TAZRIA ◆ CIRCUMCISING THE HEART

ORLAH ON AN INNER LEVEL: AN UNCIRCUMCISED HEART

[In Parshas Tazria the Torah commands:] "And on the eighth day, circumcise the flesh of his foreskin".1 The Mishnah2 states that only a circumcised Jew is called "circumcised" (mahul), whereas a gentile who is circumcised is not considered to be "circumcised", but an arel, one who is uncircumcised. This is based on the verse, "For all the gentiles are uncircumcised, and the entire house of Yisrael are uncircumcised in their hearts".3 Anyone who learns these words of the Mishnah can clearly understand there is much depth contained in the concept of orlah, of being uncircumcised, and that orlah exists on an inner level as well.

It is written, "And you shall circumcise the foreskin of your hearts",4 and the Targum translates this to mean, "And remove the foolishness of your hearts". The Ibn Ezra writes: "It makes sense that the meaning of this is to purify the heart, until one understands the truth." His words are closed and mysterious, as he does not explain what kind of "truth" he is referring to. The Sforno explains more about this matter: "It is proper that you remove the foreskin of your hearts, and this means that you reflect

about how to remove all errors which produce erroneous beliefs and so that your stiff-neckedness will not increase. When you remove the stiff-neckedness which prevents you from turning to that which it is proper to turn to, you will turn to recognize your Creator."

What is the 'error' that produces erroneous beliefs, which prevent a person from recognizing the Creator?

DISCERNING HASHEM'S MESSAGE IN ANY EVENT OF OUR LIVES

When Hashem sent angels to Avraham and Sarah in the form of Arab wanderers, they promised that Sarah would have a child in a year's time, and Sarah laughed. Hashem rebuked Sarah for her laughter, for she should have believed that Hashem could do anything. It is difficult to understand Sarah's error. The Arab guests who came to Avraham were suspected of idol worship, so why should she have believed their promise that she would have a child? Why should she trust these Arabs who were idol worshippers? Why shouldn't she laugh at their words, if they were promising her something that went against nature?

There is a traditional explanation for this matter. The criticism of

Sarah is based on the statement, "A person cannot lift his finger below, unless it was so decreed from above." That is the brief outline of the answer. (We shall elaborate upon this and explain it.) When we reflect into these words of the Sages we see the true perspective of how we need to view each thing in Creation.

"A person cannot lift his finger below, unless it was so decreed from above" – this means that nothing in the Creation is by chance. Everything that happens is with precision and calculation, to the tiniest detail.

Here is an example. A person is walking in the street and he sees a sign posted on the streetlight pole, about an organization for kiruv rechokim (drawing our brethren close to the observance of Torah). It says on the sign that they are arranging for avreichim to go to countries outside of Eretz Yisrael for the purpose of kiruv rechokim, and there is a phone number listed, for anyone who is interested in joining. A person sees it and immediately tells himself that he cannot join this endeavor, for various practical reasons. He continues on his way. While it may be true that he cannot join this kiruv rechokim program, it is still true that it isn't by chance that he came upon the sign! He should

¹ Vayikra 12:3

² Tractate Nedarim Chapter III

³ Yirmiyahu 9

⁴ Devarim 10:16

⁵ Chullin 7b

have thought to himself, "It's not for nothing that I came upon this sign and saw it."

Now, if a person lives without any palpable *emunah*, then he will think that he just "happened" to have noticed the sign, and that perhaps if he would have been guarding his vision better when he walks in the streets, he wouldn't have seen it. But a person who lives with palpable *emunah* knows that this is just being superficial. The truth is: "A person does not raise his finger below, unless it was so decreed from above!" It didn't happen by chance that he saw the sign.

Certainly, he chose to see the sign, but that is only the external part of the matter. There is definitely an inner reason of why he noticed the sign. If there was no necessity for him to see the sign, then he wouldn't have noticed it. In whatever a person encounters in his life, there is a reason that he encountered it.

If a person does not live with this attitude, then he is missing the feeling that Hashem runs the world every hour and moment, and that He runs every detail. He lacks clear, strong *emunah*.

