

**BILVAVI**

**MY  
HEART  
ASKS**

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

**PARSHAS BALAK 5782**

**ISSUE 249**

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## CONSTANT HEADACHES & ANXIETY

I have a great difficulty in my life which has already been going on for 10 years, and I don't have a solution until today. I will speak about it briefly and how it started. For about a year and a half, I was learning Torah, enthusiastically and with excitement. But along with this – I may be exaggerating when I describe this all – it came one Shabbos morning that when I started to learn Gemara, I began to get headaches.

Until today I am suffering from headaches. Every time I get an ache in my body, it translates into a headache. If I am a bit tired, I begin to get headaches. If I am a bit hungry, or if I'm a little cold, or if I'm not understanding the Gemara or anything else that I'm learning, I get headaches. Throughout all of this, I have cried to Hashem about my problem, and I have sought all of the Gedolim of the generation, yet I have still not received a satisfying answer to help solve my problem or to help me know how to deal with it. I have been to all kinds of therapists and doctors, ranging from neurologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and natural healers. From what all of the Rabbis and therapists have told me, I understand that the main reason for my headaches is stemming from inner anxiety.

Here is my big problem: according to what they are saying, I am the only one who can solve the issue. But it's already been many years and I have tried so many different ways, yet I haven't been successful. I cannot describe the pain that all of this has caused me and my family. I will just say this: My headaches greatly weaken me, they feel crushing to me, and

they are breaking my spirit. All of the *tefillos* I have davened for the last 10 years have been accompanied with headaches. For at least half of the time that I sit in Kolel, I experience headaches.

My progress in Torah learning has been very slow, as a result from this. My wife has suffered a lot because of this, and it is very difficult for me to take care of my household responsibilities, to raise my children and educate them. I feel like I am going to break. I can't go on anymore carrying this, and I don't want to live anymore like this. And I don't know if it's good for me to continue remaining in Kolel.

I am very convinced that if the Rav speaks with me, this will help me, whether a little or a lot. I am begging the Rav to help me, because I am like a blind person groping in the dark. Much thanks.

## ANSWER

After I read your letter with the seriousness that is appropriate for such a question, it appears, with *siyata d'shmaya*, that the following will illuminate the way for you.

1. The basis of our day-to-day living requires *menuchas hanefesh*, a serene soul. There are many ways to arrive at this serenity. One of those ways is explained in the "Inner Silence" series (דע את התבודדותיך). It seems that this is your *avodah* right now: to acquire *menuchas hanefesh*.
2. After that, it's possible for you to apply yourself with more exertion [to Torah study], from amidst your newly acquired *menuchas hanefesh*, and to keep repeating the cycle, of being serene, then exerting yourself [in Torah], then returning to serenity, etc. If you are ever straining yourself to the point that you can easily regain your serenity back, it is an indicator that you are acting way above your current level [which is detrimental for you].
3. As a general course of action, for the time being, it would be appropriate for you to make sure you are eating healthy and tasty food, which will calm you on a physical level and on an emotional level. You should also sleep as much as you need to, but don't pressure yourself to get a specific amount of sleep. You should also involve yourself in pleasant activities which calm your soul, such as singing, taking walks, etc. until you feel that you

have become more serene. Correspondingly, involve yourself in the avodah that is described in the “Inner Silence” series.

4. For the time being, whenever you learn Torah, you should learn about things which you find interesting and enjoyable, without pressuring yourself. Generally speaking, do not learn any of those parts of Torah which you had been learning during your difficult period, because that will trigger the old issues.

May Hashem give you the illumination of Mashiach that it should shine within your soul, completely, and through this, you will “return, and healing will come to you.” Amen, and may this become His will.

## HELPING KIDS AT RISK

What should be a person’s attitude towards kids who have thrown off the responsibilities of Torah and mitzvos (*r”l*)? In our community there are many boys and girls who have “gone off the *derech*”, and many of them even come from prominent families of G-d fearing, *bnai Torah*. It’s so painful for any person to see these kids. When I see them, I immediately start thinking of what I can do to help draw them closer. I have a desire to draw all of them closer to *Yiddishkeit*, but I don’t know exactly how. What can I do for them? Should I learn Torah as a merit for their souls? Should I speak to them warmly and with love? Should I judge them favorably and smile at them and greet them? What can *I* do, and what can *we* do for them...??

### ANSWER

Not everyone can actually be involved with them. Certain personality traits and conditions are required, in order to get involved with helping them.

