

BILVAVI

**MY
HEART
ASKS**



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
CHAYA SARAH 5783 · ISSUE 268



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Rising Apartment Costs

What is the meaning behind all the expensive prices for apartments now? It is so disturbing to one's learning, as well as from many other angles as well.

ANSWER

The house, which corresponds to the *Yechidah* level of the soul, has gained more value [and therefore the houses are more expensive now, because the house is where the Yechidah level of the soul is gained, especially now that we are closer to Mashiach where our Yechidah level of the soul is gaining more prominence and value].¹

Buying A House Now In Lakewood

I need to buy a house in the near future (I live in Lakewood) and houses are only going up, so maybe I should buy one now. On the other hand I don't really need it right now. But maybe since prices are going up, I should do *hishtadlus* and try to buy a house now, especially because now I have the money to do it and later I might not have the money. If I do need to make *hishtadlus*, do I need to be pushy about buying a house or should I just do a bit of *hishtadlus* without being too aggressive?

¹ The sefarim teach that the five levels of the soul correspond to different major aspects of one's life (and a damage in any of these areas is a reflection that a person need to repair that area of the soul). The Nefesh level of the soul corresponds to one's money. The Ruach level of the soul corresponds to one's spouse. The Neshamah level of the soul corresponds to one's children. The Chayah level of the soul corresponds to one's clothing. The Yechidah level of the soul corresponds to one's home.

ANSWER

Yes, make *hishtadlus*, but do it calmly and pleasantly, along with *emunah*, and *davening*.

Time For Torah, Tefillah & Chessed

If a person wants to learn Torah and also spend time on *davening* and also do *chessed* every day, how should he divide his daily schedule in order to accomplish this? And how much time should he spend on each of these areas?

ANSWER

There is no one way for everyone, for this is something that depends on each person's *shoresh neshamah* (soul root). But, according to all views, every person needs to become deeply connected to both Torah and *chessed*.

17 More Questions About Avodas Hashem

QUESTION 1 Why is it so important for one to become connected to the soul's power of *havayah* (existence) and why did the Rav say that "this is the entire person"? Is this because the reason Hashem created the world is so that man will take pleasure in Him?

ANSWER *Havayah* is higher than *taanug* (pleasure). Through holy pleasure, a person is able to access *Havayah*, and retreating back and forth between *havayah* and *taanug*.²

QUESTION 2 Is this why it's so important for one to connect to his inner world (*olam pnimi*), which includes getting in touch with our feelings and not only with our power of *havayah*? And if this isn't the reason, than what is?

ANSWER The purpose is to reach the recognition of the *Havayah* of Hashem, that is, His Truthful Existence. All other aspects of avodas Hashem are the ways to get to that point.

QUESTION 3 Why does a person need to discover the true "pleasure" on this world, which is *havayah*? Isn't pleasure and bliss for the Next World, as the Rav always says? Though Hashem created the world to bestow good upon us, doesn't our perspective have to be that we need to serve Him for Heaven's sake alone and not for any other reason?

² The powers of *havayah* and *taanug* are discussed in *Getting To Know Your Soul* and in *Getting Ready For Your Redemption*, chapters 10 and 12. For more about the concept of *Havayah* in general, refer to *sefer Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh, Zayin (Part 7)*.

ANSWER Chazal said that a person should learn Torah and do mitzvos even *shelo lishmah*, and from *shelo lishmah* one will be led to *lishmah*. That is why a person needs pleasure, which is a subtle type of *shelo lishmah* in the soul.

QUESTION 4 Why does our pleasure have to come to us in this way – why can't it instead come to us in a more spiritual way, such as learning a part of Torah that one enjoys to learn? Or, why can't it come in the form of physical pleasure? Why does our pleasure in this world have to come to us precisely by getting in touch with our *havayah*?

