill the words of the prophet Chavakuk who said that the entire Torah can be summed up in one point: “*A righteous person lives by his emunah (faith in G-d).*” 2) It is meant for all of Klal Yisrael to learn and it is not targeting any specific group or community of Jews. 3) *Sefer Mesillas Yeshtarim* is based on ten steps of growth that are rooted in the Ten Expressions which Hashem created the world with, which span the entire gamut of the soul. The *sefer Bilvavi*, in contrast to this, is addressing the simple, earnest point of a Jew’s soul.

QUESTION The Rav’s sefarim are based on teachings primarily found in both Bresslev and Chabad, is this the intention of the Rav’s approach in the “Bilvavi” sefarim to integrate those two approaches together, and is such an approach found in any other sefarim?

ANSWER The approach [of the “Bilvavi” sefarim] is to synthesize every way of *avodas Hashem* together. It is based on the illumination found in the End of Days in which everything is coming together, which mimics the concept of Dan, who is found at the “end” of the camp and whose role is to “gather together all of the camps”. Even more so, the intention [of the approach in the Bilvavi sefarim] is to reveal the intrinsic, unchanging essence (*etzem*), which is the power of the tribe of Yehudah, and to integrate together Dan (gathering together all the ways of serving Hashem) and Yehudah (revealing the unchanging reality of Hashem), because that was the idea of the Mishkan (Tabernacle), which was made through Yehudah and Dan.

QUESTION How is the Rav able to take the “middle path” between all of the many different approaches in *avodas Hashem* and integrate them all together? How are we able to do this? How is the Rav able to combine together the Litvish and Chassidic approaches together (and also different Chassidic approaches together), if each path is based on a certain approach that totally does not agree with the other approach? How can a person fuse together different approaches in his avodas Hashem when each approach was diametrically opposed to the other? How can a person “take from everyone”, isn’t this a problem of being *mehapech tzinoros*, mixing different channels of Heaven that oppose and contradict each other? For example, if the Gra would be around today, would he approve of a *Litvish* kolel avreich applying a concept of the Baal Shem Tov or Baal HaTanya in his *avodas Hashem*...?

ANSWER I already asked my Rebbi, the Rosh Yeshiva Rav Gershon Edelstein, earlier than 15 years ago about this, especially after I received sharp critique from others because I was mostly using a lot of Chassidic approaches in the shiurim I gave. He answered me that I had already received this way of *avodah* from the approach of Rav Dessler, who taught in the yeshivah I learned in. You can see very well in sefer *Michtav M’Eliyahu* of Rav Dessler that he often combines together the approaches of *mussar* and *Chassidus*. Rav Edelstein told me to take the same approach and to continue teaching in that way. If we analyze this from a deeper perspective, it is really because the End of Days enables a spiritual light where everything becomes integrated together, which enables an approach that encompasses together every approach in *avodas Hashem*. It is the secret of unifying all of the Torah together, and also the secret of unifying all of *Klal Yisrael*.

QUESTION Why isn’t this going against each person’s *mesorah* in *avodas Hashem* that each person has based on his yeshiva or community that he’s part of?

ANSWER You find, for example, that today a person can be “generally Chassidic” without identifying himself with a particular *Chassidus*, and there can be many different external reasons for this, but the deeper reason is because the light of the End of Days is shining, in which everything can be integrated together. That is why Rav Dessler taught *mussar* and *chassidus* together in the yeshiva of Ponovezh which he taught in. Additionally, it was from the approach of Rav Hutner [taught to me by Rav Yonasan David shlit”a] that I first received the ability of deep Torah thought, and it was Rav Hutner who said about himself “To the chassidim, I am too Chassidish, and to the Litvish, I am too Chassidish....”

QUESTION What is the source for the Rav’s entire approach in *avodas Hashem*? Which *sefarim* is the Rav mainly coming from? Of the 4 elements (earth, water, wind, fire), what is the Rav’s primary element? (Based on my understanding of the 4 elements which I’ve learned from the Rav, it seems to me that the Rav’s approach contains a lot of fire (constant spiritual growth that demands a person to go higher and higher towards Hashem), a lot of wind (fusion of different views together), and a lot of earth (organization and structure, step after step), and I’m not sure which of these elements is the root of the Rav’s path in *avodas Hashem*. (It doesn’t seem to me that “water” can be the primary element of the Rav’s path). Also, someone pointed out to me that he doesn’t understand how the Rav is able to combine so many different approaches of all of the *sefarim hakedoshim* and synthesize them together. If each *sefer* is coming from a different *kav* of *avodah* (spiritual sphere that creates a certain corresponding form of serving Hashem) which is in contradiction with a different *kav* of *avodah*, how is the Rav able to fuse all of these approaches together? How can a Litvish approach be fused with the Chassidic approach, and how can one Chassidic approach work together with a different Chassidic approach that contradicts it? How is the Rav’s approach not in contradiction with our *mesorah* (tradition) and how is it all aligned with our *mesorah*? I think that if more people would know the root of the Rav’s path in *avodas Hashem* and the main “element” which the Rav’s path corresponds to, they would be able to gain a lot more from the Rav’s approach.

