בס''ד

**Learning Rabbi Ashlag over Skype:**

1. **Our purposes in our learning**

It is useful to define our objectives in learning the work of Rabbi Ashlag.

This is to enable us to keep our mind focused on the purpose for which we come together to study.

**Our purpose for learning is to come to understand more clearly, and put into practice more successfully, ways of connecting with God, in order to serve Him, and to come to affinity of form with him.**

**Affinity of form with the Creator, implies giving unconditionally. Whether this is giving to God, to Rabbi Ashlag, to the study, to ourselves, to our teacher, or to our fellow student. All of these aspects are elements which help us come to give unconditionally.**

Remembering our purpose is important as it helps take us past times when we wonder what we doing, when we wonder what we doing in the group, and when we wonder why we are paying money to belong to this group, or giving up the time to this group.

1. **How does the study help us further our purpose?**

All the work of Rabbi Ashlag, whether we are dealing with the *Perush HaSulam* on the Zohar, whether we are dealing with his explanations on the work of the Ari, whether we’re reading an introduction that he wrote to one of his works, or a letter, are all in affinity of form with the Creator. They have a strong light within them that helps us recognize where we are distanced from the Creator.

Our recognition is an individual, inner recognition. It involves a deep inner listening to ourselves and to the material. This is not something we necessarily share with our fellow students. Usually we process what we gain from the material privately in between lessons.

1. **How does our learning over Skype particularly enhance this process?**

Since the work of Rabbi Ashlag involves a deep inner listening, learning over Skype using audio only helps us focus on listening. We are able to listen more deeply to the material, to ourselves and to all who are on the call.

Learning to give unconditionally is not easy. It involves, for most of us, going against our own nature, that of wishing to receive. We need to set aside our own desires to receive, in order to open that space of giving. .

Opening that space may also involve letting go of our desire to understand, to control, to question, in order to make a space for the words of Rabbi Ashlag to speak.

This may be frustrating, difficult, infuriating. But it works.

Many, many times, I personally have reached places in the material, which seem to me like complete Chinese. I have had no one physical to turn to for a teacher, and eventually have learned to regard this as a blessing, as I have had to learn to wait patiently for the material to speak to me. This wait maybe one week, it may be one month, it may be a few years.

We wait.

As we wait, we listen patiently to what the teachings are telling us.

4 ) **Working with a group**

A particular aspect of working on Skype occurs when we no longer learn one-on-one, but we learn with each other.

Although learning one- on- one has its advantages there are many advantages to learning in a group that don’t exist when we learn one- on- one.

Usually my groups consist of people who may not naturally go together. Personality wise or in cultural background the group members are often extremely diverse from each other. They often consist of people who would not naturally choose to be friends. Some come from learned religious backgrounds, some come from secular backgrounds, some, quite a few, are converts to Judaism. Geographically we cross continents. .

 But all this makes absolutely no difference to the ability of someone to learn and to grow through this work.

Someone, like myself, who comes from a learned and religious background, has habits of thinking caused by years of Torah learning without trying to come to affinity of form with the Creator to undo . I gain from being in contact with the fresh energy that comes from people without that particular burden. On the other hand I have wider background knowledge available to me, and this I try to share whenever it is called for.

 By coming as unique and diverse individuals to the group we enable learning from each other. We each gain through each other’s strengths.

**By learning from each other, we learn our strengths and our weaknesses**. We gain strengths, as we learn from each other new ways of putting this material into practice which we would not have thought of or come to ourselves. We also learn from each other’s experience, whether it is experience with this or other Torah materials or, more importantly, through each other’s life experience.

In order to learn from each other it is essential that we listen to each other and make space for each other on the call.

Some of us are more naturally extrovert, some of us are more naturally introvert.

We learn to listen to the introvert as much us to the extrovert. We learn to love our extrovert self and not feel shy or embarrassed because that’s who we are..

I learn, on Skype, how to pay attention to what is said and what is not said.

I give my utmost attention, to myself, to the learning, and to each other on this call with me; It is a wonderful opportunity for one hour, to put into actual living reality,

אורייתא קודשא בריך הוא וישראל חד הם

The Torah , the Holy Blessed one , and Israel is one.

May HaShem bless all our endeavors whether they “succeed” or not. May He help all of us come to Him in love, Amen

 Many blessings Yedidah

בברכה ידידה