

**BILVAVI**

**MY  
HEART  
ASKS**

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

**PARSHAS VAYECHI 5782**

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## How To Use The Rav's Answers

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Shalom to the Rav shlit" a. I want to know, when the Rav answers and gives guidance to a questioner, is it usually an answer that's only for the individual asking the question, or is it an answer that can be used by the tzibbur (public) and it's a general guidance on how a person should act and it's not just a private ruling given to the one asking the question? It makes a big difference if the answer to a question would apply to another person who has the same exact question or issue, or if each person needs to ask his question individually to the Rav even if the Rav already gave an answer to the question, because perhaps the answer changes depending on the individual's particular circumstances. Can everyone make use of the Rav's answers on the same level (if they have the very same question as the one who is asking the question) or does each person need to ask the same question to the Rav and receive his own answer from the Rav, even if the Rav already answered the very same question which someone else asked?

### ANSWER

In most cases the answer is for general use, and there are a few cases where the answer is only for the individual asking the question. This is one of the reasons why the same question can get different answers.

## The Souls Of This Generation

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Are all the souls in this generation from Dor Haflagah (the Generation of the Dispersal), and Dor HaMabul (the Generation of the Flood), and from the generation of Sodom, or rather that the influences of the world today are coming from those souls?

ANSWER: Very good question. There are always exceptional souls in every generation, even when the generation around them is evil. The Arizal said that Moshe was named so because he was drawn from the water ("ki min hamayim mi-shi-si-hu" – "for from the water he was drawn"), because even Moshe's soul is from Dor HaMabul (the Generation of the Flood) in which there was a decree that involved water, and he was saved from water because he was the one exceptional soul of Dor HaMabul who

merited not to be a part of the decree of the flood. Moshe's soul was contained in Noach who lived in the generation of the Flood.

Sodom was not a generation of Sodomy, but it was rather an evil city, but Lot was saved from it, because he was the exceptional soul in Sodom that deserved to be saved. Our souls are from those generations and we are sent here to this world to rectify their sin. Therefore, our souls are the holy parts of those previous souls. Just as in those generations there were very few souls that were holy while most of the generation was evil, so is our generation mostly evil, with a few souls that are holy and pure.

Most of the souls in this generation are totally from the "Erev Rav" (the Mixed Multitude), according to the writings of our Rabbis. Erev Rav is rooted in the three elements of fire, water, and wind. Sodom was the roots of the Erev Rav souls rooted in fire, Dor HaMabul was the root of Erev Rav souls rooted in water, and Dor Haflagah was wind-rooted souls of Erev Rav. Therefore, in our souls there is evil in our elements of fire, water, and wind. If a person merits to make himself holy, he merits to use his fire, water and wind for holiness.

## Beginning To Fix Bad Middos

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

### ANSWER

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

## Changing Unwanted Behavior

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

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

### ANSWER

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

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

The other approach, peratus, is where a person makes smaller goals for him to accomplish, which require only a bit of willpower and minimal exertion to accomplish. Each day, the person examines if he has fulfilled this small accomplishment. This also entails making use of various external “anchors” that will

make him feel personally obliged to fulfill his goals. Realistically speaking, he should use “anchors” that speak to his particular personality and his current level. Using this approach, one makes gradual progress, getting further and further – progressing slowly, but with consistency.

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

## Educating Girls About Tzniyus-Modesty

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My daughters (ages 10 and 11) are lacking in tzniyus (modesty), both in the way they dress, behave, and talk - as a result of the girls in their environment. What is the way to prevent this and to motivate them to behave just like all the other modest girls in their environment?

ANSWER

On the superficial level, show them the good that is contained in tzniyus. And on an inner level [teach girls how they can] reveal the depth of modesty in the soul [Ed. refer to Understanding Your Middos\_013\_Modesty].

QUESTION 2: Is it correct or incorrect - or is it a good thing or a bad thing - that girls are being told in certain seminaries (without mentioning specific names) that they shouldn't wear stockings all the way down to the feet, because this is a “street” way of dressing? Have we reached a situation that the girls are only covering just a little below the knees?

ANSWER

On one hand, a person must be tzanua (modest) by going a little bit beyond the actual requirements of halachah [of dressing modestly]. However, at the same time, if we are dealing with something that is considered to be a “modest” manner of dress according to halachah but it is in the style of the “street”, then we need to counter it by dressing in a way that makes it more obvious that we want to dress with more tzniyus, so that there should be an obvious difference between dressing modestly with how people dress on the “streets”.

