

BILVAVI

**MY
HEART
ASKS**

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

PARSHAS CHAYEI SARA 5782

ISSUE 213

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SEARCHING FOR A RAV

I had asked the Rav shlit”a the following question: If one’s personal Rav tells him to do something and he feels in his heart that this is the wrong thing, is he obligated to listen to his Rav in spite of what he feels? Do we apply the rule of “Even if they tell you your left is your right, your right is your left”? The Rav shlit”a responded that one needs to find a Rav whom he recognizes as the closest to the truth. My question now is: What indeed is the way to find a personal Rav for oneself?

ANSWER

Your search for a Rav has to come after first clarifying what you are really looking for, and for that you need self-recognition, to know yourself well, so that you can know how to search for a Rav who will be suitable to your personal soul. If you are lacking in self-recognition, it will be too difficult to search for a proper Rav for yourself. You also need to daven to Hashem, with tears, that you should find your true Rav.

IDEAL SEDER HAYOM OF LEARNING

I am learning all day. I have one sefer for Gemara, another seder for halachah, and another sefer of learning Chumash with *mefarshim*. But I want to know: What is the ideal seder hayom of learning that a person should have?

ANSWER

It is proper to have 2 sedarim a day to learn sugyos in Shas and halachah, and make an additional seder

Of course, it is advisable to find someone who knows you personally and can advise you according to the nature of your being. However, when he is not yet found, one should pray before Hashem, and if possible, weep over it, and make decisions with great discretion.

DAVENING ABOUT WICKED PEOPLE

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.

HAMAN, HITLER & ARMELOS

1) Will Armelos be a physical person or he is a spiritual concept? If he will be a physical person can we know who he is? Can he be someone who is a great leader? Will he know that he is Armelos? Is he a soul reincarnation of Bilaam? Can he do *teshuvah* and save himself from being destroyed?

ANSWER

Armelos is a spiritual [and evil] power who may very well become clothed in a certain person or in another person. He won't be able to do complete *teshuvah*, because by his very concept, he is evil.

QUESTION

2) Was there a possibility for Hitler, may his name be blotted out, to have free will? Did he have the option of doing *teshuvah*? And what about Haman – was it possible for him to have free will and also do *teshuvah*?

ANSWER

He had partial free will, and regarding that level of free will he had, he was able to do *teshuvah*. But he is from Amalek, who cannot do complete *teshuvah*. And the same was true about Haman.

ANXIETY VS. YIRAS SHOMAYIM

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.

REWARD FOR LEARNING THE DA-ES SEFARIM

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!

DAVENING FOR MY CHILDREN’S NEEDS

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.

HOW DO WE KNOW IF SOMEONE IS A TZADDIK?

How can we know if someone is a *tzaddik*? Are there any guidelines of the Torah about this? Are there any exact definitions given? We all know that the prince of Torah, Rav Chaim Kanievsky shlit”a is holy of holies and the Baba Sali zt”l was a holy and great *tzaddik*, but how do we know in the first place that we can rely on the *tzaddikim*? Are there certain levels that a person has to reach in order to be above and revered by the nation?

ANSWER

There are many levels, and there are also many different types, of *tzaddikim*. But generally, a *tzaddik* is someone who is greatly *davuk* (connected) in Hashem and to the Torah, and he is connected to his *shoresh neshamah*, and he has purified his physical desires, his deeds, and his *middos*.

HOW TO DEAL WITH LITVISH MISNAGDIM

I know of brilliant, exceptional [Litvishe] Talmidei Chachomim who invalidate Chassidim and say that the Chassidim are wrong, etc. How should we view this – is it a problem of *katnus* (immaturity) or is it because he is staunchly protecting the *mesorah* of the *Gra* who fought Chassidus, and because this is his way of *avodas Hashem*?

ANSWER

In some cases it comes from *katnus*, and in other cases it comes from protecting the [Litvishe] *mesorah*.