Let's return to the example of the person who notices the sign about doing *kiruv rechokim* in *chutz l'aretz*. Although it is true that

he cannot be involved in this for practical reasons, he should still view it as a message from Heaven, that something is wanted from him, in this area. If he can't get on a plane to do *kiruv rechokim* in *chutz l'aretz*, at least he should tell his friends about it, so that perhaps he will find someone who can.

Or, if he can't go to *chutz l'aretz* to do *kiruv rechokim*, perhaps he can do *kiruv* in Eretz Yisrael, where he is living, because we have brothers here in Eretz Yisrael who, unfortunately, are distant from the Torah (*may Hashem have mercy on them*), and they can use help from others.

In fact, there are even a percentage of those who sit in the *Beis Midrash* of whom it can be said, "And their hearts are not proper with Him".⁶ Their hearts are very far from Hashem…may Hashem have mercy on them.

And if a person feels that he cannot help even those people, then at least he should try to do *kiruv* on one person: himself!

IN CONCLUSION

Now we can understand why Hashem rebuked Sarah's laughter. While it is true that the promise that she would have a child came from Arab wanderers, she should have understood that nothing is by chance. If they were blessing her that she will have a child, she

shouldn't have laughed at their blessing, because she should have realized that this entire event wasn't by chance. This does not mean that she should have believed in the blessing of these Arab wanderers. Rather, she should have realized that the Arab wanderers were a tool of Hashem, to convey His words to her.

When one lives with the feeling that nothing in the world is coincidental, and that he lives in the world of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, it changes his entire view towards everything around him. Whenever he sees something, instead of seeing only the outer, external wrapping of the event, he reflects: "How is Hashem speaking to me?" This can be done in any place and in any time, and in any situation.

In a time such as this, when the entire world is shaking, everyone has the obligation to understand, that Hashem is speaking to him and that he wants something from him. One does not have to be a prophet to understand this. One only needs to be someone who isn't so blind and foolish who can't understand, for of him it said, "And you shall circumcise the foreskin of your hearts", which the Targum explains to mean: "Remove the foolishness of your hearts."

METZORA - STRIVE TO BE ALONE SOMETIMES

THE SOLITUDE OF THE METZORA (LEPER)

In Parshas Metzora, the Torah states that a metzora (a leper) "sits alone, outside the camp". The Gemara⁷ says that a metzora has caused a rift between husband and wife and between man and his friend [through speaking words of slander to them about each other], which caused separation. Therefore, the Torah punishes the metzora measure-for-measure by making him dwell alone, outside the camp, where he is separated from society.

The fact that the *metzora* must be alone is the "downside" of being alone, and a punishment. But *Chazal* have taught us that every power can be used for evil as well as for good. If it is a bad thing to be alone, there must be also a good and holy side to being alone.

There are several instances and times where a person is alone. For example, one must relieve himself in a lavatory which is a room set aside for bodily functions so that he can do so alone. The *Gemara* says that King Shaul was especially modest when relieving himself, by defecating only in a cave within a cave. This was a kind of "alone" that stemmed from the trait of modesty. However, this kind of "alone" is for hiding bodily functions, which man is ashamed of, so it is not the holiest use of "alone".

There is a holier kind of "alone" exemplified by the *Kohen Gadol*

in the *Kodesh Kodashim*, on Yom Kippur. No one was allowed there on Yom Kippur except for the *Kohen Gadol* who was completely alone with Hashem. This was the highest function of the power of "alone".

THE TWO SIDES OF MAN: ALONE AND COMPANIONSHIP

Chazal say, "Therefore, man was created alone". Adam was first created alone. This was the inner essence of man – to be alone. At a later point, Hashem said, "It is not good for man to be alone", and He created woman as a helpmate for man. This became the external function of man: to live with companionship. But the internal function of man - the initial form of existence of man - is to be "alone".

This function of man, "alone", was not lost after man received a companion. Rather, it remains as an inner power in man which is still functioning even though it is hidden. All people, throughout all the generations, retained this inner function of man to be "alone", for "man was created alone." The avodah of every person, on one hand, is to develop this inner space of being "alone"; and simultaneously, man has the task of being a companion to others. The Gemara says that it is wrong to learn Torah alone, and one must learn Torah with a *chavrusa*, or else "a sword shall be upon his neck."

