

BILVAVI

**MY
HEART
ASKS**

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

PARSHAS NASO-SHAVUOS 5782

ISSUE 244

SHAVUOS – THE CUSTOM OF FLOWERS & GRASS

What is the connection between having flowers in the house and *Shavuos*? When a person sees flowers on his table on *Shavuos*, what can he think, in order to transform it from a mere externality into a more spiritual experience?

(Also, I noticed that the word for “flower” in Hebrew is *perach*. Can this be an implication that the flowers on *Shavuos* are supposed to remind a person that the souls of the Jewish people were *porcha*, they “flew out” of their bodies, when they stood at Har Sinai?)

ANSWER

The roots of this custom are discussed in *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim: 494*, which cites the custom to hang grass in remembrance of the event of the giving of the Torah, where **grass** surrounded Har Sinai. The *Magen Avraham* (*ibid*) writes that there is also a custom to place **trees** in the *shul* and in houses, in remembrance of how Shavuos is the time where the world is judged on its fruit of trees. The *Magen Avraham* adds that one should pray for the fruit of the trees [to merit a good judgment]. The *Gra* abolishes this custom, since it is now the custom of gentiles to erect trees on their festivals. Refer to the *Mishnah Berurah* (*ibid*, 10) for more on this.

In *halachah*, only grass and trees are mentioned. But **flowers** are also included in this. The root of this matter is because at the time when Adam sinned, there were “288 sparks of holiness” which fell to the “side of evil”. The number 288 in Hebrew spells the word *repach*, an opposite arrangement of the letters of the Hebrew word *perach*, which means “flower”. At the time of the giving of the Torah, there was a temporary leave from death, for the curse of death was lifted at that time. At that time, the “288 sparks” were raised back to holiness (this is according to one opinion of the Sages in Tractate Avodah Zarah). Since the “288 sparks” were raised back to holiness, the souls of the Jewish people flew out of their bodies - as Chazal state, “*parcha nishmasan*”, their souls flew away from them. In other words, the “288 sparks of holiness” were raised back to holiness, together with this elevated state.

This is the depth behind hanging grass to remember the giving of the Torah. At the giving of the Torah, they were raised from the level of animal to the level of human being, for on Pesach there is a *korbon* brought made of barley, which is animal food, and on Shavuos there is an offering brought from wheat, which is food for people [therefore, grass is in remembrance to the food of animals, which we became elevated from, at the time of the giving of the Torah].

The *Magen Avraham* writes that one should place trees in shuls and homes and pray for the fruit of trees. On a deeper level, this is really a prayer to rectify the sin of eating from the fruit of the forbidden tree, the *Eitz HaDaas*, the first fruits of the world which were eaten which were an act of sin, and in its place, we pray to reveal the fruit of the *Eitz HaChaim*, the Tree of Life. This can be accomplished through the study of Torah, for Torah is called the *Eitz HaChaim*, the “tree of life”. That is also why there is a custom to place the trees near the place in the shul where the Torah is read from.

SHAVUOS – WOMEN & GIRLS

How can women and girls relate to *Shavuos*? How can women and girls have a connection to the event of receiving the Torah, and to relate to this on an emotional level? How can women and girls connect to the concept of this festival, in a way that speaks to their emotions?

ANSWER

- 1) [A woman can feel a connection to the event of receiving the Torah since] all of the Jewish people stood together at Har Sinai with one heart. So the women, too, were each unified with the whole of *Klal Yisrael*.
- 2) Women have a connection to a more inner root than the above: they can connect to the “light” of Torah. There is a “light” within the Torah which is at a higher spiritual point than the intellectual aspects of Torah (which include *chochmah*, *binah* and *daas*), and this higher level is called “*Toras Hashem Temimah*”, the “Torah of Hashem is perfect” [and it is this particular aspect of Torah which women can emotionally connect to].
- 3) Women also have an active connection to the Torah, on the level of “*shirah*”, “song”, for the Torah is called *shirah* [Ed. refer to the *derashah* of “*Song of the Jewish Woman*”].