QUESTION

If this comes from immaturity, is there a way to open the other's heart so that he shouldn't have such a closed perspective, or should this be avoided since usually this type of person isn't open and doesn't want to change his way at all and isn't interested in a new perspective?

ANSWER

Usually it is better to avoid such conversations.

2 DIFFERENT WAYS OF D'VEYKUS

What was the difference between what the Baal Shem Tov revealed with the approach of Reb Chatzkel Levenshtein zt"l, who both taught about having real palpable emunah (faith) in Hashem?

ANSWER

R' Chatzkel Levenshtein's path was to contemplate viscerally the exodus from Egypt, both intellectually and using the imagination, and he would also vividly imagine Gehinnom. The Baal Shem Tov however preferred to work with the neshamah directly, and he made less use of the intellectual abilities.

BRISKER AVODAS HASHEM

What unique about the path of "Brisk" in *avodas Hashem*? The Rav gave a response [#7440] on this that the Brisker path emphasizes "total, absolute subservience to doing the will of Hashem", but I don't understand, doesn't every way of *avodas Hashem* involve total subservience to Hashem? Is it only Brisk that is totally subordinate to the *ratzon Hashem*??

ANSWER

The Brisker path in *avodas Hashem* is to have total subservience to doing the will of Hashem specifically through keeping to the exact, defining parameters of the *din* (*halachah*), as opposed to an abstract emotional desire to do Hashem's will regardless of what the *din* is.

COMPREHENSIVE AVODAS HASHEM

Is there a source that a person can, and should be, a combination of many different approaches in avodas Hashem, and that it's not enough for a person to merely be a product of one particular path in *avodas Hashem* that he was taught?

ANSWER

[In the End of Days, there is the revelation of] Don, who “gathers together all the camps”, as well as Yehudah, who is the root of all of them.

MAKING SHABBOS MEANINGFUL

I find that, unlike the weekday, it is on Shabbos when I get into bad moods and I am thinking thoughts that aren't good, and I have explosions of babyish behavior and anger. This is very difficult both for me and my family. I have davened much about this and I have tried to deal with this situation. What can be the reason(s) for this and what can I do to fix this issue?

ANSWER

Sometimes there can be external reasons for this. It is because a person is found with his family on Shabbos and he is not as involved in his orderly, organized inner world and Torah learning that he may have during the week. Sometimes it can also be because “Whoever is greater than his friend, his evil inclination is stronger.” This is true both about the soul and time. And sometimes it is because a person wants to grow higher and learn more Torah on Shabbos, and when that aspiration doesn't happen, a person becomes sadder, whether consciously or subconsciously. It is worthwhile to organize a routine for Shabbos, and also to learn about what Shabbos is so that you become more connected to Shabbos. For example, learn *sefer Shabbos Malkesa* or any *sefer* on the topic of Shabbos that you have an interest in. Also, view Shabbos as the time of *raza d'echad*, the time when we are given the ability to reveal the secret of oneness – to be “one” with the family, to show love, kindness and joy with them.

BITACHON & GETTING ANYTHING

Can a person have *bitachon* and get exactly what he wants? If yes, is this when a person connects to “*Sovev kol olmin*” (Hashem’s infinite light that surrounds all worlds)? Does *bitachon* bring a person to be calm and serene in every situation? And if yes, is this when a person connects to the *kav* (ray of infinite light) which is after the *tzimtzum* (after the infinite light became contracted)?

ANSWER

Very well-said!!! When a person connects to the light of *Sovev*, and even more so to the *ohr EinSof* itself, he can draw forth any salvation that he has *bitachon* in, because everything is infinite there, and therefore when one connects to the dimension of the infinite, the possibilities are endless, because every possibility is contained there. In contrast, when one connects to the *kav* which is after the *tzimtzum*, he is still at the level of Creation, in which there was a *tzimtzum*. But when connects to the light of *Sovev*, of this it said “*And one who trusts in Hashem, the kindness of Hashem will surround him.*”

UNDERSTANDING OUR CURRENT WORLD

I want to understand the reality that the world is in today. I understand that the Q&A of the Rav on the subject of the Internet is one of the ways by which we can get an understanding of the current reality we are in, but are there any other ways besides for this, which can give me an understanding of the current time period we are living in?

