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WEEKLY PARSHA
Q&A FROM THE
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בלבבי
משכן
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BILVAVI

CHAYEI SARAH 5784

The Simple Approach Combined With the Intellectual Approach When we come to speak about matters in Avodas Hashem, there are two ways how we can go about this. One way is to speak of it with a simple approach, and this is called peshitus (simplicity). The other way is to speak about it intellectually – to utilize our mind’s thinking abilities of Chochmah (wisdom), Binah (contemplation) and Daas (connection to our knowledge).

It is essentially a question of which path to take. Should we start with the approach of simplicity (so that we can get to the simple awareness of Hashem), or should we start by thinking about this matter on an intellectual level? Either way, the goal is the same: we are trying to reach Hashem, Who is defined by the sefarim hakedoshim as the most Simple Reality that there is.

If we take the path of simplicity, then our job is not so complicating, because by very definition it is a simple approach. Simplicity is that a person thinks about Hashem – simply, at all times, verbally and mentally as much as each person can. The goal is to be able to live simply with Hashem throughout the day – in our words we speak, and in the thoughts we think. That is if the approach of “simplicity.”

But as a person expands his mind more, his heart still remains closed, and simplicity will actually become very difficult to work with. This is because the intellect, which has now grown, is the opposite of simple thinking, and when the intellect is mainly at work, the heart, which is the source of simple thinking, actually becomes concealed! If this is the case, it will be easier for a person to take the intellectual route and from that, to come to reach Hashem.

However, we must keep in mind that when it comes to Avodas Hashem, “all paths are dangerous.” If a person only involves his intellect in Avodas Hashem (and he only thinks deeply, never simply), then there is a danger that only intellect speaks to him, and he will never reach his heart, which is the ability to live simply with Hashem at all times. On the other hand, if a person only takes the path of simplicity, he won’t have this problem, but he will have a different problem: it will be very challenging for him to absorb these concepts, because he is dealing with facts that aren’t tangible at first, and his mind isn’t strong enough to comprehend these matters. What will happen is that because he can’t comprehend these matters, he is apt to think that he is just imagining these concepts, and

the result will be that he will become very disconnected from himself.

Which path, then, do we take? Do we go with simplicity, or do we go with the intellectual approach? Such a decision really needs a prophet to decide; the Ramban writes that in the time of the prophets, everyone would come to them, and the prophet would tell him what his soul needed to accomplish on this world. If a person takes the wrong path of Avodas Hashem in life, he actually causes destruction to his soul in the process! If a person wants to be successful in life, he really should cry to Hashem about this for days and nights, until he clarifies which path to take in how to serve Hashem.

Of course, there are many more paths in Avodas Hashem besides for the two which we mentioned, but these two are the root paths from which all other paths stem out of. There are two general ways how we turn to Hashem: either through simplicity (to simply think about His existence), or through probing the matter with our intellect.

The words in the coming chapters are the second way, which is the intellectual approach. If someone feels that his path to take is simplicity – he feels that simplicity is what speaks more to his heart – then he needs to hear something else other than the following words. It is not because he is incorrect; it is rather because each person has to serve Hashem according to the path that is appropriate for his soul.

We have given this introduction so that we can be clear which path we are taking, as we discuss the words in the coming chapters.

Wisdom Unifies It is written (Tehillim 104:24), “You made them all with wisdom.” All of Creation is a wisdom! This is not by chance. The power of wisdom (chochmah) really contains everything, and it can come and unify everything. If it wouldn’t, we wouldn’t be able to say, “You made them all with wisdom.”

Before the world was created, “Hashem was One, and His Name was One.” After the world was created, this oneness still continues. Day and night are called “one day”. The day is a revelation of the oneness found in Creation, and the root of all creations, which is the Jewish people, are called “one”: “You are One, and Your Name is One, and who is like Your nation, Yisrael, one nation in the earth.”

This applies to our mission as follows. Chochmah\wisdom is when we take details and connect them. Chochmah is supposed to bring us to come to unify everything. Anyone who realizes the inner essence of Chochmah can see that this is the whole point of Chochmah: to unify details, to reveal the root of all details. This is the force in Creation known as achdus (unity).

