

BILVAVI

**MY
HEART
ASKS**

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

PARSHAS BO 5782

ISSUE 223

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THE CONFUSION TODAY

We are in such a confusing situation in the world today. There are so many different opinions of Rabbonim (great rabbis and leaders), and each of them opposes anyone who doesn't have his view. What does Hashem really want that we should do?

ANSWER

Choose for yourself one *rav* and follow what he says, and take your mind off all the details that are confusing you. You need to still be generally aware that everything is shrouded in confusion today, and that “We have no one to rely on except for our Father in Heaven.”

CLARITY IN SHAKY TIMES

I have heard from tzaddikim that it is impossible for even the greatest Gadol and Tzaddik today to know exactly everything, especially in the current period we are going through, and even those who do know don't speak about it that much. And if someone says he knows clearly every detail that will happen today, we must be wary of him. What is the Rav's view about this?

ANSWER

Only Hashem knows everything! A tzaddik only reaches according to his personal portion allotted to him. In the times we are in now, the mode of Hashem's conduct is the “*Reisha D'lo Isyada*”, the unknowable head, so everything today is unknowable and hidden. But this we do know: The root of Hashem's mode of conduct today. That very knowledge gives a lot of clarity – but only partially. It is the root of the partial clarity by which we can have during these times. It doesn't just mean that we simply don't know what's happening. Rather, what we are seeing is everything being overturned. We are seeing opposites to everything. If one doesn't understand this, then everything will simply be confusing to him, he just sees the world as becoming unstable, there is mostly turbulence and changes in the world. If one wants to understand the current period according to his current level of understanding, he can

try see how each thing has two opposite concepts within it. Then he will be able to see the full picture of how Hashem is running the generation.

CONNECTING TO THE 50TH GATE OF HOLINESS

The Rav explained in a *derashah* that the way to be saved in the final generation is by becoming connected to the *shaar HaNun d'kedushah*, the “50th Gate of Holiness”. I have these questions:

- 1) How can the “50th Gate of Holiness” become practically manifested in the daily life?
- 2) Also, how can one connect to the “50th Gate of Holiness” while learning Torah? Is this level only for those who learn Torah *lishmah*?
- 3) If indeed it is possible even for a person who doesn't learn Torah *lishmah* to connect to the “50th Gate of Holiness”, what is the way to achieve this?
- 4) And can the Rav can an example of how the “50th Gate of Holiness” can be accessed at the simplest, lowest level?

ANSWER

- 1) One needs to become connected to the innermost depths of the spiritual, cycling back and forth between one's inner world and the outer world. One needs to be involved with the outer world when he needs to, and then revert back to his inner world. As the Baal Shem Tov taught, the true *bnei aliyah* (those who truly grow spiritually) are those who “dwell” above, in the inner, spiritual dimension, who “descend” back down to the world when they need to, and then revert back to their spiritual base above.
- 2) Yes, it is primarily so [the “50th Gate of Holiness” is primarily a level accessible to those who learn Torah *lishmah*]. However, as long as one learns Torah with all of his energy, especially with regards to mentally exerting himself in Torah, this is in the category of *mesirus nefesh*, which is rooted in the 50th Gate of Holiness.

3) By learning Torah with the attitude of “unifying” all contradicting opinions together. In every *machlokes* (argument) that one studies, one should see the differing views and then see how all of the views can be unified together, by seeing how each of the views form the “complete picture” [of a *sugya* of Gemara]. One needs to see all of the opposite views towards a matter, and then see how all of the views form the complete picture of the matter.

4) One can begin thinking of any concept as well as the opposite of the concept (*dovor v'hipucho*), from the understanding that the “other side” of the matter completes the view of the matter, in the same way that the back of the hand and the palm are really one entity. For example, the opposite of light is darkness, and there is a rule that “There is no light except after darkness.” Another example is that the opposite of joy is sadness, and the Sages state that on *Tisha B'Av* [the saddest day of the year] there is the birth of Mashiach [the greatest cause for joy].

MARIJUANA & THE FUTURE OF AMERICA

1) How should we view the legalization of marijuana in America? Doctors prescribe medical marijuana and don't see a problem with it as long as it's not taken in high amounts, but legalizing it is clearly detrimental and damaging for anyone who takes it. Is there something else going on behind the scenes which Hashem is hinting something to us with this?

ANSWER

These drugs bring a person somewhat into the state of *lo yoda*, losing our logical awareness, and it is the *kelipah* (the side of evil) of the concept that “The purpose of knowing, is to know that we do not know” [it is the evil use of *lo yoda*, of transcending logical reasoning, via losing the mind].

QUESTION

2) Is the legalization of marijuana another stage in the dominance of evil in our world today, another step within the 50th level of *tumah* which is in the world today, and is

it is a sign that our world is destroying itself, which will make way for the era of Mashiach and *Olam HaBa*?

ANSWER

Yes, because [the use of marijuana and drugs] is the evil, ruined side of “not knowing”, the removal of *daas* (logical reasoning).

QUESTION

3) Since it is America that legalized marijuana, and America is identified as *malchus Edom* (the dominion of Edom, Western civilization associated with Esav), does this signify the beginning of the end for *malchus Edom*, since they are starting to destroy themselves by legalizing these drugs?

ANSWER

Yes.

QUESTION

4) We worry so much for the *chinuch* of our children here in America, because who knows what kind of generation they will soon be growing up in. There are physical and spiritual dangers awaiting the next generation, and they are growing up in such an immoral society. How can we raise our children successfully in America?? (And of course there are problems in Eretz Yisrael too). What can we practically do for the future of our children, besides for *davening* and crying for their success?

ANSWER

Raise your children with love, patience, understanding, cleverness, giving, *davening* for them and crying tears for them, and have *emunah*.

QUESTION

5) On a related topic, America is becoming more and more liberal and more accepting of deviant lifestyles. Are we supposed to talk to our children about these things? Are we supposed to tell them in general that there's *tumah* in our society today, without getting into the details?

ANSWER

Explain to them very generally that we are living in the generation of the footsteps of Mashiach, and that all the *reshaim* of the past have come back again as *gilgulim* all at once into our generation, and our generation contains even the *reshaim* of Sodom. However, make sure also to remind them always of Hashem's kindnesses to us

LEARNING TORAH VS LEARNING ABOUT THE SOUL

The Rav answered me recently in a response that a man's main involvement on this world is to spend his time learning Torah, and to spend only "a little bit of his time" on understanding the soul and learning how to balance the soul, etc. This is in contrast with women, who have more of a task to learn about their souls [being that they don't have the mitzvah of Torah study]. I have some questions about this.