ANSWER

It is more important that you should mainly be involved with becoming connected to the 50 TH Gate of Holiness (the *shaar HaNun d'kedushah*) and you should not think that much about the lowliness of the generation today which is found in the 50th of the 50th level of *tumah*.

ONGOING WAR OF GOG & MAGOG

According to the words of the Rav that we are currently in the midst of the war of Gog and Magog, is this only in Eretz Yisrael, or is it referring to a spiritual war that is taking place inside us now?

ANSWER

It doesn't necessarily have to be [either one]. Either is a possibility.

QUESTIONS ABOUT MASHIACH

Is it true that Mashiach is trying to enter for the third time already? How can we enable that more people will be zocheh to the Geulah? How do we know who Mashiach is (because I heard a certain tzaddik say that any person can reveal Mashiach using his own abilities)?

ANSWER

It would be more worthwhile for you to be involved with purely serving Hashem on an inner level, and to remove your mind from thinking about all of these confusing matters. Figure out where you should mainly be spending time on and where to focus your energies on, and keep your focus there, and you can also benefit the public.

GIVING A BERACHAH

When a person gives a berachah (blessing) to another, why does it have a good effect on the other?

ANSWER

R' Chaim Volozhiner explained on the verse "Yaakov is the rope of his inheritance", that the Jewish people are like a rope, that if you pull it below, it gets pulled above, and the same vice versa. When a Jew blesses another Jew, he is awakening the upper "mouth", the Peh (mouth) of the Tzelem Elokim which is above. It also awakens the power of blessing at its

root. This is not on the level of tefillah, it is rather on the level of chessed, and as Chazal say, “Know what is above you” – it all comes from you, all that happens above is done by us down below. The actions of every Jew has effects above. And certainly when a Jew blesses another Jew with love, it awakens the power of love, the power of oneness (love/ahavah is one/echad), and this awakens the light of the Shechinah, “He and His Name are one.”

OLDER SINGLE STARTING TO DESPAIR

I have a difficult time trusting and believing that Hashem wants to give me only what’s best for me. I want to get married and build a Torah home. I see so many older singles and that causes me to lose emunah: If they’re not getting married, why should I think that Hashem will help me get married? I have difficulty believing that Hashem loves me and wants me to have a good life. Intellectually I understand that Hashem is good and He is good to everyone, but deep in me I don’t feel this and I don’t believe in it. I tried getting used to always saying “Thank you” to Hashem and seeing the good in my life, but I still keep getting recurring thoughts that “I am still single. I am not married...”

ANSWER

You need to review the fundamentals of emunah and make it practical. Refer to sefer *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*, parts 1-2. Hashem will give you whatever is good for you personally, only He knows what’s truly and good for you exactly. You want to understand Hashem, but that is impossible. Instead, you just need to believe with emunah that He’s doing what’s good for you.

Some of those who don’t get married have chosen to do so with their own *bechirah* – they are searching for a shidduch that is not really for them, and that is why they are not finding!

FRUSTRATION IN FINDING A SHIDDUCH

Why did Hashem give me such a deep desire to get married so I can build a home of Torah and kedushah, and I am still not married? What was the reason of giving me this desire when it hasn’t yet been fulfilled?

ANSWER

All suffering cleanses our soul. The frustration is also so that you can gain the maturity to be able to make a compromise and give in to a *shidduch* that isn't exactly what you had in mind, so that you can work on your *middos* and on your *emunah*.

ONE-BRAIN THERAPY

What is the Rav's view on "One-Brain" therapy?

ANSWER

There is a dispute between the wise sages of our generation if this kind of therapy may be used. I am not familiar with it because I didn't study about it, so I don't know.