It is like the words of the Rambam about building a bamah (a private altar to offer sacrifices on, in the times of the Beis HaMikdash), where the Rambam writes that at first it was permissible to build a private altar, for it was at first a beloved form of worshiping G-d, but later when the gentiles started building private altars to offer sacrifices to their gods, it became despicable to the Jewish people to build these private altars, so it became forbidden [so too, when it comes to dressing modestly, a certain style of dressing may be considered permissible at first, but later when it becomes the style of the streets adapted by gentiles, it becomes despicable in our eyes to dress in this way]. Whatever the situation, a woman should always make sure to dress as tzanua (modestly) as she can - each woman on her own level.

## Surviving A Difficult Marriage

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If someone is in a difficult marriage, how can he/she work on seeing the positive in this situation? Should he/she just focus on whatever nachas (pleasure) he/she gets from the children?

ANSWER: Analyze all the factors in your marriage, and see everything that's occurring. This can take a few months. You will then discover much good in your marriage, and then, you should daven to Hashem that He should help you find the root good point in your marriage. Gradually, you will be calmed by this.

## Torah Attitude On Breathing Exercises

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The Rav has said that there are gentile methods of breathing exercises [which we must be careful to avoid]. What exactly is the Rav referring to? Which parts of the non-Jewish breathing exercises are inappropriate for a Jew to use?

ANSWER

The Torah's approach to the power of using breathing is not so that we should expel negative energy contained in the body and bring in positive energy. A Torah-approved method that that is being somewhat mirrored in the gentile practices of breathing is that a person can bring positive energy into his system. However, this is not being accomplished through the gentile methods. A Torah-approved method would be to imagine a thought about something holy and to imagine that it is entering him, or

that it is his enveloping his body, or something similar to this. The gentile approach of breathing exercises, however, involves imagining a “light” that enters the body and purges it from all evil or negativity found in the body - this approach is heresy.

The purpose of the Torah’s approach towards breathing is that breathing enables us to reach HaKadosh Baruch Hu found in the depths of the soul. Unlike the gentile methods, which are entirely self-focused, the Torah way of breathing exercises is to come to live with Hashem in our life, through the breathing exercises. However, that is only reached at a much higher stage of the breathing. But we must be able to bear it in mind even as we begin to work with our breathing. We must know that the goal of deepening our breathing is because it enables us to live with Hashem in our life.

We can penetrate deeper and deeper into ourselves by imagining a holy thought that is entering us, and we can also think that it is purifying us – these two aspects are acceptable according to the Torah. But the part where they imagine that a light is entering the body and cleansing out all of the negativity – this is against the Torah, and it is basically a form of idol worship.

**QUESTION 2:** Does the Rav mean that one may imagine a certain holy thought entering his body as he is doing the breathing exercise?

**ANSWER:** It may be done, by imagining that it is found outside of oneself and that one wishes to bring it inside of himself. The way we have described using the power of breathing [see Rosh Chodesh Avodah\_08 - Cheshvan- Scent and Breathing) is a way of how we can get inside of ourselves, as opposed to using external factors.

However, it is certainly an acceptable method for one to imagine a possuk (verse in Tanach) or a certain holy thought about emunah, and to imagine that this is entering him and purifying him. But when doing so, the person must be aware that it is the kedushah (holiness) which is entering him, and not that some other outer “force” or “power” is entering him and cleansing him. To think that “A power is entering me” is a method that has originated in the gentile nations, and it borderlines on idol worship.

I have had to speak about length about this topic, because I am aware that many people are unfortunately using these improper methods in their breathing exercises.



## Tzaddikim Who Perform Miracles

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There are many stories of Gedolim in Klal Yisrael who were confident in their abilities to perform miracles, throughout the generations all the way until our times. At what point does a tzaddik become confident in his abilities? A person begins to learn Torah, he keeps learning it diligently and he gains holiness - but when he does reach the point where he can perform miracles? How exactly does it happen?

ANSWER:

1. From having experience in succeeding. 2) Either because he received a guarantee [from a reliable source] that he can perform miracles, or because he was told by a certain spiritual force (koach ruchni) that he has certain miraculous powers. 3) He feels a feeling of confidence that comes from within himself, as the Chazon Ish writes in sefer Emunah U'Bitachon, regarding the subject of [being confident in having] bitachon.

## Tzniyus – Teichel Vs. Sheitel

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I am a 26 year old married woman from a Chassidic community where all the women, including the Rebetzin, wear sheitels (wigs). I very much want to wear a teichel and to stop wearing a sheitel. I connect very much with wearing a teichel as opposed to a sheitel, and I feel very strongly that it is wrong to wear sheitels. When I visualize myself wearing a teichel, I feel much more like a queen, like a true daughter of the king. For me, giving up my sheitel to wear a teichel wouldn't even feel like "giving a korbon" to Hashem, because it wouldn't be mesirus nefesh for me [I wouldn't feel like I am giving up anything, because it feels natural to me to do so]. I simply want to be "myself", to act more like my true self which is pure.