1) There are thousands of *shiurim* of the Rav shlit"a (and, *Baruch Hashem*, may there be more!) about the soul. These *shiurim* are given to men, and many of these *shiurim* were given in particular to Kolel men, who are clearly scholastic and talented in their Torah learning, *Baruch Hashem*. Most of the Rav's *shiurim* are an hour long, and lately the *shiurim* are about 30-35 minutes long. This is not "a little bit of time" that's being spent on learning about the soul! This is a lot of time. So what does the Rav mean that a man should only spend "a little bit of his time" learning about his soul?

2) Also, why are the Rav's *shiurim* about the soul different than studying Torah in-depth? In the "Da Es" and "4 Elements" series, the Rav explains about each detail in the soul with tremendous depth, and it requires exertion of the mind to understand, and ultimately it's Torah. Why is this not as good as studying the laws of a cow goring an ox, and etc.?

It seems that the Rav's *shiurim* are in the category of "*mochin d'middos*", "the mind behind the emotions", whereas learning Gemara, Rashi and Tosafos is in the category of "*mochin d'mochin*", "the mind of the mind". Through the Rav's *shiurim* we are able to learn the wisdom of the soul and of our inner world, which there is no wisdom like. So why doesn't this count as exertion in Torah study? I am not asking the same

question as the *Nefesh HaChaim*, who asked why learning about fear of G-d isn't counted as Torah study. I'm asking something else. Through the Rav's *shiurim*, we are learning *sugyos*, in-depth! For example, when the Rav gives a *shiur* about the topic of *gaavah*/conceit, the Rav splits it apart into all its details, with tremendous depth (this is especially the style in the series *Understanding Your Middos*). So why doesn't this count as in-depth Torah study for a man?

ANSWER

1) It is known in the name of Reb Yisrael Salanter that, generally speaking, a person should not learn mussar for more than 2 hours a day, and the rest of a person's day should be spend on Torah study. This is what it means to spend "a little bit of time" learning about the soul [not more than 2 hours a day].

2) When it comes to *mochin* (the world of abstract thought), there is general *mochin*, and individual *mochin*, such as *mochin d'middos* (the mind behind the emotions). Therefore, when a person studies the soul because he's trying to get to the wisdom behind the emotions (*mochin d'middos*), he should only spend a little bit of time on this kind of study, as mentioned before. Because, ultimately, he is learning about *middos* [which cannot replace Torah study itself]. However, if a person learns the material in a way that is general *mochin* [learning about this wisdom because he wants the wisdom and the knowledge itself], then it becomes included in Torah study.

THE FINAL TEST BEFORE MASHIACH

After Mashiach comes, what will be the "final test" of the generation? Will it be that Hashem will let His voice be heard and each person will decide if he is prepared to listen to the voice of Hashem even though he knows he will die from it (like by Har Sinai), or will each person tell Hashem that he would rather hear the voice of Mashiach so that he won't die? If I have understood correctly from a *derasha* of the Rav that this will be the final test, what will happen to a person who doesn't want to hear directly the word of Hashem? If one doesn't pass this test, will he remain alive and he will just be on a lower spiritual level than those who heard Hashem's voice, or

will only those who hear Hashem's voice will remain alive for the Redemption, while everyone will not remain...?

ANSWER

That will be the inner aspect of the final test, but it won't necessarily appear that way. The final test may appear differently. The most spiritual parts of our being will remain to experience the Redemption, and all other parts of our being which are not as spiritual will be able to experience the Redemption only to the extent that we have underdone *bittul* (self-nullification) in those parts of our being. The process of *bittul* (self-nullification) will actually continue until the end of the tenth century. Refer to *sefer Daas Tevunos* (88) and onward.

PRACTICAL BITACHON

I'm learning for half a year already about *bitachon* and I really want to acquire *bitachon* very much. I am prepared to spend a half hour every learning about *bitachon* for many more years so that I can attain this goal. What is the best way for me to get to my goal of acquiring *bitachon*?

ANSWER

The series "Actualizing Your Faith" (*Da Es Bitchoncha*) explains about this subject, and if you have any questions on these lessons, I will try to answer them, with *siyata d'shmaya*. Along with this, you should learn *sefer Madreigas HaAdam*, especially the chapter about *bitachon*. You should also learn about *bitachon* in the *sefer Shomer Emunim*. Practically speaking, each day you should practice having *bitachon* in Hashem when it comes to a small thing, and don't do any *hishtadlus* (effort) when it comes to that area. Or, at least minimize your *hishtadlus* in that area, from an awareness that you are trying to work on your *bitachon*. Furthermore, it is appropriate to clarify the entire spectrum of this subject. Learn all the sources for *bitachon* in Chumash, Mishnayos, Gemara, Rishonim and Acharonim, as much as you are able to. Organize all the material in a notebook, as if you are trying to prepare for print as a *sefer*. This will help you become immersed in it, consistently and fundamentally, as

you study this part of Torah and apply it to your *avodah*. It will also give you increased clarity on the topic, and it will also give you the gain of both learning and practicing it together.

QUESTION

Yasher Koach to the Rav for the advice about *bitachon* which I asked the Rav for, which I have started to practice. The Rav advised that each day I should practice having *bitachon* in Hashem when it comes to a very small thing and not to do any *hishtadlus* (effort) in that area. I have a couple of questions.

1) Does this mean that if I have *bitachon* and I don't do any *hishtadlus*, then I will get what I'm having *bitachon* about? For example, if I want something small and I have *bitachon* that I will get it, will it definitely come to me, simply because I am having *bitachon* in Hashem?

ANSWER

1) There are two approaches about *bitachon*. One approach is that one can have *bitachon* that a certain thing will definitely happen, when he trusts in Hashem that it will happen. Another approach is that one can have *bitachon* that whatever happens is only what Hashem wants to happen, and that everything that happens is for a person's good. Generally a person needs to begin having *bitachon* with the second approach.

QUESTION

(2) Also can the Rav give examples of having *bitachon* when it comes to a "small" thing?

ANSWER

An example of having *bitachon* when it comes to a small thing is: (1) I have *bitachon* that I will make the bus (that is, if I leave with enough time to get to the bus stop on time). (2) I have *bitachon* that I will fall asleep and get the right amount of sleep that I need so I can have enough energy for tomorrow and to do what I need to do.

QUESTION

(3) Also, is this approach of having *bitachon* when it comes a small thing and not doing any *hishtadlus*, a matter which depends on how to understand *bitachon*? Is the Rav following a certain approach of *bitachon* or is this according to all views on *bitachon*?

ANSWER

Same as answer to the first question.

QUESTION

(4) What do I need to think when I am having *bitachon* about a small thing that I want? And how can I avoid falling into delusions from this?

ANSWER

4) Have *bitachon* that only Hashem runs every single last detail, and that everything He does is for my good.

