

GROWTH ON YOM TOV

QUESTION

1) Yom Tov is pretty stressful when I go away to my parents for Yom Tov. My kids can be wild and my mother wants me to run after the kids so they don't break anything. My grandfather is not an easy person to be around and tries to convince me not to sleep in the succah. All the more so if I get into arguments with my wife on Yom Tov. How can I feel simchas Yom Tov in spite of all these challenges which always ruin my Yom Tov?

ANSWER

Every so often, pause for a few moments and focus inwardly, entering into your pnimiyus (*inner soul*), and that is where you can draw simchah (*joy*) from.

QUESTION

2) Since I don't enjoy Yom Tov that much when I go to my parents for Yom Tov, and because of the general atmosphere there, is it possible that Hashem wants me to get all my simchas Yom Tov from just honoring my parents and also learning how to look past the faults of others?

ANSWER

That can be a part of your growth on Yom Tov, but it can't be all of it. (*Refer also to the answer above*).

QUESTION

3) What is better to learn on Yom Tov, to learn a sugya of Gemara or to learn things that have to do

with the Yom Tov?

ANSWER

It is preferable to learn a sugya [of Gemara or halachah] that is related to the Yom Tov, and through it you can find simchah on Yom Tov. In addition, learn about any concepts that have to do with the Yom Tov.

QUESTIONS ABOUT SIMCHAS TORAH

QUESTION

1) What should a person be thinking as he's dancing on Simchas Torah by the Hakafof?

ANSWER

By dancing we are moving our feet, so one should be thinking as he's dancing on Simchas Torah that he wants to give a tikkun (*repair*) to his feet if they ever went to go do an aveirah, and to repair any mitzvos that were done habitually, and that we will instead become habitually used to learning Torah. This is the aspect of intention to have while dancing, but there also intentions of hakafof (*encircling*) which are a separate matter.

QUESTION

2) There is an argument which honor is more important, Chosson Torah or Chosson Beraishis. Is the root of this argument really about what's more important, beginning to learn (*Chosson Beraishis*) or finishing the Torah (*Chosson Torah*)?

ANSWER

Yes!

QUESTION

3) Shemini Atzeres is called the time of yichud with Hashem, and it is when the message is sent out in Heaven regarding a person's judgment for that year. Is this a continuous process throughout Yom Tov or does it happen only at the final moments of Yom Tov?

ANSWER

The main yichud with Hashem takes place at Tefillas Geshem at Mussaf (*on Shmini Atzeres*), and that is when the message of one's verdict is handed over in Heaven.

QUESTION

4) On Simchas Torah can a person drink a little bit (*an alcoholic beverage*) for simchas Yom Tov, just a little bit and without getting drunk? There were tzaddikim who drank on Simchas Torah, and I heard that even in Lita there were Gedolim who drank a bit of whiskey privately before Hakafos). Or should our simchas Yom Tov come solely from our pnimiyus and not through any alcoholic beverages?

ANSWER

Because of simchas Yom Tov, it is proper to drink a reviis. Halachically, there is a mitzvah to rejoice on Yom Tov by drinking wine, as Chazal said, "There is no joy except through meat and wine." In the times of the Beis HaMikdash this was fulfilled through eating the meat of the Korbon Shelamim, and later when meat was made forbidden to eat, the mitzvah could become fulfilled through wine, for those who become gladdened from drinking wine. It is proper to drink a reviis, but if one needs more wine in order to reach a happy state, he should be careful not to get near intoxication. It is proper for one to mainly get his joy from within his pnimiyus,

and any drinking should only be used as a means to awaken one's joy – but drinking should not be taken any further than that.

STOMACH ACHES AFTER SHABBOS

I have difficulty with digestion after Shabbos, what can I do about it?

ANSWER

Chazal said, "Change of the menses [which refers to any period of change] is the beginning of stomachache". Chazal said, "All my days were suffering and bad, even on Shabbos and Yom Tov."

Eat less, and take large breaks between each meal.

Eat patiently and calmly.

In addition, satiate yourself more from liquids and less with solids.

Also, go for a walk after each meal.

SUCCAH OF LEVIATHAN IN THE FUTURE

Chazal teach that in the future we will sit in the "succah made of the skin of the Leviathan". Will this be in This World or in the Next World?