However, I wouldn't feel comfortable to make such a move, because that wouldn't be acceptable in my community – for two reasons. First of all, I feel that doing so would be disrespectful to my community and to my Rebetzin, because it would seem that I am acting "holier than thou" – although that's not my intention. Secondly, it's important to be a part of the community, and by wearing a teichel I would be separating myself from my community.

Should I continue wearing a sheitel? If yes, then how I can feel at peace with this? I feel that I simply cannot continue wearing a sheitel anymore. But if that is what the Torah wants from me, then I want to know how to do it in a way that I can be serene with it. Much thanks to the Rav for giving of his time to answer me.

#### ANSWER

There is such an approach called *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice) in which one is able to be so dedicated to the cause that he doesn't need to take any factors into account. However, that approach is dangerous for most people to take. Of this it is said, "Many tried to do like Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, and nothing arose in their hands" [they were unsuccessful].

There is a second, alternative path to take: to take small steps forward, to make slow, gradual changes in one's behavior. In your case, this would mean that you can try wearing a teichel only sometimes, and slowly you can increase it.

There is also a third path to take, which is based on what Yaakov Avinu said [to Rochel]: "I am his brother in trickery," which means that [a person is allowed to deceive others when necessary. For example, in your case,] a woman can wear a teichel and she doesn't have to say her true reason in wearing it. She can just say, "Oh, I forgot [to put on my sheitel, so I'm wearing a teichel]", or "I didn't want my sheitel to get ruined, so I'm wearing my teichel instead", or, "My sheitel doesn't hold good on my head, so I'm wearing a teichel." This approach is not the most elevated approach to take, but it is the level for most people.

There is no problem of "separating from the community" if people in the community are dressing immodestly, in a way that goes against halachah, and you don't conform. However, since you are in this community, you should understand the ramifications of what you want to do, how it will affect others. For example, how will your behavior affect your husband's standing in the community? How will the schools treat your children? This is especially a concern if anyone in the community feels that you are going against them. This is a matter which needs a lot of wisdom about life, to decide properly on how you should act, in a way that allows for both truth and peace. You also need to discern if this will harm your marital peace. You should make your decision from a calm, settled mind, and from clarifying your soul capabilities – your decision should not come from emotional reaction. In addition, you also need wisdom and subtlety to know if your actions will affect your community and those who are in

charge of it. It is a subtle and a sensitive matter, and you will need a lot of inner understanding in order to come to a proper decision about this, so that no harm chas v'shalom should result from it.

## Woman's Avodah Before Labor & Childbirth

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Is there any spiritual guidance for women before childbirth, which can provide chizuk (inspiration) as a way to prepare for birth?

### ANSWER

1. Introduction: There are several factors contained in this particular period of life, which are appropriate to understand.

Let's open this discussion with the topic of emunah (faith in G-d). A person is created with a natural belief of feeling that it is he or she he does everything, and that it is one's own actions which conduct his or her life. But the purpose of our life is to come to the deep recognition that this is not the truth, and that it is Hashem Who created everything and conducts it all. Through the inner self-work of constantly instilling emunah in ourselves throughout our life, internalizing our emunah deeper and deeper into ourselves, we can arrive at this recognition. When we come to that recognition, it is the revelation of the spiritual light of our neshamah (Divine soul) which naturally and completely believes in the Creator.

The more that a person matures and goes through all kinds of experiences in life, he slowly begins to understand that everything that happens on this world depends on Hashem Who is running it, and not on people (that is, if he is a believing Jew), and that everything which happens is all but a result of the kindness of the Creator, to help us come closer to our most desired goal: to reach complete, perfected emunah, in Hashem. When a person goes through certain critical periods in life, his soul may experience these events to the point that he is left with an indelible impression on his soul (in varying degrees) from it, to the point that it is very difficult for him to free himself from the impression that has been made on his soul, even after many years have passed since the experience. This is all because going through an experience can leave a powerful effect on one's soul. So when a person goes through a certain experience and he consciously summons forth the awareness that it is only Hashem

Who is conducting his life, this has the power to elevate the experience and leave an imprint of emunah (faith in G-d) on the consciousness of one's soul.

However, one needs to understand clearly that emunah learned from experience alone (even for a Jew who is generally regarded to be “very believing”) - without conscious awareness to acquire emunah from the experience - does not even compare to the level of emunah that one can acquire from being consciously aware beforehand of the emunah that can be acquired from the experience. For when one is consciously trying to acquire more emunah through his experiences, one becomes a stronger “receptacle” to acquire emunah through the experience, and the emunah can settle better in one's heart.

...There is clearly inner meaning that one can experience through childbirth. It is the understanding that a person is totally in the hands of the Creator, as opposed to anything or anyone else. The more that a person connects to this understanding, the more that the experience of childbirth will leave an indelible impression of emunah (faith in G-d) upon one's soul. Here are some practical suggestions on how to do this.

