BILVAVI

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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS Parshas Nitzavim-Rosh Hashanna ISSUE 260

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ASKING MECHILAH (FORGIVENESS)

I was thinking recently about all the different instances in my life I can remember in which I did not treat others right. Who knows how many people's feelings I hurt! I can remember some instances in which I intentionally slighted another person, but there were many instances where I may have unintentionally hurt their feelings or mistreated them... Tons of *chavrusas* that I didn't show enough respect to.... Acting like a *baal gaavah* (boosting my ego at the expense of others) and not being *machshiv* my friends enough, always thinking that I was smarter and better than them.... Walking around with a sour face and hurting everyone who saw me by not smiling at them and greeting them the way I should have.... And the list goes on and on. I feel like making a list of each person I think I may have hurt and then calling them up to ask them for *mechilah*. Is that what I am supposed to do?

ANSWER

There's no end to this. None of us are perfect. And many times, the one who got insulted was the one who brought about the insult upon him. Therefore, as long one didn't openly insult someone and there wasn't recognizable 'damage' afterwards, you don't have to go looking for the one you may have insulted. Instead, when you bump into him, ask him for *mechilah*. Always *daven* that you shouldn't insult others, and *daven* that whoever you insulted should forgive you with their full heart.

CHESHBON HANEFESH – SELF-ACCOUNTING

1) Is *cheshbon hanefesh* (making a self-accounting) an avodah for every person or is it only for people on a higher level?

ANSWER

It is for everyone, each person according to his level.

QUESTION

2) During Elul does every person need to make *cheshbon hanefesh* and to write a list or notebook of *kaballos* (resolutions) to take on, or was this only for the *baalei mussar*?

ANSWER

It is very good to write down any notes on oneself, not just for *kaballos*, but to organize one's progress in life and write down one's experiences so that he can keep track of himself.

QUESTION

3) How does a person make a proper cheshbon hanefesh?

ANSWER

There is already a response on this topic, try to get a hold of it. [From $Q \not{CA} 4949 - How$ *To Make Cheshbon HaNefesh:* "Organize an order of avodah that you will follow every day. Make a daily self-accounting in which you will think about the daily order that you have set for yourself and see how you are progressing with it. This is besides for reviewing how the day was in general [in terms of your avodas Hashem]. However, do not take yourself apart so much. Instead, when you are making a self-accounting, keep your focus on the points which you have chosen to work on that day."

QUESTION

4) What about if a person isn't happy with himself and he has a very self-critical nature? Does he also need to make a cheshbon hanefesh?

ANSWER

He should at least see if he has committed any aveiros. For a certain amount of time he should be busy focusing on his qualities (see the sefer *Hakarah Atzmis V'Haatzamas HaNefesh* (Self-Recognition) for more on this). At a later point when he has become more balanced after knowing his qualities, he should then start cheshbon hanefesh.

QUESTION

5) Sefer Tanya says that a person should only think about his misdeeds at night before going to sleep. According to this view does a person still need to make cheshbon hanefesh during the day?

ANSWER

It is not for every day of Elul, there should only be one day specially chosen for cheshbon hanefesh.

QUESTION

6) And if a person doesn't know himself that well does he also need to make cheshbon hanefesh?

ANSWER

See answer to #4.

QUESTION

7) I heard someone say that if a person is very drawn towards sadness or he's very selfcritical, his teshuvah in Elul is not to think about his sins or his shortcomings, but to just be b'simchah and just thank Hashem for everything he has. Is that indeed the avodah for a person who is very negative? If that's true, then it would apply to a lot of people who are in this category....

ANSWER

See answer to #4.

QUESTION

8) What is the root of all a person's problems? Can we say that all problems come from a lack of emunah, from a lack of kedushah, from not learning mussar, from not having enough connection to a tzaddik, from not being immersed enough in Torah, from not

having emunah or from not being b'simchah, etc.? I hear so many different views on what the root of all of a person's issues is and it seems that each path in avodas Hashem points to a different root. I'm a bit confused by this because I think that they're all correct. What indeed is the root of all of a person's troubles and problems? Is there an order to it?

ANSWER

The root of all issues is when a person doesn't have the light of Hashem revealed in his life. From there onward, every person has his own root where his problems may be stemming from.