SHAVUOS – NIGHT OF MESIRUS NEFESH FOR TORAH

In the *Shelah haKadosh* it is written that on Shavuos, a man is judged for how much Torah he will merit, in amount and in quality. Why didn’t *Chazal* establish any special prayers about this?

ANSWER

The Torah was given with *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice), because for every word of Hashem that was uttered, their souls flew out of them. Every year as well, the main spiritual level of this day is *mesirus nefesh*, which is a higher level than *tefillah*\prayer.

SHAVUOS - LEARNING FROM A DEEPER PLACE

What does the rav recommend to do on shavuos night, besides for what the rav has taught us that a person needs to prepare himself [for the upcoming festival]? What is the kind of learning that the rav suggests? Should a person also go out to do hisbodedus? Should one learn with the program that is in the place he lives in, or should he learn alone?

ANSWER

One should learn from a deep connection of his mind and heart, each person according to his own level, from the deepest place in his soul, the “fiftieth gate” of the soul, on the fiftieth day [of the Omer]. Part of this is that a person should also reach the place of “alone” in his soul, which is the deepest place in his own individual soul.

SHAVUOS – EXPERIENTIALLY CONNECTING TO SINAI

The Jewish people received the Torah and reached a state where the sin of Adam HaRishon was rectified. If one didn’t merit to connect to this level of rectifying the sin of Adam HaRishon, is it possible for him also to connect to the event of standing at Har Sinai, which is the main *avodah* of this day [Shavuos], to connect to that event of Har Sinai? In our generation, how is it possible to connect to that event, when we are missing the necessary conditions which the Jewish people had at that time?

ANSWER

Through *mesirus nefesh* [willingness to give up our souls for G-d and for His Torah], we penetrate to the root of the spiritual level of the giving of the Torah. The root of the giving of the Torah was *mesirus nefesh*, because the souls of the Jewish people left them at every word of Hashem.

WAYS OF LITVAKS, CHASSIDIM & SEFARDIM

1) What is the difference between the Chassidim, Litvish, and Sefardim regarding the different ways of learning the “inner dimension” of Torah?

ANSWER

The way of learning for Sefardim is to focus on the simple meaning of the text, from deducing the meaning of the words (*diyuk*). (When it comes to learning the writings of the Arizal, the commentaries differ regarding how much *diyuk* one needs to use). In addition, the Sefardim use the ability of *cheshbon* [following the flow of thought of the words], and

sometimes in order to answer a question or in order to fill in a missing detail which isn't explicitly written, the Sefardim also employ the ability of *sevara* (logic).

The way of learning of the Litvish is to learn with understanding (*havanah*) and intellectualizing (*haskalah*), to understand the very concept of each level, and accordingly, to understand the path of the wisdom, with *sevara* and with *cheshbon*. A little bit of this is explained by the Gra, in his commentary on *Mishlei*, besides for what the Gra explains in his commentary to *Sefer Yetzirah* and mainly in his commentary on *Tikkunei HaZohar*.

Chassidim learn about each thing from a "soul" understanding, and from an understanding that relates to personal *avodah*.

2) What are the different ways of their *avodas Hashem*?

ANSWER

The Sefardim emphasize the specific *kavanos* (intentions) to have when performing *mitzvos*. The way of the Litvish is to become completely attached by contemplating the ideals. The way of the Chassidim is to do the *avodah* of the soul that pertains to each detail, for the purpose of achieving *d'veykus*.

3) Which is the path that the Rav recommends?

ANSWER

Each person needs to choose which path is appropriate for him, based on his personal soul root.

WHY IS GEMARA SO IMPORTANT

Why does most of a man's time need to be spent on learning Gemara in-depth? What do we get out of it that's so important? Why don't we instead spend our time delving into spiritual discussions, as well as learning *halachah l'maaseh* (practical *halachah*) and also *hashkafah* (Torah ideology)? What do we gain from learning *Shas*?

As a separated, unrelated question to the above, it seems that each of us is bound to stumble in prohibitions of the Torah, since we didn't learn *halachah* properly. For example, we know that if one doesn't learn *hilchos* Shabbos properly, he is bound to transgress on Shabbos. Doesn't this obligate us to halt our entire daily schedule and learn *halachah* properly? Only after learning *halachah* properly would it make sense to move on to learning Torah for its own sake, with all the analytical and in-depth understanding involved. Isn't it an obligation us to study halachah [since ignorance of the *halachah* causes

us to stumble]? And isn't there a rule that "Ignorance is not an excuse – you should have learned about it"?