When any event happens to you throughout the day, especially if it was childbirth-related, even if it was something minor, you should pause for a few seconds [if not physically, then at least mentally in your thoughts] and think about this simple thought: *רבות מחשבות בלב איש ועצת ה' היא תקום*, “There are many thoughts in the heart of man, but it is the advice of Hashem which lasts”. I want a certain thing, but Hashem wills otherwise. It is His will which establishes the reality.”

It is also proper to add on a short prayer, such as “Help me, Hashem, that I should truly feel this in my heart.” This is what you should do, at least once a day (and if you can do it more times a day, that is certainly even more effective).

Additionally, you should reflect during a time of quiet, and think about different instances where you wanted a certain thing and in the end it didn't materialize. You should pick a matter which speaks to you, so that you can review it several times throughout the day, amidst your everyday chores. You can pick a verse, such as *הנני בידיך לבד*, “We are in Your hands, alone”, and review it often. Verbally repetition of the same verse can powerfully impress it upon the heart.

If you find that you feel very connected in your soul to this kind of practice, it can be very helpful to you during the actual time of the birth. When you keep reviewing

verbally that you are entirely “in Your [Hashem’s] hands, alone” throughout the entire process of labor and childbirth, this can ease your pain throughout the pregnancy and labor.

After you have given birth, you can reflect, amidst relaxation and quiet, about what you have experienced so far, from an elevated place, of recognizing the truth, that all creations are entirely in the hands of HaKadosh Baruch Hu alone, and that it is only Hashem in His kindnesses Who brings us closer to this recognition, through the various situations that we go through in life.

Alternatively, you can think thoughts of love for Hashem for all of His great goodness that He has done for you, and for this especially [the birth of a baby]. Pregnancy is a state which opens you to an entire world (dimension) of love for the fetus growing inside you, and when you awaken in yourself a love for Hashem for all the good that He does, this opens you to a new world (dimension) of love for Hashem. Make sure to seize this opportunity [which is especially available during pregnancy] and to acquire this attitude.

Alternatively, you can reflect about the renewal you are having through becoming a parent, and this awakens the soul’s power of renewal. Childbirth is a degree of renewal, and when you connect to the power of renewal through childbirth, you are accessing an important detail that is part of a greater whole – the universal renewal of the Creation.

## Woman’s Main Ability

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The Rav has said that generally, men are more gifted with the intellectual faculties (chochmah and seichel), as opposed to the ability of “heart”, whereas women are more gifted with “heart” and less with intellect, and that this was because Chavah was created from a state of sleep, where the intellect isn’t working and only the heart is active. However, it seems that the sefer Chovos HaLevovos, which is explaining to us the duties of the “heart”, is certainly teaching us how to approach the world with intellectual chochmah and seichel, and not with spiritual feelings of “heart”. What is the proper path in a woman’s avodas Hashem? Is it the path of the Chovos HaLevovos (which seems to emphasize the use of seichel/chochmah/intellect), or is it the path

which the Rav is explaining, that women are mainly meant to mainly use the heart and not the intellect....?

ANSWER

You have made a clear and proper definition. But the truth is that if there is just “heart” and there is no use of the intellect, a person will not succeed in avodas Hashem. Even more so, there is additional reason today why women need to use their intellect in avodas Hashem. Women today are worldlier and are anyways using their intellect, to think about other things that are not spiritual. If women would not be using their intellect at all, they would easily connect to the “heart”, but since women are using the intellect more these days, for materialistic concerns, the only way to counter this problem is to put their intellect to holy uses.

So in essence, the heart is the main function of the woman, as opposed to the intellect; but in more recent times, where there are women who have become more intellectual as they are involved more with the outside world, they are using the intellect for non-spiritual purposes, so they are less drawn towards using the heart; and the only way for them to counter this is to use their intellects for holy purposes. However, in most women, the heart is the stronger point than their intellect, and thus the main avodah of a woman in most cases is to use the heart, and less with intellect. The language of our Sages, such as the words of sefer Chovos HaLevovos, is certainly a more intellectual approach that is geared towards men and not towards women, but in our times where women are anyways using their intellect in all kinds of areas, they need to channel their intellect towards holy areas, to counter the use of their intellect that is being used towards mundane things.

## Woman's Spirituality

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The Rav has said that if we want to work on hisbodedus, we must make our ratzon (will) to do hisbodedus into our strongest ratzon. If I have a ratzon that my husband should feel better, does that mean that my ratzon for hisbodedus will not be my strongest ratzon?

