

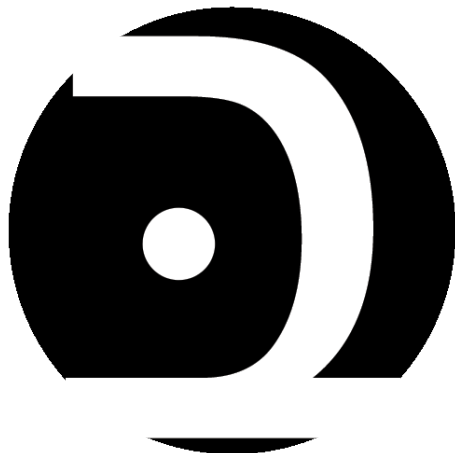
BILVAVI

**MY
HEART
ASKS**

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

PARSHAS PINCHAS 5782

ISSUE 250



DO WE CHOOSE OUR CHALLENGES	2
FEARING THE WORST	2
REALLY PREPARING FOR MASHIACH.....	3
UNDERSTANDING & APPLYING THE POWER OF THANKING HASHEM	6
FAMILY ILLNESS VS. EMUNAH.....	7
I WANT TO BE GENUINE BUT I ALSO WANT RUACH HAKODESH	9
.STUCK IN MY EMOTIONAL BLOCKAGES.....	10
CAN YOU MARRY THE WRONG ONE?.....	13
COUNTERING THE EREV RAV IN ERETZ YISRAEL	14

DO WE CHOOSE OUR CHALLENGES

Does Hashem give each person's soul the opportunity to choose what his tests on this world will be, before the soul comes down onto the world?

ANSWER

Chazal said that before Hashem created the world, each person was created willingly by their own choice, "To their *daas* (consent), He created them." From then onward, in each lifetime that a person is sent down to the world, he is given the choice by Hashem if he wants to come down onto the world again [or if he does not wish to go back down again], and certainly this includes one's [consent to undergo his or her] personal tests.

FEARING THE WORST

There are certain life situations that happen in the world and I think to myself that if I would go through such situations, I wouldn't be able to handle it. For example, I often think of children who are niftar or sick children. I keep imagining these scary situations. When I hear of others going through such a situation, I get shaken up and my thoughts make me so sad. I will then imagine having thoughts of emunah and bitachon in those very situations, that Hashem would be with me even in the worst situations, and this calms me a bit. But I know that I am not actually on that level of emunah, and that I wouldn't be able to handle such situations. Should I keep thinking thoughts of emunah every time I am imagining these fearful situations? Or should I just take my mind off all these fears?

ANSWER

Usually is it not worthwhile to think about harsh, painful events and *middas hadin*. Instead, think about happily giving yourself up for Hashem, just as by the splitting of the sea.

REALLY PREPARING FOR MASHIACH

Ever since the Rav gave the corona derasha, I have been more serious about serving Hashem. I've been learning the sefer "Bilvavi" (Part One) as much as I am able to, and working on all the steps of "remembering Hashem". I see there are several steps to work on, which each take time. But I am afraid that there won't be enough time to work on all of this, because soon the shofar will blow, Mashiach will be here, and I will remain unchanged forever, because I didn't work on myself enough before he came and I never even acquired the step of remembering Hashem, and my level will remain like that forever....

Is there any way to make quicker progress in my growth, as opposed to growing only slowly and step by step? I know that growth can only be gradual, but I'm afraid that Mashiach will be here very soon and then I will remain on the level that I am now, for all of eternity. On one hand this is all causing me to really be serious about serving Hashem, but all the time I am anxious to grow very quickly and I'm afraid there's not enough time to work on myself fully and before I know it Mashiach will be here. Do we need to 'cram in' all growth and feel like there's no time left, and to have mesirus nefesh to try to grow very quickly (instead of being patient and taking our time with each step), since Mashiach is close? Is a person able to get closer to Hashem more quickly these days, and he doesn't need to patiently grow through all the steps? Is a person during these times able to grow very quickly through having mesirus nefesh and trying to jump to the higher levels? Is there more siyata d'shmaya

(heavenly assistance) available now, to help us quickly get to all the levels that we need to grow to? Or will this just prove detrimental?

ANSWER

1) “On the waters of tranquility, He will escort me.” [Go about the growth process in a very serene way].

QUESTION

2) Does a person need to feel pressured during these times that he needs to grow a lot, so that he will be ready for Mashiach? Or will this just stress him and prevent him from serving Hashem properly?

ANSWER

No. A person needs to have calmness and a settled mind. Do only what you’re capable of.