[In relation to the above question:] If a person learns *halachah* for an hour every day, is he fulfilling his obligation? If he sins out of ignorance, are his sins not regarded, since he is at least in the process of trying to learn *halachah* and fulfill it...?

ANSWER

Chazal state (in Tractate *Kiddushin*) that a person should divide his Torah study into three different areas: Mikra (Chumash), Mishnah (Mishnayos) and Talmud (Gemara). Most of our Gedolim did not have the view that a person should spend most of his day on questions about the spiritual, or on matters of *hashkafah*, etc. Our Gedolim also did not say that a person should first learn halachah until he knows them well, so that he won't stumble upon prohibitions. The truth is that the *sefer Chovos HaLevovos* was of the view that a person shouldn't spend time on *pilpul* (analytical discussions of the Gemara) if it didn't lead to any practical outcomes, and instead, a person should only learn halachah that has practical relevance, as well as any matters that are relevant to one's personal *avodah*. However, the *Chasam Sofer* vehemently opposed the view of the *Chovos HaLevovos*, arguing that none of our Sages of the Talmud or any of the *Rishonim* ever had such a view. Be that as it may, it was certainly the view of the *Chovos HaLevovos*.

Another likewise view is stated in the *sefer Igros HaRamchal*, where the Ramchal wrote in a letter that a person should mainly spend his time on inner wisdom, and not on *pilpul*. This is also alluded to in the version of *Mesillas Yesharim* which we possess nowadays, and it was elaborated upon more in the more recently discovered "version" of the *Mesillas Yesharim*, entitled *Maamar HaVikuach*, under the format of a question and answer.

Most of our *Gedolim*, and practically all of them, were of the view that a person should mainly spend his Torah study on learning Gemara, and *Tur*, *Shulchan Aruch* and the commentaries. This is actually a multi-colored field of study. Some are more drawn towards the practical *halachah* that is derived from learning Gemara, while others are more drawn towards becoming immersed in the in-depth, analytical discussions on the Gemara.

The truth is that every person has his root area in Torah learning, and therefore each person needs to learn Torah in accordance with his particular area in Torah. It is upon every person to exert himself and clarify what his main area in Torah is – as we *daven* for each day, "And give us our portion, in Your Torah."

Since we don't find that any of our *Gedolim* held that a person should first learn all of *halachah* and only after that to learn the rest of the Torah, it is apparent that our *Gedolim* were of the view that there is no such obligation. That is why they did not learn in such a manner, and certainly they did not rule that their students should learn in this way, nor did they write about such a way of learning in any of the *sefarim* they wrote. Therefore, it is apparent that the *mitzvah* of learning Torah defines for us what the order of our learning should be, and accordingly, we are able to learn about the defining parameters of each *halachah*.

HOW TO REACH THE YECHIDAH THROUGH TORAH STUDY

The *Sfas Emes* in *parshas Beraishis* writes that just as the *Chayah* and *Yechidah* parts of the soul are “enveloping lights” which surround a person, so are Torah and *mitzvos* “enveloping lights”, which raise a person from the soul levels of *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah* to the higher soul levels, *Chayah* and *Yechidah*. He writes further that doing *mitzvos* raises a person to the *Chayah* level of the soul, and learning Torah raises a person to the *Yechidah* level of the soul. Understandably, though, most people learning Torah do not reach the *Yechidah* level of the soul, even though they learn it with exertion and even though their main desire in life is to learn Torah. So how can a person truly reach the *Yechidah* level of the soul through learning Torah, as the *Sfas Emes* describes?

ANSWER

Through learning Torah with *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice) and *l'sheim l'shamayim* (for the sake of Heaven).

SHAVUOS – MIKVEH

Should a person try especially hard to find a mikveh [on shavuos morning before shacharis]?

ANSWER

Yes.



