

LISTEN TO BILVAVI ON KOL HALASHON ISRAEL 073.295.1245 USA 718.521.5231 (2>4>12)

GEDOLIM & TZADDIKIM

QUESTION 1) How do we know if someone is a Gadol or a tzaddik? Is it only if other Gedolim or tzaddikim recognize this person's greatness and they testify that he is a Gadol?

ANSWER Usually we cannot know for sure, because a person only sees another with his eyes, but Hashem sees into the heart of another. There are certain external credentials that we first need to research in order to know if someone is a Gadol/tzaddik: How great he is in Torah, in his deeds, in his middos, in his devotion to Hashem, and other areas. One needs an inner sense in the heart, as well as davening to Hashem, to merit understanding the truth [in order to know if the other is a gadol/tzaddik].

QUESTION 2) What about if a person feels strongly in his heart that a certain person is a Gadol/tzaddik? Can a person rely on what he's feeling? We know that Reb Yisrael Salanter figured out that Rav Zundel of Salant was a Gadol even though he never heard from anyone about Rav Zundel being a Gadol, because he trusted his feeling about him. But maybe only Reb Yisrael Salanter was able to figure out who was a Gadol because he had a very pure heart? Are there any signs by which we can recognize that a certain person is a gadol/tzaddik or someone we may follow and trust?

ANSWER Same answer as above.

QUESTION 3) There are two kinds of Gedolim: Those who are great in nigleh (*the revealed dimension of Torah*) and those who are great in nistar (*the hidden dimension of Torah*). Do the Gedolim in nigleh come from the souls of the revealed dimension (*alma d'isgalya*) and do the Gedolim in nistar come from the souls of the hidden dimension (*alma d'iskasya*)?

ANSWER Usually, yes.

QUESTION 4) Today we act according to the Gedolim in nigleh, and only in the future after Mashiach will we act according to the Gedolim in nistar. Is this connected with Yeravam ben Nevat's refusal to acknowledge Dovid as walking in front of him with Hashem in Gan Eden?

ANSWER Yes.

QUESTION 5) Are there Gedolim today in nistar who are able to argue on Gedolim in nigleh?

ANSWER Certainly.

QUESTION 6) With regards to the revealed and concealed dimensions, where do the Leah-souls come from and where do the Rachel-souls come from?

ANSWER Leah-souls are from the hidden dimension, and Rachel-souls are from the revealed dimension.

QUESTION 7) There are some tzaddikim who are radiant, whose faces shine, they have a becoming appearance, they are always smiling at others, in a manner that goes beyond human nature. Other tzaddikim barely smile, or their faces don't shine, and they are not becoming in their appearance. Is this related to the two different soul-roots, the hidden dimension and the revealed dimension?

ANSWER That is a factor here, but it also depends on the tzaddik's personal soul root, as well as the state of the generation [and what the generation needs].

QUESTION 8) There is a statement from Rav Shach that there is no such thing as a hidden tzaddik, because if a person just learns Torah in his own little space and he doesn't deal with other people and he isn't sharing in others' pain, he can't be a real tzaddik. But how can this be true, if there are 36 hidden tzaddikim who greet the Shechinah each day?

ANSWER He [Rav Shach] was a revealed tzaddik, and that is why he said that there can't be such a thing as a hidden tzaddik. There is a different response I gave on this topic which elaborates more on this.

QUESTION 9) How can it be that certain tzaddikim taught a certain way of serving Hashem and led and established communities based on their approach, and later when these tzaddikim were niftar, there was no one to replace them and the communities got very messed up with no one to guide them? For example, Chabad was being led by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and Rav Kook

was leading his students, and when they were niftar, the communities they established were devastated and left in the dark, with no one to guide them, and the results for them were disastrous, leading to so many problems for them. How could these great “lights” become broken? And how are we to understand the great embarrassment to these tzaddikim after they were niftar, since their communities couldn’t go on properly without them, and it seems as if all of their hard efforts went lost?

ANSWER There are great spiritual lights that can come for a temporary amount of time, whereas other great spiritual lights disappear and then return at a later time. This is a very long discussion.