HOW TO RELATE TO NON-JEWS

1) Am I allowed to act on the concept of “loving all of Creation” by greeting a *goy* (a non-Jews) warmly and thinking that they are created “in the image of G-d”, and with deeper thoughts such as how I want the light of G-dliness to spread to them and the concept of the all-inclusive love of the future, etc.?

ANSWER

There is an inner perspective of loving all of Creation, but it is meant to remain as a very inner perspective. Outwardly, the souls of the gentiles are rooted in the “3 impure *kelipos*”. Therefore, looking at their face creates an inward connection to them (*panim*/face is related to the word *pnim*/inside) and this creates a danger of connecting to their *tumah*. Therefore, only individuals who are very connected to their *neshamah* are allowed to connect to the *goyim*, because even as they connect to *goyim* they remain firmly attached to Hashem and to their *neshamah*, to the Torah, and to Hashem. They can allow themselves at rare times to connect with *goyim* and be

involved with them, going back and forth between their *d'veykus* to Hashem with having to deal with the world. This is because they access a very pure state in their soul before they connect outwardly to the world they are dealing with, and then returning to their pure point in the soul immediately afterwards and “cleaning” themselves off from any subtle traces of *tumah* that can become attached to their soul from dealing with the world. Most people, however, need to be inwardly and emotionally disconnected from the *goyim*, except for very rare instances when they have no choice. This is something that’s very hard to do for people who have a personality to be very loving and compassionate towards others.

QUESTION

2) Just like a person may not connect in any to an “Erev Rav” person, even to smile at him or say Good Morning to him or even nod at him (because it’s forbidden to connect to evil and all of these are forms of connections) is the same also true regarding the other nations that we live with in exile (for example in America where we are in Galus of Edom/Esav)?

ANSWER

Chazal said “Greet every person”, and because of *darkei shalom* (maintaining peaceful relations with all people) one should greet even non-Jews, and that is what the Sages did as well: They made sure to first greet the non-Jew before the non-Jew got the chance to greet first. However, the Erev Rav is worse than all other *goyim*, because they are the roots of *tumah*, and one should not have any connection to them at all, as much as possible.

QUESTION

3) I feel a love for some *goyim* and I want them to have a good life. And since there is a concept of loving all of Creation and there is a future unity, I allow myself to feel a connection to them. Certainly I love the Jewish people as well, but I also love *goyim*. I want all *goyim* to be happy and that they should have a good life, and I certainly feel compassion for them when they suffer, because I feel for them like I feel for others. Is that a proper attitude?

ANSWER

Do not hate *goyim*, unless they are of the wicked people of the world who hate Hashem: “*Those who hate You, Hashem, I will hate.*” However, you should not either reveal an open love towards the *goyim*, because this is spiritually harmful to your soul, as mentioned earlier.

BURNT OUT IN LEARNING

About 2 and a half years ago I went through a “period” which caused me to have a lot of emotional issues and even physical aches. During all that time, I was actually in yeshiva, but I wasted most of my time and I wasn’t really doing anything with my life. Now *Baruch Hashem* my situation is a lot better and I can learn for most of the *sedarim* in yeshiva. My first issue, though, is that part of the reason which caused to me to go through my dismal period was because I was feeling that I wasn’t achieving any clarity or understanding in my learning, and even if I felt like I was understanding it, I didn’t cover that many pages of Gemara, so I felt like I wasn’t achieving anything with my learning, and that problem still exists by me. My second issue, which is a much bigger issue for me, is that I keep remembering all of the emotional pain that I had when I wasn’t achieving enough in my learning. Because of my frustration, I had a hard time staying interested in my learning and this was also preventing me from connecting to Hashem. These issues are really hard on me. Can the Rav give me advice and encouragement which will be of great help to me? Thank you so much.

ANSWER

Learn a section of Gemara and orally make for yourself a clear summary of what you just learned, and if you find writing it effective, then write it instead. Learn in a way that’s close to your soul and which you get satisfaction from. The main thing that is needed for you is to gain an inner connection to the holy Torah, and it is not about “how much” you are learning. Any struggle that you have in learning, and any amount of success you have in your learning, even if it’s a very small amount of success, is very precious to Hashem, which causes Him to rejoice in you and in your successes. It is upon you to feel that your Father, HaKadosh Baruch Hu, loves you

very much, and that He is happy with you at all times, like a father who is happy to spend time with His beloved sin.

Get up and strengthen yourself! Rise and succeed! With joy, and with gladness of heart!

GETTING TO KNOW DASAN & AVIRAM

1) Is it true that Dasan and Aviram kept making trouble for Moshe *l'sheim shomayim* (they meant for the sake of Heaven) because they wanted to perfect Moshe's soul?

ANSWER

At the root, everything is good and leads to something good. At the root of their souls, Dasan and Aviram had such good intentions. But, their soul roots extended onto this world in a way that led to evil, where their intentions were evil. *Sefer Megaleh Amukos* explains how Dasan was rooted in holiness, but he became ruined. See also *sefer HaLikutim (Toldos)* and *Rema m'Pano* (83).

QUESTION

2) Are Dasan and Aviram part of the Erev Rav or were they part of Klal Yisrael?

ANSWER

Any two extremes will always have one middle point between them. Dasan and Aviram were the connecting point between Klal Yisrael and the Erev Rav. Moshe wanted to fix the *Erev Rav*, who are equal in *gematria* to *daas*, as the Arizal teaches, and *daas* is the trait of Moshe. That is why there was able to be a rebellion against the *daas* of Moshe from within the Jewish people, via Dasan and Aviram. *Sefer Avodas Yisrael (parshas Shemos)* brings from the Arizal that Dasan and Aviram were the *kelipah* to Moshe and Ahron on the side of holiness. *Sefer Arvei Nachal (parshas Korach)* says that Dasan and Aviram were from the two back parts of Moshe's soul.

QUESTION

3) Why did Reuven deserve the punishment of having Dasan and Aviram as his grandchildren?

ANSWER

Because he switched around his father's bed, which caused mixing and confusion, enabling this mixture (Dasan and Aviram, who mixed Erev Rav with Klal Yisrael) to enter into Klal Yisrael.

QUESTION

4) Why did Moshe think that Klal Yisrael doesn't deserve to be freed from Egypt just because of Dasan and Aviram? Why should these 2 wicked people ruin it for everyone?

ANSWER

Because they connected *Klal Yisrael* with the *Erev Rav*. See *Vayikra Rabbah* 4:6.

QUESTION

5) Did Dasan and Aviram reach their *tikkun*?

ANSWER

Sefer Tziyuni (*parshas Vayeshev*) says that Dasan and Aviram cannot be raised from the pits they fell into.

However, *sefer Magen Dovid* says that they have a *tikkun* through the level of *Binah*.