First of all, you need to be able to “come down to their level” [to relate to what they are going through], but without falling down with them. Many times, people who are involved with helping them end up falling in with them, and to a very low level. Well-meaning people come to help these kids with the intentions of kiruv (drawing others closer to *Yiddishkeit*), and in the end they themselves become distanced further from *Yiddishkeit*. This happens because when a person talks to them, he opens his soul to another person’s world and he becomes connected to the other person’s life, and currently, the other person

is involved with the worst kinds of behaviors. [Therefore, when one talks to the other person, he becomes very connected to the other's life and all that's going on in it, and he falls in with him.]

Also, these kids are often broken souls, not just from a spiritual viewpoint, but also from emotional viewpoint. They are suffering emotionally, whether they are depressed, melancholy, full of despair, unstable, lacking love from their parents, etc. When one connects with the emotional suffering that these children or teenagers are going through, he will also suffer emotionally with them [to the point that it is emotionally unhealthy for him to be involved].

In other scenarios, a person will need to go to certain places to be *mekareiv* others, and these places are really inappropriate to be in. Sometimes a person will bring the struggling child or teenager into his house, and this can have a bad influence on his own children.

One needs a lot of understanding of the soul in order to know how to deal with these children or teenagers, and to know how he should act with them and how to speak to them. One also needs to show a warm, friendly countenance towards them, and he also needs to possess a good heart, and to be very giving towards others, and to be willing to let go of the comfort zone of his own soul.

Therefore, it is not appropriate for every person to do this. So, it would be appropriate for you to *daven* for them. *Daven* also, from the depths of your heart, for all those in *Klal Yisrael* who have lost their way, for the collective salvation and rescue of the Jewish people and for each individual's salvation and rescue – both for their spiritual needs and their material needs.

If you want to determine what you can do for these kids in terms of action, you should clarify to yourself what you can or cannot do for them, based on the aforementioned guidance, which described the boundaries of what's appropriate and what's not appropriate.

And, understandably, you also need to take into account if any of this work in helping kids will compromise on your “three main pillars”, which are: your time for Torah learning, the time you need for *davening*, and the time you spend on doing *chessed*. So you will also need to determine [after determining if you are cut out for this job in the first place] how much

time you will still have and how much energy you will need to spend on each of these areas [if you want to be involved with helping kids who are struggling].

## HYPNOSIS

There is such a thing as “hypnosis”. If a person is in a hypnotic state, someone can speak and communicate with his subconscious and tell him that he needs to do certain things [which will then affect him on a subconscious level]. When he wakes from this state, he is able to do what he has been told, without being able to explain why he is doing it. So perhaps it is worthwhile to go to a hypnotist who will be able to impress upon my subconscious, “For just two minutes a day, you need to think that there is a Creator. You can do so for two minutes a day, even if you are very busy.” Is this a sensible thing to do?

## ANSWER

It is possible to do this, but you will be skipping other stages of growth in your soul. Skipping always contains a danger, because you will still need to work through all of the steps of growth, in order to develop all of your soul’s abilities. The approach you are describing is an attempt to skip past all of the growth that you need to do when you are conscious, and by doing so, you will not be building or fixing any of those areas.

### Pursuing A Degree In Psychology

Shalom, *Rebbi* (my teacher). I am from New York and currently studying in Yeshiva University...I love the books “Getting To Know Your Self”, “Getting To Know Your Soul” and “Getting To Know Your Feelings”. I also enjoy the works of Rav Shlomo Wolbe and Miriam Adahan. I am going for a master’s degree in psychology, but I don’t know what to do. I believe truly that my purpose is to learn psychology, or to be a spiritual dean in a yeshiva to help people, and the like. What am I able to learn from secular psychology that would help me? I view psychology in the same way that people learn about medicine. When I am sick, I know I need to swallow a pill, and in the same way, I have the understanding that if there is a malady in my soul, I need to learn from secular sources about how to treat the soul. I am referring to the dangerous maladies in the soul such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, depression, and phobias. Does the Rav have any advice for me? Should I pursue a master’s degree in psychology so that I can know about all these things, or not?

Thanks so much!!! I am very appreciative that the Rav has taken the time to read my letter.