QUESTION

3) How can a person deal with the painful feeling of trying to grow in a certain area but he’s not getting anywhere, and he knows that soon Mashiach will come and then he will remain without all that growth that he could have reached (and his level will be set in place forever)? How can he avoid the anxiety of “Maybe I will remain this way forever”, the fear of being stuck in the middle of his growth and that he will never get to his desired goal (because Mashiach will come and then the person remains on that level forever, without having reached his desired growth)?

ANSWER

If a person puts in the proper effort, he receives the growth as a gift: “You toiled, and you found.”

QUESTION

4) When we will hear the report that Mashiach has arrived, how should we react? Should we jump up and down from the joy, or should we remain serene in spite of our excitement, remaining in an inner place in our soul which is unfazed from anything new? When Mashiach comes, should we just have an internal joy, slowly and calmly changing into our Shabbos clothes? Or is this something that will depend on the level of each person?

ANSWER

The light of Mashiach is to have an internal and calm kind of joy.

QUESTION

5) Do we need to prepare a special set of clothes for when Mashiach comes? And does it have to be closely within our reach?

ANSWER

This is a level of piety, which some tzaddikim did (each tzaddik had his own way of preparing like this).

QUESTION

6) There are all kinds of messages today that the Geulah is imminent, and often there are certain signs from the past that they base it on, making it seem that Mashiach is literally by

our doors. Sometimes this excites people to start preparing for Mashiach, but as time goes on, the inspiration wanes. People often are callous about this topic and they say “That’s what they said last time...now they’re saying it again...” What should be our attitude towards this?

ANSWER

Take your mind off all of this. Just believe [in Mashiach’s arrival] with *emunah peshutah* (simple faith), and as we say in the *Ani Maamin*, “I will await for him every day that he should come.”

UNDERSTANDING & APPLYING THE POWER OF THANKING HASHEM

It seems to me that “thanking Hashem” is only an *avodah* for people who are in a certain state of *katnus* (immaturity or low-level spiritual consciousness), who aren’t able to work hard at serving Hashem. Is the emphasis in recent times on the concept of gratitude to Hashem because our generation are mostly the “souls that come from the heels” of Adam HaRishon, and because we have the weakest souls? Or, is it because thanking Hashem is the *tikun* (repair) for the sin of the generation of the desert [of reacting to the bad reports of the Spies] which caused the *Galus*, when everyone cried for nothing?

ANSWER

The light in the End of Days is called “Dovid”, who comes from Yehudah, from the word *hodaah* (gratitude). That is why in this generation, we should be thanking Hashem more.

However, this has to be done only to a certain degree and within one’s current level, unlike those who teach everyone to say “Thank you [Hashem]” for every single thing that happens, something which is way above the level for most people to do.

FAMILY ILLNESS VS. EMUNAH

1) There's a well-known concept of "genetics" which affects a wide range of areas, including health. There are people who sadly are more likely to get certain illnesses, much more than others. How does this fit in with *emunah* and *bitachon* (believing that only Hashem is in charge)? Why would a child inherit certain conditions from his father, if health is not merely determined by physiology but a result of one's spiritual situation? [If Hashem determines one's condition of health, then] why would a child be more likely to get the same conditions that his parents had...?

2) Also, sadly there are a number of people in my family who are ill with "the illness". Most of them are older. This really bothers me and I'm in anxiety because of it. (Through learning the Rav's series on Bitachon I am seeing improvement in that area. But I want to ask the following.) What is the avodah of a person when he comes down with a disease that's in the family? Does he have a certain avodah to do, or should he just focus on emunah and bitachon?

3) Since there's a concept that bad thoughts can materialize if a person continues to think about them (based on the verse "*That which I contemplated, came to me*"), because he becomes "included" in the thought when he continues to obsess over it - how can a person in this situation [of being ill with a disease that's in the family, or if he is just afraid that he might get it since it's common for his family to get it], how can he battle any anxious thoughts about dying? (The person isn't choosing to have these thoughts, they are just a nature response that's coming from anxiety and fear of dying. (So how can a person deal with such thoughts and prevent them from actually happening?))

ANSWER

1) The Rishonim (Kuzari and others) said that the word *teva* (nature) is equal to *Elokim* (G-d), meaning that G-d's conduct is clothed in the garment that is nature. But in the inner dimension, everything is run by Hashem in exact and wondrous detail, down to the smallest detail. The human mind cannot comprehend how on one hand there are laws of nature that are set in place, while amidst it all there's a certain detailed Heavenly ordained calculation that it all revolves around, run by Hashem's Divine Providence, which is affected by each individual's deeds and choices.

