

BS"D Soul Prayer, Class #6, November 12, 2019 ¹
Shalom Friends,

Nurturing Inwardness

Last week I sent out an addendum to Class #5. I urged all of us to move inward. We need to be able to connect with deeper and deeper levels of our own being, in order to get to and enter an inner place within where we connect directly with Source. I alluded to but did not go into a very important kabbalistic teaching. I wrote, "This inner place is always there. It is hidden but nevertheless always there." This is what Torah/Kabbalah reveals to us. We usually look at the world from the *outside-in* and from the *bottom-up*. We see a world of multiplicity, of fragmentation and divisions, and we conjecture or even come to believe that there is something, some essential unity, that precedes and is the source of all this. The Torah comes and tells us, don't strain. You don't have to believe anything. You rather have to remove what is preventing you from knowing that *Hashem Elohekhem emet*, the Infinite One is one and only. He/It is Reality with a capital R. *Ein od milevado* – on the inside-inside level, nothing else exists but Him.

Tefillah, real prayer, is all about getting into that inner-inner place where you experience this, where you enter a state of *yichud* (non-duality, oneness, unity), which is an immersive state of *devekut*, which itself is fueled by tangible feelings of thankfulness, appreciation, acceptance (accepting and being accepted), awe and love. Accordingly, *tefillah* is not about asking for things, but rather about relationship: (1) Relationship with our self as we know our self, transparency of self; (2) relationship with higher aspects of our self, higher levels of our soul, of which we are presently unaware; (3) relationship with elevated souls with whom we are bound; and finally, (4) intimate relationship with our divine Source.

Again, this is a major paradigm shift to an *inside-out* and *top-down* perspective. According to our teachers, Hashem unfolded the worlds/dimensions from the *inside-out* and the *top-down*. The higher, inner dimensions are called *Adam Kadmon*, *Adam d'Atzilut*, *Adam d'Beriah*, *Adam d'Yetzirah*, and finally *Adam d'Asiyah*. [Why *Adam*? Because in Kabbalah, like the term *olam*, the term *adam* indicates a complete system. That is why the world is called *HaAdam HaGadol*, and man is called *HaOlam HaKatan*. *Adam* and *olam* are almost interchangeable terms. The same goes for *Etz HaChayim*. It's not literally a tree, but a complete system or super-program of ten *sefirot* that starts up in *Keter* (Primal Will) and goes all the way down to *Malkhut* (Final Actualization).] In simpler terminology, *Olam Haba* is not simply the World-to-Come, as if it will exist in the future but doesn't exist yet. No, *Olam Haba* is the entire spiritual dimension that *precedes and is the context within* which *Olam Haze* (this lower physical world of time and space) exists. Whatever the case, the one thing that characterizes the higher dimensions is that Hashem's oneness, Hashem's unified light, is much more revealed there. That is where Hashem confided in us (our souls) that it was part of His overall plan to create lower and lower dimensions, and finally our physical dimension, in which His oneness and light would be all but totally concealed. He would then lower our souls down into this lower dimension. Our mission would be to reveal His presence here as it is revealed in the higher dimensions. He showed us the whole plan and asked us, "Are you ready?" And we said, "*Hineni!*" "But," He revealed to us, "descending will entail forgetting everything! Are you still in?"

This amnesia, this forgetting is so deep that we mistakenly think we have to prove Gd's existence or believe with blind faith. But Hashem wouldn't just drop our souls down here to fare completely on our own. That's why He hints throughout the Tanakh, and then throughout the generations through the Torahs of the great *tzadikim*, that we are never completely disconnected from Him. Deep down, within, we can begin to remember that we come from the higher dimensions. Our *Lekh Lekha* (Go to yourself) journey started in *Shamayim*, and will eventually bring us back there. *Shamayim* is HOME! As such, we can still have direct access to the reality of Hashem's infinite oneness that is stamped into our soul. Thus, from the perspective of our body, so to speak, we conjecture and believe that Hashem exists. But this is vague compared to the level of knowing we get from the perspective of our soul. That's why the Torah says "Know today [in your

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soul] and internalize it in your heart [your body], that *Havayah Hu HaElokim, ein od milevado.*” The Torah talks directly to the soul and only indirectly to the body.