HEALTH AWARENESS

Does a person need to stay away from fattening foods and from sugary foods? Or does this not damage a person's health because "Hashem guards the ignorant?"

ANSWER

Anything that does clearly recognizable damage on a person's health should be avoided in a sensible manner, until one arrives at the balanced "middle way" [between the two extremes of overindulgence versus staying away totally].

I DON'T UNDERSTAND KABALLAH

If I tried learning Kaballah but I don't understand it, does this mean it's not meant for me to learn? Or do I need to try harder at understanding it?

ANSWER

For now, become more purified [by purifying your deeds and motivations] and after that try again to understand it.

SIMCHAH & SMILING

Does it make sense to say that our avodah is not to “be” b’simchah (happy) but to “work” on simchah (to strive to be happier)? And therefore if we didn’t reach simchah even after we tried to reach it, it doesn’t mean that we have a problem or that our avodas Hashem is sorely lacking?

ANSWER When it comes to anything a person’s avodah is to “work” on it, not to actively try to reach it, because Chazal said “The task is not upon you to complete.” Reaching any level is always a gift from Hashem, as the Mesillas Yesharim says regarding *kedushah*, that “the beginning of it is work and the end of is a gift”. It is within our hands to partially reach any level, but in order to completely reach any level we need to receive it as a gift from Hashem, for that is the specific *kedushah* that applies to every single level.

QUESTION 2) *Is it right when people say “Be more b’simchah” or “Smile!” or “Dance more lebedig (more excitedly)!” If a person doesn’t easily become in a happy mood does he need to awaken himself to simchah or is this called acting above his level, which is detrimental and jolting to him? If a person is not a “lebedig” kind of person, is he supposed for be forcing himself to dance very excitedly at a chasunah when other people tell him that he should ‘get more into it’ and dance with a lot of energy?*

ANSWER A person always has to act according to his level, and when he needs to he can act a bit above his level, because there is always *ohr makif* (surrounding light) which he is able to reach a bit above his current level. He needs to go back and forth between his current level and striving for a bit above his current level (which is within his reach). A person’s main level is the level that he is able to return to after he has reached above his current level. That is the growth that he has so far acquired. He can also rise a bit higher than his current level, and he should do that when he feels an internal awakening to go higher, or even if he

has an external need to do so. But a person cannot aim for anything that's beyond his current reach. (For every rule there can always exceptions.)

QUESTION 3) *Is it true that the purpose of life is to serve Hashem b'simchah (joyously)? Is learning with simchah and dancing at a chasunah with simchah so important? It actually feels ego-focused, because it's about "Me" being happy, and it seems that the purpose of life is to do Hashem's will whether I am happy or not. So what is the big emphasis on simchah?*

ANSWER Complete *simchah* is when I am happy that the ratzon Hashem has been fulfilled, whether it was through me or through someone else. In this way, *simchah* doesn't come from *negios* (self-serving motivations), it's not about "Me". Such *simchah* can be called the purpose of life, because it shows that the person is clean from egoistic thoughts and that he is attached with Hashem. It would only be a partial fulfillment of the purpose of life, though, and not the complete purpose, because the more complete purpose is *hiskalelus*, to become integrated, to give up one's existence and merge completely into the Existence of Hashem.

QUESTION 4) *Why is it so important to come up with chiddushei Torah on Shabbos (as the Ben Ish Chai says, that a chiddush on Shabbos is 1000 times more important than a chiddush during the weekday), if Shabbos is all about menuchah (serenity), not simchah (happiness)?*

ANSWER The Rambam's view is that there is an obligation of *simchah* on Shabbos, and this is based on the Sifrei. (See also *Pardes Yosef* on *Shemos 31:16* and *Beis Yosef Orach Chaim 281*, and *Yerushalmi Megillah 1:4*. There are many other sources as well that there is *simchah* on Shabbos). However, chiddushei Torah on Shabbos is not because of *simchah* on Shabbos, it is because Shabbos is called "source of all blessing", therefore it is the root of all renewal, and that is why chiddushei Torah on Shabbos have 1000 times more value than chiddushei Torah of the weekday, because 1000 is *elef*, from the word *aleph* (1), which refers to the beginning [and Shabbos is the beginning and root of the week].

