

BILVAVI

**MY
HEART
ASKS**

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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CHOVOS HALEVOVOS VS. MESILLAS YESHARIM

Which is a better sefer to learn, *Chovos HaLevovos* or *Mesillas Yesharim*? I'm always in doubt if I should be learning either of these two sefarim, which are each so amazing, at times I feel like sticking with *Mesillas Yesharim* but at other times I'm more inclined to stick with *Chovos HaLevovos*. Can the Rav please help me clarify my confusion about what to learn and which path to take?

ANSWER

The *sefer Mesillas Yesharim* is based on the secret of “unifying Hashem’s Name” (*yichud Hashem*), as the author the Ramchal explains about in the sefer *Daas Tevunos*. This is also known as *hanhagas hayichud* (the mode of unification, Hashem’s revealed light, Hashem’s infinite compassion, *rachamim* – the higher mode of conduct). The *sefer Chovos HaLevovos* is describing *hanhagas hamishpat* (the mode of justice, Hashem’s concealment, *din* – the lower mode of Hashem’s conduct). The *Chovos HaLevovos* is like the *guf* (body) compared to the *Mesillas Yesharim*, which is like the *neshamah*, for the *Chovos HaLevovos* is describing *hanhagas hamishpat*, the lower mode of conduct that is subservient to Hashem’s higher mode of conduct known as *hanhagas hayichud*. Practically speaking, one should work his way upwards, beginning from the “*guf*”, which is to *first learn sefer Chovos HaLevovos*, and after that one should learn the *neshamah* part of his *avodah*, which is by learning *Mesillas Yesharim*. For a long time one should be implementing what he learns in *Chovos HaLevovos*, and after that one can enter into the *avodah* described in *Mesillas Yesharim*. For the time being, don’t learn any other sefarim, and by going in the aforementioned order of learning you will have, with *siyata d’shmaya*, the clarity to remove your confusion and doubts.

INVOLVEMENT IN MY HUSBAND’S LEARNING

My husband is a Talmid Chochom and learns all day. I want to make sure that he also learns the hidden dimension of Torah (Zohar, Arizal, etc.) though, because I read that if a person doesn’t learn all of the parts of Torah, including even the hidden and esoteric areas of Torah, he will need to come back in a different lifetime in order to learn those parts of Torah that he didn’t learn. In light of this, I am trying to get my husband to add on learning “Zohar” to his Gemara sessions. My husband wants me to show him sources that

say he must do this. Can the Rav guide me to any sources about this matter? Or, am I not supposed to be getting involved in his learning?

ANSWER

Generally a wife is not supposed to be involved in what her husband is learning, whether he is learning Gemara *bekiyus*, Gemara *b'iyun*, *halachah*, *agadta*, kaballah, etc. There are only rare instances in which a husband involves his wife in what he is learning and he is happy to include her in it. This only happens where the couple has a very unique and strong relationship with each other. A wife's role is to *daven* for her dear husband that he should completely reach his unique share in the Torah.

SEFER FROM THE GRA & FROM CHASSIDUS TO LEARN?

I want to gain from both the way of thinking of the Gra (the Vilna Gaon) and also from *Chassidus*. Which is a good sefer from both of the above paths that is recommended for me to learn?

ANSWER

Gra: The sefer *Even Shelaimah*. Chassidus: sefer *Shem M'Shmuel*.

HOW SHOULD WE VIEW PSYCHOLOGY

1) How should we view psychology? On one hand it's all secular knowledge which is antithetical to the Torah, but on the other hand it has helped so many people.

ANSWER

Psychology can only help the surface level of a Jew's soul. It is not able to help the "Jewish" part of the Jew's soul.

QUESTION

2) We can see today that Rebbeim in yeshivos who have degrees in psychology were able to help so many students who were struggling in all kinds of situations. We can see that our communities are very thirsty for this kind of knowledge [to know professionally how to identify and deal with all kinds of emotional, mental and behavioral issues]. Certainly it's all

in the Torah, but very few people know where to find this information in the Torah, and of the educators in our system who became professionals in psychology did not get this information from the Torah, but from going for schooling and getting their degrees in psychology. Is it better to send my children to a school where the Rebbi has a degree in psychology?

ANSWER

It's better to send your children to a school where those educating your children are people who have a love for Hashem and who have a love for people, and they should be people who have wisdom about life. This was always the way it has been throughout the generations.

QUESTION

3) Also, I've heard that Rav Dessler and Rav Avigdor Miller advised people to read the books of Dale Carnegie (who was a gentile and also a devout Christian). Did everyone agree with this?

ANSWER

No.

REVELATIONS OF ELIJAHU TODAY

The Rav explained that the “voice of Eliyahu” which precedes Mashiach’s arrival is currently being revealed today on an inner level, via the secrets of Torah which are available to those who purify themselves inwardly, and with the closer we get to Mashiach, the more clearly we can have access to this “voice of Eliyahu” which is the secrets of Torah. Is this only for people on a high level or can anyone today reach it?