ANSWER Man's purpose is to recognize the *Havayah* of Hashem, and the inner tool to reach this is through **self-recognition**. At first there is pleasure involved in recognizing one's inner self. This connects one to his very *havayah*. After that one can enjoy recognizing the Creator, and this connects one to the *Havayah* of Hashem. Finally, the last stage is to divest oneself from all pleasure and become connected and integrated in Hashem.

QUESTION 5 Once I asked the Rav that I feel like this avodah of becoming connecting to inner world is causing me to feel further from Hashem because it's self-focused. The Rav answered me that "*Shelo lishmah* leads to *lishmah*." Let me explain further about my issue though. My Rebbi said that a Ben Torah has to be entirely focused on Torah, and anything else (including any other matters of avodas Hashem) is just distracting us from our central goal. That's what he said, more or less. I identified very much with those words, especially because I felt that the entire topic of the "inner world" is just disconnecting me from real avodas Hashem and connecting to Him! So I still have my question.

ANSWER Self-recognition is the inner path to recognize the Creator, and it does not stand on its own as a self-serving purpose. It is a path to recognize the Creator. That is how one needs to view the entire process of self-recognition.

QUESTION 6 Why do I need to reveal my true "I" through getting in touch with my inner world and becoming connected to it? Why won't it become revealed through avodas Hashem and getting closer to Hashem, which purifies one's physicality and causes one's neshamah to shine? Why isn't that enough for one to develop a rich, expansive inner world?

ANSWER Because [otherwise], many times one's true self becomes revealed in an inaccurate way, and then a person's service to Hashem is also off.

QUESTION 7 When I am getting vitality from my inner world, though I feel more alive and existing and that I'm actualizing my potential more, I feel like it's hard to live in that space all the time. I feel like it's not the purpose, it's not the truth. I feel that serving Hashem and living should be entirely about being more truthful, and I feel uneasy about putting all my energy into this.

ANSWER True, it is not the goal, it is only a means. It is a means which Hashem created, and it is His will, that we should serve Him like this, to come to recognize Him through this means of self-recognition.

QUESTION 8 I've been learning Bilvavi Parts 7 and 8. Some time I had asked the Rav (1) What is the purpose of man on this world – is it to take pleasure in Hashem or is to serve Him for the sake of Heaven (and how do we reach this)? The Rav answered me, “*Shelo lishmah* is to serve Hashem for the sake of pleasure while *lishmah* is to serve Him even without trying to get pleasure. But it is impossible to serve Hashem without trying to get pleasure, because everyone has some trace of ulterior motivation, and in fact, *shelo lishmah* is the tool that we need in order to get to *lishmah*. This is what Rav Chaim Volozhiner teaches in Ruach Chaim. Our avodah is to minimize our motivation to get pleasure, and do this sensibly, and one has to be very careful about it, because many fell because of this, because they lost their pleasure and didn't reach *lishmah*. At a young age one should not try to be reaching this (the level of *lishmah*)”. My understanding of the Rav's answer, based on what I've learned in the Rav's sefer Bilvavi Part 7, is that *d'veykus* is the same thing as taking pleasure in Hashem, which cannot be reached except through learning Torah *lishmah*, which is what brings a person to the true pleasure. The Rav's words about minimizing the motivation for pleasure – if I understand correctly – is that the way to break the I is so that a person will be able to serve Hashem from his neshamah. My understanding about those who lost their sense of pleasure and never reached pleasure is that such people never managed to enter G-dliness into their heart. And a person shouldn't work on *lishmah* at a young age because it is dangerous for a person to work on gaavah, because a young person needs to work with his “I” instead of breaking it before he has developed himself. Is my understanding correct? (2) Is wanting to give Hashem a *nachas ruach* called serving Him *lishmah*? The Rav answered “Yes”. (3) Can we define the purpose of life as giving a *nachas ruach* to Hashem? The Rav answered, “Yes, but there are higher levels than this.” (a) My question now is, is giving a *nachas ruach* to Hashem only the external, surface level of *lishmah*? And would the higher level of serving be to serve Hashem from the *neshamah* (recognizing that “I am a portion of G-d from above”)? Have I defined correctly what the purpose of life is and what serving Hashem *lishmah* is? (b) Also, is it the same definition for everyone or is it different with each person depending on their *shoresh neshamah*? Is it entirely impossible for a person at a young age to work on any of this? I am feeling a difficulty, because if I serve Him more *lishmah* – with less pleasure involved – then I feel less enthusiastic. But on the other hand, though it gives me a lot of vitality, I can't be at peace with it since I feel like it's not the purpose and it's not truth. Are there any parts of the *avodah* of serving Hashem *lishmah* which I can do at a young age or at least handle in the proper way? (c) Also, how is it possible to slowly chip away at *shelo lishmah* and do anything without some self-serving motivation? (d) Also, it sounds like a person's essence is not the “portion of G-d from above” – does that mean that a person's essence is not the *Yechidah*? What, then, is a person's essence – is it the *neshamah*? If so then what does being a “portion of G-d” from above have to do with a human being? (e) Does a person need to be aware of this already at the start of his *avodah*?