Anyone hearing this the first time will find it very strange. When a person isn't there in the point we are describing, it does seem very perplexing: What does Chochmah\wisdom have to do with Achdus\unity?! It sounds more like another detail about Chochmah, but how can unity be the entire essence of Chochmah?!

But if one understands the depth of Creation, he knows that all of Creation is really all about unity.

The Inner Source of Wisdom – The Power of Unity in the Heart There are three levels of achdus: the first level is called achdus (unity), the second level is called echad (one), and the third level is called yachid (individual).

The first level, achdus, is when two things are separate, and they become unified. The higher level, echad, is when they are one to begin with, and the highest level, yachid, is when there is nothing except Hashem – the recognition of Ain Od Milvado.

In order to aspire to reach Hashem, the tool to get to Him is by turning all of Creation into one unit. Only through this can we reveal the Creator of the world, Who is yachid, because there is none other besides for Him.

When the various forces in our soul are scattered and not connected into one unit – and when there is disparity among people – there is separation in the world, and the world cannot be a tool to hold the presence of Hashem.

We are living after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, which was destroyed because of baseless hatred. This hatred “still dances among us” (Yoma 69b). Baseless hatred (sinas chinam) is a force of separation in the world, which is the opposite of the Beis Hamikdash, the place in the world that held the Shechinah. In each person's heart, there can be a personal “Beis Hamikdash” – when we reveal Hashem inside us. Baseless hatred, though, holds back one's personal Beis Hamikdash within, because the disparity within a person doesn't allow the unity to enter.

The power of achdus\unity is located in the heart, and from it, the rest of the body thrives on. It is the power which connects all of Creation together. “There is nothing that is not hinted to in the Torah.” This is because Torah, the essence of all wisdom, contains everything. This is the secret that Chochmah\wisdom accomplishes.

Chochmah is also called “wisdom of the heart”, as it is written (Shemos 35:10), “And all those who are wise of heart.” It is also written (Koheles 1:16), “My heart has seen much wisdom.” When a person only has Chochmah in his intellect, it’s not really Chochmah, and such knowledge is just a scattered kind of wisdom; the facts to such a person don’t bear any connection to each other. Chochmah is only considered Chochmah when a person’s knowledge is in his heart – “wise of heart.” The power of achdus\unity found in the heart is the source of all wisdom, and all wisdom stems from this power.

The fact that we have 613 mitzvos seems to imply that we have many “separate” tasks to fulfill. But there is one root that unifies all this together: Rav Saadiah Gaon writes that the positive commandment “I am Hashem your G-d” is the root of all the positive commandments, and the commandment “You shall not have any other gods” is the root of all negative commandments. Chazal (Makkos 24a) tell us that these first two commandments were told to us directly by Hashem; if so, why do we need all the other mitzvos? It is because the entire Torah is about unity – to show how the first two commandments unify all 613 mitzvos together.

At the giving of the Torah, Hashem opened up all seven layers of heaven and showed us that there is nothing else besides Him (Devorim Rabbah 7:9). The root and source of all wisdom is this – Ain Od Milvado, there is nothing besides for Hashem. This is yachid – the deepest manifestation of unity; it is echad and achdus in its simplest form.

Unifying Everything Into One What is our inner mission that is hidden from us? There are many works of mussar that have been written throughout the generations. When a person learns mussar, and surely when he learns a lot of mussar sefarim, he sees many points that he has to work on, and these are all truthful points. They all come from one pure source, and all the advice that a person sees in the sefarim are holy and true. The problem is, though, that there are so many details, and it is overwhelming. But herein lies the secret to success

– or failure.

If a person sees one underlying point from all the mussar sefarim he learns, he will be successful. If he sees this point and that point, though, he is already on his way toward failure. What we need to do is to learn how to see one point alone throughout all the mussar we learn. In this way, we will find ourselves in a world of *achdus*, because all the details will be unified into one point. This will serve as a tool for us to connect with Hashem.

