

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

THE SITUATIONQUESTION

Here in chutz l'aretz there is a lot of talk in the frum newspapers and between different people about the situation in Israel. What should be our attitude about it? That we are in the exile of the "Erev Rav"? That we are in ikvesa d'Meshicha (*directly before Mashiach*)? What can we do to make the situation better? Are we supposed to be davening about it, or should we just take our minds off it and just be immersed in learning Torah?

ANSWER

Don't be involved with this at all. Instead, just be aware that we are found in the depths of the "50th Gate of Defilement", and that is why all kinds of tumah (*spiritual defilement*) and fallacies are all present, in all of the deeds, emotions, and thoughts, in our external world as well as in the more inner dimension. Everything today [all deeds, emotions, and thoughts of both the external and inner dimensions of reality today] is all a giant mixture. That is the very idea of the Erev Rav, which means taaruvos rabbah, "great mixture."

We need to scream out to Hashem, with mesirus nefesh, for the complete Redemption.

PURPOSE OF THE ROSH CHODESH SERIESQUESTION

I have listened to all of the Rav's shiurim on the topic of "Rosh Chodesh", including the series on Avodah of Rosh Chodesh, Mazal of Rosh Chodesh, and Mahus (*Essence*) of Rosh Chodesh, and most of the shiurim on "Shevet" (*Tribe*)

of Rosh Chodesh. I want to know what the Rav's purpose was in giving these shiurim. I also want to know if these shiurim are offering an alternative ladder of growth (*which seems to begin from the month of Nissan, the beginning of the months*).

Also, if someone was born in a certain month, does that mean this personal avodah is closer to the avodah described in the shiurim about the essence, mazal, and tribe of that month? For example, if someone was born in the month of Sivan, does that mean his avodah is more connected with the mazal of "twins" in the month of Sivan, and with all that this implies? And is such a person's avodah more relevant to the personal correction which that "tribe" of that month (*such as the tribe of "Reuven" in the month of Sivan*)? Also, are these shiurim a step-by-step program of growth, or is there no particular order to go in, when trying to practically implement these shiurim? Meaning to say, for example, that the avodah of the month of Sivan doesn't necessarily need to be done before the avodah of the month of Tamuz?

ANSWER

There is a mazal for each day as well as a mazal for each hour of the day, and a mazal for the month. Each mazal is a "garment" of one's soul. There is a way to serve Hashem based upon one's very soul, and this is the primary service of the Jewish people, who are above mazal. There is also a way to serve Hashem through the "garments" of the soul, such as through the mazalos. The "Rosh Chodesh" series (*Essence, Mazal, Tribe, and Avodah*) were given according to the order of the months, but this is not a specific order. Rather, it is a possible order to go in for one who wants to serve Hashem based on the order of the months, which correspond to the order of the mazalos. This is because there are many different orderly systems within Creation, and

that means that there are many different corresponding orderly systems of avodah. The orderly system described in the classes of the Rosh Chodesh series is one of those orderly systems.

### WHY EMPHASIZE THE 4 ELEMENTS?

My understanding, based on speaking with a student of the Rav, is that the most important sefer of the Rav which I need to begin working from is the series of the “4 Elements”, so that a person can attain self-recognition.

#### QUESTION

1- I am not sure if: (A) This is the ONLY sefer that I need, meaning that I don't need any other sefarim to serve Hashem, such as a sefer of chassidus, or sefer Mesillas Yesharim, and the like, or, (B) From learning this sefer [on the 4 elements], I'll know how to recognize myself and then I'll know what area of Torah learning I need to be involved in, and what approach I need, and where all of this is bringing me to.

#### ANSWER

1) You need to learn the words of our Sages at their source, and to analyze the exact words which they taught. As you stated in your question, from learning about the 4 elements a person can recognize and know which direction he needs to go in, and which sefer he needs to learn, based on his personal soul. From learning about the 4 elements, you will see more clearly, with siyata d'shmaya, the words of our Rishonim and Acharonim, and you will have greater understanding in their words, knowing how to apply them to your own personal soul and to properly actualize their words.

#### QUESTION

2- Also, how does the Rav's sefer on the 4 elements relate to the Rav's other sefarim which explain chassidus and Kaballah?

#### ANSWER

2) The [series on the] 4 elements is a way for one to

recognize his “personal soul”. All other sefarim are teaching the general fundamentals of Torah, and each person needs to find his “personal soul” within them.

### WHAT DO I WORK ON FIRST??

#### QUESTION

It is hard for me to feel “grounded”. I don't feel centered in my body. I feel like I am unbounded. Sometimes all I feel are my eyes, as if all my energy is in my head. It's possible that physical exercise would help me become more grounded, but I have very little time in my day and I have a lot to do, both when it comes to family and work, and I have very little free time. I very much want to make the most of my time, and focus on that which is eternal, and to work directly with my soul. I want to do this sensibly. The Rav has said many times that it's important to improve gradually, in steps. But where do I begin??

Also, I thirstily drink up the Rav's shiurim and sefarim, like a parched person in the desert who needs water, like a child in a candy store. I want to grow in all areas that the Rav talks about. Is there any order for me to go in? Does it make a difference which of the Rav's sefarim or series I should begin with?

I very much appreciate that the Rav has taken of his precious time to read through my question. I am eagerly awaiting the Rav's response. Thanks.

#### ANSWER

You can work on one topic at a time, along with reading any of the other sefarim.

For now, it is recommended that you begin by learning the “Focus” sefer, which is part of the “4 Elements” series, which has just been released in Hebrew [also available in English for download as Fixing Your Focus].