ANSWER A wife's desire for her husband to be healthier is a physical will, because it is material-related. Having a ratzon for hisbodedus is a deep ratzon that comes from the neshamah. What needs to become your strongest ratzon – the deep ratzon of the

neshamah, or any other ratzon you have that is related to the material world? While it is very important for you to want your husband to be healthy, it is not a ratzon that comes from the neshamah [hence your desire for hisbodedus should be stronger].

#### QUESTION

I don't understand. The reason I want my husband to be healthy is not a material kind of will – it is touching on more a spiritual kind of will.

#### ANSWER

It may be touching upon the spiritual, but it is not your actual spirituality. Let's take for example a case where a woman has a husband who is not that G-d fearing. Does this mean that she will be prevented from building her own inner world? Certainly, she is still able to [regardless of her husband's situation]. A woman's husband is certainly a very important aspect of her life, but her relationship with her husband does not define her inner world and her personal avodas Hashem. She has a unique, spiritual individuality of her own to develop. Certainly it will be more complete if a woman builds her spiritual world together with her husband, but it doesn't depend on that. Even when the husband is physically ill, a woman can continue to grow in her own spiritual world that she can build for herself. There is an inner point that exists in every person's soul, by which every person can recognize that there is an inner world of our own to develop. From developing one's own internal world, one can also influence others, and certainly the first person a woman will be influencing is her husband [but before being able to influence, a woman must first develop her own inner world, for her inner world exists independently from her husband's].

## How Do I Open My Heart

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How can I open my heart more?

#### ANSWER

You can try to do so by learning and working on the steps laid out in sefer “Bilvavi”, Part One.

## Connecting To A Tzaddik After His Death

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1) Is there a way to see a tzaddik after his death, either while awake or in a dream? (In a case where one already spoke with the tzaddik in his lifetime and the tzaddik had told him “We will speak again the next time”, but there never was a next time, because the tzaddik was niftar after our last conversation. I want to know if there is a way for me to continue to communicate with the tzaddik).

ANSWER

Yes.

QUESTION

2) What is the way to bond with or to gain a connection with a tzaddik after he is niftar?

ANSWER

Either by learning his divrei Torah or by connecting to parts of the tzaddik’s soul, such as by connecting to the tzaddik’s middos or to the actions that he did on this world.

QUESTION

3) If I print a sefer as a zechus for the tzaddik, does he know about it in Heaven? Do I need to inform him? And if I need to inform him about it, what is the way to let him know?

ANSWER

Usually, yes [he knows about it], especially if people are learning his sefer.

QUESTION

4) If we learn the divrei Torah of a tzaddik, does the tzaddik know that people are learning his divrei Torah right now?

ANSWER



If his divrei Torah is being learned properly. All of the above depends on the different soul roots that there are, and also on how close the tzaddik feels to the world, and also on how many years it has been since the tzaddik has left the world.

QUESTION

5) If I go to the grave of a tzaddik on his yahrtzeit and I speak with him there, does the tzaddik hear me?

ANSWER

Not always. On Rosh Chodesh and on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, yes.

QUESTION

6) Am I able to talk to the tzaddik at his grave even when it's not his yahrtzeit? And if yes, does the tzaddik hear me?

ANSWER

Give tzedakah to elevate his soul, which will inform the tzaddik that so-and-so is coming to daven by his grave. But care must be taken that the one asking the tzaddik for a request should be purified, because the tzaddik may be upset that he has been disturbed for nothing.

QUESTION

7) What if I can't go the grave of a tzaddik, like if he is buried in Eretz Yisrael and I live in chutz l'aretz? Can I send a friend there and call his phone and speak to the tzaddik by his grave, by having my friend hold the phone as I talk? Does the tzaddik hear me if I do this? Or do I need to actually be by the tzaddik's grave?

ANSWER

Not necessarily.

QUESTION

8) I have heard that if people get together to speak about the tzaddik and they share his divrei Torah, the soul of the tzaddik comes there. Is this only on the yahrtzeir or is it any day that people gather together to eulogize him or say stories about him? And does the tzaddik come to such gatherings, even if it is under 10 people?

#### ANSWER

He comes at all times [when people discuss his divrei Torah]. When people learn the divrei Torah of the tzaddik, that is gives light to the tzaddik's neshamah.

#### QUESTION

9) What if a person speaks alone with the tzaddik or he says the divrei Torah of the tzaddik, does the tzaddik come to him then or does the tzaddik at least hear him, when he speaks to the tzaddik or says the divrei Torah of the tzaddik?

#### ANSWER

If one was connected to the tzaddik in the depths of his soul or he learned the tzaddik's words in a state of purity, or if he was heavily involved in what the tzaddik himself was involved with.

## Knowing Which Path To Go In

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How does a person know if he should go according to the order of steps laid out in Mesillas Yesharim or if perhaps he should start from emunah, etc.?