In the depths of our soul, we

need to develop the soul's power of "alone", man's "individual" aspect, but at the same time, we also need to build connections with others. You are commanded to love another Jew like yourself, and in learning Torah, you need to learn Torah with others, and not by yourself.

These are the two major, opposite areas in the soul which need to be accessed: the power of alone, and the power of companionship. One needs to build the power of "alone" - in a holy manner, that is - and on the other hand, one needs to be able to connect to others.

TRUE FRIENDSHIP WITH OTHERS IS BASED ON DEVELOPING THE POWER OF "ALONE"

Therefore, let us understand the following. If a person does not build in himself the power of "alone", his connections to others will not be genuine. Instead, they will be the kinds of connections that remove a person from his world, such as the traits of jealousy, desire and honor which remove a person from "his world" - meaning his own, inner world. When a person connects to others only in a superficial manner, these connections turn him from being an internal person into an external kind of person who acts superficially.

When a person has no inner place in his soul of "alone" – meaning that he is not accessing this power in himself, and he is just taking life as it comes – his connections 4

to others will be only external and superficial. They will be stemming from a lack of connection to his own inner world — they won't be genuine, truthful connections that stem from the depths of his soul.

To give an example, a child cannot really connect to others. A child lives for himself, which is a use of "alone". This is not the holy use of alone, rather the impaired, self-absorbed use of "alone". A child cannot have mature connections with others, and all he can do is be dependent on his mother for care and affection. This is a kind of bittul (self-nullification), which is some kind of connection, but it is not a connection of love for another person, which is only possible with two mature adults.

When growing up, a child learns how to connect to others, mainly through the power of speech, which is the force that enables conversation and connection with others. But if one has not developed yet his power of "alone", of "man was created [an] individual", his connections to others will be on an immature level, and he will not have true, genuine friendships with others.

Therefore, Hashem has created man in a way that he must access both of these aspects – the power of "alone", and the power of connection to others.

THE BALANCE BETWEEN SOLITUDE AND COMPANIONSHIP

With regards to our own personal avodah, the Ramchal in Mesillas Yesharim states many times that befriending others often awakens our materialistic aspect, and it often awakens bad middos as well, when

we are around friends. The *Ramchal* therefore says, that a person must have time every day in which he is alone, spending time learning Torah or in his own personal *avodah*. In addition, part of the day should be spent in the good company of Torah scholars and those who serve Hashem.

It is impossible to say how much of the time of the day should be spent alone, and how much time of the day should be spent with others, because there are no ironclad rules for this. Some people naturally like to be alone and they are less social, but they need to have some time of the day of connecting to others, for the Sages say that it is incorrect for a person to learn Torah all day by himself and not to be involved with others when learning Torah (as well as in matters of avodah).

On the other side of the spectrum are the people who love to socialize with others and they do not like to be alone, but the Ramchal advises that they, too, must have some time of the day where they can learn Torah alone. There are people who dread learning Torah by themselves, and they can only enjoy it when they learn with a chavrusa, but if the chavrusa doesn't show up one day, they are so disturbed by this that they feel like they cannot learn. This is what happens when a person has not yet developed his inner space of being "alone". He must learn how to be "alone" sometimes.

It is difficult to determine how much time of the day one needs to spend alone learning Torah and doing *avodah*, and how much time of the day one needs to learn Torah with others and to be around Torah scholars and those who serve Hashem. There are no set rules for this, and it is matter that depends on one's personal soul root, as well as on the particular level that one is on now. It is also affected by external factors, such as the location one is in, and what his particular needs are right now.

But a sensible person must set aside some time of the day for learning Torah alone, and for making private self-accounting, and for speaking with Hashem privately, both mentally and verbally. And he must also have times of the day in which he learns Torah in the company of others.

The Chazon Ish would spend a large part of the day learning Torah alone. He also had some time of the day where others could come speak to him. When he came to Eretz Yisrael, the yeshiva students came to his home at certain times of the day to converse with him in Torah. Those who were close to him and who studied his writings in-depth were able to tell that he learned Bava Kamma with a chavrusa, because the style of his Torah chiddushim on Bava Kamma was different than all other tractates he had written on. This was a clear example of a Gadol who spent most of his time learning Torah alone.