ANSWER The main “elements” [in the “Bilvavi” approach] are as follows: The element of earth is the basis (*kli*) of the approach, and the spiritual illumination (*ohr*) of it manifests as “fire-of-wind.”

The path [which the “Bilvavi” approach] stresses is “*kelalut hakol*”, inclusivity of everything [or comprehensiveness]. In order to counter the ruination caused by the “Erev Rav”, the evil spiritual forces which cause mixture and confusion in everything, we need an approach that unifies together everything. Each person, according to his own ability, is able to unify and bring everything together. But, if a person acts above his level and beyond his capabilities when he tries to do this, he becomes mixed up and confused.

QUESTION The Rav recently clarified that his approach in *avodas Hashem* is based on the element of “earth” which is expressed in “fire-of-wind”. Does this mean that the Rav’s approach is only for those who have a strong element of earth or those who have a strong amount of wind-of-fire?

ANSWER Those who are mainly living their lives *shelo lishmah* (not for the sake of Heaven) are more interested in pleasure, and they will not connect that much to the [Bilvavi] approach.

QUESTION How can it be that the Rav's approach is based on the element of "earth" but it's actually expressed in a way that's "fire-of-wind"? Did the Rav mean that his approach is earth-of-fire-of-wind?

ANSWER [The revelations that come from the spiritual dimension called] *Atik* corresponds to the element of "earth" [in the esoteric]. When *Atik* [esoteric "earth"] descends into the lower realms, it is called *Keser*, which corresponds to the esoteric element of "wind". Getting more specific [*Keser* is comprised of two levels – the higher level *Keser* is called *Atik* and the lower level *Keser* is called *Arikkh*], the world of *Arikkh* corresponds to the "right", symbolizing kindness, the element of water, whereas the world of *Atik* corresponds to the "left", symbolizing restraint, the element of fire.

QUESTION The Rav has explained that his approach mainly uses the elements of earth, fire and wind. What is the main element in the Rav's approach? Is it earth or is it fire-of-wind? Is the element of "earth" the main part of the Rav's approach, since it is the basis of the Rav's approach, or is the main part of the Rav's approach the "fire-of-wind", which is the outcome of the basis for the Rav's approach?

ANSWER Same answer as above. The basis of the approach is to apply the power of organization and structure [the element of earth]. In more inner terms, the basis of the approach is coming from the essence of *havayah* [the inner point of reality]. From the viewpoint of the essence of *havayah*, the basis that is organization and structure completely fills everything. From the viewpoint of the lower basis, the movement of fire-of-wind is expressed in a way of organization and structure.

QUESTION I connect very much with the Rav. I very much want to learn all the Rav's Torah words, but it is difficult for me, because I haven't yet become clear about my soul. How can I know if I have the same *shoresh haneshamah* (soul root) as the Rav's?

ANSWER You have parts of a similar "soul root" [to mine], but we do not share the same exact soul root. You should take [from the *shiurim* and *sefarim*] any parts [of my soul] that are compatible with yours.

QUESTION How can a person know if his *rebbe* is the right one for his *shoresh haneshamah* (personal soul root)? How can a person figure out the *shoresh neshamah* of his *rebbe*?

ANSWER A person can know the *shoresh neshamah* of his *rebbe* by learning the *Divrei Torah* of his *rebbe* - but only if he already has *daas*, if he can think logically and sensibly).

QUESTION I have a general question about the entire deep, inner and truthful approach of the Rav, and I hear this question from other people as well, who sometimes struggle with the Rav says and they have a hard time accepting what the Rav is saying. Could it be that the Rav's approach only works for people in Eretz Yisrael, and not for Americans? Because after all, the Rav did grow up in Eretz Yisrael, where people there are generally made of 'tougher skin', and where the "Torah of truth" is more found, so perhaps we can assume that the Israeli audience can more easily handle the truthful approach of the Rav, whereas Americans have a harder time with the truthful approach of the Rav. Also, the Rav is speaking from a very truthful place in the soul, and the Rav often demands a lot of intense deep spiritual growth from people. Maybe Americans just can't handle this? Because we in America grow up surrounded with *tumah* and mixed with the goyim, and we're much more affected by secular culture than our Israeli counterparts. And in America, the more popular approach that works for people here is to focus on the positive, to feel good about ourselves, to constantly get *chizuk*. Though many people feel that the Rav is speaking the truth, a lot of people in America find the Rav to be too much for them, and they have a hard time accepting what the Rav says. So, basically my question is: When the Rav speaks, is the Rav mainly addressing an Israeli audience, who can better handle what the Rav is saying, as opposed to Americans, who can't really handle as much what the Rav says? And in particular, is the Rav's approach mainly for those who are *bnei aliyah*, who are far and few between? Of course, any person on any level can gain from the Rav's psychological insights about the human soul, but I'm asking about the very truthful and inner approach of *avodas Hashem* which the Rav talks about. Can this approach also apply for those in America...? *Yasher Koach* to the Rav for all of the holiness and purity which the Rav bestows us with.

