

Is it Ratzon Hashem or Not? - Response to #508

Posted by Pintele Yid - 19 Jun 2009 14:21

"So... maybe this addiction is actually the answer to my prayers! In other words, davka through this huge spiritual nisayon, Hashem wants me to draw closer to him! Isn't that an amazing thought?

The handbook expresses the idea that Hashem can put us into this challenge just so we can grow and become better Jews. That has really uplifted me, because until now I didn't feel worthy to fight, worthy to become close to Hashem. But the handbook helped me put it in the right perspective; that it's a nisayon just like all others and that I will overcome it, just as I have overcome others. This is not about me, it's about a challenge and mission that I have, in order to serve the almighty even better."

Dear Heiliga Yid,

What you are expressing in other words is the Bechira vs. Yidiah issue. This issue discusses that if Hakodosh Baruch Hu knows that you are going to sin, and the bottom line is that we can never do anything that is against his will, then all of our sins were **his will** to begin with. So what does Hashem want from us since we never had **real Bechira** in the first place?

Although throughout the generations, this question has been discussed by many, I have read about it in depth in a sefer called *B'gan Emunah* from Rav Shalom Arush. I advise everyone on this forum to learn it. Rav Moshe Wolfson said that this sefer was written for **our generation**.

Although he doesn't attempt to answer the question, and says that the answer is beyond our comprehension, he said that we have to implement both sides of the equation. When we have a nisayon, we have to totally believe in the concept of Bechira, free choice. But after we fall R"L, he states what you so elegantly said "davka through this huge spiritual nisayon, Hashem wants me to draw closer to him!". Basically, this was the "Yidiya", the Ratzon Hashem and **you/we never had a choice but to sin**.

This concept not only helps ease the guilt that accompanies failure, but on the contrary, drives a person with Emunah Pshuta to meet the challenge that his holy tatte set out for him, because ultimately, if Hashem wanted him to fall, it was because he knew that this person can climb out

of the mess. This is clearly stated in the Gemorah in Avoida Zorah on Daf Gimel Umud Aleph.
Hashem doesn't give us a test that we cannot ultimately handle.

Hatzlacha Rabbba! It is evident that you are extremely bright and Bezras Hashem, together with all your new friends on this site, you will succeed.

Pintele Yid

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Re: Is it Ratzon Hashem or Not? - Response to #508
Posted by the.guard - 19 Jun 2009 15:18

Thank you Pintale, that was very nice. We discuss this same issue in [this page](#) of our FAQ.

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Re: Is it Ratzon Hashem or Not? - Response to #508
Posted by the.guard - 19 Jun 2009 15:20

In response to #508 someone wrote/asked me:

Wow, what an amazing feeling it must to see the Handbook's used in this way - to bring a Heilige Neshama back to Hashem! Although I'm sure this is exactly what you hoped for, for me this response is instructive, bringing me to higher levels of understanding and appreciation of our purpose in this world, the ways of Hashem and the inspiration to rise to the challenge. In fact, you deserve credit for this very response too!!

The writer highlights an idea in Principle 26 that I don't fully understand:

"Am I an eved hashem because it's my nature and/or because it keeps me emotionally happy, or do I serve the Almighty because that's His will and nothing else?"

Perhaps my lack of understanding is rooted in my own journey towards recovery, however why is emotional happiness an indication of something wrong with my Avodas Hashem? In fact I use my emotions as a barometer of how well I'm doing, and when I feel good inside I take it as a sign that I'm on the right track, not as a sign of shelo lishma. Aren't we all seeking true fulfillment based on Avodas Hashem? If we can't use emotions as an indicator, what can we use? And if we can't use anything, because any indicator that comes from us means there's some taint in our mehalech, how can you work on "serving the Almighty because it's his will and nothing else"? How do I know if I'm succeeding or if I should change course if there's no way to measure?

I'd love to hear your answer and also thought of posting this on the Forum to hear what those tzadikim think too. But I wasn't sure where to put it. Maybe we should add a thread or a section devoted to discussing the daily Chizuk e-mails?

Answer:

Ah, this is one of the greatest questions of all time. The Ba'al Hasulam discusses it at length. (You would enjoy the sefer "Shamati"). I will answer you short and sweet. The joy we feel inside while serving Hashem is definitely a sign that we are on the right track. As a matter of fact, true Lishma brings the greatest joy imaginable. If there's no joy, you can be sure that you are on the WRONG track... HOWEVER, the joy we feel in avodas Hashem should never be THE REASON that we serve him. It needs to be a "result" of it, but not a "reason to continue".

But this is hard to gauge. How can a person truly know if they are continuing because of the joy they feel, or that they mean it truly for Hashem? So that's where the yesod #26 comes in. Sometimes Hashem takes away from us everything and we feel no joy and no desire to serve Hashem. And that is when we can truly test ourselves and see what our real motives are :-)

I hope this helps.