There were other *Gedolim* who were opposite than this, and they spent most of their time learning Torah around their *talmidim* and speaking in Torah with others. But the common denominator between all *Gedolim* is that they were all able to do both – they could learn Torah alone, and they could also converse in Torah with others.

WHEN THE "ALONE" IS MISSING

If a person cannot learn Torah alone at all, he is greatly lacking a fundamental, deep power of the soul, and in all (or most) cases, he will certainly find it difficult to set aside any time of the day to make any self-accounting. Although there are many different approaches of how to make self-accounting, everyone agrees that self-accounting is mainly a personal matter, which [mainly] needs to be done alone. Perhaps this kind of person will want to make a self-accounting together with his chavrusa, but he will be missing the main kind of self-accounting, which is done only when one is alone.

The external part of self-accounting may be done with others, but the main, inner part of self-accounting needs to be done alone. One needs to have time alone every day for making a self-accounting, where he contemplates his situation deeply, alone, by himself.

One needs to really acquire - and with emphasis on "acquire", because he must work hard at attaining this space of "alone" in himself. This is what is meant by the words of Rabbi Pinchos ben Yair that "Torah brings one to zehirus....to kedushah.... to ruach hakodesh...to techiyas hameisim." The Torah that leads one to developing his own "alone" - his own personal share, his own inner world, his own personal obligation on this world - this is the kind of "Torah" that will lead one to all the other levels, such as zehirus, zerizus, etc.

When one can only learn Torah in the company of others but he cannot learn Torah alone, he has

not developed his soul's abilities he is not actualizing the potential of his soul to be "alone". Man was created alone and to become an individual, man must reach his "individual" aspect by discovering this "alone". He will not be able to reach his individuality if he has no times of being alone during the day. Man needs time of the day in which he can learn Torah alone, as well as to connect to his inner self, when he is alone. If he merits to exert himself in Torah even when alone, the vast inner world of avodah becomes opened to him.

If one wants the world of inner *avodah* without trying to get to his own personal share in Torah – which can only be attained through learning Torah alone - it is like a branch without a root, or a tower floating in the air, which cannot sustain itself.

The root of one's avodah is to activate the potential forces of the soul, to access man's "individual" aspect, which is unique to each person and which no one else can equal. The root of this power lies in discovering one's own personal part in the Torah. Hashem created everything in His Divine wisdom, and man in particular was created with a special Divine wisdom, and one's avodah is to activate the potential of all this wisdom.

One reaches his own Torah, on an external level, by learning Torah alone, and on an internal level, by reaching one's unique part in the Torah. Then, just as Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world, so can a person "create worlds" through his own personal share in the Torah that he reaches: he can build his own inner world, through the unique share in Torah that he reaches. If only learns Torah with a *chavrusa* and never when he is alone, it will be difficult for him to reach his own share in Torah, and as a result, it will be very hard for him to reach his own inner world of *avodah*.

Without developing the power of "alone", a person may daven well, he may be heavily involved in trying to improve his character, which is wonderful, but he won't reach his own personal obligation on this world as described in the beginning of sefer Mesillas Yesharim, that "the foundation of piety and the root of perfect service is to clarify and make true one's obligation on his world". As the baalei mussar explained, one must reach "his" personal obligation in "his" own personal world.

The *halachos* of the Torah apply to everyone equally, and there are also levels of piety which vary depending upon the person's particular level, and then there are parts of one's personal *avodah*, which are unique to each person.

On a similar note, the *Vilna Gaon* in Mishlei says that there is a derech (path) of serving Hashem which applies to the public, which all people must traverse, and there is also the *orach* (private way) which each person must traverse privately. Each Jew must take the general path, which is called the *derech*, and this path is traversed by all of *Klal Yisrael*, but since there is also the fact that "man is created individual", each person has his individual aspect, and therefore each Jew must find his own private path as well, which is called his "orach".

So a person must have times of learning Torah in the company of others, as well as by himself when he is alone. When one makes sure to have times every day of learning Torah alone, along with holiness and purity, he can slowly penetrate, at least to some level, to his own personal part in the Torah. When he reaches it, his "individual" aspect intensifies and he activates it from its potential state, more and more. Then a new gate will be opened to him, where he can reach his own inner world, through his own personal share in Torah that he has reached.