BASIC GUIDANCE FOR TESHUVAH

I'm so confused when I start wondering how I should do teshuvah, especially during Aseres Ymei Teshuvah. How do we begin to do teshuvah? What should we focus on? How can we do it all during Asres Ymei Teshuvah??

ANSWER

Everything has a root and branches to it, and there are many braches. But the root is always one. Clarify deeply what the one underlying root of all your problems are, and then fix the problem at its root. When you fix the root, you are a lot closer to fixing the branches of your failings. This is the fundamental way of tikkun during these days. Also, make sure to quickly stop doing anything that goes against halachah.

SHOWING GRATITUDE TO FRIENDS

There was a time in my life when I received a lot of benevolence from certain friends, in different ways. I formed a soul bond with my friends and I was very close to them. I was especially close with one of my friends, who made himself available to me at all times. He was like a father or a mother to me. He and his wife together made their house available to me at all times and they invited me for Shabbos meals all the time, and many times even during the week I would eat by them. During that period of my life, they saved my soul and my spirit, and my *neshamah*, with all of the honor and good feeling

that they gave to me. This was besides for physically nourishing me, through the many Shabbos meals. I have endless gratitude to them. But now, Baruch Hashem, it is 7 years later, and since then I have gotten married, and I have 3 children now. Now I feel more settled and happier, and I have developed my inner world. Inwardly, I am much more mature since then. I no longer feel like I "need" that friend (or any of my friends) as I used to. Although I feel much happier now, because I can now get my needs from within me (of course, this is only relatively speaking, in comparison to the past. Clearly I still have a long way to go), I still feel somewhat pained at the fact that I have nothing to do anymore with my friends of my past, because I don't need them as I used to.

How should I relate to my friends from my past? How should I relate especially to the friend that I used to be so close with, now that I no longer "need" him? And how can I show gratitude to my friends, especially to the friend that I was closest to?

ANSWER

Whenever any of your friends need help, make sure to be help them, and put your heart and soul into helping them, dedicating yourself to their cause.

Every so often, like on Yom Tov or during certain times of the year, you can renew your bond with your friend(s), from an inner place in yourself, of love and gratitude. Express your gratitude to your friend(s) with words, and sometimes you should also show it in action. Every so often, you should also *daven* for your friends, out of a love for them.

THE KOSEL – PLACE OF YECHIDAH

During these days of quarantine [Tishrei 5781] where all public places in Eretz Yisrael are shut down should a person try to daven at the Kosel, for Yomim Noraim and Succos? Or should a person remain davening at home because that is where he can find the "Yechidah" as the Rav explains?

ANSWER

It is worthwhile to make the effort of trying to get to the Kosel during these days, but make sure to be joyous and have emunah. At the Kosel, the light of the Yechidah shines more openly, because the Kosel is connected with Mashiach (the light of the Yechidah): הנה זה עומד אחר כתלנו, "Behold, he stands after our wall."

DVEYKUS OF JEWS & DVEYKUS OF GOYIM

1) What's the difference between the closeness to Hashem that a Jew can reach versus the closeness to Hashem that a goy can reach?

ANSWER

This is a lengthy topic and there are many other responses we gave on the topic (printed in sefer Shaal Libi). In general, the difference is that the Jewish people can reach Hashem both through Yeish and Ayin together, while the goyim can only have an experience of being close to Hashem through either Yeish alone or through Ayin alone, but without the integration. This means that a Jew is able to come to the level where he feels Hashem in every last detail, and he can also come to a revelation of the simplicity of Hashem's Presence, with yichuda ilaah and yichuda tataah together – becoming aware of Hashem as He is unified in the upper world, as well as becoming aware of how Hashem is unified even with this lower world.

QUESTION

2) In the future when everyone will completely recognize Hashem with complete d'veykus, will there still be a difference between a Jew's recognition of Hashem versus a goy's recognition of Hashem?

ANSWER

Yes.

QUESTION

3) The Leshem says that in the future, everyone will go back to the way it was before the sin, when both Jewish and gentile souls were all contained in Adam HaRishon's soul and

there was no differentiation yet. It seems that in the future there will not be a difference between Jew and gentile and that we will all be on the same level.