ANSWER (a) No, the purpose of life is to come to completely recognize Hashem. Serving Him for the sake of Heaven (and not for the sake of spiritual bliss) is the way that our *avodah* must look like – it is the “way” of *avodah*, just like a *korbon* has to be brought *lishmah*, but after the *korbon* has been offered and the *avodah* is over, the purpose has been completed. (b) *Shelo lishmah* is inevitable and therefore one has to agree that Hashem wills it to be this way, just as we know that Hashem wants a person to start off as a child and do childish things. There is a part of us that acts immature and childish, for self-serving purposes, and Hashem wants this part of us to be there. There will always be some self-serving motivation in how we act, and our *avodah* is to minimize these self-serving motives and purify them. We also have the *avodah* to connect to our *neshamah*, which knows how to act *lishmah*. But we will always have an “animal soul” in us which acts *shelo lishmah* (self-serving) and it is that part which we need to minimize and purify, as mentioned. (c) Every person has an “I” according to the level he is on right now. Generally speaking, This World is a world of free will, where man is identified as *Ruach*, which is the part of the soul that is utilized for free will. This is written by the *Gra*. But individually speaking, a person is identified by the particular soul-level he is on. (d) A person does need to integrate the more sublime goal of wanting to serve Hashem for the sake of Heaven, already into the start when he wishes to reach the basic purpose of life, which is to take pleasure in Hashem. (e) We can only see that greater goal from far away, so cannot see it up close, and therefore we cannot know how to reach it exactly when we start. All we can do is guide ourselves on the general path to get there, but we cannot know exactly how to get there until we are getting closer to it.

QUESTION 9 Is it fine for a person to connect to his *havayah*, feelings, and inner world, before *davening Shacharis*?

ANSWER Yes, it can be done as a preparation for *davening*.

QUESTION 10 Is it fine to do this in a shul or in a beis midrash or is it considered like idle words of chatter (*divrei chullin*) since it’s not words of Torah?

ANSWER Yes. *Chas v’shalom* to say that it’s ‘idle chatter’ - these are not matters that are not mundane and empty, they are matters that are full of content.

QUESTION 11 Is there a difference between the approaches explained in sefer *Da Es Atzmecha* (Getting To Know Your Self) and *Hakarah Atzmis* (Self-Recognition)?

ANSWER *Da Es Atzmecha* (Getting To Know The Soul) is about the soul in general, while *sefer Hakarah Atzmis* (Self-Recognition) is the details of the soul.

QUESTION 12 Can a person do the *avodah* that it says both in sefer *Chovos HaLevovos* and in the Rav’s *sefer Bilvavi*, at the same time? Same question for learning and applying the Bilvavi and *Da Es sefarim* at the same time – can this be done? Or should a person only work on one area at a time?