QUESTION 10) Lakewood today isn’t what it used to be. It was established by HaGaon R’ Aharon Kotler who made a community of bnei Torah who would be moser nefesh for Torah, living a life of Torah and living simply with no pursuit of materialism. But today Lakewood isn’t like that anymore, and in fact many people make fun of Lakewood in a cynical way that it is no longer the “town of Torah” that it is so called. And quite frankly, many families in Lakewood today are simply not interested in continuing the way that Rav Aharon envisioned. They want to live very comfortably and have very high materialistic standards. And because there are so many problems in families trying to raise their children according to Rav Aharon’s vision of bnei Torah, there are actually many kids in Lakewood who went off the derech because they can’t live such a life of mesirus nefesh for Torah and avoiding materialism. It seems as if the high standards in Torah of the community have led to so many problems in many families, who can’t handle the way of living of mesirus nefesh for Torah that Rav Aharon wanted Lakewood to be, and all of this seems to be an embarrassment to Rav Aharon, as if he was wrong in establishing such high standards of Torah living. What is the proper attitude to have about this?

ANSWER There is never a path of serving Hashem that will work for everyone. Every path will always help some people and harm others at the same time. This is all the mysterious ways of Hashem, Who created the world and runs it.

WHY DOES THE RAV EMPHASIZE 4 ELEMENTS?

QUESTION The Rav mentions that there are other paths of avodas Hashem besides for the “4 elements” approach, and I would be happy to know what those other ways are. Also, I want to know why the Rav chooses to go with the 4 elements approach more than any other path in avodas Hashem.

ANSWER The sefer Tomer Devorah lists 13 steps of avodas Hash-

em, based on the 13 middos of rachamim of Hashem. The sefer Mesillas Yesharim lists 10 steps of avodas Hashem, based on the ten steps of growth taught by the Sage Rabbi Pinchos ben Yair, and this is based on the Ten Sefiros. However, the path of 4 elements is closer to home with most people, because it speaks even to the animal level of the soul (*the nefesh habehaimis*) since it is an approach by which one can repair his natural imbalances. This is because the 4 elements are really part of the secret of the Iggulim (*the circles*), as explained in the sefer Leshem, and the avodah that corresponds to Iggulim is the avodah of repairing the nefesh habehaimis. The 4 elements approach is also an approach that balances even our Nefesh Elohis (*G-dly soul*). That is why Rav Chaim Vital in sefer Shaarei Kedushah explains how to repair the animal soul by working with the 4 elements (*fire, wind, water and earth*).

WHAT EXACTLY IS THE BILVAVI SEFER ABOUT?

QUESTION 1) Who is the “Bilvavi” sefer especially catering to? 2) What type of audience did the Rav deliver the classes to upon which the sefer is based on? It is targeting kolel people or working people? 3) Also, what is unique about this sefer which isn’t included in sefer Mesillas Yesharim?

ANSWER 1) It is a sefer that is speaking to the simple, earnest part of every Jew’s soul. It is meant to fulfill the words of the prophet Chavakuk who said that the entire Torah can be summed up in one point: “A righteous person lives by his emunah (*faith in G-d*).” 2) It is meant for all of Klal Yisrael to learn and it is not targeting any specific group or community of Jews. 3) Sefer Mesillas Yesharim is based on ten steps of growth that are rooted in the Ten Expressions which Hashem created the world with, which span the entire gamut of the soul. The sefer Bilvavi, in contrast to this, is addressing the simple, earnest point of a Jew’s soul.

WHY DO CLASSICAL SEFARIM ONLY HINT?

QUESTION How come we don’t find any mention of the Rav’s teachings about “revealing the soul” and “feeling Hashem’s Presence in the heart” in any of our classical sefarim? I have not come across any of these concepts in sefer Chovos HaLevovos or in the Kuzari, or even in the Ramchal’s sefarim. Most of the early sefarim which speak about emunah and avodas Hashem do not openly mention this point. Certainly when we analyze the sefarim we can find that they are describing a certain inner dimension, and there are many hints to the “inner world” contained in the sefarim, but it seems that this concept is largely

being explained by the Rav and other recent authors of sefarim, which explains openly about revealing the soul and revealing the presence of Hashem in our heart. But the classical sefarim only hint to it and they do not speak about it openly. What is the reason for this?

