

LISTEN TO BILVAVI ON KOL HALASHON ISRAEL 073.295.1245 USA 718.521.5231 (2&gt;4&gt;12)

REVIEWING THE RAV'S SHIURIM & SEFARIMQUESTION

It is already several years in which I have been listening and also reviewing many of the Rav's sefarim and shiurim. Except for the Rav's shiurim on kaballah, I have spent a lot of thought and reflection on the Rav's shiurim, which I have grown tremendously from, Baruch Hashem. This really cannot adequately be expressed or described. My question now is: How can I review all of the Rav's shiurim and sefarim which I have heard and learned, and how can I integrate all of it into my daily schedule? I currently have three learning sessions a day, and in the afternoon I am babysitting my kids.

ANSWER

It's possible for you to set aside a few minutes a day [for reviewing]. On a "vacation" day, you can spend more time on it. It should only be done according to your current capabilities. The main thing is to gain a wide expanse and depth into the sefarim of the Sages throughout the generations. **In no circumstance should you limit yourself only to these sefarim.**

HOW DO I KNOW IF AM BECOMING MORE FOCUSEDQUESTION

How is it possible to know if I am taking the approach in improving my power of focus?

ANSWER

The quality of one's focus is a personal matter, relative to each person. Therefore, we cannot "set" what the appropriate level of focus for each person should be.

Improving one's focus is an inner movement of the soul, of going from a state of being less focused to a state of being more focused, of sharpening one's focus. A person's focus fluctuates all the time. One needs to develop an inner awareness of how focused he is right now. One needs to be able to sense "Right now, I feel more scattered, and I am not able to focus so good right now." Later, one should pay attention if he has succeeded in becoming more focused. After a person has begun to become inwardly aware of how focused he is right now (*if he is more focused or less focused*), he then needs to see from time to time if he has generally improved when it comes to focusing.

When a person doesn't try to improve his focus, usually his ability to focus will weaken with time. If a person is working hard at improving his focus, and even so, his focusing abilities are still not improving, it is a sign that he is not acting precise. He will need to re-assess himself and see which factors are causing him to lose of focus, and based on the results that he comes up with, he should work with himself in correspondence with what he has found.

TESHUVAH FOR INTERNET ADDICTIONQUESTION

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?

ANSWER

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.

### QUESTION

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.

### ANSWER

He should occupy himself with anything that will keep him away from the possibility of being tempted.

### QUESTION

Would it be a good idea for him to make an oath that he will not use the Internet at all?

### ANSWER

He should beseech Hashem, from the depths of his heart, for help. He should be willing to die rather than have another fall.

### QUESTION

Or should he at least make this oath for a month, and after that he will see if he has had any progress?

### ANSWER

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.

### QUESTION

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.

### ANSWER

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.

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.

## REGAINING MASCULINITY

### QUESTION

Is there such an aspect of the soul called “masculinity”, meaning the personality traits of a man and acting like a man? For example, the power to be a giver, and the power to use logic over emotion, and other “masculine” traits. If a man is weak in any of these aspects, and he instead reveals “feminine” traits, more or less – would such a man need to learn how to build his masculinity, and to avoid feminine traits? For example, if a man is a more emotional type, or more reactive, or he cries often, or if he speaks in a more “womanly” tone of voice, does he need to learn how to distance himself from all of this?

Could this be a problem that stems from childhood, in which a boy felt closer in his soul to his mother, or because he had a stronger bond with his mother, or an unhealthy attachment with his mother, and therefore he received more “feminine” traits due to his closeness with his mother, whereas he did not receive enough [manly traits] from his father, since he wasn’t that close to his father? If there is such a thing, how can such a person be healed?

### ANSWER

Our Sages explained that Yitzchok Avinu at first had the soul of a woman. His womanly soul departed at the same time of the death of his mother, Sarah, which happened as he was being bound on the Altar. After this event, he received a man’s soul. Thus, for the first 37 years of his life before this event, his mission was to complete his womanly soul, and after that, his mission was to ascend to the level of the man’s soul.

However, not always is this the cause for a more feminine nature in a man. Sometimes, a more “feminine” nature in a man can be a flaw in his character, which he may have been born with. In that case, it is simply a trait of the “animal” part of his soul. Or, he may be this way due to the influences of his environment. Each situation needs to be individually examined, of what is causing a man to have a more feminine nature. Accordingly, one can then know how he can go about fixing it.

In a case where a boy grew up with a strong attachment to his mother and a lack of relationship with his father, one can fix this problem, either on an external level or an internal level. On the external level, one can fix this problem by becoming more balanced [between his masculine and feminine aspects], if possible. On the internal level, one can fix this problem by developing the soul's masculine aspects within him.

That is all true on a general level, but individually speaking, each case needs to be examined well, by itself.