But if a person learns mussar sefarim and he sees more than one point contained in them, and he looks at all this information as many pieces of knowledge and advice – this is already a viewpoint of separation, and it distances a person from connecting with Hashem.

It is not easy to see the one point that unifies all the information one sees in the mussar sefarim. We are not used to thinking this way. The very way we live contradicts this way of thinking, because life is full of vast details, and we are not used to taking all the information and unifying it into one. In addition to this, we are after the sin of Adam, after the sin of the Calf, and after the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash, and all this has wreaked much havoc on our souls.

In order to build a house, you take a bunch of bricks and stack them up together, unifying them all into one piece. When the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed, all the bricks of this “house” were separated, and each brick was now by itself. In our own soul, this can happen as well – when the structure of the soul is split apart and scattered around into parts, there is an inner destruction to the person, and a person cannot connect with Hashem like this; He cannot find Hashem or sense Him.

“With wisdom a house is built.” (Mishlei 24: 3). When a person wants to take all his knowledge and let it fill his heart, he needs to unify it all together. That is how his knowledge can become like “a pure heart G-d gave me, and a proper spirit He renewed in my innards.”

What we actually have to work on is small in comparison to our general mission. The general mission we have is to be able to acquire the proper viewpoint – to see how all of life is one piece, one unit.

“Hashem created man upright, but they seek many calculations.” (Koheles 7: 29). The “many calculations” which people have is the root of sin and is responsible for preventing one from finding Hashem in his heart. When a person

has yashrus (straightness), he sees only one path in front of him, because he sees straight. But when a person has “many calculations”, he sees many paths in front of him.

In order to build anything, we need to get used to living with a “unified” outlook – to live in a world of unity. This is the foundation of the structure we want to build.

Ponder One Point For A Long Time These words are the foundation of everything, because they will seem very ambiguous at first. What is this “unity” we are referring to? How do we reveal it in our soul?

There was a well-known method used by Reb Yeruchem Levovitz zt”l that one should take one thought and ponder it for a few months. One time Reb Yeruchem was talking to a student after he delivered a discourse, and he asked him, “How long do you think it took me to prepare this shmuess?”

The student replied, “Two hours.” Reb Yeruchem replied, “It took me more than that.” The student then guessed, “Four hours?” Reb Yeruchem again told him, “More than that.” Eventually, Reb Yeruchem told him, “You aren’t even close to how much time it took me. It took me half a year to prepare for this shmuess!”

What is the meaning behind this story? It did not take Reb Yeruchem Levovitz half a year to understand the material he was going to deliver. He was brilliant. It took him half a year to prepare because he had to think it over and live with it and breathe it, constantly probing its depths. Only after doing this for six months did he feel that it was ready to be given over.

What we learn from this is that being successful in Avodas Hashem is not about increasing the quantity of our actions. Our main job is to keep thinking about one point, and to live with it for a while.

Usually, when a person seeks inspiration, he goes to hear a lecture. The next week he hears another lecture about that week’s parsha. At best, all he remembers from any of these lectures is some mark that was left on him. He remains with some small inspiration from it, but that’s it. We don’t mean to poke fun at any of these lectures; they all contain points of spirituality that are true. But hearing this lecture and that lecture doesn’t build a person.

If we want to enter the inner outlook, which is the “unified” outlook – achdus

– we need to have the tools in order to receive it. If a person tries to work on many different points depending on the time he's at – On Purim he tries to improve on one area, on Pesach he tries to work on a different area, during Sefiras HaOmer he works on another area and on Shavuot he works on another area – if this is how he serves Hashem, he will be all mixed up, and he will never build himself! He might get inspired every here and there, but he will never build anything.

When it comes to knowing information, the more a person expands his mind, the more knowledge he can think about. But when it comes to building oneself into one unit, a person has to take one point and stick with it. Doing more things isn't the point here. This is how a person can give himself the tool that is called "unity". When a person works on many areas, not only will he become confused, but his outlook on everything is separated and scattered. He loses the outlook of unity, and he will not be able to truly serve Hashem.