ANSWER

While it's true that every soul of Jew and gentile was contained within Adam's soul, there were still levels of superiority within his soul. There was the head part of his soul, the heart part of his soul, and the heels of his soul, etc. [Thus the Jewish souls were contained in the higher parts of his soul, and the gentile souls were contained in the lowest part of his soul, so even at that point of integration the Jewish souls were still superior to the goyim].

AHAVAH VS. YIRAH IN DUR TIMES

In our generation, is the main avodah to mainly be connected with Hashem, to love Hashem, and to serve Him joyously?

ANSWER

The Mishnah in the end of Sotah (49a) says that in the ikvesa d'meshicha (the generations preceding Mashiach), "those who fear sin will be disgusted", and there are those who explained that it means that in the ikvesa d'meshicha, the main emphasis should be on loving Hashem [as opposed to being afraid of Him].

I DISAGREE WITH THE RAV'S ENTIRE APPROACH

I have been listening to the Rav and learning the sefarim for over 6 years and I understand very well what the Rav says. (I don't think I've reached my Yechidah yet.) I've reached the conclusion that although the Rav's Divrei Torah goes incredibly deep and while it's clear that the Rav is trying to help Klal Yisrael, I still think that the Rav's teachings are only applicable to the Rav's level, and that anyone who tries to "imitate" the Rav is being like Haran who imitated Avraham by jumping into the fire.

The Rav's Torah has an ongoing theme of a lot of harsh, judging *"Gevuros"* and *"Tzimtzum"* - to close yourself off in an inner world and live in one's own private inner

silence. For most people to do this, this is like asking them to die – it's not an elixir of life that make them more alive, it is basically a poison that would kill them off.

From what I understand, the Rav's Divrei Torah focuses on all the darkness and concealment of G-dliness that there is on our world, how the generation is so far from feeling Hashem and how bad the world has become. With all due respect to the honor of the Rav, this doesn't sound anything like what Mashiach ben Dovid will reveal, the light that will come to the world, the G-dliness that will be revealed in the world. Will Mashiach ben Dovid ask everyone to close themselves off in an inner silence and be cut off from the world? That sounds more like the avodah of Mashiach ben Yosef (based on what I understand from the sefarim about the roles of the two different Mashiachs), and yes, Mashiach ben Yosef is first needed in order for Mashiach ben Dovid to do his avodah, but the goal and purpose is the avodah of Mashiach ben Dovid, who will revive the world and bring light into the world. but the Rav's Divrei Torah makes us focus on darkness and on how G-dliness is so concealed from the world. It's all about *he'elam* (concealment, darkness) and not *giluy* (revelation, light). It doesn't make us want to jump up and dance and sing and be happy on this world.

Someone who is really *kadosh* (holy) is someone who knows how to come down to the level of everyone on this world and help them in the place where they are, to show *chessed* and *rachamim* on them and shine light on them. We can see that very well in the teachings of Rav Kook, who teaches how to take the quiet *d'veykus* of the inner and concealed dimension and to make it become revealed to all, to light up life on this world, to live in what that reality truly is, and not to just live in our hopes and fantasies for a better world.

I very much respect the Rav and I hope I've been understood. Have a gmar chasimah tova.

ANSWER

Thank you. May you rise and succeed!

Everything you are saying here is true and correct **after** the Erev Rav will be cut off, and not before that. Before the Erev Rav is destroyed, we are currently in the peak of the 50th

gate of *tumah* which is in control, something which wasn't around 1 or 2 generations ago. And that results in a major difference, which necessitates a change of direction [on our avodah in this generation].

PHANTOM PAIN

How do we explain the phenomenon of phantom pain, i.e. a person gets his foot amputated and he continues to feel pain where his foot was?

ANSWER

There is a *chut* (a 'string') that connects the feelings into the brain, which extends into the place where the feelings were, for that is its nature.

LEARNING KABALLAH VS. LEARNING GEMARA

Is learning Kaballah more important than learning Gemara?

ANSWER

The main importance of studying Kaballah is when it is combined with Gemara. Kaballah is not meant to be an independent study for its own sake, it is a wisdom to be fused with all the other parts of Torah.

