



### SIYUM HARAMBAM

On Shabbos we will be completing Sefer Mishpotim of Rambam's Mishneh Torah. On Sunday we commence Shoftim, the 14th and final Sefer.

All men are invited to join a Siyum on Sunday night in the Lunchroom following the 8:30pm Maariv Minyan in the Yeshiva Shule.

### CHOF AV SHIUR

A large gathering joined together on Chof Av to mark the Hillula or the Rebbe's father this week by learning one of his Torahs.

Rabbi Johnson led a study of one of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak's Kabbalistic writings from Toras Levi Yitzchak.

The exposition explored the inner significance of the Kiyor in the Beis Hamikdash and the mechanical device made to lower it into a subterranean spring each night to prevent the Kiyor's waters becoming Pasul.

### SHAALOS UTESHUVOS

This week we will be continuing our study of a Teshuvah of the Tzitz Eliezer. The Teshuvah will be focusing on the rebuilding of the 3rd Beis Hamikdash, whether it will be built by man or by Hashem and whether it is possible for us to build it now.

9:30am Sunday in the Kollel Beis Medrash

### DOR LEDOR LEARNING

Dor Ledor learning this week will take place at 7:30pm Motzai Shabbos in the ORZ Mezzanine. All men and boys are invited to join in.

A collection of Torah thoughts produced by Kollel Menachem



9-days Siyumim in the Shule

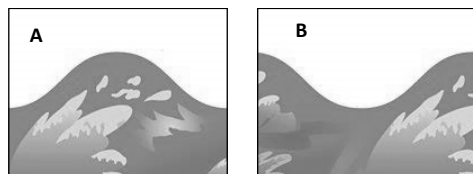
## In this Edition

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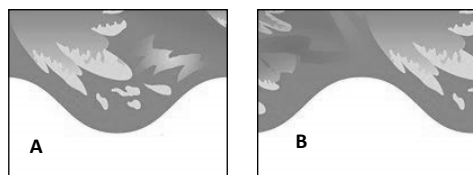
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## A Land of Mountains or Valleys

Look at the pictures below. Do you see a mountain in picture A and a valley in picture B?



It really depends from which perspective you look. Invert the picture and you will see picture A as a



valley and picture B as a mountain.

Whether you look from the bottom up or from the top down, gives a completely different perspective. The pictures that you see from below to above or from above to below are directly inverse images.

In this week's Parsha, Eretz Yisrael is described as a land of mountains and valleys.

One of the ideas discussed in Kabbalistic thought is *Isarusa Delesata* and *Isarusa Deleila*. *Isarusa Delesata* refers to the perspective from below and our Avodah down here.

Our Avodah generates a corresponding flow of G-dly light and revelation which come down from above to below. This responsive flow is the *Isarusa Deleila*.

Eretz Yisroel refers to the Neshamos of the Jewish people. Like Eretz Yisroel, our service of Hashem has mountains and valleys. The *Isarusa Deleila* that each Avodah arouses is inverse to the nature of the Avodah. Our mountains arouse valleys and our valleys create mountains.

The mountains from below represent the powerful love of the Neshama. In Chassidus, mountains are used a metaphor for love.

This love leads the Neshama to a *Ratzo*. Like the flame which flickers upwards, the Neshama yearns to escape the confines of the body and limitations of

the physical world, to unite in oneness with Hashem. *Ratzo* lifts the Neshama up like a mountain.

As lofty as this love is, it is ultimately self-serving, expressing the Neshama's personal desire and craving for spirituality and escapism to connect to Hashem. In a way, this is a subtle form of 'arrogance' or focus on self, like the elevated mountain.

The valleys reflect a different type of Avodah, *Shov* - return. *Shov* means to put our spiritual cravings aside. Rather than escape the physical world in pursuit of spiritual experience, we 'return' to this world, to engage and refine its physicality to reveal G-dliness down here.

Whereas the Avodah of *Ratzo* is motivated by love, the Avodah of *Shov* is an expression of awe, *Bittul* and surrender; to put our spiritual cravings aside to fulfil Hashem's desire for a *Dirah Betachtonim*. Whereas love lifts us up like a mountain, to surrender means to humble oneself like a valley.

When our *Isarusa Delesata* is a mountain of love, the *Isarusa Deleila* from above is a valley. This represents a lower level of G-dly revelation. But when our *Isarusa Delesata* is a valley of humility and surrender, we draw down a towering mountain of G-dly revelation. The more humble we are, the deeper the level of G-dliness that we draw down will be.

This concept can also be brought out using the analogy of a signet ring. The depressions in a signet ring create protrusions in the wax and the raised protrusions in the ring create indentations or depressions in the wax.

The message of these mountains and valleys is encapsulated in the words of the Novi Yishaya; רם ונשא ... מרום וקדוש אשכון ואת דכא ושפל רוח

*Thus says the High and Lofty One... 'I dwell in the High and Holy place (but) and with him who is contrite and of humble spirit'.*

*Kadosh* also means separate or beyond. The deepest and loftiest levels of Hashem's transcendence on high come down a dwell in the valley of humility, when we put ourselves and our own interests aside, even our spiritual ones, to surrender ourselves completely to live in fulfilment of Hashem's will.

# A collection on kavana

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

The month of Elul is connected to the verse Ani Ledodi Vedodi Li, I am to my Beloved and my Beloved is to me. Chassidus explains that this love union where we turn to Hashem refers to the Avodah of Tefillah.

תפילה בלא כוונה כגוף בלא נשמה. Prayer without kavana is like a body without a soul. Davening is referred to as עבודה שבלב, a service of the heart and requires feeling, concentration and a sense of meaning.