THE HIGHER LEVEL: RESEMBLING THE "INDIVIDUALITY" OF HASHEM

Even more so, the Ramchal in Mesillas Yesharim says that a person was not created except to bask in the pleasure of Hashem...and the true perfection of man is in attachment with Hashem." It is explained in Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer, and in other sources, that before Hashem created the world, "He was one, and His name was one". Just as Hashem is the Individual One of the world, so did He give man a resemblance of this power, so to speak, to become an "individual". This is a root force in man.

There are a myriad amount of creations, but they are united under the oneness of Hashem. *Chazal* teach that man must resemble Hashem's attributes: "Just as He is compassionate, so must you be compassionate." The deeper aspect of resembling Hashem, though, is to resemble His individuality. Yaakov fought the angel of Esav "alone",

and *Chazal* teach that when Yaakov remained "alone" after fighting the angel, he resembled Hashem's complete reign in the future, when it will be clear to all that He alone rules the word. *Chazal* also state that Yaakov *Avinu* also resembled the likeness of Adam *HaRishon*; just as Adam was an individual man of the world, so did Yaakov reach the "individual" aspect of man.

TOGETHER, AND ALONE

The personal avodah of man to reach d'veykus (attachment) with Hashem contains two deep aspects. One part of it is to connect with all of Klal Yisrael together, which was the state of Har Sinai, when all of the people received the Torah together. The other part is to use the light of Moshe Rabbeinu, who ascended alone to Heaven, receiving the Torah alone, from Hashem.

Each soul contains both of these deep aspects. On one hand, a person can connect to Hashem through the Torah that was given to all of *Klal Yisrael*. But the deeper aspect is to be like Moshe Rabbeinu, who received the Torah privately from Hashem; the Rambam says that everyone can reach a level that resembles Moshe Rabbeinu, and Reb Elchonon Wasserman in the name of the Chofetz Chaim wrote about this extensively.⁸

A person needs to use both of these aspects together. On one hand, a person should learn Torah in the company of others who exert themselves in Torah, and to connect himself with the company of Torah scholars. But a person also needs to develop his own inner world,

by connecting to his own personal share in the Torah, and to activate the potential of his inner world.

But even more so, as a result of combining the above two aspects of the soul together, there is a greater level as well that one can reach: a person can reach a level in which he stands "alone" with Hashem, and resemble the individuality of Hashem, so to speak. Besides for revealing the power of "alone" in the soul, there is a higher level one can reach through it: to discover the power of "Moshe Rabbeinu" within, on his own level. Moshe is called the "faithful shepherd", who had true ahavas Yisrael to all souls of the Jewish people - a genuine connection to each Jew.

Therefore, the more a person develops the power of "alone", the more his connections to others will improve, as a byproduct. Then a person will merit rectifying the power of "alone", of the impaired kind of "alone" of the *metzora*, who sits alone, outside the camp - and in its place, to reveal the true "alone" – which is balanced by an ability to connect to all others.

The way life looks like for a person who traverses the ways of our teachers is to have connections with others, out of a general love for each Jew, and on a particular level, to be able to learn Torah with others; and at the same time, to build the "individual" aspect of the soul, with true, complete *d'veykus*, in the Creator.

שיחת השבוע 024 תזריע-מצורע.לבד

DIFFERENT WAYS OF TZADDIKIM

1) In the sefarim of *Chassidus*, as well as in the earlier *sefarim*, it is mentioned many times that the purpose of life is *d'veykus* (attachment with Hashem). Did all tzaddikim throughout the generation agree to this, or were there other tzaddikim who held that the purpose of life is to fulfill all of the 613 mitzvos, and mainly the mitzvah to learn Torah?

ANSWER

1. The purpose of life is always d'veykus with Hashem, and it is just that there are several angles to this, which are all needed: (1) To connect to Hashem out of emunah peshutah, simple faith in Him, with a simple sense of His reality, which is called "the Infinite". (2) To connect to Him by way of His garments, which is the Torah, which enables a person to become "one" with Hashem so to speak, since Hashem and His will and wisdom are one. (3) To connect to the middos of Hashem, by emulating His compassion, etc. (4) By revealing Him on this world, through doing the mitzvos. This is the lower aspect of d'veykus in Hashem, which is to listen to Him. All of the above are the different form of d'veykus in Hashem.