QUESTION 5) *Why is it so important to learn with simchah? Is there a source for this?*

ANSWER The further a person is from his root, the more he becomes attached to the element of earth, the source of sadness. [Thus it is very necessary for a person to have *simchah*]. Also, [*simchah* is so important today] because we close to the *Geulah*, of which it said “*With joy they will go out.*”

QUESTION 6) *How can a person learn with simchah if he’s constantly trying to understand what he learns and he always feels what he doesn’t know in the sugya, and he doesn’t feel satisfied yet with what he knows in the sugya? Putting in effort into learning is exertion, and that seems to contradict the emotion of joy. Also, learning can get difficult, like when a person gets stuck and he doesn’t know pshat (the surface level) and he doesn’t understand what Tosafos is saying and he feels like he doesn’t know the sugya. These are all normal parts of the process in learning, so how can a person learn b’simchah?*

ANSWER Whenever a person learns, he has to always know what he’s clear about and what he’s not clear about, what he so far understands and from which point onward he doesn’t understand. This is the way to learn, and when a person learns like this, he will have *simchah* when he learns. From becoming aware of what you do understand in your learning, you can become filled with *simchah*. And even more so, when you’re working hard at understanding something, this is the *simchah* of working hard at gathering diamonds!

QUESTION 7) *Does a person need to begin learning Gemara with a feeling of simchah and cheishek, or does the simchah come on its own as long as he applies himself properly to his learning and he works hard at it?*

ANSWER It is proper to begin one’s learning by reminding oneself that he has been *zocheh* until now to learn Torah and to gain knowledge and understanding of it according to his level.

QUESTION 8) *If a person is in middle of his learning does he need to generate simchah and does he need to remind himself of the fact that he is zocheh to learn Torah?*

ANSWER See answer #6. That is how a person awakens *simchah* in his learning, yes.

QUESTION 10) *Does a person always need to walk around with a smile on his face, so that he can put himself in a good mood and so that he can make others happy when they see a smile on his face?*

ANSWER This is something that depends on the particular *nefesh* (soul and personality) of the person. Not all of the Gedolim had a smile on their faces all the time.

QUESTION 11) *Many times I hear the complaint, “Why aren’t you smiling?” I feel like it’s above my level to be smiling all day or most of the day. When I walk in the street I feel a big pressure on me that I always have to smile at everyone, especially because my nature is to be serious and be deep in thought. But sometimes I feel that others feel hurt that I didn’t smile at them when I passed by them, or even if I didn’t look at them or give them eye contact, I get the feeling that the other person feels like I’m ignoring him. So is there a *chiyuv* (obligation) on me to go against my serious nature by smiling at everyone?*

ANSWER A person has to act according to his level.

QUESTION 12) What is the importance of *simchah* in avodas Hashem in general and why did the Chassidim especially put so much emphasis on it, as if *simchah* is the main thing? Isn’t the main thing to simply do Hashem’s will, not about how I feel right now about doing Hashem’s will? True, *simchah* shows that a person wants to serve Hashem, but why is it so fundamental?

ANSWER The root of mitzvos is the Torah, and the Torah “gladdens the heart”, thus the root of all of mitzvos is to connect a mitzvah with the Torah, to connect *simchah* with the Torah.

QUESTION 13) Did the *baalei mussar* also emphasize *simchah*, or was it only something the Chassidim emphasized?

ANSWER In the mussar approach of Slobodka, there was more of an emphasis on *simchah*.

QUESTION 14) Why did Chazal say that simchas Yom Tov is fulfilled with wine, when there are people who hate wine and they need to fulfill simchas Yom Tov through other ways that bring them *simchah*? Why didn't Chazal say instead to fulfill simchas Yom Tov with whatever makes you happy? Why wine specifically?