ANSWER It is because we can now receive the illumination of Mashiach, as the Sages teach, that the closer we are to the coming of Mashiach, the more we can receive the light (*the revelations*) of Mashiach, and since we are currently very close to the coming of Mashiach, we can receive more revelations that Mashiach will reveal to the world.

A WOMAN'S EXTRA UNDERSTANDING

QUESTION The Rav has explained that it is not a woman's task to serve Hashem through in-depth Torah study. But don't Chazal say that women have "binah yesairah" (*understanding*)? And although Chazal also say that "Women are light-minded", to a certain degree women will still have this extra amount of understanding. Also, the Rav explains in the book "Getting To Know Your Feelings" that a woman's avodas Hashem does not involve knowing something on an intellectual level before internalizing it on the heart, because women have the avodah to begin from their heart, not from intellect. But how can a woman begin internalizing any knowledge in her heart, without first knowing of it intellectually? In other words, how can a woman build her own inner world correctly if she doesn't have the daas (*intellectual awareness*) which is supposed to eventually become internalized in the heart? And in general, is the book "Getting To Know Your Feelings" an appropriate avodah for women?

ANSWER This is a lengthy concept explained in the works of Kaballah. The following is a brief and simple outline.

There are two kinds of knowing: mochin d'gadlus, a more mature level of understanding, which is to study knowledge for the sake of the knowledge itself. This is the root ability that is needed when learning Torah, and it continues when a person is in Gan Eden and it will also be the case in the future after the Redemption. Women lack the complete level of this kind of knowledge (*mochin d'gadlus*). The lower level of understanding is called mochin d'katnus, and it is about thinking in order to do something. Women are better at this kind of thinking [because women are naturally more action-oriented].

Getting more specific, women are better at grasping and understanding certain details (*prat*), but they are less gifted at seeing a more encompassing view of the information (*klal*).

Furthermore, there is binah (*understanding*) in both the intellect

and the heart. Women do not have the quality of intellectual understanding, but they will have more "heart understanding", which is about palpably recognizing and feeling their knowledge. This is the meaning of the statement in Chazal that women have a better understanding of a guest, more than their husband's understanding.

Women feel the truth of a situation not by deeply analyzing the reality in front of them, but by using their feelings directly. In that way, women skip over the stage of "knowing", which is the intellect, and they begin from the heart, by having a conversation in their own heart about their feelings, which in turn sharpens their feelings towards a matter.

This is the main ability which women need in order to learn about anything and it is the main ability which women need in their avodah in general. And, more specifically, it is needed in order to understand the book "Getting To Know Your Feelings".

THE DEPTH BEHIND COVERING THE HAIR

QUESTION I am a baalas teshuvah for a few years already and I am keeping all the mitzvos – except with the mitzvah of covering my hair. I need chizuk in this mitzvah. I only cover my hair when I light candles for Shabbos and when I'm sending my children to school, but otherwise I have no desire for this mitzvah. I don't feel so connected to this mitzvah. When I cover my hair, I feel like this is just not "me" to be this way. How can I get myself to have more of a ratzon for this mitzvah?

ANSWER The mitzvah for a woman to cover her hair is according to the Torah. It is both Biblical and it is also the way of married women, to cover their hair. There is a higher root as well as a lower root for this mitzvah.

The lower root of this mitzvah is because Hashem created the world with both din (*judgment*) and chesed (*kindness*), and the area of din/judgment is mainly manifest on this world in women, especially by the hair. The reason for this is because the hair is the highest point of a person's body, above even the head itself. Hashem first wanted to create the world with din/judgment, but He saw the world wouldn't last like this, so He included rachamim (*compassion*) in it in order to create the world. We are not able to handle complete din, and we needed rachamim, in order to exist. Since din is associated with the hair, the hair must be covered, because we are not handle complete din, and therefore we cannot handle the exposure of the hair of a married woman. That is why there are some women who have the minhag to remove the hair entirely from the head [after marriage], while others do not remove the hair but make sure to cover it

according to halachically – according to the din.

