

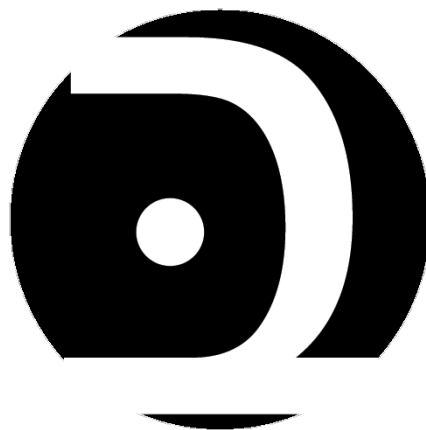
BILVAVI

**MY
HEART
ASKS**

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

PARSHAS VAYIKRA 5782

ISSUE 232



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MESIRUS NEFESH ON A PRACTICAL LEVEL

In the Rav's *derashah* "The Avodah of Our Generation", the Rav writes that the way to overcome the "50th Gate of Defilement" in our generation is only through *mesirus nefesh* [self-sacrifice]. However, in other *derashos*, I have heard the Rav say that there are always different paths to traverse: to go step after step, and the path of *mesirus nefesh*. But according to what the Rav has said in the *derashah* of "The Avodah of Our Generation", it seems that there is only one path to take – *mesirus nefesh*.

I would be happy if the Rav can clarify what this means for me, practically. Let's say we have a person who has difficulty with learning Torah, and he likes to sleep a lot. Does such a person need to give up his entire being, in one moment, in order to serve Hashem [by overcoming his difficulty in learning and his desire to sleep]? How can he do this, if he's not on that level?! So what does the Rav mean by the words "*mesirus nefesh*"?

ANSWER

Throughout all of the generations, there were always two paths: 1) *Hadrakah*, to progress step after step. 2) *Mesirus nefesh*, self-sacrifice, as Rabbi Eliezer ben Dordaya did [see Talmud Bavli, Avodah Zarah 17a].

In our generation, where the "50th Gate of Defilement" is in full force, the only way to counter it is through *mesirus nefesh*. Therefore, each person needs to exercise *mesirus nefesh* on [at least] one area of his life. However this does not mean that a person needs to do all of his actions with *mesirus nefesh*. It just means that a person needs to have some connection to the level of *mesirus nefesh*. It is possible for one to implement this idea by taking the area of his life in which he finds his greatest struggle in, and to have *mesirus nefesh* in that area.

Practically speaking, though, this is unfeasible for most people, so it is not close within reach of most people. So instead, one can try to find other areas in his life [where he struggles in] – each person on his own level and according to his own unique situation – and to exercise *mesirus nefesh* in those areas [in which he struggles in]. In that way, one can become connected to *mesirus nefesh*, and thereafter, one has a connection to the "50th Gate of Holiness", and he is no longer held captive by the "50th Gate of Defilement". Once a person accesses this spiritual illumination, it will be shined onto all other areas of one's *avodah*.

ASKING A TZADDIK FOR ADVICE

1) I deal with the tzibbur and sometimes people have very complex issues and questions, such as questions about shidduchim or medical issues and other serious issues, which needs to be asked to a Gadol. When sending in a question to a Gadol, does every detail of the question need to be described? Or is it enough to send in the question in general, without writing all the details, or is it not necessary to write down all the details of the question, because people will say to me, “Why do all of the details of the question need to be written, since he has Ruach HaKodesh?”

ANSWER

1) To give a very general description, there are two kinds of *Ruach HaKodesh*. There is one kind of *Ruach HaKodesh* where the *tzaddik* understands all of the details of an issue, through the enlightened understanding of *Ruach HaKodesh* that he has attained.