The *sefer Emek HaMelech* says that Yehudah ben Garim, who tried to kill Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, was a soul reincarnation of Dasan and Aviram. See *Sefer HaLikutim*, *parshas Korach*.

There is a verse that says that the earth swallowed Dasan and covered Aviram, so they were each punished in a different way.

The *Rema m'Pano* says that Dasan and Aviram were reincarnated as Doeg and Achitofel, and were later reincarnated as the two bulls that Eliyahu sacrificed on Mt.

Carmel [by the showdown against the false prophets of the Baal], and Dasan was the “stronger” one from the two. *Shaar HaGilgulim (hakdamah 39)* says that part of the sparks of the souls of Dasan and Aviram were repaired in the soul of Rebbi Gamliel. The *Rema m’Pano* says that Dasan and Aviram were repaired when they were swallowed by the ground.

QUESTION

6) Which evil characteristics do Dasan and Aviram represent?

ANSWER

Rema m’Pano says that Dasan was the main instigator, and Aviram was dragged after him. But the *sefer HaLikutim* says that Dasan’s soul was more refined, whereas Aviram was coarser and toughened his heart. The *sefer Ohr L’Shomayim (parshas Korach)* says that Dasan was impaired *din/gevurah*, while Aviram was impaired *chessed*, and the ruined side of the *chessed* of Avraham (hence the connection between the names of Aviram and Avraham).

Dasan is first hinted to in the word “*Dosanah*”, the city where the tribes went to, which led to the dissension of the brothers versus Yosef [hence Dasan and Aviram were rooted in *machlokes*/dissension, in “*Dosanah*” where the dissension of the brothers with Yosef took place]. Chazal (*Nedarim 64b*) said that whenever the Torah speaks about people fighting and gathering together for a rebellion, it is referring to Dasan and Aviram.

The *sefer Toldos Yaakov Yosef (parshas Bo)* explains how Dasan and Aviram were really opposites of each other, and elsewhere (*parshas Pinchos*) he explains how are Dasan and Aviram manifest in the soul.

THE RAV’S APPROACH TO AVODAS HASHEM

It seems to me that the Rav’s sefarim are based on teachings primarily found in both Breslev 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

IS THE RAV'S APPROACH ALSO FOR AMERICANS?

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*.

(For example, people here of all types and of all levels love listening to Reb Meilich Biderman, who knows how to give *chizuk* in a way that's very positive-focused and also through humorous stories. Everyone is drawn to him. That is the approach that speaks very much to the American crowd.) Now, getting back to the Rav's approach, 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...

SURVIVING THE END

During these times we can actually feel how the end is near. From what I've heard from Rabbonim, we are slowly seeing with our own eyes how this is happening. All of the news I hear is terrifying to me, though I am trying really hard to disconnect from all media, and I am hearing enough from the people I meet and speak with. 5G tracking technology is everywhere, and it's directly in front of my house. And there are other things too. How should I view all of this in the proper way? And what does the Rav recommend I should do? Every time I hear the latest news development, it drains me, whenever I think about the current state of affairs.

ANSWER

Repeat to yourself the *emunah peshutah*, the simple belief, that Hashem does everything that and that He will do everything, and that there is no force which has any power in the world except for Him. This is discussed in *sefer Nefesh HaChaim shaar III*. By reviewing these facts, you will be “moving” all the time near the Creator and with the Creator, instead of “moving” all the time with all the human beings on the world. This is the way a true, inner life looks like, for anyone who seeks truth.

A GOOD MUSSAR SEFER FOR OUR GENERATION

Is there a particular *mussar sefer* which is suitable for our generation to learn?

ANSWER

Every person is different when it comes to which sefarim are best for them to learn, but a good example of a mussar sefer for our generation are the sefarim of Rav Shimshon Pincus [i.e. the *Nefesh Shimshon* series, the series of *Sichos HaGaon Rav Shimshon Pincus*, and *sefer She'arim B'Tefillah*].

WHICH SEFARIM ARE FOR EVERYONE TO LEARN?

1) Was there any sefer in Klal Yisrael that contains an all-inclusive, comprehensive approach in serving Hashem? Or did every tzaddik hold that his way of avodas Hashem was a comprehensive approach in serving Hashem?

ANSWER

Mesillas Yeshtarim was authored by the Ramchal, whose soul was Rabbi Akiva, whose name was Akiva ben Yosef – the secret of “Mashiach ben Yosef”.

QUESTION

2) Is the Rav’s approach (explained in the “Bilvavi” sefarim and in the other sefarim and shiurim of the Rav) a comprehensive approach to avodas Hashem that includes all the ways of *avodas Hashem*?

ANSWER

In the End of Days, there are illuminations of Mashiach ben Dovid readily available, and even before Mashiach ben Dovid comes, the illuminations of Mashiach ben Dovid are shining strongly. The path explained in my sefarim and shiurim are not really “my” approach - it is just tapping into the perspective that Mashiach ben Dovid will reveal to the world [how to have a real relationship with Hashem, and how to take from all of the existing paths in our avodas Hashem].

QUESTION

3) It seems that the most popular sefarim in Klal Yisrael are *Mesillas Yeshtarim*, *Tanya*, and *Likutei Moharan*. Is these because these sefarim were written for the entire Klal Yisrael and that they are applicable to each Jew, as opposed to other sefarim, which are not for everyone to learn?

ANSWER

Mesillas Yeshtarim is a practical sefer for the entire *Klal Yisrael*. The other sefarim you mentioned [*Tanya* and *Likutei Moharan*] are the hidden roots of “inner” *avodas Hashem* [so they are not for everyone].

DIFFERENT SEFARIM & WAYS IN SERVING HASHEM

1) Is there such a thing that the yetzer hora shows a person a certain sefer or statement of Chazal in order to scare him too much and depress him, so that he will give up on doing teshuvah, or the opposite, to calm him down too much so that he won't want to improve or do teshuvah?

ANSWER

Yes.

QUESTION

2) Are there any views of Gedolim that people today shouldn't be learning mussar and that they should only learn sefarim that give them *simchah* and *chizuk* (inspiration)?

ANSWER

For most people, that is an incorrect mentality. It is likely that a person should first learn sefarim that he gets *chizuk* from, before embarking on learning *mussar*, but eventually he would need to clarify and work on, his *middos*.

QUESTION

3) Is there a view that holds that we don't need to improve our shortcomings and our middos because we need to accept ourselves the way we are, since everything Hashem made is perfect and therefore He made us with imperfections and shortcomings, and therefore we don't have to try to fix ourselves because then we are not accepting how everything Hashem made is really perfect?

ANSWER

That is absolutely not true!

QUESTION

4) Does the view of Chassidus hold that a person doesn't need to work on his middos directly, and that instead a person's middos are improved just by *aseh tov*, through just having d'veykus in Hashem?