#### ANSWER

That is a very general question: How can a person know what his cheilek (personal portion) on this world is? The inner answer to this is that when a person serves Hashem lishmah, he removes the barriers that are covering over his "I" which hasn't been purified yet, and through this he recognizes what his personal portion should be. Until a person is zocheh to that, however, he should become clear about his soul, according to his level, and he should daven to Hashem that he should be guided towards his cheilek, along with asking advice from a wise Torah scholar.

## Shidduchim - Divorced Twice

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I was divorced twice already and I am about searching for a prospective marriage partner for what will be my 3<sup>rd</sup> marriage, b'ezras Hashem. Whenever a match is suggested to me, there are people who badmouth me. How should I look at this?

What is my avodah in this situation and is there anything I can do so that I won't despair chas v'shalom from getting married again?

ANSWER

The Chazon Ish was asked about such a case and he answered that a person needs to have emunah, that if the shidduch is not meant for him, others will say bad things about him and prevent the shidduch, and if the shidduch is indeed for him, it will be made by someone who is interested in his good and there won't be obstacles holding back the shidduch. One needs to strengthen the emunah that everything is ordained by Hashem, and at the same time one should also work on himself and take care of the reasons that caused his first marriages to fall apart.

## Vaccinating To Visit Eretz Yisrael

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I didn't take the vaccine for corona. I want to go to Eretz Yisrael to visit my children. Should I take the vaccine in order to come to Eretz Yisrael?

ANSWER

To be in Eretz Yisrael, it is worth it to get the vaccine!

## Female Therapist For Men

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Is it permissible for a female therapist/psychologist to do sessions with men (married or unmarried), and if yes, what are the conditions that need to be met?

ANSWER

It is not proper, at all !

## Laughter Vs. Seriousness

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What is the difference between the laughter that comes from true joy (simchah) with laughter that comes from being light-headed (kalus rosh)? Can a person be serious and live an internal life of pnimiyus and also allow himself to laugh and allow his joy to be expressed without any bounds, to become enthused and to allow his positive emotions

to just flow? I find that when I am in a very happy and joyous mood, I'm not as serious and I don't take life seriously, in general. When I'm in "serious" mode, I can sit and learn Gemara in-depth and concentrate on my learning, and I want nothing to disturb me from my learning, not because I'm pressured but because I really enjoy my learning and being focused on it, but when I'm in "laughing" or "happy" mode, I don't take my learning seriously. I noticed that I can either be very serious or very not serious, and I live with this contradiction all the time in me. What is the way to go about these two opposite emotions and states?

ANSWER

When laughter comes from being light-headed, a person's head becomes "lighter" as he's laughing and he can't think that well. But when a person is laughing out of true joy, like if he's happy when he's doing a mitzvah, he can amazingly maintain a settled mind (yishuv hadaas) even as he's in the midst of laughter and joy, and his laughter only serves to free him from his normal constraints but he can remain centered. It is fine for a person to laugh whenever he needs it emotionally, but one needs to always that he can maintain his yishuv hadaas even as he's laughing.

## Astral Self

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Is it possible for a person to go outside of the earth's atmosphere (the rekiat/paradise which directly surrounds the earth)?

ANSWER

Yes, it can be done in one's thoughts, in the neshamah, and it can also be done when the body becomes purified and it becomes ohr (light).

## Holistic Healing

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Is there a way to heal physical illnesses by doing inner work? For example if a person has the 'dreaded disease' [cancer] can he be healed by doing any specific kind of inner work?

ANSWER In some cases, yes. But sometimes, the inner work [which improves the health of the soul] won't be strong enough to penetrate to the body, and the body will still need to be treated separately.

## Instilling Yiras Shomayim In A Child

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How does one instill yiras shomayim in a child? Does it depend on the child's age?

ANSWER

Tell true stories, from your heart, of how our Chachomim exemplified yiras shomayim.

## The Secret of Thank You Hashem

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Is there such a thing that if a person says "Thank you" to Hashem for his troubles and suffering, he sweetens all the dinim (harsh judgments) on him in those areas he is suffering in, as well as sweetening all of his suffering in general?

ANSWER

Yes - if he says it from his heart. The mouth and the heart of a person should be aligned [he has to mean what he says].

## Understanding The Amshinover Rebbe

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I was always taught to believe in the greatness of tzaddikim, but on the other hand I have also become educated and sharper in the last couple of years to the reality that if a "tzaddik" doesn't keep even the smallest section in Shulchan Aruch, he belongs in Gehinnom and it doesn't matter how much of a tzaddik he is known to be. Therefore, I am trying to understand what I've been told about the Admor of Amshinov, shlit"a. I've been told that he makes Kiddush on Sunday and he skips tefillos, and other things. I cannot understand how it's possible to overlook these facts. Yet, I've heard that there were Gedolim who held him in prestige. Therefore, I want to ask: What is the way to view him? I hope that the Rav will not answer me something like "We are

not supposed to harbor any thoughts against our sages/tzaddikim”, because I want to understand this.