There is another kind of *Ruach HaKodesh* which does not make the *tzaddik* aware of all the details, but merely gives him the answer, in any of the following ways. Either the words come out of the *tzaddik*'s mouth, as Gemara in Tractate Berachos says, that a *possuk* (verse) can fall into one's mouth [when one wakes up in the morning] and this is a small level of prophecy. In the same way, words can come out of a *tzaddik*'s mouth [through *Ruach HaKodesh*] which answers the person's question or he becomes aware of the answer mentally in his thoughts, or he hears a voice telling it to him, or he will see the answer in the form of writing. In this kind of *Ruach HaKodesh*, the *tzaddik* is not aware of the reason for the answer.

Another phenomenon that is close to this is when the *tzaddik* gets a *muskal rishon* (initial perspective) about the issue, which is *Ruach HaKodesh*, and this is coming from a “spiritual illumination” that comes from the “intellect of the *neshamah*” [as opposed to his second thoughts, which are already mixed with human logic and which are not in the category of *Ruach HaKodesh*]. Sometimes he can even sense this with the spiritual sensitivity of his soul.

In the second kind of *Ruach HaKodesh*, there is no necessity for him to know every last detail of the issue. But in the first kind of *Ruach HaKodesh*, there are varying levels. If the *tzaddik* is on a completely righteous level, the *tzaddik* can see the questioner's soul at its source in the soul of Adam HaRishon, and even more so, he can see the soul root of the person as it was before Creation. But only rare

individuals throughout the generations had this ability. Any person who possessed *Ruach HaKodesh* saw things within the limitations of his understanding, just as no Torah scholar sees exactly what another Torah scholar sees in the Torah.

Therefore, the answer that the *tzaddik* saw in his *Ruach HaKodesh* is modified to the spiritual level of the *tzaddik*, and accordingly, the *tzaddik* will understand the general issue and the details of the issue, based on his particular level. When this happens, the *tzaddik* will sometimes become aware of details even by employing the use of his human logic, to understand what he sees in the spiritual spheres.

It resembles what happens with prophecy, where the prophet saw a certain vision and he needed to interpret what he saw, as the Ramchal describes, in sefer *Kelach Pischei Chochmah*. It was also similar to what happened when asking questions to the *Urim V'Tumim*, where the Kohen needed to use his *daas* in order to combine the letters properly and understand the answer. The answer that the *navi* or Kohen found did not come to him as a clear understanding, it had to be discerned. He had to analyze the information and combine it properly. With this kind of understanding, he was made aware of all the details.

Even more so, there were Sages who were able to answer questions based on wisdom and cleverness, combined with *siyata d'shmaya* (assistance from Heaven) and prayer to be guided to the truth. This is also entailed knowing all the details of the issue or question at hand.

QUESTION

2) When a Gadol or *tzaddik* writes a response to a question, is it to be regarded as “advice”, or do we need to look at it as a decision coming from Hashem, since a *tzaddik* is called an extension of Hashem [because Hashem communicates to us through the words of *tzaddikim*]?

ANSWER

2) It depends on what goal the questioner has in mind. If the questioner wants advice, then the Gadol's answer is “advice” to him. If the questioner is seeking a *psak*, this will depend. If he is going to the sage because he wants an answer based on the *Ruach HaKodesh* of the sage, he is not obligated to listen to the sage's answer. But if he asks the sage a question because he wants to hear the word of Hashem and he believes that the word of Hashem is revealed through the sage, who is worthy to hear the word of Hashem, then he is obligated to listen to the sage,

because it is the word of Hashem. Similarly, if the sage tells him that he heard the word of Hashem, the questioner is obligated to listen. But this barely ever happens.

QUESTION

3) What if the person asking the question has a certain subconscious motivation that he wants to get a certain answer from the Gadol? Will his ulterior motives cause the Gadol to give him an answer that's not accurate?

ANSWER

3) Yes – בדורך שאדם רוצה לילך מוליכין אותו – “In the way that a person goes, he is led in.” For this reason, many times the answer that one receives is not accurate.

QUESTION

4) *How should a question to a tzaddik be asked? Is this something that depends on which tzaddik one is asking and does it also depend on each questioner?*

ANSWER

It depends on the level of the sage and on the question being asked. In cases where the answer depends on the understanding of the sage, one should indeed suspect that the answer is being manipulated by the motivations of the questioner.