QUESTION

2) The *tzaddikim* throughout the generations disagreed with each other, both in areas of Torah as well as in areas of how to serve

Hashem. There is a well-known fundamental that this was because they had differing soul roots (shorshei haneshamos). When the tzaddikim disagreed with each other's views, was it because they each had a clear knowledge that the other tzaddik was presenting a view according to his unique soul root? Or was it instead that each tzaddik held that the other tzaddik was totally wrong?

ANSWER

It depended on the situation. Usually, a *tzaddik* whose soul root was in *ohr pnimi* (*internal light*) did not recognize this concept [of validating the other *tzaddik*'s view], whereas a *tzaddik* whose soul was rooted in *ohr makif* (*surrounding light*) was more aware of this concept [of validating the other *tzaddik*'s view in spite of their disagreement].

QUESTION

3) How is it possible for a *tzaddik* to have an influence on his students, or a *Rebbe* on his *chassidim*, and draw others in to follow his own way? How did the *tzaddik* or *Rebbe* know that this was good for his students or *chassidim* [since every person has a different soul root]?

ANSWFR

Either it was because [the tzaddik or Rebbe] knew through Ruach HaKodesh [that his teachings were appropriate for his students and chassidim], or it was because he had

emunah peshutah that if Hashem directed this person to him, it was the will of Hashem that it should be this way – this was the approach of the Chazon Ish.

QUESTION

4) In certain sects of Jewry, there is a view of "My way is the right one", and that anyone else who isn't part of their following, or anyone who isn't a chassid of their own Rebbe, is deemed as someone who doesn't serve Hashem. I am talking specifically about those who are following a statement that was said by any of the true tzaddikim or Rebbes of the past. How it is possible that a tzaddik should say that someone needs to attach himself with his Torah teachings? Aren't there many ways to serve Hashem, as we see from the 12 different tribes, who are called the "12 tribes of G-d", who each represent a different path of serving Hashem?

ANSWFR

Each tzaddik's intention was, that his particular approach was the "gateway" that was all-inclusive of the 12 general paths in serving the Creator. This is well-known. [Therefore, each tzaddik held that] anyone who didn't become attached to his all-inclusive "gateway" would merit [only] a "diffused" light (ohr prat), without a "collective" light (ohr kolel).

CHILDREN - SELF-ESTEEM

How can we get a child to feel satisfaction from what he or she does? How do we uncover a child's strengths? And how do we give a genuine compliment to a child that will make the child feel good about himself?

ANSWER

Get to know the child's personality and strengths, not just how the child acts and what he does. In order to do this,

you need to get to know the child by observing what he does and how he expresses himself. For example, take note of how energetic the child is, what he's like when he gets angry, and what makes him happy, etc. You can know this by learning about the 4 elements in the soul and how they are expressed in one's behavior.

And you also need to

compliment a child whenever you notice his particular good points, by giving a genuine compliment to the child about the quality that the child has, without adding anything else to the compliment, just stating the pure truth – for example, if the child cleans and tidies up well, say "You clean so nicely", and don't add anything else to the compliment.

CAN UNDERSTANDING 4 ELEMENTS HEAL SEVERE PHYSICAL ABUSE?

If a child was molested, is no longer *shomer Shabbos*, fell into drugs, and is currently living a life of total carelessness, and now as a teenager this boy or girl is turning to therapists for help, can understanding the particular 4 elements of the soul (earth, water, wind and fire) be helpful in treating the abuse of this teenager?

ANSWER

No one has the same soul as another person, and therefore, even if every person were to experience this same exact situation, they would each experience it differently [due to the unique makeup of the 4 elements of each person's particular soul]. Therefore, it is necessary for the therapist to (1)

Understand the child's particular personality [by seeing which elements are most dominant in him or her], and also (2) The teenager [or any abused person in question] would need to have a very strong, determined will to work hard at understanding himself, and (3) The teenager in question would need to have a strong desire to come out of the trauma that he/she experience.



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