ANSWER

It will be on This World, in a state that is a semblance of the World To Come.

D'VEYKUS & MITZVOS

I feel deeply connected to ruchniyus whenever I focus on how much I love Hashem or fear Hashem or on my emunah in Hashem, in all the different levels – and that's when I feel ohr (*the light*). But when I do mitzvos, all I feel is my kavanah when doing the mitzvah but I don't feel anything about the actual mitzvah I'm doing. Just to give an example of how far this goes, when I'm putting on tefillin, I feel that I'm doing something so special and holy, but I also know that if someone were to come and remove

the parshiyos from my tefillin, I would still feel the same that I'm doing something holy! My feelings of kavanah and feeling connected to Hashem through the mitzvah of tefillin would stay the same! In other words, I'm not really feeling the actual *ohr* of doing the mitzvah, because it's not the mitzvah I'm concerned about, it's my own feelings of *ruchniyus* that have nothing to do with the mitzvah. I can shake *arba minim* and feel so connected to them, but if someone were to switch my beautiful kosher *esrog* for an *esrog* that's not kosher, I wouldn't feel anything has changed! I daven and I feel connected to Hashem, but if I were to say the wrong words, like if I would say *Baruch Agid* instead of *Baruch Atah*, I would feel the same connected when I daven - I would feel like I still have the same deep kavanah when I daven and that I've merely switched around the order of the words. Why am I like this and how can I change this?

ANSWER

You have the *ohr*, but you don't have the *kli* – you aren't building a container to house all of the *ruchniyus* that you are feeling. You should learn *halachah l'maaseh* (*the practical halachah*), and you should be careful to follow every *halachah* you learn, with the clear recognition that this is what Hashem wants from you, and you should do this with every detail of *halachah* you learn, even the smallest detail of a *halachah*, that this is all the *ratzon* Hashem. This is you should connect yourself to the power of *maaseh* (*action*) in general, and to being careful with every detail of *halachah* specifically, to become deeply connected to each mitzvah act with all of your *nefesh*.

KAVANOS ARIZAL

For a long time now already I make sure to have the kavanos (*intention*) of the different names of HaVaYaH with their different vowelizations depending on the month....and I can even see these names of HaVaYaH when I close my eyes since I

have gotten used to concentrating on them. I am very drawn after these kavanos of the Arizal. But I'm starting to give up because there's so many different kavanos to remember! Is the kavanos Arizal only for people on a high level and not for regular people? Are there certain conditions necessary in order for a person to have these kavanos? Also I've heard the Rav say that today our *avodah* is not mainly the kavanos but something deeper - what is it?

ANSWER

There is such a path, and the view of the Ben Ish Chai was that the kavanos are for everyone.

There is more inner light shining today which is deeper than the kavanos, and it is called *p'shitus*. This is unlike *yichud*, which is about combining together different names. The essence is *p'shitus*, while the garment is *yichud*. The main thing must be *p'shitus*, while *yichud* (*the kavanos*) should be viewed as a garment.

USHPIZIN

How does a person work on acquiring the middos the Ushpizin on each day of Succos?

ANSWER

In every area a person can find the 7 middos of *ahavah* (*love*), *yirah* (*fear*), *rachamim* (*compassion*), *Netzach* (*victory*), *hod*, *yesod*, *malchus*. For one who wants to take this path, he should find these 7 areas on each day of Succos and see how on the first day how he can show more love for Hashem, on the second day how he can show more fear of Hashem, etc.

QUESTION

What is the relationship of Shlomo HaMelech with the other Ushpizin?

ANSWER

Shlomo HaMelech is called the “root” of the 7

Ushpizin. The Ramchal (*Pirush HaMitzvos* 8, 9) says that Shlomo HaMelech appointed the 7 shepherds (*the Ushpizin*), and that Shlomo is the eighth of the Ushpizin, and the number 8 is the number of the future and the level of complete tikkun. As a hint, Shlomo's mother was Bas Sheva – he is the product of 7, which is 8. Shlomo HaMelech was called by 7 names, as the Zohar says. Also, the Zohar elsewhere says that the Avos, Moshe, Aharon, Dovid and Shlomo are the 7 shepherds corresponding to the 7 Sefiros, and they came to the Succah [according to this view in the Zohar, Yosef is not counted in the Ushpizin and instead Shlomo is counted]. The Gra says that Shlomo is the foundation of all 7 shepherds. See sefer Tolaas Yaakov on Succos.