#### ANSWER

He is an oved Hashem, a person who serves Hashem, with t'mimus (earnestness) and yashrus (uprightness) and mesirus nefesh (self-sacrifice), from intense ahavas Yisrael (love for the Jewish people). Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt”l was already asked about him and he ruled that there is nothing to suspect at all. From the little that I know about him, he acts according to the halachah, even if he doesn't follow all the views in the Poskim on every matter.

## The Pnimiyus of Yosef & Yehudah

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The Rav explains that Yehudah (who came from Leah) received the “temimus” (emunah, tefillah) aspect of Yaakov Avinu, whereas Yosef (who came from Rochel) received the daas/chochmah (wisdom, Torah) of Yaakov. Why then did Yehudah sell Yosef? Isn't that the opposite of temimus? It would have made more sense for daas/chochmah (Yosef) to feel threatened from temimus (Yehudah) since the logic of daas cannot handle the earnestness of temimus.

#### ANSWER

Yehudah [in his temimus, sold Yosef because he] thought he was saving the brothers from Yosef [whom he perceived as a danger].

#### QUESTION

2) It is known that Esav will be defeated in the future through the power of Yosef, and as it is written, “And the house of Yosef will be a flame, and the house of Esav will be like straw.” According to one view in the Midrash, Esav was killed by Yehudah [and according to the Gemara, Esav was killed by Chushim son of Don]. Why was Esav killed by Yehudah (according to the Midrash) and not by Yosef?

#### ANSWER

Rashi says that the name of Esav implies asuy v'gomer, “made and complete”, meaning that Esav represents the evil completion, the evil that counters the complete havayah. Yehudah was the holy havayah to counter the evil, pseudo-havayah of Esav.

And Esav is also countered by Yosef, who is called the tosefes, the addition, and the “addition” of Yosef reveals that Esav is not made and complete.

## Can A Woman Say Tikun Chatzos?

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Is it permissible for a woman to say Tikun Chatzos?

ANSWER

It is permissible, but it is chassidus (a pious level beyond what is required of her) so she needs to first see if she is at the appropriate level to do it.

## Temporary Enlightenment

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Since the “neshamah” (Divine soul of a Jew) is very far from one’s is it possible for a person to feel a closeness with Hashem after gaining a more basic level of self-awareness? Or is this not possible until a person reaches the “neshamah” level of the soul?

ANSWER: It surely is possible. We have described a path in which we build our way upwards, beginning from the bottom levels and working our way upwards [see Rosh Chodesh Avodah\_09\_ Kislev\_ Sleep and Dreams). It is definitely possible for a person to feel “sparks” of higher levels even before he is there, because the light of the higher levels sometimes shines itself onto the lower levels. However, we will not be able to understand the sparks of the higher levels until we have actually entered more inward.

Every person contains a spark of the neshamah, which enables him to feel a deep closeness to Hashem at times, even before he has risen to the higher levels of his existence. There are several ways of how it is experienced. Sometimes it happens when a person has a deep feeling of simple faith in Hashem (peshitus/temimus), sometimes it is experienced through a deep experience of davening, sometimes it is felt through talking to Hashem, sometimes it can come from feeling a deep love for Hashem.

But it still does not mean that the person’s actual soul level is there. There is a ‘crack’ in the soul which enables us to connect deeply to Hashem through those places, as we mentioned earlier, due to the light of the redemption which is closer to us now, which enables the light of the neshamah to be more easily accessed. That is why it is easier

these days for a person to feel deep experiences in his soul, long before he has entered within.

However, as we said earlier, it doesn't mean that person is actually there at that level. It is just that sometimes, the light of the neshamah penetrates into the lower layers of the soul and enables a person to connect to it easily. Thus, generally speaking, we must work our way upwards, starting from the lower levels of our soul. That is why when we work on our middos, we begin working with the lower levels and we work our way upwards, as opposed to beginning from a higher plane. We need to start from the bottom upwards. First we need to recognize the lowest parts of our soul and work our way upwards. We work to 'build' ourselves in this organized manner.

It is certainly possible for one to begin with the "neshamah" level, but it is a dangerous to do so. There are some people who begin with this path because they cannot deal with their weaknesses, and if they were to begin analyzing their weaknesses, they would do nothing to improve themselves, so they instead begin to enter the "Neshamah" level as an alternative. For such people, there is no realistic alternative, so they feel no other option other than to begin with the "Neshamah" level. Others are inclined to begin with Neshamah because there's a strong portal available in their souls that enables them to reach their Neshamah, and they would have a hard time descending to the lower levels of the soul and working from there. Others want to begin with Neshamah simply because they want to see success right away and they wouldn't want to deal with the failures of their weaknesses that are present in the lower layers of their soul. So it is possible for a person to begin with the Neshamah level, but in all of these cases, it is always risky to do so.