## THE ELEMENTS OF SHAME

### QUESTION

From which element does shame come from? On one hand we can say it comes from the element of fire, because when a person feels shame he eats himself up and 'destroys' himself inside, through the emotion of shame that he is feeling, which is like a fire. On the other hand I have heard that shame comes from the element of wind (*but I don't know why*). However it can also come from the element of earth, because when a person feels shamed he contracts into himself, and contracting is a trait of earth. It doesn't seem to come from the element of water, because a person has no pleasure or vitality in the emotion of shame. However, since anything is able to come from any of the 4 elements, there must be somehow be a way for shame to also come from the element of water...but how?

### ANSWER

Shame is a contradiction between one's desired situation with one's actual situation right now. Therefore, shame comes [primarily] from the element of wind, becomes wind is space, and every space contains two extremes, where there is always movement between two extremities, an upper extremity and a lower extremity. If the person wouldn't want the desired situation – the upper extremity – he wouldn't feel shame.

As a result of shame, a person's face drains from color and turns white, then red. This is a product of the element of fire – expressed here as a self-destruction – and all

destruction [fire] causes contraction [earth]. This is the revelation of inner “dryness” which is found both in the elements of earth and fire. However, “dryness” is mainly found in the element of earth. This is the anger [fire] that leads to sadness [earth]. The “dryness” of fire [the destructive feeling of shame] leads one into the general “dryness” in the soul, which comes from the element of earth.

There is also the element of “water” present here because if the person would be in his desired situation, he would “expand” to that place, which is “water”. If he would give up on expanding, he wouldn't come to feel any shame. Thus, since the person still wants to expand to his desired situation, the element of “water” is also involved here, and this leads a person into the “dryness” of the soul.

## DEPRIVED OF EMOTIONAL NOURISHMENT

### QUESTION

How does one straighten out a “messed up” soul? Ever since [my] childbirth, my soul was not given its basic needs. Even though I was nursed as a baby, my soul was undernourished emotionally, because I was not given any of the emotional warmth or natural love that every soul needs in order to survive. And, throughout childhood, not only didn't I receive love from my parents, but all I received from them were many physical and emotional blows to me, and this was due to their abusive behavior.

As a result from all this, I grew up dysfunctional and confused, with very low self-esteem, and I also felt certain pressures from the environment I grew up in, which only hurt my self-esteem further. But worst of all is that I feel a terrible and deep void of love and natural feelings in my life which I don't have. As a result of this, I have begun to pursue interests that are of a dysfunctional nature, in order to fill the gaping void in my life. I am trying to fill myself with inappropriate kinds of “love” because I need to feel my existence in some way. I didn't get love from a normal source, and I find myself so desperate for love

that I am seeking it in a crooked, dysfunctional way. I am not speaking about committing any actions that are evil or disgusting, chas v'shalom, but I am certainly desiring to receive certain emotions and to pursue certain desires which are inappropriate, so that I can feel a little pleasure with myself and in my existence. In addition, everything I do is being done out of a pressure that comes from a self-conscious thinking, of notoriously trying to gain the approval of others. This is because I want so badly to feel good about myself, and be able to have some pleasure in my existence.

So now, the question is: What can a person do in order to straighten out his soul and become emotionally healthy? What can I do to feel naturally good about myself, as opposed to getting pleasure from negative sources?

I wish and yearn to get pleasure from Hashem alone, to serve Him with wholeness and with a complete heart, who is awaiting a yeshuah for Hashem, for my body and soul, and for my neshamah which is holy and precious.

## ANSWER

1) Discover any love that you did receive, even if it was only a little. In your question, you state that your soul “did not receive any emotional warmth or love.” You need to think about this and see that you certainly did receive some love, even if it may have only been a little. But you certainly received a little bit. Then, focus on the little bit of love you received, and open yourself further towards it, so that this emotion becomes alive. This will be a seed which you can use to open yourself up further, as will soon be explained.

2) Open yourself up to Hashem's love for you, and from

that you can receive some pure love.

3) Open yourself up to the ability of healthy self-love, love which comes from your inner self. You can access your inner self-love and extend it to yourself. From your inner self-love, you can also develop the ability to feel loved from Hashem, an ability which comes from within yourself, and which does not come from outside of yourself.

When a person receives loves from outside of himself [i.e. from family or friends], this is a means to a greater end, which one can use in order to reach his own genuine and pure self-love. However, many times, a person remains on this “means” without reaching the greater end: A person feels fine receiving love from others, so he never reaches his own inner self-love, for the most part.

When someone is missing love from others, when he did not receive love from any source outside of himself, on one hand, he is missing the path to get to his own self-love. However, if he wants to, he can choose good, and he will be a lot closer to reaching pure self-love, without using any outer means to get to it. The more inner that a person is, the less he will be needy of love from outside sources, and it will suffice for him that he has a self-love that comes from within himself, as well as the love that he feels from the Creator.

One needs to love others, using this approach [of first discovering his own inner self-love]. One should identify his wish to love others, and then extend that love further.

Understandably, each of these points requires further discussion. If you have any specific questions, I will try to elaborate further on these points, b'ezer Hashem.

המשך סדרה  
יום שני יא' אלול תשפ"ג 28/08/2023  
20:30  
רח' הרב בלוי 33 ירושלים

# צורת אדם