The upper root for this mitzvah is because Hashem is Endless and therefore a human being cannot comprehend Hashem, and Hashem willed that people should have some revelation of Him; but for the most part, Hashem is covered and hidden from everyone. Only a little bit of His Presence can be revealed to people. The Sages describe this as “HaKadosh Baruch Hu is hidden and revealed” (*and the Torah as well is both hidden and revealed*). Therefore, just as there is an avodah to connect that which is revealed and which can be known to us, so is there an avodah to connect to that which is hidden and concealed from us. Connecting to the hidden realm is a higher form of avodah than anything else. Only a little bit of it can become known to us, and for the most part, it remains hidden from our perception.

That is the higher root of the mitzvah of covering the hair, and especially the root of modesty for women in general. The avodah of a man is to reveal the hidden, to activate his potential, to perform and work – to reveal. But a woman’s avodah is hidden. It is the verse, “Your wife is in the thighs of your house” – her avodah is to connect to that which is hidden and concealed. This was what Queen Esther revealed. The word Esther is from the word hester/concealed. She was connected to the hidden dimension. This is the general concept of modesty, and especially covering the hair. The hair is the highest point of the body, and covering the hair is therefore about becoming connected to the hidden point above oneself. The hair covering is also called atarah, the “crown”, and it is also called the keser (*crown*) worn on a woman’s head.

Thus, the Sages taught that when Hashem was creating women, for each part of her body He said, “Be modest.” Meaning, the very quality of a woman is to become connected with that which is Above and hidden. To the degree that a woman is actually keeping the laws of modesty, covering her body and her hair especially, and also by becoming emotionally connected in her soul to the concept of modesty, she becomes connected to hidden, inconceivable dimension of Hashem. And in fact, she fulfills the purpose of Creation in doing so, for the purpose of Creation is to connect not only to His will and to His wisdom – which we can comprehend – but even in that which we cannot comprehend, of the Creator.

To the extent that the words here have been understood and settled upon your heart, you will merit to fulfill the will of Hashem, both because it is Hashem who has commanded you in this mitzvah and because it is His will that you do it, and also because you will be able to reach the purpose of this mitzvah by understanding its reason and underlying concept, and in that way you will be able to taste the depth of the sweetness of this

mitzvah. Any mitzvah can be fulfilled either out of two motivations – either because we are afraid of being punished if we don’t do it, both in This World and in the next (*and not covering the head is even more punishable, because it causes men to stray after their eyes when they see a married woman’s hair*), or, because we want the great reward for this mitzvah, which will be according to how much difficulty we had in fulfilling this mitzvah. The reward for this mitzvah is awesome, in the next world. But even more so, the Sages taught that the reward for a mitzvah is another mitzvah – meaning, when you do a mitzvah, the reward is that you merit to understand the depth of the mitzvah, and through that you become even more connected to the mitzvah, out of joy and gladness of your heart to fulfill it.

An even higher motivation for doing a mitzvah is when you do it simply because the Creator commanded that you do it, and you have a sense of awe of the Creator and you recognize the greatness of the Creator, and therefore you are afraid to go against His will. There is also a holier motivation than this, and that is when you are afraid of committing a sin, because you don’t want to do anything that even remotely is against the Creator’s will, because you recognize your Creator. Finally, the highest motivation in fulfilling a mitzvah is because you want to do it out love for the Creator, and you desire for much to fulfill the love of your Beloved. In order to attain all of this, you need to recognize the Creator both intellectually and in your heart, and you also need to recognize the greatness of the Creator, and even more so, a love for the Creator, a pining of the soul for G-d.

May the light of your neshamah, which wants to do the will of her Creator, become fully revealed in you, and may you merit to do His will completely, with joy and with pleasantness and amidst serenity.

In addition to all that was mentioned, there is also another way to help yourself fulfill this mitzvah: By sensing and feeling that your hair is not “you”, and they are just extra parts extending from the body. There is a difficulty a person can have with covering the hair, and there is also a difficulty with removing the hair. In order to alleviate the difficulty of removing the hair, you can reflect about the above. You might be able to exercise the above thinking by taking your hair after has been cut, and then burning it, so that you can internalize that there is no inherent worth to your hair.

If you still feel like you are not ready to fulfill this mitzvah at all, is recommended for you to at least try wearing a head covering just for the beginning of Shabbos, and then you can gradually increasing wearing it for more often, until you become intellectually and emotionally at peace with the concept of covering the hair.