The path which we must mainly use to traverse in our avodas Hashem is to work in a step-by-step manner, beginning from the lower layers of our soul. This was the main path which our great leaders traversed throughout the generations. There were always exceptions to this who began to work on themselves from the higher plane [of Neshamah], but they were still taking a risk, and it is usually dangerous for us to take that unusual route.

QUESTION 2: When I begin this avodah of calming myself to enter deeper within, I try various ways of trying to calm myself. I am doing so in order to connect to Hashem. I think of pesukim (verses) that mention Hashem, and I think about the "Ein Sof" (the Infinite) of Hashem, and this calms me, and I truly feel that I am more connected to



Hashem when I do this. Is this a true feeling that is coming from my neshamah, since I am feeling a deep feeling? Or is it just something that calms me and there is a lot more for me to feel....?

ANSWER: I do not know personally who is asking this question, so I cannot give a complete answer to this question. But generally speaking, any feeling which feels deep to you contains some truth to it, for there is a 'crack' in the soul that enables you to experience the light of the neshamah somewhat. But it is only experienced temporarily and it doesn't mean that you are at that level. It is possible for a person to live in that higher state on more permanent basis, but if a person has not purified the lower layers of his soul, he is taking a very dangerous path by attempting to live in this higher state. It is fine to connect to this higher place in yourself from time to time, but then you must make sure to return to your lower levels and continue fixing yourself there.

When one is working his way upwards, beginning from the lower levels of the soul, and he is not yet feeling a deep connection with Hashem, it is very hard for most people to patiently work on themselves, when they are not getting a feeling of more connection to Hashem. This is especially the case with our generation. That is why every person needs to connect to Hashem from the place where he is currently found in, and along with this, he needs to work his way upwards. Each person can connect to his inner point of the soul, on his own level.

The truth is that sometimes a person is only imagining that he is becoming closer to Hashem, and sometimes it is a real feeling. However, even if it's being imagined, he is still being spurred on to become closer to Hashem and to enter deeper into himself; and if only all people could imagine in this way. But, we cannot build our path in Avodas Hashem based upon this point. It is fine to feel a deep closeness with Hashem if this will calm you and then you immediately return to reality and you work on yourself; as long as you understand that you have merely entered into a 'crack' in your soul which lets you experience a higher level. But you must immediately return afterwards to the actual level that your soul is found on, and to continue to work on yourself from there.

## Outer-Body Experiences & Imagination" :

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QUESTION: There's something called "astral journey" in which a person can be hypnotized and have an outer-body experience and explore his fantasies. Since I practiced all kinds of spirituality, I was imbalanced and my spiritual experiences were not aligned with Torah. I would have these "astral journeys" when I was sleeping and also when I was awake, and my entire body would go limp and I would lose control over my body, and my focus would change, and there were all kinds of phenomenon that I experienced in connection with this. Can the Rav direct me to any Torah sources about this phenomenon, which can guide me properly on this subject, and can the Rav explain what causes this phenomenon to take place?

ANSWER: "There are some people who can experience this due to impure spirituality or because they are not balanced properly. There are also those who are able to do these things since they were born, who have a space they can go to between their soul and their body, which causes them to have this outer-body experience. I do not know of any sefarim that speak about this subject. Generally, the way to repair this issue is through developing the power of our intellect, to make our thinking mind more active, and especially by using the mind to think more about Torah, by learning Gemara. The mind needs to be used both analytically as well as for the sake of action. One also needs to become more connected with keeping halachah. Along with this, one also needs to purify the imagination and sift out the bad from the good in it, as explained in "Getting To Know Your Imagination."



Questions in all spheres of life in general  
and the *nefesh* in particular  
are welcome in the Q&A system  
and will be transferred to the Rav, *Shlita*  
email: [rav@bilvavi.net](mailto:rav@bilvavi.net)



The Rav's classes appear  
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There are some of you who might find this intro a bit odd but you have to keep in mind two things. The first is that the Rav comes from a different background from most of us. He never read a secular book in his life. Secondly, we have a lot of problems. We are very mixed up- we were raised very far from kedusha and even the best of us have been infected and affected by things that are not pure Torah. Sometimes we come across a view that's expressed from that perspective of pure Torah by a contemporary person. So, not coming from a perspective of pure Torah, hearing something that comes from pure Torah does not always click.

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Rav Moshe Weinberger,  
in "Getting to Know Your Self"  
more than 10 years ago