QUESTION

Are Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben Dovid included in the Ushpizin?

ANSWER

Yes. Yosef is the root of Mashiach ben Yosef's soul, and Dovid is the root of Mashiach ben Dovid's soul.

4 ELEMENTS OF 4 SPECIES ON SUCCOS

Is there a connection between the 4 species on Succos and the 4 elements of earth, water, air and fire?

ANSWER

Lulav – Yesod Ruach (*air*).

Hadasim – Yesod Mayim (*water*).

Aravos – Yesod Aish (*fire*).

Esrog – Yesod Afar (*earth*).

MOSHE – NETZACH

The Sefirah of Tiferes is called “Torah”. Therefore, in the 7 Sefiros which correspond to each of the 7 Ushpizin, why does Moshe correspond to Netzach and not Tiferes, since he gave the Torah (*Tiferes*)?

Why is Yaakov the Tiferes and not Moshe? And what is the connection between Moshe and Netzach?

ANSWER

There are several ways to look at it. The Zohar says “Yaakov on the outside, Moshe on the inside.” Thus Yaakov is Tiferes and Moshe is Netzach, because Netzach is the inner level within Tiferes, since Netzach is called the inner level of all six Sefiros which comprised the partzuf Zeir Anpin (*sefer Koheles Yaakov*). Sefer Chaim V'Chessed says that the Torah overcomes all the nations, thus Torah is associated with Netzach. Sefer Toldos Ahron says that Moshe is called Netzach because he was victorious over the angels to get the Torah, and that really Moshe was on the higher level, Tiferes, but because of his humility, he was willing to go down to the level of Netzach. Sefer Imrei Pinchos says that Moshe is called Netzach because Moshe's holiness spreads to every generation, thus Moshe is eternal, Netzach. Sefer Toldos Ahron also says that Moshe is called Netzach because he overcame all of his middos, so he was victorious, Netzach. The inner level of Netzach is daas, which is the root of all the middos.

MISHNEH TORAH HOSHANAH RABBAH

1) What is the benefit of hearing Mishneh Torah (*sefer Devarim*) on the night of Hoshanah Rabbah?

ANSWER

1) See Sefer Moshav Zekainim (*Bamidbar 21:14*) that reading the book of “wars of Hashem” which refers to sefer Devarim, which contains the victories of the Jewish people. 2) See also to Tosafos to Gittin 2a that “Mishnah Torah is not counted” as one of the sefarim of the Torah because it is entirely repetition of everything that was said in the first 4 books of the Torah. This would make Mishnah Torah on the level of Malchus which has nothing of its own. 3) It is a sefer which is entirely rebuke to Klal Yisrael. R' Nosson of Breslov says that even though it is entirely rebuke, it is to show us that we

should not despair from Hashem's mercy. 4) Aderes Eliyahu (*Gra*) explains that it contains 995 pesukim. The Mekubalim said there are 995 Heavens, thus in each possuk Moshe said in Mishneh Torah he was opening another Heaven. 5) The Maharal says that Mishneh Torah is the Torah we receive, which needs explanation in order to understand, as opposed to the regular Torah. On a deeper level, there is Written Torah and the Oral Torah, and Mishneh Torah is the bridge between them. 6) The mitzvah of d'veykus is in Sefer Devarim. It was said in Arvos Moav, right before they entered into Eretz Yisrael, thus Sefer Devarim (*Mishneh Torah*) is the root of the level of Torah of Eretz Yisrael, whereas the other 4 sefarim of the Torah were said in the desert and they are on the level of the desert. 7) The Arizal says that Sefer Devarim corresponds to Malchus, which is the level of Hoshanah Rabbah. Another reason for Mishneh Torah on Hoshanah Rabbah night is mentioned by R' Nosson of Bresslov. 8) There are 7 sefarim of the Torah, because Vayehi B'Nesoa Ha'Aron is counted as a separate sefer (*see Maseches Sofrim 6:1*), thus Sefer Devarim is the 7th sefer. And the king would read it at the end of every 7 years. [Hence Sefer Devarim is read on the 7th day of Succos].