GRIEVING OVER MY FRIENDS WHO LEFT LEARNING

Something is bothering me so much and it takes away all my menuchas hanefesh, and it's one of the many things I go through which I feel that there's no one to turn to except for the Rav, to discuss my feelings. This is the question. I had a lot of wonderful friends who were learning great in Kolel and they were excellent. For whatever reason, each of them went out to work. I think it's because they got financially taught and not because they simply burnt out of learning. But with each of them that went out to work, I feel such a loss. It's such a loss that they aren't found anymore in the walls of Yeshiva and now they're in an office working, with all the nisyonos they face at work today. It's such a loss that all they can no longer learn all day, and their ruchniyus is in danger too. They are all going through a yeridah, they are all going downhill, because they have to use Internet now, and I am certain that they're only using filtered Internet – at least that's what I hope – but still, it's the end of their ruchniyus. It's hard to speak more about this but I feel like I'm in mourning over them. Yesterday they were in the beis midrash and now they are in the working world. Sometimes I tell myself, "What's it your business? Worry about yourself. Your situation in learning isn't either too great and you need to improve. Instead of judging others, judge yourself! Are you utilizing every moment in yeshivah properly? Do you think you'll be learning your entire life? Are you so sure about that?" I become disoriented from thinking about it. How can I deal with these feelings of grief I feel over my friends who left learning, and how can I stay balanced and not becoming overinvolved in the situation of others because I care about them so much?

ANSWER

You need to become very, very strong to your own personal portion on this world, to the root of your portion, and even more, to the portion you've already reached so far. That inner connection you have will give you strength and stability in your soul. Go back and forth between thinking about how others are doing with your own personal situation: Be happy for others and join with their pain, and then return to your own portion and to the strong connection that you feel towards your personal portion. That is the cycle to keep to for all of your life. This is the way – go in it!

REAL EMUNAH IN THE FINAL DAYS

1) What's the difference between *emunah peshutah*, *p'shitus*, and *Ain Od Milvado k'pshuto*?

ANSWER

There is emunah in Hashem that a person was taught as a child, and this is *emunah peshutah*, in which one doesn't engage in philosophy questions about Hashem and he simply believes it because this is what he was taught. This emunah is generally the mind's awareness, on the level of thought, and it is emunah by way of *ohr makif*. There

is also emunah that penetrates into the heart, and upon touching the heart, the depths of the heart are revealed, and this is [another way of] *emunah peshutah*. There is also *p'shitus*, which extends and permeates one's entire being. It is rooted in the *ohr EinSof pashut*, the undifferentiated infinite light of Hashem, and in emunah peshutah. There is also *Ain Od Milvado k'pshuto*, and that is the illumination of the *ohr EinSof pashut* in the experience of the soul.

QUESTION

2) Are all of these things essentially to live with bittul to Hashem?

ANSWER

Every *pshitus* contains *bittul*, and the level of *bittul* depends on what level [of *pshitus*] it is.

QUESTION

3) Was there a change in the way that we need to serve Hashem in the last couple of years? Can we say that until now, our *avodah* was *emunah chushis*, to sense and feel Hashem, and now our avodah has become *emunah peshutah* and *temimus* – not necessarily to feel Hashem more viscerally, but to remain loyal to Hashem amidst the darkness of the final days?

ANSWER

Emunah peshutah and *temimus* must certainly be *chushis*, viscerally felt. In every generation the avodah was to have *emunah chushis* in Hashem. As we get closer to the end and the light of Mashiach shines stronger, there is more *pshitus* and *temimus* that can be revealed, and it must become *chushis*, a *pshitus* and *temimus* that is a palpable sense of Hashem.

QUESTION

4) If people don't understand Kabalistic terms like *Radl"a, kav ohr EinSof, Arich* and *Atik*, etc. should we explain to them our avodah in the end of days in non-Kaballistic and simple terms, such as *emunah peshutah, temimus,* talking with Hashem, etc.?

ANSWER

Yes

REMEMBERING PREVIOUS LIFETIMES

Is there detailed guidance on how to return to or remember a previous lifetime? Can a person get there though being hypnotized and other means?

ANSWER

The inner way to get there is a long process, which can be learned through the sefarim to help one clarify his personal soul and there he can return to where he was in his previous lifetime. The external means of accessing information from a previous lifetime – i.e. through hypnosis - can bring a person there for a moment in the form of some experience, but it is not an actual return to the previous lifetime.