Below we present a compendium of rulings of from the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch on the requirements of having kavana in davening.

## Pesukei Dezimra

When reciting *Ashrei*, one should have specific kavana on the verse פותח את ידיך ומשביע לכל חי רצון. They should concentrate on the meaning of the words how Hashem supervises and provides each of His creations with their *Parnasa*. If this verse was recited without kavana, one is required to go back and repeat it. (Orach Chaim 51:8)

Pesukei Dezimra should be recited slowly, word for word, without rushing. This is in order to concentrate properly on the meaning of the praises. (Orach Chaim 51:13)

## Krias Shema

Even according to the view that Mitzvos do not require kavana, one must have kavana when reciting Krias Shema, since this is the primary acceptance of Hashem's Kingship.

This refers specifically to the first posuk of *Shema Yisroel* and the verse *Boruch Shem* which is also an acceptance of Hashem's Kingship. If these verses were recited without kavana, one does not fulfil their obligation and are required to repeat the Shema. (Orach Chaim 60:5, 63:5 and 101:1)

Ideally, one should have kavana when reciting all 3 of the passages of Shema. They should be recited with awe, like when reading the proclamation of a king. (Orach Chaim 61:1, 63:5)

The first verse of Shema is read out loud in order to arouse kavana. The reason we cover our eyes is to block out seeing anything that may distract our kavana. (Orach Chaim 61:5)

## Preparing for davening & the place of prayer

Our sages forbade eating or drinking (other than water) before davening. This is because it is inappropriate to indulge oneself before accepting Hashem's Kingship. Nonetheless, if a person would not be able to concentrate without eating or drinking they are permitted to do so, to be able to daven with kavana.

This is true even now when our kavana is on a lower level than that of previous times. (Orach Chaim 89:5)

With the exception of labourers, one may not daven while atop a tree or the like. The fear of falling and the concentration necessary would detract from having kavana. (Orach Chaim 90:3)

One should not daven facing a tapestry or painting since the image will draw their eye and disturb their kavana in their Tefillah. If one did end up davening in front of a painting, they should close their eyes. (Orach Chaim 90:2)

A person should wait momentarily in their place of prayer before beginning the Amidah. This is in order to prepare themselves to have proper kavana to daven to Hashem. (Orach Chaim 93:1)

There are those who are careful to daven the Amidah from a siddur to enhance their concentration and kavana. (Orach Chaim 93:1)

If one is travelling on a boat or wagon it is preferable to sit while davening the Amidah if one's kavana would be compromised by standing. (Orach Chaim 94:5 & 10)

When davening, one should not hold anything that they would be worried to drop, for example Tefillin, Sefarim, money etc. Worrying about dropping such items would distract one from their kavana. It is praiseworthy not to hold anything in their hands at all during davening. (Orach Chaim 96:1)

One may hold a siddur during davening. Since the siddur serves to aid davening it will not detract kavana. On the contrary it will enhance it.

If a sefer falls on the ground and one is unable to concentrate because they are bothered by it, they may interrupt their Amidah at the end of the brocha in order to pick it up. (Orach Chaim 96:1)

One should not daven in a place where his kavana will be distracted. Similarly one should not daven while their mind is not calm due to pain or anger etc. Nowadays since we do not daven with the highest degree of kavana, one should still daven in such circumstances. (Orach Chaim 98:2)

## The Amidah

When davening the Amidah, one should have kavana on the meaning of the words that they are saying. They should arouse their kavana and remove all worries from their mind, so that their mind and kavana will be pure for davening. If one is not capable of having kavana on the meaning of the words, they should think general thoughts that will direct their hearts to Hashem. (Orach Chaim 98:1)

Davening is in place of the Korbanos. Just as Korbanos required kavana and would be invalidated by any foreign thought, so too one should

not mix any foreign thoughts into their Amidah. (Orach Chaim 98:4)

Ideally, one is required to have kavana during the entire Amidah. At the very least, one must ensure to have kavana during the first blessing of the Amidah (from the beginning of the Amidah until *Magen Avraham*). If one is not in a state that they will be able to have kavana for this blessing, they should wait until they are calm before davening.

Kavana in the blessing of Avos is integral. If one did not have kavana, they are technically required to repeat the Amidah. Nonetheless, nowadays one does not repeat the Amidah, since it is probable that in the repeat-Amidah they will also not have kavana. However, for the Posuk Shema Yisroel and פותח את ידיך (discussed above), one is required to repeat even nowadays since they are each only one Posuk and it is easy to remember to have kavana.

A person should try to have kavana at least for the conclusions of each of the other brachos of the Amidah. There are 113 words in these conclusions, corresponding to the 113 times the word לב appears in the Torah and kavana being a service of the heart. (Orach Chaim 101:1)

It is preferable for one who does not understand Hebrew, to daven in the language that they understand so that they may have kavana. (Orach Chaim 101:5)

If one loses kavana in the middle of davening, they should lift their eyes up heavenwards to arouse kavana. For this reason, Shules should be built with windows on the Mizrach wall. (Orach Chaim 90:4)

## Disturbing other's kavana

One is not permitted to walk in front of someone who is davening Shemoneh Esrei (if he passes within four amos - approx. two metres). This is because doing so would disturb the other's kavana. (Orach Chaim 102:4)

If one has finished their Amidah and someone else is still davening behind them, they may not take their 3 steps back until the other individual has completed their Amidah. (Orach Chaim 102:5)

Young children who disturb their fathers (or others) during davening, should not be brought to shul. (Orach Chaim 98:1)

May all of our Tefillos be heartfelt and meaningful and may Hashem hear and answer all of our Tefillos, granting us all of our requests.