### STRUCTURED GROWTH FOR WOMEN

#### QUESTION

I am very confused in how to improve in my avodas

Hashem. Is there any path I can take in avodas Hashem that is structured and clear, which I can implement in my daily schedule? For men it seems to much clearer on what to do and how to live, because men have Torah learning. But for women, it's not so clear, when it comes to what the path in their avodas Hashem should be. And I am very bothered by those who have told me, "Just be all day in the kitchen, and that's it." Women have much more spiritual feelings, and this is a very unsatisfying answer.

### ANSWER

It is recommended that you learn the series about the "4 Elements", so that you can become familiar with your personal element. Accordingly, you will then know what you need to personally focus on in your avodas Hashem. Besides for having a strong and truthful desire to improve – which you already have – you also need to become clear about your soul, and accordingly, you need a structure in your avodas Hashem which will correspond to that [fixing your most imbalanced element].

## THE 4 ELEMENTS AND THE TEN SEFIROS

### QUESTION

Does the Rav explain how we can practically use the Ten Sefiros in terms of our soul? And, why has the Rav chosen to teach about the 4 elements, as opposed to all other abilities of the soul (*or at least the seven primary traits of the soul*)?

### ANSWER

There is a new series called ארבעת היסודות - שורשי תנועות הנפש, "Four Elements – Root Movements of the Soul" in which I explain [for example] the element of earth and how its defining characteristic is "contraction", according the system of the Ten Sefiros. There are Ten Sefiros [Keser, Chochmah, Binah, Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferes, Netzach, Yesod, and Malchus] and there are four Partzufim (Abba, Ima, Zeir Anpin, and Nukva). A "partzuf" implies a combination of some sort. This new series (*Four Elements – Root Movements of the Soul*) explains the elements

according to the system of the Partzufim.

Besides for the aforementioned series, the Ten Sefiros are explained on a person "soul" level in the series "Getting To Know Your Soul" and in the series "Getting To Know Your Feelings."

## DIFFICULTY WITH THE 4 ELEMENTS SERIES

### QUESTION

One of the difficulties with the "4 Elements" is that there is a vast amount of information to learn in it. Each middah contains 16 parts to learn about, and this is an endless kind of learning. There are people who are finding it hard to analyze all 16 parts of even one middah. A person can find it too overwhelming to learn so much information and to take such a deep approach that has so many details to it. If a person finds the approach too overwhelming, does this mean that the "4 elements" approach is not for him or her? Would this kind of person need a different approach?

A tremendous Yasher Koach to the Rav.

### ANSWER

The approach [of the 4 Elements series] is **not** for everyone. It is only for people who are capable of **depth and subtlety**, who have patience, and who are able to **build and develop themselves by breaking down all the details**. It's recommended only for this kind of person to identify which particular one of the 16 subdivisions [of the middah in question] are applicable to him, and that particular area should become his focus. There is no need to focus on any of the other areas being learned about.

If one finds even this to be too difficult, for the time being he should not involve himself with this kind of self-work.

## STAYING SPIRITUAL DURING FAMILY TIME

### QUESTION

On Chol HaMoed [or Bein haZemanim] the reality is that one's wife and children "want to go out and do

something” and today there’s no place where a person won’t see goyim, indecent dress, people who have thrown off mitzvah observance, and other influences that we don’t want to expose ourselves or our children to. So all of us who have no choice but to take the family out somewhere, and even the biggest masmid who has no desire for such things and who would rather sit and learn all day in the Beis Midrash, is ultimately forced to take his family out somewhere on Chol HaMoed, as part of his obligation of simchas Yom Tov to make him family happy. And, he has to do it all in a good mood, and not with a scowl on his face. He has to take his family somewhere. But the reality is (*especially in chutz l’aretz*) is that even when we go to a place where all the frum people go to, where the families of bnei Torah spend their time in, it is very difficult for a person to guard his eyes from seeing anything improper. And even if all the women would be dressed modestly, the fact is that they’re all dressed up in their most beautiful clothing, so this presents an obvious challenge of mingling and shemiras einayim for men. I also feel that when I go to these places, I lose my pnimiyus and I become involved with chitzoniyus (*the outside world*). When that happens, I meditate more and connect inwardly, so that I can remain connected to my ruchniyus, but that is not good for my family, because I become lost in my own world and in my own thoughts. I have no choice but to be involved in all the frivolousness of this world, and especially when I am spending time with my family, and especially on these Chol HaMoed outings. How can I become more balanced, making my family happy on Chol HaMoed while remaining connected to my inner world?

Much thanks to the Rav, and may the Rav have a Chag Kasher V’Sameiach.

## ANSWER

Each case is different. Should you go or not go to a certain place, and in what way should you get there? Every situation needs to be weighed differently, and for every rule there are always exceptions. Generally speaking, a person needs to gain the balance of a ben aliyah, a truly growing and spiritual person, who lives Above but comes down below every so often, “running and retreating” (*ratzah v’shov*) between the spiritual and the mundane, as the Baal Shem Tov taught. One needs to consider his main place to be “above”, in spiritual thoughts, and soon after one needs to return to his surroundings and interact properly with them, according to his current level and respecting the level which others are on (*and relating to them as such*).

However, while this is the general rule, it is not always the case. Sometimes a person is so attached with the spiritual that he cannot sever himself from his spiritual source, and even if he were to somehow separate himself from thinking about the spiritual, it would be tremendous suffering for his soul. And at other times, a person is at a low spiritual level and if he were to become even more involved with the outside world, his level will only sink lower. As a rule, as long as a person cannot immediately return to being focused on his inner world [i.e. thinking about Torah, the Creator, or matters of avodah], then he must not allow himself to “descend” from his level, unless it is a life-and-death matter. Sometimes a person is allowed to “descend” from his level if it will affect his shalom bayis (*marital harmony*), because the Sages taught that “Great is peace, for Hashem erases His name in water [to allow for peace between husband and wife]”.



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