RUACH HAKODESH VS. ESP

Is there a way to tell if someone has real Ruach HaKodesh or if he just has an ability to "see" things from an impure source?

ANSWER

It is very hard for a regular person to figure this out. Sometimes a person has revelations that come from an unholy source. He may be a person who isn't careful with halachah [and in that case, if he has revelations, they aren't coming from a holy source]. And sometimes it is harder to tell if the person's revelations are genuine or not, because they can be a mixture of good and bad together, since the sefarim teach that there are

revelations that are able to come from the mixture of good and evil. Inner wisdom is needed in order to discern where another person is getting his revelations from.

JEALOUSY

I am older single. I am struggling emotionally because every time I see a married couple walking so happily together I am burning with jealousy. I also am not finding a *shidduch*. I feel like I am missing so much in my life when others have it all. I tried to help myself in different ways but to no avail. I have other emotional issues too but the jealousy issue bothers me the most. Can the Rav give my any direction on this? Much thanks.

ANSWER

Every person is missing some things. Sometimes people are missing small things and sometimes they are missing big things. Even when others have what you don't have, they are still missing other things. The true way to deal with all of these kinds of situations is to have emunah peshutah that everything from Hashem is for the good!!! You must allow that emunah to penetrate so deeply into you!!! In addition to that, write down all the good things Hashem has done for you, and review the list every day, according to your means.

MASHIACH AFTER 10 SHEMITTAH CYCLES

I heard in the name of the Chofetz Chaim that after 10 Shemittah cycles there will be the war of Gog and Magog. Is that true? Is the 10th Shemitah year referring to this coming Shemitah year? And if yes, what do we need to do to prepare for Mashiach? And if it's true, why don't the Rabbonim prepare Klal Yisrael for it and why aren't they speaking about it openly?

ANSWER

Yes. In other responses we explained what the avodah in our generation is, and that that we are in the middle of the war of Gog and Magog.

HAPPINESS IN SHAKY TIMES

Ever since corona started we discovered the Rav's Torah words, writings, and guidance. We understand that there's a certain process which is happening to the social situation of the world. On one hand, it's good to be in the truth and not to be found in the darkness of the world without knowing what's really going on behind all the events. On the other hand, it adds so much pain on our hearts, for ourselves and for Klal Yisrael, over the situation we are in now. Why should we be informed what the truth is if it's going to cause us so much pain? And from where can we draw out simcha (joy) in such shaky times that we're in?

ANSWER

It is written in Koheles, *"An increase of knowledge is an increase of pain."* The Kotzker Rebbe said: "Woe is to the person who doesn't want to know anything truth, because he doesn't want to have more pain."

It is necessary for a person to know about the situation we are in, so that he can be saved from harm. Because if he doesn't know the situation he is in, he is like a blind person walking in the dark near the bank of a river....

Knowing the truth about the situation in our world today certainly adds a lot of pain to us. It is part of joining with the pain of the Shechinah, as Chazal speak about.

Joy has to mainly come from an internal and deep connection that one has to his special part in ruchniyus in general and to being close to Hashem specifically, from the emunah peshutah that Hashem is running His world and that it is all for the good.

CONNECTING TO TZADDIKIM TODAY

1) Since we are supposed to connect ourselves to tzaddikim, are we supposed to also find hidden tzaddikim to connect to? 2) If yes, how much? 3) Do we mainly have to hear the words of Torah from a tzaddik or is it enough just to go see him? 4) I once heard from a certain rav that the original talmidim of the Baal Shem Tov were greater than the

Gedolim in those times. Is that true? If a person doesn't relate that well to tzaddikim of the past, can he replace this with connecting to tzaddikim who are currently alive?

ANSWER

1) There is no obligation [to look for hidden tzaddikim specifically].

2) Attaching to the path of the tzaddik doesn't depend on any certain amount of time. At least once a week, learn his words of Torah.

3) There is also a need to see the tzaddikim – either on Yom Tov, or also on Shabbos or Rosh Chodesh.

4) It is not upon us to think who was greater than who. Rather, we must become clear about what each tzaddik contributed to the world and what his unique place was. Then one needs to clarify "What specific area do I need to receive from the tzaddik? Which tzaddik is the appropriate one to go to, in order to fill that need?"