ANSWER

Chassidus holds that a person also needs d'veykus in Hashem [in addition to working on our middos], not that a person only needs d'veykus in Hashem.

QUESTION

5) Are any of the views in mussar (i.e. Kelm, Slobodka, Novhardok) closer to the views in Chassidus?

ANSWER

The Slobodka view in mussar, which focuses on *gadlus ha'adam* (the inherent greatness which we can reach) is rooted in the fact that we are inherently good, that we are a *neshamah* [hence Slobodka is closer to the view of Chassidus].

QUESTION

6) 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.

HATEFUL SOULS & THE GEULAH

Just like the Rav said that if a person doesn't disconnect his soul from internet by the moment before the *Geulah* he won't be *zocheh*, does the same thing apply to a person who fell into *sinas chinam* and *alma d'piruda* (he is divided against other Jews and has unwarranted hatred), and he doesn't disconnect himself from this by the moment before the *Geulah*?

ANSWER

Only if he is someone who became "intrinsically" attached to this [to being divided against other Jews with an unwarranted hatred], who has a soul rooted in *Dasan* and *Aviram*, who are connected with the *Erev Rav*.

PREREQUISITE FOR GEULAH

Can the Rav explain to us exactly what level of *teshuvah* and *emes* (truth) is needed, in order for one to experience the light of the *Geulah*?

ANSWER

One needs a genuine *ratzon* (will) to do the will of Hashem, in spite of all his personal *aliyos* (achievements and growth) and *yeridos* (failures, sins).

STARTING TO LEARN KABALLAH

I want to slowly enter into studying *nistar* (the hidden dimension of Torah). Which sefarim should I begin with? I am very drawn to *sefer Pischei Shearim* of Reb Yitzchok Issac Chaver, but I can't decide which sefer I should start from. What does the Rav recommend?

ANSWER

Sefer Pischei Shearim is suitable for one who can be very analytical and think very logically and sensibly. It is recommended to begin studying this part of Torah by learning *sefer Otzros Chaim*, using any of the commentaries from today's authors, and along with this or after completing it, one can move on to learning *sefer Pischei Shearim*.

SUMMARY OF THE VIEWS IN KABALLAH

Is it possible to summarize all of the basic views the different Kaballists throughout the generations, and what the primary fundamental was in each view? Is the bulk of *Kaballah* limited to the views of the *Remak*, the *Arizal* (which divide into the teachings of the Rav Chaim Vital and the *Mahari Sruk*), the *Ramchal*, and *Gra*... or was there more than that?

ANSWER

1) This is a very lengthy matter, and I will give a very brief response (*b'siyata d'shmaya*).

The *Remak* (Rabbi Moshe Cordovo) taught about the *Olam HaTohu* (the dimension of chaos), and he also collected together most of the wisdom of Kaballah that had been revealed up until his generation [in the early 1500's].

The *Arizal* (Rabbi Yitzchok Luria) taught about the *Olam HaTikkun* (the world of repair). His two primary students each taught the *Arizal's* revelations in a different way. His student Rabbi Chaim Vital taught the *Arizal's* words in terms of *ayin* (the

negation of physical existence), also known as the secret of the *chalal* (the void), whereas his other student, the *Mahari Sruk*, taught the Arizal's words in terms of *Yeish* (the revelation of a newer level of existence), also known as the secret of the *kav* (the line of the Infinite Light which runs through the void that is our Creation).

The Ramchal (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto) taught about the *Toras HaYichud*, the secrets of *yichud Hashem*, revealing Hashem's oneness on the world.

The Gra (the Vilna Gaon, Rabbi Eliyahu Kramer) connected all of the Torah together with precision, which led to novel Torah insights that he connected together with the teachings of the Ramchal.

Chassidus [revealed through the Baal Shem Tov and his students] explained the teachings of Kaballah in terms of how they apply to the human soul, in great detail, revealing the “secret of secrets” (*razin d'razin*), the “secret of Hashem's oneness”.

The Reshash (Rabbi Shalom Sharabi of the 16th century) taught the secret of how all of the different realms and dimensions are unified together.

The Leshem (Rabbi Shlomo Elyashiv of the 19th century) showed how the higher and lower dimensions parallel each other, and accordingly he showed how all details are connected together, and how it all forms one complete structure.

The Sulam (mid-1900's) taught about the “refracted light” (*ohr chozer*) that results from the Arizal's teachings.

QUESTION

2) Does a person need to learn Kaballah both according to the views of the Gra and the views of Chassidus?

ANSWER

Yes – each person according to the view that matches their personal soul root, and according to their level and ability.

QUESTION

3) Is a person supposed to begin Kaballah by learning the Gra's approach or by starting with the approach of Chassidus?

ANSWER

Either way is possible.

QUESTION

4) There are sefarim today which collect all of the Gra's teachings on Kaballah into one sefer, is it recommended to learn such sefarim or should I only learn the Gra's actual writings?

ANSWER

Since the Gra's words are spread out and scattered, and they were not organized together (unlike the teachings of the Ramchal and the Remak, which are organized), it is recommended to learn such sefarim which organize together all of the different teachings of the Gra.

ESCAPING CHEVLEI MASHIACH & DOING TESHUVAH

1) Why do we need to live in Eretz Yisrael in order to be there for Mashiach? Won't Mashiach gather all Jews from all over the world when he arrives?

ANSWER

Firstly, the suffering of *chevlei Mashiach* is lesser for those who are already found in Eretz Yisrael by the arrival of Mashiach. On a deeper level, it is because the light of Mashiach first shines in Eretz Yisrael, and therefore anyone found in Eretz Yisrael at Mashiach's arrival are the first to receive his light.

QUESTION

2) Right now there's a lockdown in Eretz Yisrael and all the airports are closed, so there is no way for anyone in *chutz l'aretz* to make *aliyah* to Eretz Yisrael at this time.

Does that mean that Jews living in *chutz l'aretz* should be more afraid of *chevlei Mashiach*?

ANSWER

It is a sign to awaken all those living in *chutz l'aretz* to move to *Eretz Yisrael*, because we don't know each day will bring. Eretz Yisrael is the "land where the eyes of Hashem are on", and therefore it is always safer to be in Eretz Yisrael.

QUESTION

3) How do we do *teshuvah* when we get ready for the *Geulah*? Are we supposed to be davening, crying, making cheshbon hanefesh, and full of fear of what might happen in chevlei Mashiach? Or should we instead be rejoicing and dancing, with *emunah* that the *yeshuah* is underway, just as Mordechai knew that the decree of destruction against Jewry wouldn't happen because he had total *bitachon* that Hashem would bring a *Geulah* to their situation?