ANSWER Even in Eretz Yisrael, most people are not searching for this [truthful] approach. There is never any one way of *avodas Hashem* that works for everyone, and this way [the "Bilvavi" *derashos* and *sefarim*] is only one of the ways of *avodas Hashem*. Each person needs to find the way that is suitable for him.

Often, people who live in *chutz l'aretz* are not looking for a “way” of *avodas Hashem*, and they are instead looking for a ‘compromise’ – they are looking for a way to have the best of both This World and the Next World at once. But there is no such way.

The way of *avodas Hashem* which we [I] emphasize is not in order to “demand more growth” from people. It is just to clarify and become precise about what we face, and that, in and of itself, can demand something from us....

QUESTION Sometimes people can't handle *emes* (truth) and when they are told something that is *emes*, they say, “I don't want to hear *mussar* right now, I need *chizuk*. Don't tell me things that depress me. Tell me something that makes me feel good about myself.” The Rav's approach is very truthful and it seems that not everyone can handle what the Rav says. Is this because a lot of people aren't really meant to be so truthful? Or is it because many people are on a low *madreigah* and they don't want to grow, or is it because some people by their very nature can't handle being so truthful and they need a different approach?

ANSWER Everyone needs *emes* (truth), but every person needs to work with the truth that he can handle on his current *madreigah* (level). If we tell a person something that's *emes* but it's above his level right now, it's actually not the *emes* for him. This is because *emes* includes the beginning, middle, and end (*rosh, toch, sof*) of a matter [the *emes* includes the entire picture], and if a person can't handle something that's *emes*, it means that the particular *emes* for him which he can't handle is in the category of something that has no “end” to it, making it *Ein Sof* (endless) for him - which he is not able to comprehend right now.

That is one reason why people can't always handle the truth, besides for 2 other reasons that are more deeply rooted, which may be the cause also: (1) There are different *shorshei neshamos* (soul roots), with some people being rooted in the *kav yemin* which makes them lean towards *chessed*], others rooted in the *kav s'mol* [which makes them learn towards *gevurah* and *din*, strength and judgment], and others rooted in the *kav emtza* [“middle line”, which naturally can fuse both aspects together]. (2) There is also a general difficulty that people have, when it comes to dealing with the truth.

QUESTION I have been listening to the Rav and learning the sefarim for over 6 years and I understand very well what the Rav says. (I don't think I've reached my Yechidah yet.) I've reached the conclusion that although the Rav's Divrei Torah goes incredibly deep and while it's clear that

the Rav is trying to help Klal Yisrael, I still think that the Rav's teachings are only applicable to the Rav's level, and that anyone who tries to "imitate" the Rav is being like Haran who imitated Avraham by jumping into the fire. The Rav's Torah has an ongoing theme of a lot of harsh, judging "Gevuros" and "Tzimtzum" - to close yourself off in an inner world and live in one's own private inner silence. For most people to do this, this is like asking them to die – it's not an elixir of life that make them more alive, it is basically a poison that would kill them off. From what I understand, the Rav's Divrei Torah focuses on all the darkness and concealment of G-dliness that there is on our world, how the generation is so far from feeling Hashem and how bad the world has become. With all due respect to the honor of the Rav, this doesn't sound anything like what Mashiach ben Dovid will reveal, the light that will come to the world, the G-dliness that will be revealed in the world. Will Mashiach ben Dovid ask everyone to close themselves off in an inner silence and be cut off from the world? That sounds more like the avodah of Mashiach ben Yosef (based on what I understand from the sefarim about the roles of the two different Mashiachs), and yes, Mashiach ben Yosef is first needed in order for Mashiach ben Dovid to do his avodah, but the goal and purpose is the avodah of Mashiach ben Dovid, who will revive the world and bring light into the world. but the Rav's Divrei Torah makes us focus on darkness and on how G-dliness is so concealed from the world. It's all about he'elam (concealment, darkness) and not giluy (revelation, light). It doesn't make us want to jump up and dance and sing and be happy on this world. Someone who is really kadosh (holy) is someone who knows how to come down to the level of everyone on this world and help them in the place where they are, to show chessed and rachamim on them and shine light on them. We can see that very well in the teachings of Rav Kook, who teaches how to take the quiet d'veykus of the inner and concealed dimension and to make it become revealed to all, to light up life on this world, to live in what that reality truly is, and not to just live in our hopes and fantasies for a better world. I very much respect the Rav and I hope I've been understood. Have a gmar chasimah tova.