QUESTION

2) Why does it have to be done before midnight?

ANSWER

The Arizal (*Shaar HaKavanos, drushei Succos*) says that at the first half of the night, we read sefer Devarim, and after that one should learn Avos.

QUESTION

4) What should a person be thinking about when he's hearing Mishneh Torah? Is there something more to it than just a custom of hearing it?

ANSWER

Connect to the soul's power of receiving (*being mekabel*).

QUESTION

5) Can I say the tikkun alone and learn alone if I learn better that way?

ANSWER

At least a little bit should be with the tzibbur, so that one shouldn't separate from the tzibbur. The rest of the time can be spent on how you want it to be. It's a fundamental question if a person should act on Kaballah matters even when he is not on the level.

QUESTION

6) Am I allowed to learn on Hoshanah Rabbah night instead of hearing Mishneh Torah?

ANSWER

Same answer as before – it depends on if one is obligated to do something according to Kabalah when he isn't on the level to. However, if until now he did it, he needs hataras nadarim if he wants to forego his custom of Mishneh Torah.

QUESTION

7) What should I focus on the night of Hoshanah Rabbah?

ANSWER

See answer to #4.

BANGING HOSHANOS & EREV RAV

We bang Hoshanos on the ground Hoshanah Rabbah in order to nullify the Erev Rav and bring them down into the ground (*as the Rav explained in one of the shiurim on Succos*). But we know that there's an infinite light of Hashem which repairs everything,

even evil. Shouldn't we then wish to repair the souls of the Erev Rav when we bang the Hoshanos, and instead of simply wishing to destroy them we should have the kavanah that they should receive their tikkun? After all, Hashem wants them to get a tikkun.

ANSWER

Their tikkun is through bittul, through nullifying them. There are two ways to be nullified – lower bittul and higher bittul. Lower bittul is to simply be nullified (*destroyed*). Higher bittul is to become nullified to the EinSof, the Infinite.

SHMINI ATZERES

The Sfas Emes says that Shmini Atzeres corresponds to Yosef. In another place he says it corresponds to Dovid, and in another place he says it corresponds to Moshe. How do we reconcile this?

ANSWER

Shmini Atzeres corresponds to Yosef because it is the added day onto the festival, for Hashem says "Stay with Me one more day", and Yosef is called tosefes, the addition. Shemini Atzeres also corresponds to Dovid, because Dovid is the all-inclusive soul of Klal Yisrael, and Shemini Atzeres holds within it all the other revelations of every festival that came before it and contains it all within it. Shemini Atzeres also corresponds to Moshe, because it is the day of Simchas Torah, and Moshe gave us the Toras Hashem Temimah, the Torah of Hashem which is perfect.

SUCCOS & SHMINI ATZERES

The Midrash says that the aravos correspond to the reshaim, and their tikkun is to be taken together in one agudah (*bundle*) with the other species [the lulav and esrog and hadassim, who are compared to tzaddikim (*the esrog*) and people who have good deeds (*hadassim*) or Torah learning (*the lulav*), and by being joined together] they "atone" for the aravos - the reshaim. Since the other species correspond to tzaddikim (*on varying levels*), especially the esrog, can we deduce from this Midrash that the tikkun for the reshaim is to become connected with the tzaddikim, and even more so, to connect to the personal "tzaddik" that is within every Jew's soul, the "Yechidah" level of the soul, that pure place inside of us which never sins and is always connected to Hashem – and if that's correct, can we take this insight further and say that the way to be saved in this generation [if we are on the level of reshaim, chas v'shalom] is to become connected to tzaddikim?

ANSWER

That is a good insight, but even more so, we know that after the arba minim (*4 species*) of Succos comes Shmini Atzeres in which there is no arba minim, in which Hashem says "Stay with Me one day", and this high level of closeness of Hashem available on Shmini Atzeres doesn't require the arba minim [Thus there is a deeper level than Succos, which is the level of connecting to the tzaddikim. And that is Shmini Atzeres, where we can connect to Hashem directly with no intermediary in between]. *Understand this.*



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