QUESTION

6) Are there any ways for a person to decide upon the answers to his questions? If yes, how can a person know which way is appropriate for him to use, in order to answer his questions? Are there several approaches which a person needs to use, in order to decide upon an answer to his questions or issues?

ANSWER

6) Yes. One way is if he removes himself from any subconscious ulterior motivations (*negios*), which allows the initial understanding to be true. Similar to this, the Ramban says that when one learns Torah *lishmah*, he can then decide the answer to his question based on the first thought that comes to him, because learning Torah *lishmah* removes all obstacles from him and allows him to receive spiritual illumination from the source of understanding. Alternatively, by having *emunah* that only Hashem manages everything (except for one's free will), the answer to one's question is also coming from the Creator, because here is one allowing the Creator to decide for him. But in order to do this, one needs to have very clear *emunah*.

All of these ways are true, and it is a matter which depends on each person's soul root (*shoresh neshamah*) as well as his current spiritual level (*madreigah*). The better a person recognizes himself, to that extent will he know when and how to go about this, and which approach to take.

.WHY AREN'T OUR GEDOLIM TELLING US TO MAKE ALIYAH?

1) It seems simple that every Jew should be in Eretz Yisrael in order to greet Mashiach, and even if a person *chas v'shalom* isn't *zoche* to see Mashiach at least he should be living in Eretz Yisrael to be spared from the dangers of the final war (Gog and Magog). What is the reason then for all of the silence of our *Gedolim* and wise sages of the generation – why don't they announce that everyone should make *aliyah* to Eretz Yisrael? (Is it because of the rule that the sages do not issue a decree that the community cannot keep to?)

2) Also, what makes the question even stronger is that our time period is clearly the very end of the *ikvesa d'meshichah*, and there are many *Midrashim* and words of our Sages written about the catastrophic scenarios that will take place in *chutz l'aretz* by the war of Gog and Magog, both physically and spiritually, so why aren't *Gedolim* telling us to make *aliyah* to Eretz Yisrael? Why all the silence? Is it because we are waiting for certain *simanim* (signs) to signify when the time is ripe for all of *Klal Yisrael* to go to *Eretz Yisrael*?

3) Finally, when making *aliyah* to *Eretz Yisrael*, where is the best place in *Eretz Yisrael* to be, in order to greet Mashiach?

ANSWER

1) Rav Chaim Kanievesky *shlit"á* tells people all the time to move to Eretz Yisrael. He is not being quiet about it. There are others who disagree with him. Others agree with Rav Chaim but they are not voicing their disagreement, in addition to other fundamental areas of Yiddishkeit that they are being quiet about, for certain reasons which they have (which take precedence to the issue of everyone moving to Eretz Yisrael or not).

2) Most of the Rabbonim in the generation are trying to lead and guide according to the level of the generation and they are trying to save whatever they can, according to their understanding of the issues of the generation. That is why they are quiet about matters that are even more important than this particular issue [of making aliyah or not to *Eretz Yisrael*].

3) [The best place to be in Eretz Yisrael to greet Mashiach is] Yerushalayim. If that is not possible, then try to be in Tzefas.

THE GEDOLIM'S VIEW ON INTERNET USE

1) I've seen the Rav's words on the severity of Internet use, and while people sense that there is truth in these words, they feel that in the end of the day the Gedolim allow Internet use under certain conditions, so the question is: Why are the Gedolim silent about Internet use, and why aren't the Gedolim as severe as the Rav is?

ANSWER

Already close to a decade ago, Rav Elyashiv zt"l organized here in Eretz Yisrael a group of Rabbonim to rule on technology matters and to establish clear-cut rules about it. I met several of those Rabbonim, and they said to me that they never personally examined these devices and what the different types of filters are, and they rely on the experts in technology for information on it, based on their understanding of how computers work, and accordingly, the Rabbonim decide what to do, based on the information they are receiving from the technology experts. These Rabbonim themselves expressed their pain over the fact that this is what's running the process, and they were very worried about what will result from all of this. There were also several Rabbonim, such as the *Bedatz Beis Din* in Bnei Brak who ruled that those who already own internet-capable devices must get the best filter possible. But gradually as time went on, the opposite happened. Those who previously had a kosher phone began to purchase filtered smartphones, etc.