5) Yes

QUESTIONS ABOUT *MESIRUS NEFESH*

(1) What are the conditions for "*mesirus nefesh*", when it comes to (a) *avodas Hashem*, (b) recognizing our soul, (c) learning Torah, and (d) doing *mitzvos*? Through *mesirus nefesh* a person receives *siyata d'shmaya* (Heavenly assistance) to skip levels. What is the simple meaning of *mesirus nefesh*? Does it mean that I have to be mentally willing to be killed *al kiddush Hashem* over something? Does it mean that I have to spend a lot of energy on something?

(2) The Rav has said that the *avodah* of our generation is *mesirus nefesh*. Is this referring to *mesirus nefesh* in *avodas Hashem*, in doing *mitzvos*, or in learning Torah? Or in all of them?

(3) I have heard from the Rav many times that the way of *mesirus nefesh* is only for individuals. If so, what is the Rav's intention that the *avodah* of *mesirus nefesh* is for this entire generation?

(4) In the *sefer "Bilvavi*" (Part 6), the Rav explains that the soul's power of "*lishmah*" (acting for the sake of Heaven) is the same power as *mesirus nefesh*, because it is the power to go above the "I" and act from a place in the soul that is higher than the "I". However, I once asked the Rav how a person is able to reach the "*Yechidah*" part of the soul through Torah study, and the Rav responded to me that it is reached through learning Torah with *mesirus nefesh* and *lishmah*. Did the Rav mean that they are two separate things? Or are they one and the same?

ANSWER

1) Mesirus nefesh in avodas Hashem means that a person works on an area which he finds personally difficult to work on, and he perseveres in that area, through self-sacrifice to succeed, no matter what comes his way. Mesirus nefesh should not be used when one is trying to recognize the soul, because one needs calm and quiet reflection in order to slowly recognize and understand the soul [hence trying to have "mesirus nefesh" in order to understand his soul would only deter him from reaching it]. Mesirus nefesh in learning Torah is that a person learns above his natural physical capabilities, and with mental exertion, until he exhausts his mind over it. Mesirus nefesh in doing mitzvos is that a person takes one mitzvos and does it as perfectly as possible, on his own level, according to the halachah, and with love and awe of Hashem, and with the conviction that he will never give up this mitzvah under any circumstance.

2) In this generation, there is a spiritual illumination of the ability to act with "*mesirus nefesh*", which is called the "light of Mashiach", the light of Dovid HaMelech, who is called a "stillborn", with no life support of his own, whose entire life source stems from acting on the level of *mesirus nefesh*.

3) In essence, the way of *mesirus nefesh* is applicable only to individuals. However, as mentioned above, since we are currently in a time period where the "light of Mashiach" is shining strongly, the light of *mesirus nefesh* is also present, and it exists in order to aid us in contending with the evil of the "50th Gate of Defilement" that is rampant today. The only way to spiritually survive the "50th Gate of Defilement" is through *mesirus nefesh*.

4) *Lishmah* and *mesirus nefesh* bear the same root. However, there are two ways to nullify the "I". One way is to do it from within oneself, and this is called *lishmah*, which applies to the proper intention that one needs to have in Torah learning. This is experienced through the faculty of thought: learning Torah with the intention of *lishmah* [for the sake of Hashem]. There is also a way to nullify oneself through external means, through action, which is accessed through exerting oneself in Torah beyond one's natural physical abilities, through losing sleep over one's Torah learning, through physical frugality, etc.

SMARTPHONE VS. UMAN

Every year I fly to Uman for Rosh HaShanah. Last year all the flights were closed at this time, but this year the flights are open, and this year there are all kinds of corona rules to follow upon entering Uman and leaving. One of the rules is that if a person isn't vaccinated, he needs to have a smartphone so that he can get an APP confirming if he's in quarantine from the moment he arrives. Special kosher phones were made for this purpose so that a person doesn't need to use a smartphone. However, the very fact that they are asking the entire religious Jewish community to come with smartphones was a turnoff to me and because of this I am thinking that maybe it's not worth it to go at all.

ANSWER

If going to Uman requires you to have a smartphone, do **not** go to Uman.



The Rav's classes appear on "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 <u>info@bilvavi.net</u>