For example, the sun shines with a certain degree of heat, it moves in a set orbit, and it all seems like nature runs its own course. The sun affects all of mankind, and each person is affected differently by it, in terms of heat, cold, sweating, physical effort, expenses, and all other countless results which are all being affected by the degree of the sun's heat. If you think about this, it is amazing how just one movement of the sun, a simple law of nature, is planned with such precision, affecting an infinite amount of details that will affect all creations, every inanimate creation, every plant, every animal, and every human being.

2) [The *avodah* of a person with an illness that's in the family is, to] increase doing acts of *chessed* (kindness). Chazal (*Gemara Rosh HaShanah 18a*) said that the family of Eli HaKohen was cursed to die young, but those who did *chessed* were saved from the decree. Additionally, those who increased Torah learning were also saved from this decree, as the Gemara says there. And they should also increase *tefillah* (prayer) (*Talmud Yerushalmi, Sanhedrin 1:2*).

3) Besides for strengthening one's *emunah* and *bitachon* that everything is overseen by Hashem, and that everything is for one's good, one should also mentally and verbally review

it until he reaches an awareness that every time an anxious thought comes into his mind, he should be aware that this thought, too, is from Hashem, and then the thought will be calmed.

After he has quieted himself and he is no longer afraid, he can then prepare properly for death. Since Hashem has placed a person into a situation where the doctors are saying that he must be regularly examined from time to time in order to ascertain that there is nothing dangerous developing, this situation should be seen as an awakening from Heaven, that he should inspire himself at any opportunity to prepare himself properly for the transition to the “world that is entirely good”.

I WANT TO BE GENUINE BUT I ALSO WANT RUACH HAKODESH

For several years, I discovered a contradiction in me. On one hand, I understand how important it is to just serve Hashem simply and earnestly, with no ulterior motivations of trying to seek glory or to seek high levels. On the other hand, I really want to taste *ruach hakodesh* in all its varying levels. Is there a way to get *ruach hakodesh*? And I am allowed to pursue such a goal?

ANSWER

Chazal said, “Always learn shelo lishmah (not for the sake of Heaven), because from shelo lishmah comes lishmah.” So there are two levels to serving Hashem – shelo lishmah, and lishmah. Each person has to figure out which level of shelo lishmah will be proper for him to make use of. It can be a desire for wealth, a desire for honor, or a desire to attain high levels, such as *ruach hakodesh*. However, shelo lishmah has to be integrated with an intention of lishmah. And one has to know clearly which kind of shelo lishmah is appropriate for him to make use of [so that he can remain balanced and he doesn’t totally pursue shelo lishmah].

The sefer B'Tiv Yerushalayim – Darkei Hasagah explains the ways of how to attain ruach hakodesh, which is attainable today for tzaddikim.

STUCK IN MY EMOTIONAL BLOCKAGES

I will try to be brief as possible here, but I also have to give over a lot of details, to make the picture clearer.

My childhood was turbulent. My parents had a difficult divorce, and before that there was always tension in my house, a lot of pressure on me, and always taking sides between my mother and father in their arguments.

My mother, and one of my siblings, were also emotionally abusive to me, by always making fun of me and insulting me at any opportunity they could, already from when I was a young age.

Today as an adult, I am suffering from emotional blockages because of all this. I find it hard to express love to my wife, even though I really love her.

I have a hard time with relationships, because the slightest criticism from a person will awaken all the insults and emotional abuse that I endured as a child. (There are only a few people I know who would never criticize for me, so I feel like I have to stay away from most people.) Even when I form a friendship with another, during the conversations I feel like I'm stupid, crazy, and other negative self-talk that are etched in my consciousness from all the emotional abuse I endured as a child. Even when I speak to soft-hearted people who are sensitive to the feelings of others, I can get into clashes with them, because the sensitive people that I know are often suffering from low self-esteem, and there always uncomfortable feelings on both sides of the relationship - on my part and on the other's part, due to all the feelings of low self-esteem that both us feel.

In yeshiva [which I enrolled in after doing teshuvah, because I abandoned mitzvah observance at some point, but I don't want to get into that part of my life. I did teshuvah, Baruch Hashem, and enrolled in yeshiva.], I would feel certain feelings of “transference” on another boy, and then later with a different boy, searching for a replacement for the love I didn't get as a child, and this was because these 2 friends were emotionally attractive to me, because they gave me a certain love and positive feeling that I didn't get from my parents and family. Very quickly, I became very co-dependent on those friends.