Therefore, before we learn about the plan of Avodas Hashem, we must first be aware of the root of it all – we must make sure that we are immersed in one point alone. A person should take one point he knows about and think about it. "On my bed at night, I requested that which my soul loves." When you go to sleep, think about the point you have decided to stick with, and when you get up in the morning, continue to think about it. Let it become a part of your life.

Seeing How Everything Reveals Hashem All of us have heard much and read much on how to better ourselves. All the information we have heard and read is true, but the question is, where to start??

How can we take all our thoughts and unify them?

It is written, "For My honor I created it." Creation is a revelation of Hashem's honor. Everything contains in it the honor of Hashem, and that is the depth of Chochmah. To see the wisdom in something is essentially to see the honor of Hashem in something – to see how something reveals Hashem's glory.

To see how each thing actually reveals the glory of Hashem is already the second stage, but the first stage is to realize that everything reveals Hashem. After one comes to the conclusion that everything contains the glory of Hashem, he can then figure out how.

When a person looks around at his house, he sees a table, a chair, and other items. It seems that these are all separate items, but really, a person can see one

thing alone in all of them: they were all created to give honor to Hashem!

From a superficial outlook, it appears that in a house there are many items, but if we have the inner perspective, we can see how they are unified. The unified outlook is to have a deep look at things, and not to use the childish outlook we are born with.

Our neshamah only sees the honor of Hashem in something. The neshamah is called kavod\honor. If a person wants to become connected to his neshamah, and to all the other souls of the Jewish people, he needs to see how Hashem is in everything, how each thing can reveal Him somehow.

Revealing the Neshamah What holds back the Redemption? What is holding back all people from reaching the inner perfection?

Chazal state that as long as Amalek lives, there cannot be a Redemption. Amalek detracts from the honor of Hashem. This nation epitomizes the evil trait of leitzanus (scoffing), which is the opposite of kavod (*honor*). If we want to get rid of the Amalek within our soul, we need to utilize kavod.

A person with a superficial outlook, who isn't used to these concepts, will think, "How do we reveal the kavod of Hashem in everything?!" But there is an inner outlook which is totally different than this way of thinking. A person should go for three, four or five months of thinking about how we are all created to give honor to Hashem. We don't know how, but we believe that everything somehow reveals His honor. One can repeat to Himself this fact, again and again, until it penetrates his heart.

We first have to think about how Hashem created the whole world and each thing in the world for His honor, and we need to live with this fact, constantly. After one gets used to this, he reveals his inner self – his neshamah – which is a tool for Hashem to reside in him. On one hand, he gets used to thinking one thought and pondering it, and on the other hand, he looks for Hashem in everything. He becomes a tool for unity, and he searches for Hashem in everything. In this way, one is connected to Hashem.

These words are a small glimpse into the proper outlook we should achieve. The truth is that the words here are not for everyone. If someone feels that the words here speak to his heart, good, but if the words here don't speak to you, then you will need a different way than what we have said here. (*BILVAVI PART 6*)

AHAVAS YISRAEL IN THE FINAL DAYS

QUESTION

1) What did the Rav mean that the counterforce to Gog and Magog in the final days is the power of ahavah/love which is becoming more revealed in the end of days, a deep feeling of unity with the heart of every Jew?

ANSWER

It is a connection to “Klal” Yisrael – to the collective unit of the Jewish people – as opposed to a connection to Jews on an individual level.

QUESTION

2) What is the source of this concept?

ANSWER

It is the “50th Gate of Holiness”, the all-inclusive gate, the collective unit which is above all individual parts.

QUESTION

3) Where is this deep love today that is becoming more revealed? All we are seeing is more and more separation between people, where people are so distant from each other, full of unwarranted hatred that is so rampant today. *(Especially because each person today is so absorbed in himself.)* So where is the love and unity that is being revealed in Klal Yisrael now in the end of days?