ANSWER:

Thank you. May you rise and succeed! Everything you are saying here is true and correct after the Erev Rav will be cut off, and not before that. Before the Erev Rav is destroyed, we are currently in the peak of the 50th gate of tumah which is in control, something which wasn't around 1 or 2 generations ago. And that results in a major difference, which necessitates a change of direction [on our avodah in this generation].



Questions in all spheres of life in general
and the *nefesh* in particular

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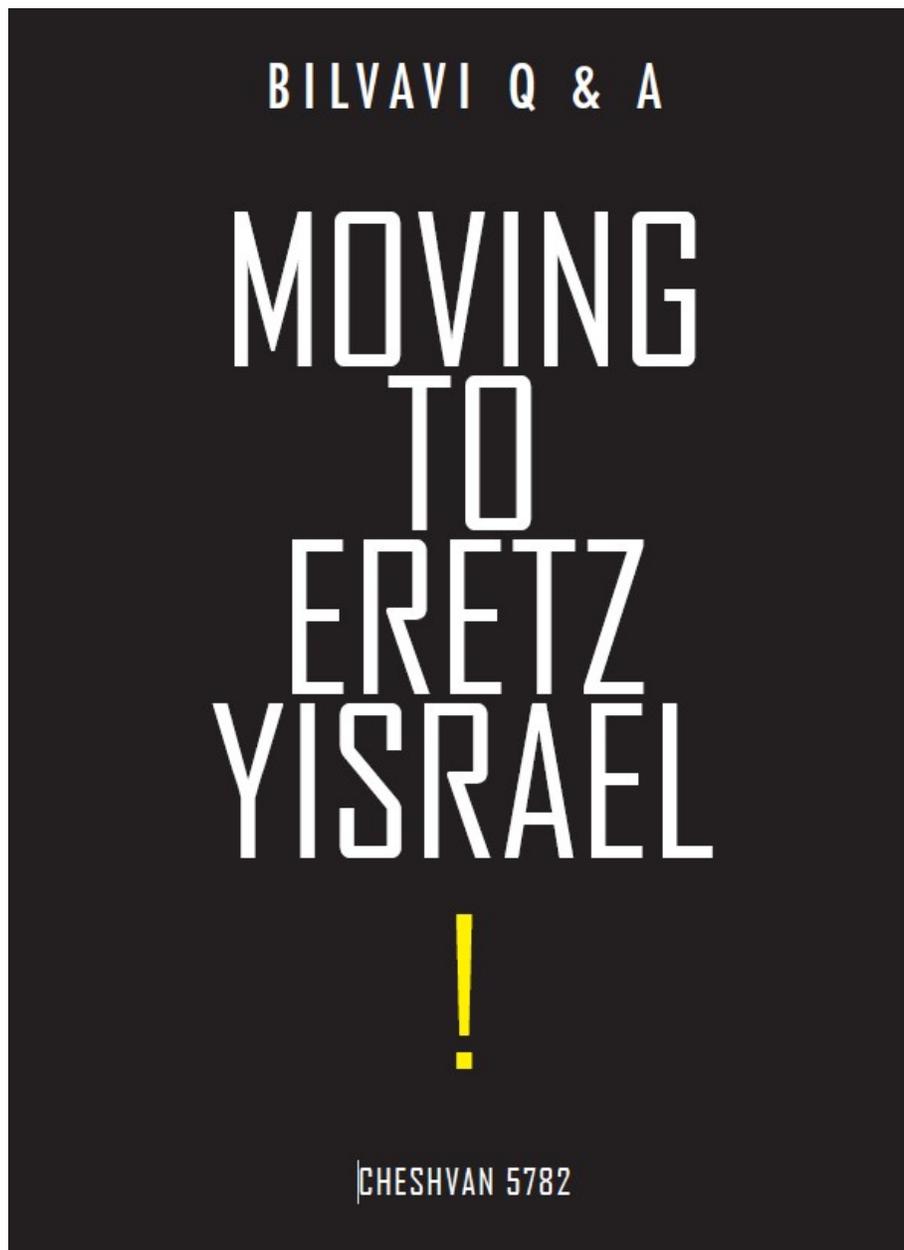
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