ANSWER The ideal thing is to do each *avodah* separately.

QUESTION 13 Can a person daven on Shabbos for spiritual needs? What about things that aren't spiritual but enjoyable to ask Hashem for? And is it fine to talk to Hashem on Shabbos about difficulties?

ANSWER It is permitted on Shabbos to talk to Hashem, and to thank Him, but it is forbidden to ask requests of Him. Shabbos is a time to praise and thank Hashem, but not a time of *tefillah*.

QUESTION How much time does a person need to spend on each chapter of *Chovos HaLevovos*, in order to really acquire it well?

ANSWER At least a few months.

QUESTION 14 Am I able to apply *Chovos HaLevovos* by myself or do I need someone to guide me in it or to speak to someone with experience?

ANSWER It requires partnering with someone else, for guidance.

QUESTION 15 I feel that I don't have enough shiflus towards Hashem, how can I work on this?

ANSWER For now, leave this alone.

QUESTION 16 What kind of awareness does a person need, in order to stop being in the category of a person who is completely unaware? Is it awareness of what one is doing – meaning that I need to think why am I doing this right now? Or is it awareness of what I'm feeling now? Or both? What does it mean to be self-aware?

ANSWER Both, but one should utilize his sensibility when becoming self-aware – he should only do it according to what he's capable of, and not overdo it.

QUESTION 17 I feel that what I personally need in my *avodah*, is to purify my deeds and do them for the sake of giving a *nachas ruach* to Hashem. This is how I will be able to feel my *Yechidah*, to at least feel that I have a unique relationship with Hashem, in this way. Yet on the other hand there are also other ways which I want to grow in – for example, I want to learn and apply *Chovos HaLevovos* and the Rav's sefer Bilvavi. Is there a way for me to combine all of this together? Also what is the way for me to purify my deeds and do them for the sake of giving a *nachas ruach* to Hashem?

ANSWER “If you try to grasp too much, you will not grasp anything.” Stick to one approach for half a year or more, and then move on to the next step. Just like it's impossible for most people to learn 3 *Masechtos* in-depth all at once, so is it impossible for a person to work on so many areas in *avodas Hashem* all at once. He must instead go step by step.

Beginning To Learn Pnimityus

I want to begin learning *pnimityus haTorah*. Which sefarim should I learn?

ANSWER

Sefer *Chasidus Mevueres* מבוורת חסידות and *sefer Pischei Shearim* פתחי שערים of R' Yitzchok Eizik Chaver.

Learning Kaballah & Maharal

(1) I am an *avreich* and also a *baal teshuvah* for a few years already. I mainly learn Gemara and halachah (in-depth) and I also learn the ways of *avodah* and *pnimityus* as taught by the Rav. I want to know, what is the purpose of learning Kaballah? Also, even if I should be learning Kaballah, won't this come at the expense of learning *Shas* and *Poskim*? (2) What is the difference between learning *Maharal* with learning the *Kaballah* of the *Arizal* and *Ramchal*? Will one of these suffice [to learn Kaballah]?

ANSWER

(1) Learning *Kaballah* gives a person a complete picture of the Creation, and it is mainly meant to be learned by those who are seeking *shleimus* (perfection) as the *Mesillas Yescharim* describes. However, learning *Kaballah* elevates even people who aren't in that category.

(2) Learning the *Maharal's* sefarim does not offer a "complete picture" on Creation that learning *Kaballah* gives. One would have to be very wise in order to extract a complete picture on Creation from the *Maharal's* Torah teachings. The gain of learning *Maharal* though is that it enables a person to see a more inner view towards each concept, and that is why one should learn the *Maharal's* sefarim, in addition to *Kaballah* [*Arizal* and *Ramchal*] which provides a complete picture on Creation.

Everything takes times to learn and it will always come at the expense of learning a different area of Torah. So in order to know what to learn and how much, one needs to clarify it greatly, and each person's situation is different.



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