ANSWER

From the individual’s point of view, there is separation today between one individual Jew and another. But from the collective view, there is a connection between all Jews. For example, there are many tzedakah organizations today, which connects so many Jews together. This is a result of the great spiritual light of the collective unit of Klal Yisrael that is becoming more revealed. Another example is Daf Yomi, which connects

together tens of thousands of Jews in the same endeavor, and this creates an inner connection with each other.

18 QUESTIONS ABOUT AHAVAS YISRAEL

QUESTION 1) Is there a kind of hisbodedus and tefillah that a person can do in order to increase his ahavas yisrael?

ANSWER Contemplate what achdus (*true unity*) is. First think about the concept of achdus Hashem (*the unity of Hashem with all of the worlds*), and think of the unity between the Creator and all His creations, and then think of the unity that must exist between all created beings. Gain a perspective of achdus on everything, and then from the depth of achdus that one reaches on his own level, one should daven for that achdus to be revealed.

QUESTION 2) Will speaking about ahavas yisrael help us internalize in our heart what we know about ahavas yisrael? For example if we repeat the verse “V’ohavta l’reiacha kamocha” several times and we say it from our heart, will the ahavas yisrael sink into our hearts?

ANSWER Yes!

QUESTION 3) Is there a kosher way for women to work on ahavas yisrael towards men, and the same vice versa, without compromising on halachah?

ANSWER A woman should not work on ahavas yisrael towards another individual man (*and vice versa*), only on loving a certain community, or loving the rest of Klal Yisrael on a collective level.

QUESTION 4) If I hate someone, can I imagine people that I love as if they’re all standing in a circle, and then imagine the person I hate that he’s standing in that circle of people I love?

ANSWER Yes, but don’t do this so much, because heavy use of the

imagination can lead to imbalance and other problems.

QUESTION 5) Why is hatred the opposite of love? Hatred seems to imply that there is a connection between me and the other – since I am bothered by the lack of connection with the other, I hate him, because of the tension between us. But that is a kind of connection. Hatred doesn't necessarily have to be an indication that I don't love the other. The opposite of love seems to be "apathy" or "indifference" to the other – to have no feeling for the other, not love and not hatred.

ANSWER Any two opposite concepts will always bear one root. At the root, the opposite of love is hate. But at the branches, hate can show up as indifference to another, lack of connection to another, etc.

QUESTION 6) The Rav explained that women connect to each through emotion and not through an intellectual connection of daas. But weren't there women who had a lot of wisdom and daas, such as Devorah the prophetess, Beruriah the wife of Rebbi Meir, and the wife of On ben Peles, etc.

ANSWER For every general rule there are always exceptions.

QUESTION 7) What is the meaning of "Women have light daas"? Does it mean that women don't have daas and they don't have seichel and they only have emotion?

ANSWER It means that their daas isn't complete. They have "light" daas, but they do have daas. In the terms of Kabbalah, women have daas d'Gevuros (*the "judgments"*) but they are missing daas d'Chassadim (*the "kindnesses"*). That is the meaning of what Chazal say that women are very analytical and judgmental of guests who come to their home. In more inner language, women are lacking the ability to "integrate opposites".

QUESTION 8) If a person only does kindness for his family, why does this mean that he doesn't have ahavas yisrael yet? How can it be that such a person is really still self-absorbed? It's certainly difficult to be busy all day with the family and it takes a lot of energy, so why is taking care of

one's family still a degree of self-absorption and not yet ahavas yisrael? With the parent-child relationship it makes sense that it's not ahavas yisrael because a parent naturally loves their child, for the child is their extension, but a couple doing chessed for each other and getting along with each other does not come natural to them so why can't that be called ahavas yisrael?

ANSWER The love that one has for his children is because they comes from his body, because they were born from him, and because they are garments of his soul, but this love has nothing to do with ahavas yisrael. Love between spouses is often because they have no choice but to get along with each other and learn how to love each other, and a husband has an obligation to love his wife like his own body. So love for one's spouse and children is only a small "spark" of ahavas yisrael.

QUESTION 9) What does it mean that a person is acting (1) above his capabilities (2) when a person is acting above his shoresh neshamah (*soul level*), and (3) when a person acts above his current level? They all sound like the same thing.