ANSWER

First a person needs to do *teshuvah* out of fear of Hashem, and after that he should bring joy into doing *teshuvah*. First a person needs to do *teshuvah* (and all that it entails), and after that one can rejoice with *simchah*.

HOW TO RELATE TO EVIL STILL ATTACHED TO ME

1) Do I need to take my mind off the feelings of independency from Hashem (cause-and-effect thinking, or the *daas* of *Bilaam*) and instead find expression to them in Torah, avodah, chessed and mitzvos?

ANSWER

These thoughts are very very proper and you should continue to think them until they become simple awareness to you in mind and in feeling: The fact that evil is only a garment on and it is not your "I."

QUESTION

2) Is this how I can “run” back to Hashem?

ANSWER

Yes, certainly. Because evil becomes attached to a person and makes it seem to the person as if the evil is the person himself. Evil becomes turned into a garment on the person which covers him over, and it takes lifelong work to continuously purify oneself from it.

QUESTION

3) Are we always experience a false I due to our self-absorption, and is our true I when we become integrated with Hashem, which is expressed when we do Hashem’s will?

ANSWER

Yes. “More light is gained from darkness” – from recognizing the false sense of self one is able to learn what his true self is, and then he can later discover that the true “I”, the true existence, is only Hashem, for there is truly no one but Him.

QUESTION

4) Is this an expression of the hidden light?

ANSWER

Yes, it is one of the ways.

QUESTION

5) Is the sense that this is the greatest pleasure (becoming integrated with Hashem), which eclipses all of the self-gratifying pleasures which we are pulled towards – is that something which is developed gradually with time, or can we feel it right away?

ANSWER

Usually it is a gradual process which requires one to slowly amass a lot of knowledge. However there are times when a person merits to get everything at once, as with those who acquire their World To Come in one hour – and this is either when it comes to a person as a sudden gift in the midst of all his *avodah*, or, though having *mesirus nefesh*.

TIKKUN FOR EVIL PEOPLE & FOR THE EVIL WITHIN

1) Why is it that sometimes there are wicked people who were sent to come back in another lifetime and they achieved a tikkun for their soul? For example the *Rama m'Pano* says that Vashti came back as a cow who wouldn't work on Shabbos, and the owner (who was a reincarnation of Achashveirosh) got angry at the cow for not working and he took a knife and killed the cow in his anger, and this is how Vashti fixed her sin of making the Jewish girls work on Shabbos. Why would such an evil person like Vashti have the *zechus* to come back down again and fix her soul?

ANSWER

When wicked souls comes back in another lifetime, any *tikkun* they reach can only be for part of their soul and not for their entire soul, and only for the good sparks that were present in their soul.

QUESTION

2) As an aside, the *sefarim* explain that Vashti represents *kelipas noga*, the part of our being which is mixed with good and mixed with evil, which needs to be sanctified and turned into holiness. Is that the reason why Vashti merited a *tikkun*?

ANSWER

Her *tikkun* was only for the good sparks in her soul, as mentioned.

QUESTION

3) And if a wicked person (such as Vashti) gets a *tikkun* for her soul, does that mean that the wicked person goes to *Gan Eden* afterwards?

ANSWER

Same answer as before [only the good parts in her soul are raised to Gan Eden].

QUESTION

4) In our generation, there are many contradicting aspects in all of our souls, and as the Rav explained, because most of the generation today have souls that are a

combination of many souls together in one body. Does this mean also that there are souls of completely wicked people as well as souls of completely righteous people who can be inhabiting one soul? Can any of us be a combination of both a total *rasha* and a total *tzaddik* (or more)? And, would that be the reason why we can feel a pull towards the most evil things possible, yet we can also feel the pull towards *d'veykus* and *hiskalelus* in Hashem, and all the other qualities of *tzaddikim*?

ANSWER

Yes! And, it is also because we are in a time period (End of Days) where opposites are becoming integrated together all at once, “like a bolt of lightning”.

QUESTION

Are all of us essentially complete *tzaddikim*, since we are all a “portion of G-d from above”, a *Yechidah*, and it is just that we have “others” living inside of us who are not *tzaddikim* and worse, who are all inhabiting the lower parts of our soul which are from the *Chayah* level of the soul and downward? Do we need to define ourselves as actually being a *Yechidah* or rather as a *neshamah* (with the *Yechidah* surrounding us but not actually being who we are? Since our inner essence is the *Yechidah* part of the soul, does that mean that our *Yechidah* is who we really are? Or is the *Yechidah* out of our reach?

ANSWER

In order for any Jew to define himself as actually being the *Yechidah* part of the soul (which is intrinsically connected with Hashem), one would need to reveal the illumination of “Mashiach” in his own personal soul. That is why the sefer *Da Es Atzmecha* is coming to explain that we need to define ourselves as a *neshamah*.

QUESTION

6) If there exists a “spark of Erev Rav” within our soul, as well as part of ourselves that are a total *tzaddik*, and if we choose to let the *tzaddik* part of ourselves dominate over the evil parts of our being, does that raise the “*Erev Rav* spark” within us into holiness? And if yes, does that mean that this evil part of our soul achieves a *tikkun*? Or do we have to look at it that we need to destroy and erase the “*Erev Rav*” within us (the parts

of our character that are totally evil) by choosing truth, righteousness, and living a life of holiness, etc.? And would that make the “*Erev Rav*” parts of ourselves fall away, leaving us with only the parts of ourselves that are completely a *tzaddik*?

ANSWER

[The evil parts in us need to become] nullified, integrated into holiness, through the secret of revealing our soul’s deep yearning for Hashem, to be burned up and destroyed so that we can go back to Hashem – to reach the state of *hiskalelus*, becoming integrated with Hashem.

REWARD FOR WICKED & FINAL SORTING PROCESS

1) Sometimes Hashem pays back a rasha for any mitzvos he did on this world, and he rewards him nicely on this world so that he will lose Olam HaBa. But isn’t there a rule that “there is no reward for a mitzvah on this world”, because mitzvos are eternal and therefore they can’t be rewarded for on this world (and also because the true place of reward is the Next World and not on this world)?

ANSWER

“A man according to his praise.” If one valued mitzvos only with a physical perspective, doing the mitzvos shelo lishmah and because he wanted wealth or honor – which is a bridging level between the physical and the spiritual – he may get that on this world, as R’ Chaim Volozhiner taught.

QUESTION

2) What is a rasha? Someone who tried to keep Torah but fell into aveiros, does that mean that anything good he has on this world is all an exchange for his reward in the next world because Hashem is just paying him back on this world so that he won’t get rewarded in the next world?

ANSWER

A rasha means he is deserving of *kares* (soul excision), meaning that his soul is cut off from its root, because it is so attached to this material world and all of his desires and wishes are for this material world, as taught by Rabbeinu Yonah.