His Reply:

Yes, actually it helps A LOT. In fact, it helps to answer the question I posted about what I should be learning (thanks for your suggestion of the Zohar, I did see it and might give it a shot). The answer is, stop wondering about what to learn and just do it! Lack of motivation and feeling, lack of emotional "corroboration" is an opportunity to serve Hashem Lishmah!!!

Thank you, "unfortunately", I feel great after reading your reply :D

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Re: Is it Ratzon Hashem or Not? - Response to #508
Posted by TrYiNg - 22 Jun 2009 08:26

[color=navy]Thank you Pintele.

I was actually the one who wrote the email. As you understood, and so eloquently explained, I was trying to figure out how much bechirah we actually have. In all my years of attempting to resolve this question, I was trying to understand how we *do* actually have bechirah if hashem has his entire plan for the universe mapped out, and he knows everything (Where we'll stumble and where we'll climb) beforehand ,down to the last detail. So where is our bechirah?

The way I learned to understand this is that Hashem's yediah has nothing to do with our bechirah.

Why?

When we have a choice, we're actually presented with 2 paths to follow, and the choice is intrinsically ours. After we've done the act , we know what we have chosen, and that doesn't affect the actual choice, right?

Hashem knows what we will choose after we chose, But **before**. Meaning, he has no influence in our decision.

How can that be?

BECAUSE- HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY TIME CONSTRAINTS.

Sorry if I'm being unclear, but basically , that hashem knows after we did something that we did it, we wouldn't have a problem with it,right? It should be the same with him knowing BEFORE.

There is no before and after in hashem's world.

(So the difficulty in understanding it, lays in our inability to view the world without time, as we've never experienced anything without time.)

The first time I encountered a view that we may not always have bechirah , was in the handbook. I was a bit startled by it, but it changed my whole view of my past sins, as you clearly explained;

he said that we have to implement both sides of the equation. When we have a nisayon, we have to totally believe in the concept of Bechira, free choice. But after we fall R"L, he states what you so elequantly said "davka through this huge spiritual nisayon, Hashem wants me to draw closer to him!". Basically, this was the "Yidiya", the Ratzon Hashem and [b]you/we never had a choice but to sin.

[color=navy]You were implying that by realizing that we don't always have bechirah, I was thinking of the bechirah/yediah contradiction. I quote you:

What you are expressing in other words is the Bechira vs. Yidiah issue. This issue discusses that if Hakodosh Baruch Hu knows that you are going to sin ... what does Hashem want from us

since we never had **real Bechira** in the first place?

I do not see this as a contradiction. I understood it like this; whenever Hashem wants to give you free choice we have it, and those few times when he takes away this ability we don't. This has nothing to do with his yediah. In the first situation, he knew afterwards what happened, **NOT INFLUENCING OUR DECISION IN ANY WAY**, but before. The latter instance is when HKBH doesn't give us bechirah, period.

About thinking when *we're faced with a nisayon* that we have free choice and *after the sin* to think that our bechirah could've been compromised, I totally agree. As you stated so beautifully;

This concept not only helps ease the guilt that accompanies failure, but on the contrary, drives a person with Emunah Pshuta to meet the challenge that his holy Father set out for him, because ultimately, if Hashem wanted him to fall, it was because he knew that this person can climb out of the mess. This is clearly stated in the Gemorah in Avoda Zorah on Daf Gimel Umud Aleph. **Hashem doesn't give us a test that we cannot ultimately handle.**

[color=navy]This is what gives me the drive to succeed now. Thanks for spelling it out.

I just had one more question and was wondering if anyone can help me. You wrote;

you/we never had a choice but to sin

How do we reconcile this with tshuvah. If after the sin were supposed to think that we had no choice but to sin, where does tshuvah come into the picture? For what?

Thank you,

This is my humble opinion, feel free to contradict. (Sorry such a long post)

Always TrYiNg!

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Re: Is it Ratzon Hashem or Not? - Response to #508
Posted by the.guard - 22 Jun 2009 08:53

you/we never had a choice but to sin

How do we reconcile this with tshuvah. If after the sin were supposed to think that we had no choice but to sin, where does tshuvah come into the picture? For what?

This is an excellent question and I'd be happy to hear feedback from everyone. The way I always looked at it, is that teshuvah means changing our direction NOW, not dwelling on the past. When we look at what caused us to fall in the past and make better fences or try to fix the underlying issues that led us to fall in the past - and change it for the future - **NOW**, that is Teshuvah. In otherwords, the focus of teshuvah is only NOW. But we have to look back to the past to learn WHAT needs to be changed NOW.

Even when we say to Hashem "I sinned and feel bad", that is teshuvah because it means you are changing direction NOW. It means you want to be better NOW. And NOW is always in our hands.