ANSWER Wine is the root of *simchah*, because wine brings understanding, Binah, which is the root of *simchah*, as it is well-known.

DIFFICULTY WITH AHAVAS YISRAEL

It is difficult for me to love another person who has different mentalities (*de'os*) and views (*hashkafos*) than mine. What is the solution to this?

ANSWER

You need to understand that there are other truthful viewpoints which are no less valid than yours. Your mentalities and viewpoints are understandable according to your particular *seichel* (intellect) which Hashem has given you, and had Hashem given you a different kind of *seichel*, you would think in line with that other *seichel*. That is why you need to gain different ways of thinking that are each truthful.

IYUN AND BEKIYUS

1) What should be my goal when learning *b'iyun* (in-depth) and *bekiyus* (learning to cover ground)?

ANSWER

Iyun is about knowing the roots of the different views and to clarify them, with *cheshbon* (reviewing the buildup and details of the *sugya*) and *sevara* (original reasoning). *Bekiyus* is to know the root *dinim* (*halachos*) that appear in each *sugya* all the way down to the *halacha l'maaseh*.

SEFARIM ON UNDERSTANDING OUR PURPOSE

I feel a strong desire to clarify “how to serve Hashem” really well, to understand well what our purpose on this world is and to understand exactly what Hashem wants from a person, and where to begin, etc. Which sefer discusses this?

ANSWER

See sefer *Derech Hashem* and *Daas Tevunos*.

YICHUD HASHEM

QUESTION

(1) What is the concept of yichud (unifications) and yichud Hashem? Does yichud mean that I am being m'yached (unifying) with Hashem or does it mean that through doing certain deeds I am bringing about how Hashem is misyached (unified) with all the different worlds?

ANSWER

(1) Whenever any two concepts in any of the “worlds” become connected together, it is called yichud (unification), and this is true even in the practical world of maaseh (action) that we live on. Yichud Hashem is the root of connecting together different names of Hashem. In our soul, yichud Hashem is when our soul feels a bond with Hashem.

QUESTION

(2) When does a person fulfill the mitzvah of yichud Hashem? Is it only during Kerias Shema or is it every time that one bonds with Hashem?

ANSWER

(2) The mitzvah of yichud Hashem is fulfilled every time when one bonds with Hashem.

QUESTION

(3) Why doesn't the Rav mention that much about yichud and yichud Hashem (only in the later volumes of Bilvavi the Rav discusses a lot about echad, achdus, and yichud, but the

Rav doesn't speak about these concepts in most of the shiurim. Is there a reason why the Rav doesn't mention these concepts that much?

ANSWER

(3) In the shiurim, we are explaining what the yichud of each thing is. The shiurim usually discuss the yichud between different letters and the yichud of each word. The entire work of all the [Bilvavi] shiurim is to intellectually understand the yichud of each thing, and its root, which is yichud Hashem. The shiurim are also discussing a lot about Hashem's conduct and how the process and history of Creation is unfolding, which is all explaining about the concept of yichud Hashem that is fulfilled through Creation, which the Ramchal taught. And more specifically, the shiurim are also explaining the particular "movements" in Hashem's conduct, as well as the particular movements in our soul. The shiurim are also explaining the art of balancing the soul, which is to unify the abilities in our soul, and that is yichud.

QUESTION

(4) Are we all actively involved in yichud Hashem since we are all essentially doing learning Torah and doing mitzvos and avodas Hashem (each of us in a different way) or it is only individuals today who are actively involved in yichud Hashem?

ANSWER

(4) Only individuals are involved with the yichudim of combining together the names of Hashem. The yichud Hashem of connecting to Hashem is also existent today but it is also largely unknown about to most people.



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

email: rav@bilvavi.net



The Rav's classes appear
on "Kol haLashon" Torah Bank Service
USA 718.521.5231 | Israel 073.295.1245

For Inquiries on "Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh"

Contact: mobile 052.763.8588

Email info@bilvavi.net