QUESTION

3) There was a tzaddik who said that it's worth it for him to come into the world and do every aveirah in the world even if he can get to fulfill the smallest mitzvah, because a person is eventually purified from his aveiros, but the reward for even the smallest mitzvah is endless. How does that work out with the fact that wicked people are rewarded only on this world?

ANSWER

In such a case, the person isn't completely attached to materialism, it is just that he has fallen and he is pained by his fall.

QUESTION

4) The Rav has said that chas v'shalom those who don't give up Internet before the Geulah will not be zocheh to the Geulah. How does that work out with the fact that there were tzaddikim who said that they can bring the Geulah in their time and it's just that there were souls in the generations who didn't yet receive their tikkun and therefore these tzaddikim chose to push off the Geulah? It is told of R' Mordechai of Chernobyl, and of the Ramchal as well, that together with their students they meditated on yichudim for a long amount of time in order to bring Mashiach, and on Musaf of Yom Kippur they heard a noise, and it was the Samae"l (S"m) who was coming to prevent Mashiach, and it told them that if they bring Mashiach now, there will be souls who won't be by the Geulah, so the Ramchal pushed off all his efforts to bring Mashiach and postponed it. And I saw brought from the Chofetz Chaim who said that we should inform everyone that when Mashiach comes everyone will reach their tikkun, because no Jew will be left behind. So why is the Rav saying that not everyone will be by Mashiach? Also, if there were neshamos that didn't reach their tikkun in the times of the Ramchal and that is why the Ramchal didn't want to bring

the Geulah, what did they gain, if the situation today is much worse and there are far more neshamos who are doing much worse than in previous generations and they aren't reaching their tikkun?

ANSWER

The higher parts of the soul will merit the Redemption, because “All of Yisrael have a portion in the World To Come”. Those who lose out on the World To Come forever and remain outside of it essentially refers to the lower, less refined parts of the soul. Also, additional parts of people's souls have already been sifted since then, and now only those parts which haven't been sifted remain, to be sifted. This is the final sorting process!

MASHIACH

Is Mashiach a person or he is a spiritual light ?

ANSWER

Both.

DESTRUCTIVE PLEASURES OF OUR TIMES

I believe that 3 things are destroying our generation today [in particular, the children growing up in today's generation]: The internet, candy [sweet sugary foods], and music that puts people in a trance. Do all of these things have a common denominator? And if yes, how can we protect our children especially from these things? And if the answer is to develop a holy sense of pleasure that will counteract these things, then how exactly do we develop it and teach it?

ANSWER

The pull towards the internet is a pull that goes beyond logic and reason. Candy/sweets is not the issue of candy/sweets per se, it is the desire to experience pleasure in general. Music that puts people in a trance represents the loud, jolting culture of the world today in general, which modern-day music is just an example of.

The repair for all of these things is to connect to the dimension beyond logic and reasoning: to a holy sense of pleasure [pleasure in the spiritual, in a connection with Hashem]: to reach *hashkatah* (*sheket*), to become inwardly calm and serene.

HOW A WOMAN CAN SAVE HERSELF FROM SIN

Yosef HaTzaddik was also able to avoid sinning with Potiphar's wife by picturing the image of his father Yaakov in front of him, which provided him with a burst of extra *kedushah* (holiness) to withstand temptation. What should a woman do in order to prevent herself from giving in to temptations and into a bad environment around her?

ANSWER

The Talmud Yerushalmi says that Yosef also saw the image of his mother Rachel in front of him, which also aided him in avoiding the temptation. Just as a man can avoid sinning by remembering the image of his father and mother [if they were G-d fearing, righteous people whom he would be ashamed sinning in front of them], so can this help for a woman, because by doing so she connects herself to her root.

EXILE AGAIN

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

ANSWER

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

GAINING HASHEM'S PROTECTION FROM TRAGEDIES

I work so hard at learning and davening and doing mitzvos and training myself to do chessed for others and to improve myself, and to identify with my neshamah, and it's

all so that I can have a genuine relationship with Hashem. It seems that most people just aren't into this. And, not only that, but most people I know are involved with doing very bad things. Does Hashem see the few of us who are trying so hard to live our lives in the right way according to His *ratzon*, when most people aren't interested in living their lives for *ratzon Hashem* and many people even have businesses and interests that are the antithesis to the Torah? Is it only in Olam HaBa (in the World To Come) where we will see the difference between those who lived their lives according to Hashem's will and those who didn't? Or maybe it's only individuals on this world who are clearly apart from the majority, since tragedies and hard times are befalling the world due to the way that most people act (who aren't living their lives in accordance with Hashem's will)....?

ANSWER

The Rambam (*Moreh Nevuchim, III*, in *perek 51 - 53*) discusses this a lot, and the Rambam there explains that the more a person is *davuk* (attached) to Hashem, the more protection he gains from Hashem, and he will be saved more from tragedies, even on this world. This is called *Hashgacha Peratis* (Divine Providence) and it is different with each person depending on what his personal level is. And Chazal said: "Hashem is your shadow" – Just as you exist to Him, so will He exist for you" [The more you think of Hashem, the more He will protect you. See *sefer Nefesh HaChaim shaar III*.]

LISTENING TO A GADOL

The Rav was asked if a person has to listen 100% to the view of *Gedolei Yisrael* when it comes to something that is not clear and if a person can rely on the ruling 100%, and the Rav answered that this depends on how much *emunas chachomim* (faith in the sages) that one has. What about in a case where a Gadol says that "Your right hand is your left hand, and your left hand is your right hand"? And if a person doesn't have enough confidence in the words of a Gadol does that mean that he is not obligated to listen to the Gadol? Also, how can it be that this depends on "how much" *emunas chachomim* a person has?

ANSWER

If it is a *halachic* matter and you asked the *Gadol* about it, then you are obligated to listen to him. But if you were merely asking advice on something you are not obligated to listen.

A person never has complete *emunah* [not in Hashem and not in the sages and *gedolim*] and therefore a person always has to strengthen his *emunah* and make it clearer. This is a lifelong *avodah*, to make one's *emunah* stronger and clearer.

[Elsewhere in a different response [No.4647 – Asking A Tzaddik For Advice, printed in *sefer Shaal Libi*], the Rav clarified: “If the questioner wants advice, then the *Gadol*'s answer is “advice” to him. If the questioner is seeking a *psak* (a *halachic* ruling), this will depend. If he is going to the sage because he wants an answer based on the *Ruach HaKodesh* of the sage, then this alone does not obligate him to listen to the sage's answer. But if he asks the sage a question because he wants to hear the “word of Hashem” from him, and he believes that the word of Hashem is revealed through the sage who is worthy of hearing it, then that obligates him to listen to the sage.]