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Re: Is it Ratzon Hashem or Not? - Response to #508
Posted by TrYiNg - 22 Jun 2009 09:00

Guard,

Sometimes Hashem takes away from us everything and we feel no joy and no desire to serve Hashem. And that is when we can truly test ourselves and see what our real motives are :-)

Exactly what I meant. I am by nature a deeply emotional person, and my avodos hashem reflected as such. After sinning repeatedly , hashem took that away from me and I felt no joy serving him. I actually couldn't feel any emotion at all. (I think I saw someone else mentioning this someplace.)

So that's where I needed this wake up call;

Am I an eved hashem because it's my nature and/or because it keeps me emotionally happy? or do I serve the almighty because that's his will and nothing else?

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Re: Is it Ratzon Hashem or Not? - Response to #508
Posted by TrYiNg - 22 Jun 2009 09:06

Guard, I understand what you're saying about now. But it doesn't reconcile my question.

If our bechirah was takin away from us, why do tshuvah?

and if it wasn't, how could hashem have put us in this situation? ???

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Re: Is it Ratzon Hashem or Not? - Response to #508

Posted by the.guard - 22 Jun 2009 09:28

If our bechirah was taken away from us, why do tshuvah?

Because **right now** we do have a free choice, and the only way to become better NOW is if we look at the past and say, I want to be better **than that**. That is what is commonly referred to as "feeling bad" about the past. But we should not feel bad about the past in a "guilty" way, but

I could be missing something. I am waiting for other talmidei Chachamim like Battleworn and Yakov Shwartz to fill me in...

and if it wasn't, how could Hashem have put us in this situation?

Hashem sometimes puts us in situations where we have no Bechira (or very little). The axiom "Hashem doesn't give us a test we can't overcome" is only true in the "over-all" context. In other words, the things we were meant to accomplish and overcome in this world, Hashem gave us the ability to do. **But the timeline of success is not always what we envision.**

rather in a "I want to be better NOW" way.

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Re: Is it Ratzon Hashem or Not? - Response to #508

Posted by battleworn - 22 Jun 2009 09:58

But we should not feel bad about the past in a "guilty" way, but rather in a "I want to be better NOW" way.

This is a very important point. Teshuva really has nothing at all to do with guilt. R' Saadia Gaon is famous for doing Teshuva every day on yesterdays Avoda, because yesterdays Avoda was only on the level of yesterday and not today. It was clear from the story he told (mentioned yesterday by R' Dov) that he didn't think that he was guilty.

As soon as a person understands that "Kol Haporesch mimcha kiporesh min hachaim" he will always be doing teshuva with no connection at all to guilt.

I don't want to discuss the Yedia /Bechira issue here and now because I need a lot of yishuv hada'as for it. Bli neder in the near future I'll discuss it at length in the 'smedrish (if the hanhala allows me to)

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Re: Is it Ratzon Hashem or Not? - Response to #508
Posted by TrYiNg - 22 Jun 2009 10:09

I will restate my question in very simple terms, prob. I'm the one who's just not getting it.

Tshuvah is repentance for doing something wrong.

Question:

What did a person do wrong if hashem forced him to do it / gave him no free choice?

(if the repentance should be done with a guilty conscience or not, is irrelevant to the discussion)

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Re: Is it Ratzon Hashem or Not? - Response to #508

Posted by the.guard - 22 Jun 2009 10:14

Teshuva is not repentance for doing something wrong. It is a desire to be different than you were, NOW.

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Re: Is it Ratzon Hashem or Not? - Response to #508

Posted by battleworn - 22 Jun 2009 10:19

Teshuva means to return to Hashem. It doesn't make a difference how you became distant.

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Re: Is it Ratzon Hashem or Not? - Response to #508

Posted by TrYiNg - 22 Jun 2009 10:54

[guardureyes wrote on 22 Jun 2009 10:14:](#)

Teshuva is not repentance for doing something wrong. It is a desire to be different than you were, NOW.

Teshuva in the *end result* is to be different than now.

What is viduy, charoto, azivas hacheit and kabalalah al ha'asid, if not repentance?

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Re: Is it Ratzon Hashem or Not? - Response to #508
Posted by the.guard - 22 Jun 2009 11:09

What is viduy, charoto, azivas hacheit and kabalalah al ha'asid, if not repentance?

Azivas hacheit and kabalalah al ha'asid you understand deals with NOW, right? Well, even the vidui and the charata deal with now. Like I said before: *That is what is commonly reffered to as "feeling bad" about the past. But we should not fell bad about the past in a "guilty" way, but rather in a "I want to be better NOW" way.* The whole idea of vidui and charata is just to recognize that what I was or what I did is not what I want to be doing NOW.

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Re: Is it Ratzon Hashem or Not? - Response to #508
Posted by battleworn - 22 Jun 2009 11:33

Charata means regret. When you regret that something happened it just means that you didn't want it to haapen. It does not mean that it's your fault. Vidui means admitting(recognizing) that it was bad and discussing it all with Hashem.

We find in a number of places that saying "there was nothing wrong with what I did" is a big aveiroh. [obviously it totaly prevents a person from doing teshuva.] But saying I was powerless is totaly something else. Blame is not part of teshuva.

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