## ANSWER

Every person grows up in a certain environment, and there is where he receives an entire world of knowledge of certain concepts and ideas. In Eretz Yisrael, up until very recently, there was no such thing as a truly Torah religious Jew to go to such places and study secular material. In the USA though this was considered acceptable. Therefore your question partially stems from a certain kind of lifestyle which you have been raised in. If you wish to continue and end your life with such a way of living, then your studying in such places needs to be accompanied with caution on your part, and to clarify the truth in each thing you come across: to know what is true in what you learn, and what isn't true. You need to use caution, guarding your kedushah (sanctity) in a place that is far from kedushah. You also need to daven deeply, all the time, to be saved from evil influences, and to do your work in a way that will benefit others. All this needs to be done amidst a [sense of] separation from your environment.

But there is also a possibility for you to choose a life that is inner and true, which is far better than the aforementioned path. But in order to do that, you would need to make an overhaul in the way you live. Did the Mashgiach of Lakewood [Rabbi Nosson Wachtfogel *zt"l*] study there...? Did Rav Wolbe study there....? So this is a fundamental choice for you to make: to choose which path you want to take.

## BILVAVIPEDIA SHIURIM

- 1) What is the Rav's intention in delivering the *shiurim* entitled "*Bilvavipedia*" [an "encyclopedia" series on various topics in the *aggadic* sections of the Gemara]?
- 2) What are we supposed to be taking out of these *shiurim*?

## ANSWER

1) Just as the Rambam wrote a work which concentrated all of the *halachos* of the Torah together, which had been previously been spread out and scattered [throughout the Talmud], so is there a need to gather together all of *agadta* [homiletic sections of the Gemara]: for each existing word, we are gathering together all existing information

throughout the Torah, which pertains to the particular word. With this series [of *Bilvavipedia*], a little bit of order is being given [to *agadta* matters]. There are also novel Torah insights which are produced along the way from this, because when details are gathered together, it is like a marital union, which produces offspring. The purpose of the shiurim is to gather together all the details [pertaining to a particular matter of *agadta*] and thereby reveal how all details are rooted in the wisdom of Hashem.

2) When details of Torah become unified together, the result is a novel Torah insight, in the same way that a tree bears fruit.

## THE ELEMENTS OF ABSTINENCE

Which of the elements does the trait of abstinence (*perishus*) stem from? On one hand abstinence comes from the element of fire, because when one abstains from physical pleasures, he “destroys” materialism and he becomes more spiritual, by nullifying his bodily desires. So abstinence (*perishus*) seems to be a form of self-nullification, which comes from the element of fire. However, it may also come from the element of water, because a person is able to enjoy abstinence. It may also come from earth, because when a person abstains from pleasure, this may give him a feeling of being more orderly.

### ANSWER

*Perishus* (abstinence) itself comes from the element of fire. But the other elements can also be motivating a person to be abstinent. A person may be practicing abstinence either because he is being motivated by his element of fire, or because he is being motivated by his element of water, such as a love for the spiritual – as you mentioned. A person might also be abstinent because of his element of earth, which seeks organization. However, the very trait of abstinence itself is a form of the element of fire. It is just that there may be several other motivating factors involved in one’s abstinence.

## TESHUVAH FOR INTERNET ADDICTION

Concerning an *avreich* who doesn’t have Internet, but who fell in a few times looking at inappropriate sites, which at first this began with a curiosity and later turned into a lust of



viewing material on the Internet that is forbidden according to *halachah* to look at – what does the Rav advise for this situation?

Usually he feels the temptation to use the Internet inappropriately whenever he is feeling empty inside, and he finds it very difficult to overcome those feelings.

Would it be a good idea for him to make an oath that he will not use the Internet at all? Or should he at least make this oath for a month, and after that he will see if he has had any progress?

He is aware that this is bad and he truly feels regret, and he wants to fix the problem, but he keeps going through a vicious cycle of trying many times to stop and eventually falling in. It would be appreciated if the Rav can suggest anything about this.

## ANSWER

- 1) He should resolve that if he falls in again, *chas v'shalom*, he will impose a fine upon himself, either by adding on extra hours of time onto his learning, or by giving more money to *tzedakah*, etc.
- 2) He should occupy himself with anything that will keep him away from the possibility of being tempted.
- 3) He should yell to Hashem, from the depths of his heart, for help.
- 4) He should be willing to die rather than have another fall.
- 5) If he finds himself amidst the temptation, he should try to “appease” his evil inclination with something else that’s permissible, which will steer the lust in a permissible direction. For example, he can try noshing on food that he enjoys, etc. However, he should not wait until the temptation is burning. Rather, as soon as he begins to feel empty, he should quickly try to remove his feelings of emptiness, or at least minimize it.
- 6) If he finds himself at the height of temptation and he feels that he is about to fall in to the sin, *chas v'shalom*, he should pause a bit and not immediately go to the forbidden site. Even as he in the midst of falling into the sin *chas v'shalom*, he should at least hold himself back from completely satisfying his curiosity, and keep pausing a bit. Right before he is

finished he should again make sure not to completely satisfy all of his curiosity. In this way, he at least gains that the evil inclination doesn't have total control of him.