One faction of Rabbonim were in great doubt about what to do about it, because it was a severe issue of transgressing Torah prohibitions versus financial loss for so many people, and to prohibit all internet use would certainly take away livelihood from the families of *Bnei Torah*, and all of religious Jewry in general. So they ruled that it is permissible to have such devices only for the purposes of *parnassah*

(livelihood), and the ruling was publicized in signs all over the country. But slowly, those signs were taken down, and then newly ‘edited’ signs began appearing, in which they only advertised the kosher certification of the Rabbonim for internet use, without specifying the condition of *parnassah* uses only. Another faction of Rabbonim felt that the *tzibbur* will not listen at all to the conditions, and ever since then they have been treading a thin rope on what to permit and what they should ignore.

QUESTION

2) It seems that the Gedolim do permit Internet under certain conditions, so why should we be more stringent than the Gedolim’s view on this matter?

ANSWER

More than 20 years ago, I heard from Rav Yechiel Yaakovson who heard from the tzaddik Rav Yoel Klufit zt”l that the day will come when Rabonim will permit certain things and every person will have to examine well his soul to see if the heter (leniency) is really appropriate. It’s astounding! He certainly meant internet.

QUESTION

3) The Rav said that the Gedolim are leading the generation according to the level of the generation, and that is why the Gedolim are silent about certain matters or are lenient in certain matters. According to the Rav’s words, this is leading the generation in destruction. How can it be that the Gedolim are leading this generation into destruction chas v’shalom?

ANSWER

This is *hanhagas hayichud* (Hashem’s way of oneness and higher mode of conduct) as the Ramchal discusses in *Daas Tevunos*, and it is a mode of conduct of Hashem that is very hidden and concealed.

QUESTION

4) According to the Rav’s words that those who remain connected to the 50th level of tumah via having internet, how can it be that most of the generation won’t make it to Geulah chas v’shalom or Olam HaBa chas v’shalom? Hashem is our merciful Father, surely He will save all His children and make sure that all of them make it to the Geulah and Olam HaBa!

ANSWER

Because we are in the final sorting process. The sefer *Chesed L'Avraham* says that if chas v'shalom not zocheh to the Geulah to come before its time, there will only be 7000 Jews who will be alive at the Geulah. The sefer *HaDor HaAcharon* brings together all the words of Chazal about this.

QUESTION

5) I am so heartbroken over the fact that so many Jews might not make it to the Geulah or lose Olam HaBa, chas v'shalom. I am especially worried for my family and grandchildren. I am crying for them and I am so distressed over this, and I am getting high blood pressure from thinking about this. What can I do to calm myself down?

ANSWER

On one hand, take your mind off from thinking about this, and on the other hand, connect yourself to emunah that since it is Hashem Who is doing everything, He knows better than we do, and that is the best *emunah peshutah* you can have.

QUESTION

6) Should we tell the Gedolim in chutz l'aretz about the Rav's words concerning all of this (the connection between Internet, Geulah and Olam HaBa) so that we can scream about this and save the generation? How I just sit by and watch the generation go to destruction???

ANSWER

It would be proper to do that, but only according to what you can handle emotionally. Do not overdo yourself when it comes to this, because if one becomes too involved in dealing with evil and in how much we need to separate from it, that can actually cause a person to fall very much.

CAN A GADOL MAKE A MISTAKE?