Again, this is what our ancestors experienced. They connected to their soul root, and in this way became interdimensional. Once you get this, you start seeing it throughout the Tanakh. In *Lekh Lekha*, Avraham builds a few altars. At every altar he builds, he calls out in the name of Hashem: “*Vayikra sham Avram beshem Hashem* – Avram called out there in the name of Hashem” (Genesis 12:8, 13:4). In the Midrash and Talmud we are told that Avraham’s calling out in the name of Hashem means that he taught Torah (*Sotah* 10a-b). In another place we are told that Torah is like pure water from a well (*Berakhot* 56b). This is the reason that all the *Avot* established schools of Torah wherever they dug a well and found water in the desert. Precisely in those places where physical water flowed from below, they would channel spiritual water (prophetic Torah) from above. On the other hand, Onkelos translates “*Vayikra sham Avram beshem Hashem,*” as “*Vetzali taman Avram beshema d’Shem* – and Avram *prayed* there in the name of Hashem.” We thus see that Avraham’s calling out in the name of Hashem means that he gathered students and showed them how to pray.

There is no contradiction. Torah is a revelation of Gd’s will from above. Prayer is our wanting what Gd wants from below. Avraham first channeled Torah from above. He then turned to Gd and prayed for the fulfillment of the very things that Gd was revealing through him. In prayer he aligned his will below with Gd’s will above. At a later stage Avraham entered into such a deep level of prophecy that channeling Torah from above and praying to Hashem from below became one and the same. In that highly attuned state, that is, he broke through the illusion of duality. There is only divine oneness. He realized, in other words, that on the deepest level of existence our entire ability to think, speak, act, and exist is from Hashem.

Although this sounds quite radical at first, it is really the deeper, archetypal reality behind all prayer. Didn’t Hashem say to Moshe at the burning bush, “Who gives man a mouth, or who can make a person dumb or deaf? Who gives a person sight, or who makes him blind?” (Exodus 4:11)? This is why calling out in the name of Hashem is so deep. It is here that we overcome the illusion of duality in the most perfect way possible.

With this, we can now understand one of the Torahs that I brought at the end of the addendum:

בתפלה צריך לשום כל כחו בהדיבורים, וילך כך מאות לאות עד שישכח מגופניות, ויחשוב שהאותיות מצטרפים ומתחברים זה עם זה, וזהו תענוג גדול. דמה אם בגשמיות הוא תענוג, מכל שכן ברוחניות. וזהו עולם היצירה. ואחר כך יבא לאותיות המחשבה ולא ישמע מה שהוא מדבר. וזהו בא לעולם הבריאה. ואחר כך הוא בא למדת “אין”, שנתבטל אצלו כל כחותיו הגשמיים. וזהו עולם האצילות, מודת חכמה. (כתר שם טוב ח”ב ד”ז ע”ב, וק”א ד”ז ע”ד סוד”ה אורייתא. בעל שם טוב על התורה, עמוד התפלה אות ט”ז, ועיין פ’ שמיני אות ר’)

In prayer, you must put all your *koach* (strength/energy) into the words you utter. Concentrating thus, move from one letter to the next until you lose awareness of your physicality and your physical surroundings. Focus on how the letters combine and unite with each other. This itself is a great *taanug* (delight, pleasure). Consider, if the union of two human beings on the physical plane results in such great delight, how much greater is this delight on the spiritual plane. This is the experience of the dimension of *Yetzirah*. From here you proceed to the letters of Thought where you no longer physically hear yourself speaking. Here you have entered the dimension of *Beriah*. From here you proceed to the level of *ayin* (nothing-ness), wherein all physical sensation is nullified. This is the dimension of *Atzilut*, the level of divine *Chokhmah*. (*Baal Shem Tov al HaTorah, Amud HaTefillah* §16)

The Baal Shem Tov is teaching us here how to enter within in stages. First put all your *koach* into each word. Yes, concentrate all your inner physical *koach* into the act of pronouncing each word. That means primarily your forehead and facial muscles. Like: *Shma...Yisrael...Hashem...Elokenu...Hashem...echad*. This is not outer directed speech. You are not speaking to someone else outside yourself. Tone your voice down. Connect to your breath. Notice how the act of prayer consists, from the bottom up, of **breath, sound/voice, intention/thought**. As you say *Shma*, hear each letter. Prolong your breath. The breath is the main thing. “Until you no longer physically hear yourself speaking.”