ANSWER When one acts above his capabilities, it means that he is exhausting his physical abilities and he won't be able to handle it. When one acts above his current level, it means that he is acting above his current level of pnimiyus that he's on right now. When one acts above his soul root, it means that he is doing something that's not meant for him to do. With most people, their current actual level is not aligned with their soul root [even if they are according to their current level, it is not aligned with their soul root, and vice versa].

QUESTION 10) When hating a sinner (*which repairs him*), does a person need to hate the sinner himself or just the evil acts that the sinner does?

ANSWER To hate the evil acts that he does.

QUESTION 11) What is the difference between the highest level of love, which is love that transcends logic (*Echad/oneness*), and unconditional love?

They are both a love that isn't dependent on any reason.

ANSWER Unconditional love (*love that is not dependent on anything*) is when the love is above any factors, but it's still a logical kind of love because there's still some reason to love the other. For example, in a father's love for his child, he loves his child in spite of what the child does, but he still loves his child because this is his child.

In contrast, the highest level of love which goes beyond logic is when there is no rational reason to love the other – it is to be intrinsically one with the other, in a way that transcends all logical reasoning.

QUESTION 12) If a person can deeply feel another person and because of this he can't stay centered within himself, is there a way for him to know when his love for another is coming from an unhealthy place (*nefesh habehaimis*) and not from true ahavas yisrael? And is there a way to fix this problem of getting “consumed” in others? This problem is especially common in women, who are more emotional by nature and when they feel love and worry for another person, they over-identify with the other and they “merge” with their friend, and then they can fall into depression over every trouble that happens to their friend, etc.

ANSWER If the love is clean from ulterior motivations, then it is a love for the other that comes from one's neshamah. If the love isn't clean from ulterior motivations, then the love is stemming from one's animal level of the soul (*nefesh habehaimis*).

The way to fix the problem of becoming overly consumed in one's love for another and getting too stuck in the other's issues is, by learning how to have a deep connection to one's inner self as well as to deeply attach oneself to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. To the degree that one does this, one will be less [co-]dependent on others.

QUESTION 13) What about a person who feels very stressed out from others as a result of his ahavas yisrael because he is always so involved with joining others in their pain? How can he continue to work on his ahavas

yisrael without getting stressed from the pain of others?

ANSWER One should join in another's pain only to the emotional extent that he can handle, and not beyond what he can handle emotionally.

QUESTION 14) What about a person who forgets about himself or he forgets about his family when he's involved with giving to others? What causes this and how can he fix this problem?

ANSWER If the love is coming from deep in his soul, then it is a revelation of the root of love that transcends logic, or it is at least a spark of it. If the love is only superficial, though, it will create an imbalance in one's soul [causing one to misplace his priorities on where he should be expending all his love and kindness on]. In either case, though, a person needs to fix himself by learning how to have a balance the faculties in his soul. This is an expansive topic.

QUESTION 15) Are there priorities in ahavas yisrael, i.e. wife first, children second, followed by parents, then friends, then community, then the rest of Klal Yisrael?

ANSWER Yes, family & relatives must come before all else. Refer to #5.

QUESTION 16) If a person doesn't love himself that much should he not work on ahavas yisrael? Does he first need to love himself well in order to work on ahavas yisrael? **ANSWER** He should first work on attaining a healthy self-love, and only after that should he work on developing more ahavas yisrael.

QUESTION 17) If I feel apathetic and indifferent to someone, does that mean I hate him?

ANSWER On a subconscious level, yes.

QUESTION 18) If I only have a "spark" of ahavas yisrael (*especially if it's a degree of the highest level of ahavas yisrael*), is there any gain from this?

ANSWER Certainly!

דברי רובותינו

שער הנו"ן

חלק א'

שער הנו"ן
דקדושה



חלק ב'

שער הנו"ן

בקרוב



במרחב

דע את תורתך

דרכי לימוד

בו יבואר דרכי
הלימוד
מראשית