The Rav's classes appear
in "Kol haLashon"
Torah Bank Service
USA 718.521.5231 #2>4>12
Israel 073.295.1245

For Inquiries on
"Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh"
Contact: 052.763.8588
Email info@bilvavi.net



בלבבי משכן אבנה עולם ברור

המאמרים שבאו בספר זה, רובם נערכו מתוך סדרת שיעורים שניתנה במוצאי שבתות בעיר בני ברק. כל שיעור מקיף ומברר נקודה אחת בהלכות דעות וחובות הלבבות, ונותן מבט שורשי ומעשי בדרך הישרה שיבור לו האדם. בחלקו האחרון של הספר מופיעים "מאמרי התקופה" - מתוך שיעורים שנמסרו לאור תקופתנו, וכן שיחה נוגעת לתקופתנו מאת הגה"צ רבי שמשון דוד פינקוס זצ"ל, היוצאת לאור לראשונה.



הפצה אבדומוביץ
03.578.2270
משלוח ברחבי העולם

ספרי אבדומוביץ
רח. קוטלר 5, בני ברק
03.579.3829

הפצת ספרי קודש
רח. דוד 2, ירושלים
02.623.0294

ספרי מאה שערים
רח. מאה שערים 15,
ירושלים 02.502.2567

סניפים ספרי אור החיים

USA: SHIRA DISTRIBUTORS 718.871.8652

בלבבי משכן אבנה בעל שם טוב - להב אש

ספר בעל שם טוב התחבב לדורות, אלא, שמאמריו בעוד שהם עמוקים הם גם תמציתיים, מצב הגורם קושי להביןם ולהשיגם. הרב מגלה רבות מהעמקות שיש בעשרים ושישה מאמרים ראשונים של פרשת בראשית.

בספר להב אש, סידר הרב וכיאר את מאמרים אלו על פי סדר הנושאים, כולל: תורה, תפילה, אהבת ה', אהבת ישראל, אכילה בקדושה, אמונה, אמת, בחירה חופשית, בטחון בה', וקדושה



הפצה אברומוביץ

03.578.2270

משלוח ברחבי העולם

ספרי אברומוביץ

רח. קוטלר 5,

בני ברק 03.579.3829

הפצת ספרי קודש

דח. דוד 2,

ירושלים 02.623.0294

ספרי מאה שערים

רח. מאה שערים 15,

ירושלים 02.502.2567

סניפים ספרי אור החיים

USA: SHIRA DISTRIBUTORS 718.871.8652

בס"ד

בלבבי משכן אבנה תיקון כח התאוה

ספר זה עוסק בביאור פרטי מידת התאוה הרעה שבאדם, והדרכה מעשית לאופן תיקונה. האופנים שבהם מתגלית מידת התאוה בנפש האדם רבים הם מאוד. בספר זה מובאים ט"ז האופנים הזותר עיקריים והזותר בולטים, שבהם מתגלית מידת התאוה בנפש האדם.

הפצה אברומוביץ

03.578.2270

משלוח בדחי העולם



ספרי אברומוביץ	הפצת ספרי קודש	ספרי מאה שערים
רח. קוטלר 5,	רח. דוד 2,	רח. מאה שערים 15,
בני ברק 03.579.3829	ירושלים 02.623.0294	ירושלים 02.502.2567

סניפים ספרי אור החיים

USA: SHIRA DISTRIBUTORS 718.871.8652

בס"ד

בלבבי משכן אבנה

נפש החיים שער ד'

מטרתו של ספר נפש החיים שער ד' עם פירוש בלבבי משכן אבנה הוא, לברר מהו עניינה ומהותה של התורה הקדושה, ואת יחס חיבורו של ה'אדם' לתורה הקדושה, בכל מדרגותיה. [562 עמודים]

הפצה אבחמוביץ

03.578.2270

משלוח ברחבי העולם



ספרי אבחמוביץ	הפצת ספרי קודש	ספרי מאה שערים
רח. קוטלר 5,	רח. דוד 2,	רח. מאה שערים 15,
בני ברק 03.579.3829	ירושלים 02.623.0294	ירושלים 02.502.2567

סניפים ספרי אור החיים

USA: SHIRA DISTRIBUTORS 718.871.8652