That was my main problem – my overwhelming feelings of dependency that I felt on those 2 friends – but that did not either spare me from other emotional hardships I endured, due to all the emotional blockages that had formed in me. I developed a fear of talking to any of the guys who were confident and popular. I had a hard time making friends. I also had a hard time expressing myself and feeling liked by others.

During that time, I developed some kind of physical condition that there was no known medication for, where I would get up in the morning and felt so joyless and depressed that all I wanted to was just go back to sleep, to avoid feeling so depressed. I also would have a hard time falling asleep because I was afraid of later getting up and feeling joyless upon awakening. I also developed a side effect with this where I started to get pounding headaches near my eyes.

Today I am married Baruch Hashem with a few children. But my emotional blockages still are around, and I still have the difficulties I mentioned (including the depression upon awakening). I thought that I was suffering from some kind of physical exhaustion, but I'm thinking that it's some kind of depression that's in my body.

(Lately I read from a secular author who discovered that physical and emotional pain comes from the body's response to a deep emotional pain that a person couldn't handle, thereby forcing the mind to forget about the pain, and this later shows up in the form of pain or depression. For example, when a person is talking to someone whom he finds difficult, he might anxiously pick his skin until he's bleeding, without even being aware of this, as a subconscious response to the painful feeling he can't deal with. I think that this concept is very true, and I have many other examples as well to prove this phenomenon.)

My Rav recommended that I see at least 10 therapists to use "One-Brain" therapy on me. I did it, but my main problems that I mentioned still didn't go away. I also tried homeopathy, but it didn't help me at all.

The depression that I experience upon awakening still hasn't been solved, and it's getting worse. I also have no desire for learning Torah.

I understand that these issues are really a combination of other, bigger issues that are under the surface. I don't know what to do, how to treat all these issues. Especially the mysterious depression upon awakening. I have been davening about this for the last few years. But, to my pain, Hashem hasn't yet answered my *tefillos*, at least not totally.

I also want to add that my nature is to be warm and loving and I have intense emotions, and I also think that I can help and understand others, but it's just that my life situation has brought me to a point where I can't actualize my abilities that I have. My feelings are just buried in me and cause me pain all the time. Is there any advice the Rav can give me? And of course, I need a *berachah*.

ANSWER

The root of healing for the soul lays in actualizing your strongest ability. This will be a “little bit of light pushes away a lot of darkness.” As for the little bit of darkness that will still remain after that, you can work on purifying (repairing) those areas after you have learned how to make use of your strongest ability. You can learn about this in *sefer Hakarah Atzmis*, Self-Recognition & Self-Actualization [currently being translated into english]. The more that you will gather access your strong abilities and develop them (with *siyata d’shmaya*), the better and more easily you will be able to deal with the difficulties.

CAN YOU MARRY THE WRONG ONE?

Is it possible for a person to marry “the wrong one”, because he or she made the wrong decision? Or do we say that once they stand under the *chuppah* and the man gives her the ring, that means that their marriage was orchestrated by Hashem’s Divine Providence?

Also, what should a wife do if she’s not satisfied from her husband (to say the least) and the couple is also very different from each other in their knowledge, level of emunah, middos (character), and other important factors, which were barely recognizable on their dates? (And, since it’s possible that the girl could have done research more on the boy when they were engaged, she could have put more effort into researching him better, perhaps she married someone who is not really compatible with her?)

ANSWER

Everything is orchestrated by Hashem’s Divine Providence.

Sometimes a marriage is made in accordance with their soul root. Sometimes the marriage is made in order to provide a certain aspect of tikkun (soul-repair) for one of them. And

sometimes a marriage is made according to a person's decision, who chooses to marry this person based on his personal wishes, and later on he may have to fix this [his improper motivations].

Chazal said, "In the way a person wants to go in, he is led." If the suggestion was made was due to a lack of emunah, [meaning that] it was made due to various ulterior calculations, then a person is given a match according to what they wished for. But if it was made with emunah, then the "hand of Hashem" has arranged it.

COUNTERING THE EREV RAV IN ERETZ YISRAEL

Why didn't the Gedolim set up educational systems in Eretz Yisrael for those who want to be educated in the way of truth? Since they were aware that the Erev Rav would mix into Jewish education in Eretz Yisrael and try to influence the *chinuch* of children, why didn't they set up some kind of system to counter this?

ANSWER

If you would know the burden that's on their shoulders, you would see it differently. That is what the Chofetz Chaim told the young Chazon Ish who was bewildered at the way the Chofetz Chaim was running the generation.



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