PURPOSE OF COMMUNIST RUSSIA

Does it make sense to say that Hashem placed millions of Jews in communist Russia without any Torah in their life, so that they will come to feel that they are missing something and then reveal the light of the *Keser*?

ANSWER

Yes! There are two parts [to reaching the light of *Keser*]. One part is the *ratzon* (the inner will) – through this exile [of communist Russia], the will of a Jew for Torah and mitzvos is intensified. When a person wants it and it is held back from him, it increases his desire for it. Another part of it is *mesirus nefesh*, which was greatly awakened through being in this exile [of communist Russia].

WHY DOES THE RAV GIVE BRIEF ANSWERS?

Why does the Rav give such short answers? Sometimes the brevity of the answer causes the reader to be unclear of what the answer is...

ANSWER

Chazal already taught, “One should always teach his student in a manner of brevity.” The Chazon Ish said that sometimes there can be a long path which is really short. First of all, giving long or short answers depends on the personal soul root [of the one giving the answer]. Some have a soul root that is more contracted, so they are inclined towards brevity, and others have a soul root that is more expansive, so they are inclined towards elaboration.

It also depends on how much time I have. Many times I can spend several hours a week answering questions, and I need to consider how energy and how much time I need to invest in writing responses, and how much time and energy needs to be spent on other areas.

An additional difficulty is because of the type of questions that come in. It is very easy for people to send in a very general question without learning about the topic at all beforehand, and in order for me to give an answer, I have to be very lengthy in order to give background on the topic of the question [and not always do I have the time for this]. The best thing is that when people send in a question, they should try to send in a question that is in the category of a “wise question”, which already contains half the answer, and the question should be coming from sources and from first being clear about the topic of the question, and after that a person should send in the question.

If there is anything unclear about an answer, you can try sending in another question for clarification of the answer.

HOW DID THE RAV BECOME A TZADDIK?

How did the Rav become such a *tzaddik* and reach such high levels??

ANSWER

“The heart knows the bitterness of his soul” that I am no *tzaddik*!

[SHOVAVIM] TESHUVAH THROUGH LEARNING TORAH

Since teshuvah during Shovavim involves immersing the mind in Torah, what about if a person just learns Torah without any intention for teshuvah and without awareness? Will his learning fix his sins if he’s not doing this from awareness to Shovavim and if he’s not consciously trying to do teshuvah?

ANSWER

To the degree that one deeply immerses his thoughts in Torah, that is the root of the *tikkun*. Intention (of doing *teshuvah*) adds to the quality of this.

[SHOVAVIM] FIXING THE SIN

Is there a *tikkun* (remedy for the soul) for the sins involving violating *Bris Kodesh*? It says that a person needs to fast 84 times in order to atone for this sin, but nowadays this is not possible. So is there any alternative *tikkun* that a person can do in order to atone for this sin?

ANSWER

There are many different ways of *tikkun* for this sin, and the root of all of them is the concept of exercising the power of *mesirus nefesh* (giving up one’s will). However the way that is closer within reach for most people is to bind one’s thoughts constantly on the Creator, to involve the mind constantly with learning His Torah, amidst pleasantness and calmness and not out of pressure or strain. There are also those who are careful to do the “*Pidyon Reshash*” at least once in their life, which carries the same weight as fasting 84 times.

[SHOVAVIM] AVOIDING WET-DREAMS

How can men avoid *keri* (wet-dreams) when sleeping at night (besides for making sure not to view anything inappropriate during the day)?

ANSWER

1) Your meals at night should be light, and don't eat things that cause the body to become aroused during sleep. 2) Alternatively, sleep with your feet tied together and exposed [uncovered by a blanket], or keep your feet folded on each other. 3) Before going to sleep, say the *pesukim* of *Tehillim* that are said on Yom Kippur night [which appear in the Yom Kippur Machzor after Maariv of Yom Kippur]. Also repeat for 3 times the *pasuk* of *Kedoshim Tihyu*, "You shall be holy to Hashem..." (Vayikra 19:2).

I've heard that learning *Mishnayos* is a great *tikkun* for *Shemiras HaBris*. Is there a particular *Mishnayos* which one should learn for this?

ANSWER

Yes – either *Seder Taharos* or *Seder Kodshim*.

[SHOVAVIM] GUARDING BRIS KODESH

1) Different sects of Klal Yisrael always emphasized one particular area of avodas Hashem another. By some, Torah is everything, and by others, *emunah* is everything. By others, *tefillah* is the main thing, and others focus on being *b'simchah*. Some sects of Klal Yisrael focused a lot on guarding *Bris Kodesh*, whereas others did not make that much of a deal of it, and some don't speak about it at all. I've heard that the ways of avodas Hashem that emphasize guarding and fixing *Bris Kodesh* are all the way of "Mashiach ben Yosef", whose role is to fight for *kedushah*, whereas those who focus more on *tefillah*, *emunah*, and other areas are part of the way of "Mashiach ben Dovid", whose role is to reveal *emunah*. (This is explained by the *sefer Nesivos Shalom*). Does this mean that not everyone holds that a person should be that concerned about *Shemiras HaBris*? and fixing sins in this area only if it's part of his mesorah to do so?

Or does everyone hold that a person should be careful when it comes to *Shemiras HaBris*?

2) Also, there are some people who fall into the sin of *p'gam Bris* but they just go on afterwards as if nothing happened, and they don't feel guilty about doing this *aveirah*, whereas others become broken whenever they fall into this *aveirah* and it eats them up and they are worried about how to do *teshuvah* for it, and especially when they fall a lot into this *aveirah*. Why do some people not feel guilty after doing this *aveirah*? Is it because they are most positive people who focus on *emunah* and being happy with themselves, or is it due to some other reason?

ANSWER

1) No. Everyone always held that a person should be very careful with guarding his *Bris Kodesh*, and the entire argument between the different ways in Klal Yisrael is only if a person needs to add on “extra” care or not when it comes to guarding *Bris Kodesh*.

2) As for those who quickly move on after falling into the *aveirah* of *p'gam Bris*, it comes from *timtum halev* [a heart that is blocked from *ruchniyus*, as a result of committing many *aveiros*].

[SHOVAVIM] ROOT OF THE TIKKUN

If a person becomes inspired during Shovavim to improve a bit in matters of *kedushah* (personal holiness) but he's not that young anymore, and the words aren't as applicable to him as they used to be, what can he work on [in order to do *teshuvah* during these days]?

ANSWER

The main *avodah* [during Shovavim] is to purify the mind's thoughts – both by thinking constantly in Torah, and also to refine the quality of one's thoughts. That is the root of the *tikkun*.

ספר נפש החיים שער ד'
עם ביאור בלבבי משכן אבנה
בקרוב





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