7) When he finds himself amidst the peak of temptation, if possible, he should go immerse in a cold mikveh. If this is not possible, he should at least take a cold shower.

8) He should find a close friend or a Rav whom he can confide in, after he has a fall. His embarrassment [at having to confide in someone whom he respects] might aid him in holding himself back from sin.

9) He should reflect on the fact that Hashem is with him at all times, standing beside him, and that He sees everything that he is doing.

10) He should awaken himself to think about all of the suffering that takes place in the world, and he should imagine this suffering in front of him and be afraid that if he falls into the sin, *chas v'shalom*, that he may face any of this suffering as a consequence of sinning.

## THE ELEMENTS OF THE RAMCHAL'S SEFARIM

1) The Rav said in a response that the sefarim of the Ramchal (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato) correspond to the “element of wind”, since the Ramchal's theme is to explain how the entire Creation is “moving” to the goal of Creation, which is *yichud Hashem* (the oneness of Hashem). This “movement” corresponds to the moving element, wind. This would mean that the *sefer Mesillas Yesharim* corresponds to the element of wind. I have a difficulty understanding this, because the Vilna Gaon said that *sefer Mesillas Yesharim* is the main *sefer* for *Klal Yisrael*, but according to what the Rav is saying, that would only make sense for those whose main element is wind, but for those who are weak in their element of wind, the path explained in *Mesillas Yesharim* wouldn't be suitable for them (at least not in the beginning of their way). How then could the Vilna Gaon say that *Mesillas Yesharim* is for the whole *Klal Yisrael*, if the *Mesillas Yesharim* would only be a path for those whose main element is wind?

2) Also, it's hard for me to understand in general how the Ramchal's sefarim correspond to the element of wind. It's understandable that the *sefer Derech Hashem* and the *sefer Daas Tevunos* correspond to wind, because those *sefarim* explain how the entire Creation is “moving” towards the oneness of Hashem, and that this is the entire “movement” of

Creation [and movement corresponds to wind]. But the sefer *Mesillas Yescharim* seems to correspond to the element of earth, because it is a step-by-step ladder of growth. That sounds very much like the element of “earth” to me – not “wind”. Maybe I don’t understand what the Rav meant?

## ANSWER

1) There are three “lines” – the “right line”, which corresponds to the element of water, the “left line” which corresponds to the element of fire, and the “middle line”, which corresponds to the element of wind. The middle point (wind) balances and connects together the other two extremes (water and fire). The general path is always in the “middle line” (wind), whereas any other paths are “to the side”, to any of the far extremes of either water (the right line) or fire (the left line).

2) The sefer *Mesillas Yescharim* corresponds to the element of wind because it guides a person on how to move from the first step to the last step. Since this sefer does so in an orderly, step-by-step manner, it is specifically in the category of “earth”-of-wind.

## ELEVATING THE SOUL OF A DECEASED PARENT

I finished saying the *Kaddish* for both of my parents who were *niftar* (passed away) 2 weeks apart from each other. When can I do for them in my thoughts? Should I imagine them in Gan Eden, surrounded by their parents and relatives? And - how can I feel them right now?

## ANSWER

Continue learning Torah and giving *tzedakah* (charity) and doing various acts of *chessed* (kindness) on their behalf. Every good deed which you do on their behalf causes an elevation for their *neshamah* (Divine soul). From that, their souls receive Hashem’s light.

You don’t need to use your power of imagination for this. However, if you feel that it’s very important for you to involve your imagination somehow, you can visualize that there is a clear, pure light (a container that houses the “light” of Hashem), and visualize that this light is surrounding and enveloping them. You can do this especially when after you have finished learning Torah or after you have done a good deed on their behalf in order to

elevate their souls, and this is because it is through this purity [which comes about through your Torah learning and good deeds] that Hashem's light will be shined upon them.

Go from one accomplishment to another, increasing the light of *kedushah* (holiness) as an elevation for their souls, through your good deeds, words, and thoughts, every day. This is the complete fulfillment of the statement [regarding the mitzvah of honoring parents], "He honors him in his life, and he honors him in his death" (*Talmud Bavli Kiddushin 30b*).



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