ANSWER

On any level, one can find a degree of “Eliyahu”, and that is when any spiritual level becomes revealed to a person (because Eliyahu implies revelation).

This concept is described by the *Chovos HaLevovos (Gate VIII:3)* who writes, “Hashem can be found in one’s inner recesses, and one can see Him with his mind’s eye.”

MISCARRIAGES

1) Can emotional issues cause a woman to miscarry (whether she has experienced certain emotional issues in the past or whether she is currently experiencing them)? 2) If yes, then what is the nature of the connection between a woman's emotional state and her fetus? 3) Is this the same for all women? 4) How can a woman know what particular emotional issue she went through or is currently going through which caused her to miscarry?

ANSWER

1) Sometimes, yes [an emotional issue can cause a woman to miscarry]. 2) It depends on what exactly she has gone through or is currently going through [certain issues can be intense enough to bring on a miscarriage, whereas other emotional issues are not intense enough to cause her to miscarry]. 3) This is an example of a question that's very hard to answer. 3) The connection between a mother and her fetus is not the same in every woman. 4) Just as it is sometimes easy to see how Hashem is acting *middah k'neged middah* (measure for measure) and sometimes it is not easy to see how, so is it the same when it comes to this [sometimes it is easy to know what issue caused it, and sometimes it is difficult to know what caused it].

WHAT HAPPENS TO OUR DESIRES AFTER DEATH

1) Do all of our intentions in our efforts to redeem the Shechinah, which is concealed by our *nefesh habehaimis* (animal soul), which we redeem by nullifying our will to Hashem's will – does this materialize only after death?

ANSWER

Part of it is revealed already now [during one's lifetime].

QUESTION

2) Is our ability to approach the light of Hashem and the Next World entirely a result of our requests from Hashem when we were alive on this world, and from our difficulties we faced in actualizing our inner desire to go above our natural desires of our animal soul to serve Hashem for the sake of His Name?

ANSWER

In potential, it is always existent, and it becomes actualized and brought to fruition through doing our avodah (task) on this world.

QUESTION

3) Is all that we're doing on this world essentially fixing our soul so that the self-focused desires of our animal soul won't remain with us after we die?

ANSWER

It depends on how much self-purification a person underwent on this world.

QUESTION

4) Are our requests from Hashem to materialize our inner will to overcome our animalistic tendencies all a return of the Shechinah's light which became concealed on this world, returning it to its original state when it was unified with Hashem?

ANSWER

Yes.

QUESTION

5) Is all of this a spark of Mashiach?

ANSWER

Yes.

QUESTION

6) Is all that we have acquired on this world essentially the very judgment that will decide if we can approach Hashem's light and the Next World?

ANSWER

Yes, and it becomes even more revealed after death, when we are divested of all physicality.

QUESTION

7) And if yes, is that the general and universal avodah for all people, in spite of all the pain that we are in as a result of unfixed character in an our animal soul which leaves us in an egoistic and self-focused state?

ANSWER

Yes.

QUESTION

8) In short, the question is: After we die, do we remain emotionally connected to our natural desires that we had on this world? For example if a person dies and he still feels an emotional connection to Internet, does that desire remain with him even in death, or does that connection become erased after death, leaving him with only his true and holy desires of wanting to do Hashem's will?

ANSWER

Yes! Yes! Slowly, the soul despairs [from its worldly desires], because [after death] it sees and understands that it can no longer return to there anymore.

ABORTION

I have a relative who went to the doctors for an ultrasound and she told that her fetus won't live for more than a few months, and she was told to do abortion. She received a ruling from several Rabbonim who are G-d fearing people, that she should do the abortion. She is inconsolable over this and has so many questions: Why is Hashem doing this to her? Why did Hashem make this fetus have to undergo abortion and be killed? For what purpose does this unborn child have to go through this? I am at a loss of what to tell her, but she wants answers and she wants to be consoled. What is the attitude to have about this situation?

ANSWER

Chazal said that before Hashem created our world, He created several worlds and then destroyed them, so these worlds never fully developed. The concept of these undeveloped worlds sometimes becomes manifest in the active sense in these souls who don't develop

fully, who have a soul root in these undeveloped worlds that were destroyed. Sometimes these souls get a *tikkun* (a repair) after developing as a fetus for a short amount of time, and sometimes they get a *tikkun* a little later when they have to undergo abortion. They have to undergo some form of punishment [in order to rectify the damage that resulted from them in those undeveloped worlds], measure-for-measure [by being destroyed, which mimics how their roots never developed fully and become destroyed].

PERSISTENCE IN DAVENING FOR SOMETHING

My understanding is that when a person *davens* when he really wants something, he needs to add on at the end of his tefillah "Only answer my *tefillah* if this is for my good", because sometimes a person is *davening* so long for something which is really for his own good (even though he thinks it is), and since "In the way a person wants to go in, he is led", Hashem will answer his *tefillos* even though it will be to his detriment. Is this true?

ANSWER

There are some times where that is true [where his *tefillos* will be answered even when it's not for his good, because he keeps *davening* for it], and there are other times where no matter how much a person *davens*, his request will not get answered.