First I want to introduce this question by stating respectfully that I am asking these questions out of an earnest desire to know the truth, and not because I want to fight or attack. The Gra says in Mishlei (16) that the Sages of the generation are given special assistance from Heaven to give rulings to the public. We blindly followed the ruling of Gedolim to vaccinate – my wife got vaccinated but I didn't. I was

personally opposed to taking the vaccine. I didn't take the vaccine because I had just recovered from corona, but my wife got the vaccine. Later we heard someone put out an announcement with the exact words of Rav Vosner shlit" a (the grandson of R' Shmuel Vosner zt"l) who testified that scores of people (maybe more, I don't remember exactly what he said) testified that they were highly damaged because of the vaccine. And there were even cases of death from the vaccine, which the government hid from people. And there was also a letter from Rav Karp shlit" a (but it's an older letter from several months ago) saying almost the same thing.

Another story: About a year ago, the Gedolim from all different types of Jewry signed a letter of approval that people should donate to the organization "Hidabroot", for kiruv and tzedakah purposes. But now R' Kobi Levi is saying valid testimony that R' Chaim Kanievsky shlit" a forbids any kind of kiruv through "Kosher TV" channels and through "Shidduch websites", which were founded by Hidabroot. I think it's safe to say that if R' Chaim would know about everything Hidabroot is doing he probably would not advocate them. And in fact many Gedolim are also against Hidabroot, such as Rav Tzadka and Rav Mutzpi and others.

My question is: How do we explain such a thing, that Gedolim could be mistaken about something, and why isn't this a contradiction to the words of the Gra that the Gedolim always receive assistance from Heaven to give the right ruling when they are ruling for everyone?

Also, how can we ever rely on anything said in the name of the Gedolim when it's possible that they weren't given the right information about something (like if people intentionally withheld certain information from them when conveying to them all their information about something)? How can I listen and trust the Gedolim when I suspect that people are misleading them with false or lack of information, if I don't know for certain that they aren't being misled by the public? Does Hashem want me to blindly follow everything the Gedolim say even if it doesn't make sense to me? How can I be emotionally at peace with this, how can I trust their words when we can plainly see sometimes (maybe even many times, but I don't know...) that certain important information wasn't told to them?

ANSWER

The Baal Shem Tov said that sometimes the *nasi* (the leader) can sin due to the sins of the nation, because the nation are like the branches that are intertwined with the root, their *nasi* (their leader), and the branch always has some effect on the root, as well as vice versa.

That is why when the majority is found in the less ideal situation, they can be influencing the “root” (the leaders), and understand this very well.

And sometimes, the branches (the nation) don’t merit at all to be influenced by their root (by their leaders). The Gemara in Bava Kamma gives a parable about a flock of sheep that don’t listen to their master [and run away and become endangered by the wolves].

Another example is the generation of the Judges, as Chazal taught, that the Judges ruled according to the level of the generation [Because the generation was at a low level, the Judges also were influenced by the level of the generation]. I heard these words from my teacher, HaGaon R’ Gershon Edelstein shlit”a, earlier than 20 years ago.

2) I heard from my father-in-law who was a student of R’ Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt”l, that once someone came to him to discuss a halachic ruling that was publicized in his name. R’ Shlomo Zalman told him, “I never said this”, and then he added, “I am telling you and ruling to you that you should not believe whatever you hear in my name. Only believe what you hear directly from me.”

HOW DO WE KNOW WHO THE GADOL HADOR IS?

How do we know who the *Gadol HaDor* (the greatest person in the generation) is? Is it determined by the *Gadol HaDor* before him who appoints him to be in his place?

ANSWER

The *Gadol HaDor* is the one who has the soul of Moshe, either for the most part or at least a spark of Moshe in his soul. One of the Sages told his student, “Moshe, you have spoken well” (*Talmud Bavli Succah 39a*) and Rashi there says that just as Moshe was the “*gadol hador*”, so is the *gadol hador* in every generation called

“Moshe”, because there is an illumination of Moshe’s soul that shines within the soul of the *gadol hador*.

See also *Tiferes Yisrael* (on *Shabbos HaGadol*) who says that the *gadol hador* is the one in whose merit the entire world is sustained, such as R’ Chanina ben Dosa, of whom it was said, “The entire world is sustained through my son, Chanina.”