An incredible teaching from the *Leshem Shvo VeAchlamah* (Rabbi Shlomo Elyashiv, 1861-1926):

Our sages said, “All creatures were created *be'komatan* (according to their stature), *le'daatan* (with their knowledge), *le'tzivyonan* (according to their individual character)” (*Rosh Hashanah* 11a). [Rashi: *le'daatan* – Hashem asked each one whether it wanted to be created and it answered yes; *le'tzivyonan* – according to the taste of each one, and also each according to its form.] **Each was thus created at its particular level with its *daat* (consent) and *ratzon* (willingness). For it saw and understood that such was the true good for itself to be created at that particular level *davka*, in light of the ultimate *kavanah* (purpose, intention) of its existence that was revealed to it from the mouth of the Holy One, to each and every one individually.** Similarly, such is the case in each of the lower worlds of *Beriah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah* in general. All of them became extremely darkened and thickened. All this was done to them *be'heskem daatam* (with their conscious agreement), and *be'cheftzam ve'retzonam* (their willing desire). For they recognized and saw that this was the true good for themselves, to descend to such a level *davka*, until the time of the *tikun*, in accordance with the ultimate purpose of their entire existence. It is obvious that all their understanding that they grasped regarding this was in terms of their own higher root above. **For there, all are alive and cognizant, and they are informed from the beginning of everything they will experience. They are informed of the ultimate intention of their existence, as well as the paths and the events that will pass over them, from their initial beginnings until the very end. They themselves therefore choose this *be'nefesh cheftzah* (of their own free will) according to the *yedia* (foreknowledge) that is revealed to them from the mouth of the Creator of all, the Exalted Emanator, may His name be ever more blessed and revealed, that this is for their ultimate good that is befitting them according to the *takhlit tikun ha'acharon* (final ultimate *tikun*)** (*Leshem, Drushey Olam HaTohu, Chelek Aleph 5:5:6*, pp. 82-83).

We can now better appreciate what the *Leshem* said above in the previous *siman* (5:5:5).

This is also the mystery of all the descents and constricted states of consciousness that every person endures (actually this is true in a hidden way about everything that exists). It is in order to descend and come close to that which is below it, in order to raise up that lower level. [The reason any creature at any higher level willingly descends to a lower dimension is in order to elevate that lower dimension.] It is in this way that holy sparks are elevated from having been swallowed [in the *klipot*], to bring forth preciousness from that which is lowly. From here you see how important it is that a person be extremely cautious lest he have doubts about Hashem's *midot*, to complain, *chass ve'shalom* about his or her portion – that it is small and mean, or that he sees that he never has any success in his attempt to get close to *shamayim*, or that his *yetzer* overwhelms him, *chass ve'shalom*, more than is appropriate according to his own estimation. **For a person never knows what the task is for which he has been sent to this world.** One is sent [to the world] to clean toilets from stench and contamination, and is always constrained and under pressure. Another is sent to adorn a king's palace and prepare the king's crown; he delights in all the pleasures of a king.

But our sages have already declared: “According to the struggle, so is the reward.” And, “the Holy One does not demand from a person more than he is capable of doing.” This is actually part of the mystery of the *Shekhinah* who descends into the lower worlds [incognito] *le'barer berurim* (to refine, extricate, elevate, and redeem sparks). If so [if the *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence itself is in exile], it is enough that the servant suffers the same as the master. This is also the mystery of the four exiles. In sum, a person should not complain about his situation and his level. One should simply ask for *rachamim* and nullify/dedicate himself at all times to Hashem. The Ramak z"l thus taught that this is part of the question regarding *tzadikim* who suffer, which is from the hidden ways of the Creator, the hidden way that He governs His world. A person should therefore not fall [become disheartened or cynical] whenever he has a descent, *chass ve'shalom*. He should rather strengthen himself at all times and fulfill the verse, “Be silent to Hashem and hope in Him” (*Tehillim* 37), for Hashem alone is the One who brings about all things, to distribute to each his particular task that is fitting for him, to rectify the root of his soul in the highest dimension. In the end, all will be illuminated with the light of the face of the Living King (*Leshem, Drushey Olam HaTohu, Chelek Aleph 5:5:5*, p. 82).