See also *sefer Sheairis Yisrael* (*Shaar Hiskashrus 5*) that if one has *mesirus nefesh* for the *EinSof* which goes beyond the level of *keilim*/vessels and he draws down nourishment from there to the world, he is the *Gadol HaDor*.

See also *sefer Bas Ayin* on *Parshas Beshalach*.

IF A TZADDIK ISN'T A TALMID CHOCHOM

How should we view *tzaddikim* if they aren't *talmidei chachamim* (Torah scholars)? Sometimes I see people who can *daven* for many hours straight, and their faces shine with *kedushah*, but they are not a *Talmid Chochom*. (1) May one go to such a person for advice or to get a *berachah* from him? Or is it better to go only to *tzaddikim* who are also *Talmidei Chachomim*?

ANSWER

There are three pillars that hold up the world (Torah, avodah and chessed) and each person can connect to any of these pillars depending on what his *shoresh neshamah* (soul root) is. That is why we can find people who put a lot of effort into their *tefillah* even though they are not that gifted in their Torah learning. We are allowed to go to such people for a *berachah*. If such a person has *Ruach HaKodesh*, we may also ask him for advice, but if he does not have *Ruach HaKodesh* then it is better to go to a *Talmid Chochom* whose thinking is *yashar* (Torah aligned) and clean from the influences of the world.

LUBAVITCH & MESSIANISM

How should we understand the view of Chabad Chassidus today on Moshiach and namely on the fact that they hold that the Rebbe was Mashiach, and especially on how Chabad views the Rebbe as being alive? It’s mind-boggling that such intelligent

people, even brilliant Talmidei Chochomim, can continue to hold strong with this absurdity.

ANSWER

Chazal said that the tzaddikim are called alive even in their deaths. However, this does not mean on a halachic level.

WHY DO SOME TZADDIKIM ACT COLD?

Something is very bothersome to me. There are many people who don't even observe Torah yet they are nice, warm, friendly people who are enjoyable to be around, and they act with derech ertz and they treat everyone respectfully. But we can find even tzaddikim who act harsh towards others, who do not act warm at all towards others, and sometimes they even push people away from them. How can such a thing be, that tzaddikim whom we look to as a symbol of radiating light to the world, of showing *achdus* and warmth and *derech ertz* for others – how can it be that those tzaddikim act cold and distant to others? I want a logical answer for this that will satisfy me, not some lofty spiritual reason that they are trying to rectify others' *neshamos*, because it's clear to me that this is not always the case.

ANSWER

There are several reasons for it, and here are a few of them. (1) It had to do with their *shoresh neshamah* (soul root). Some tzaddikim were very stern and strict with others, and a clear example of this was the sage Shammai, who pushed away the gentile who was trying to convert. (2) Due to the great holiness of the tzaddik, the tzaddik was not always able to handle the low spiritual level of the world around him. (3) The tzaddik might not have reached his own *shoresh neshamah* yet, and therefore he is not serene, and as a result he has imbalances in his interpersonal behavior with others. (4) It can also be that he hasn't yet perfected the lower level of the soul, the *nefesh habehaimis*. (5) It can also be that he is trying to do *hamtakas hadinim*, he is trying to mitigate the stern judgments that are hanging upon others. This was the way of the holy *tzaddikim* of the recent generation before us.¹

¹ Editor's Note: As it was known, the Steipler zt'l would often scream at others. Other Gedolim as well could be very stern with others, and it was for the purpose of erasing the harsh judgments that were hanging upon others.

HELP FROM A TZADDIK

Is there a concept that a person can receive help from the souls of tzaddik, regarding certain areas of inner work? Also, is this something that is worthwhile for a person to invest his efforts in?

ANSWER

Yes [there is such a concept]. The main avodah of a person should be spent on developing his soul, but one can also involve himself a little with gaining help from a tzaddik.

A connection to the soul of a tzaddik can be gained from attaching oneself to the Torah teachings of the tzaddik, or by connecting with the unique actions that the tzaddik did. Or, a person can gain from a tzaddik if he is of [or attains] the same soul root (shoresh haneshamah) of the tzaddik.



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