

BILVAVI

KNOWING  
YOUR  
SHARE

BILVAVI MISHKAN EVNEH  
THE RAV'S SHIURIM ARE AVAILABLE  
ON THE KOL HALASHON TELEPHONE LINE  
073.295.1245 ISRAEL | 718.521.5231 USA



**BILVAVI**

© Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh

BILVAVI BOOKS  
POB 34192,  
Jerusalem,  
Israel  
9134100  
Tel. +972.52.763.8588  
Fax + 972.3.548.0529  
[www.bilvavi.net](http://www.bilvavi.net)  
[bilvavi231@gmail.com](mailto:bilvavi231@gmail.com)

Distributed in Israel by:  
SIFREI ABRAMOVITCH  
World Wide Delivery  
03.578.2270  
[books2270@gmail.com](mailto:books2270@gmail.com)  
· 15 Mea Shearim Street,  
Jerusalem 02.502.2567  
· 2 Dovid Street  
Jerusalem 02.623.0294  
· 5 Kotler Street,  
Bnei Brak 03.579.3829

Distributed in the USA by:  
SHIRAH DISTRIBUTORS  
4116 16th Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11204  
Tel. 718-871-8652  
Fax 718-871-8412  
[sales@shirahdist.com](mailto:sales@shirahdist.com)

To register for the weekly  
Bilvavi newsletter  
send email to:  
[bilvavi231@gmail.com](mailto:bilvavi231@gmail.com)

The author's original  
Hebrew shiurim,  
transcriptions & English adaptations  
are available for free download  
at [www.bilvavi.net](http://www.bilvavi.net)  
The author's shiurim in  
Hebrew can be heard on  
Kol haLashon's telephone service  
in the Israel 073.295.1245  
USA 718.521.5231 2>4>12

BECOMING YOU	5
THE MAIN TOOL - INTERNAL CALM	13
SEEING REALITY THROUGH INNER QUIET	22
THE WAYS OF QUIETING	30
STAYING ANCHORED TO SERENITY	37
EXPERIENCING LIFE FROM A CALMED SOUL	43
REFINEMENT	54
HONING IN ON YOUR SOUL'S PREFERENCES	61
INTERNALIZING & MIND-HEART INTEGRATION	77
CLARITY & BEYOND YOUR PERSONAL SHARE	86
LIVING IN YOUR PERSONAL 50TH GATE OF HOLINESS	98



# BECOMING YOU

## WHAT ARE WE SEARCHING FOR, AND WHY?

Whenever we enter into any undertaking because we're trying to reach something, we first need to be clear what we're really looking for. And, at the very least, we should at least know what's motivating us. One aspect is to know what we're searching for, and a second aspect is to know what's motivating that search.

We will first try a bit to analyze what exactly we are looking for, and how we can figure out it out. (Understandably, even when we begin to search for something, our search can change along the way.)

## THE UNIVERSAL SEARCH – SEEKING PROGRESS

The nature of most people is that they will want to enter into a certain process or curriculum that will enable them to grow and make progress. That's the way of the world. A child goes to school – usually against his will, and not necessarily because he wants to (As Chazal use an expression, “Like a child running away from school”<sup>1</sup>). But when he gets a bit older, he gains understanding, he recognizes a bit more about the reality of life, and what he will need to do on this world. This is what prompts most people to look for various ways that will help them progress through life.

Most people, seeing a material world in front of their eyes, will therefore look for progress in the material world. As a result of this, they will look for how they can earn a profession, job, and the like. There are also those who have subtler goals than the above. They want positions of honor and power. They don't just want temporary honor or temporary power, they want to be in a position where they will get it on a regular basis, and they are prepared to invest a lot of time and energy into this. But most people aren't interested in this. They just want to earn a profession so that they will have livelihood. This nature exists both in the nations of the world as well in the nation of Yisrael (the Jewish people). In contrast to this, there are a few people in the world who are looking to go more inward. They want to uncover a deeper and more inner layer of life.

## ASPIRATIONS

When we leave the superficial perspective and we enter into a more internal perspective, we begin to search for something more inner. But even then, what is the goal? Where should we be trying to get to? We need to have some kind of plan of where we want to get to. “*The end of action is first in thought.*”<sup>2</sup> Understandably, each person has his own way of thinking and his own perspective. He

<sup>1</sup> Yalkut Shimeoni 729

<sup>2</sup> Recited in Kabalas Shabbos

has certain concepts he knows about. Based upon that, he has certain aspirations. He has a certain understanding and he has his own capabilities, and based upon this, he has a certain understanding of where he would like to get to – more or less. He sets goals based on what he understands at his own level, along with knowing his capabilities (more or less) and seeing if that goal is for him or not. And then he can set out on his goal.

There are those who want to be great in all three pillars of the world - Torah, *avodah*, and *chessed*. Each person has certain aspirations in each of these areas, based on how he understands what Torah, *avodah*, and *chessed* is. Others aspire to perfect their *middos*, to refine their character and to increase good deeds. There are many kinds of spiritual aspirations. If a person wants to get an idea of what to aspire for, he can take a look at the sefarim. There are even sefarim which contain resolutions that great people accepted upon themselves. For example, there is a sefer today which records the notebook of resolutions that people in Kelm took upon themselves. You can see there how each person had his own way and took on different things, based upon his unique aspirations of where he wanted to get to. We can relate to this very well.

Now let us think about this. If a person is just starting out the beginning of the way (to serve Hashem), and he is beginning to have aspirations to grow, what should he aspire for? Should he desire to know all of the Torah? Should he desire to become a lover of peace and pursuer of peace, like Aharon HaKohen? Should he become extra careful to guard his tongue from even the slightest form of evil speech? These are all good things to aspire for, and we can say many more examples. But what is the one common aspiration that every soul should have?

It would seem right away that there is no one common aspiration for everyone. After all, every person has different capabilities, and therefore each person can have different aspirations. That is certainly true. But if we think about this a bit more, we can see that there's a very clear and simple aspiration for every soul to have, when anyone wants to start growing.

## BECOMING WHO YOU TRULY ARE

Hashem created each of His creations with unique properties. No plant, rock, or animal is the same. Every person has a different face and different ways of thinking.<sup>3</sup> No one is exactly the same. What is the *avodah* then for every person? The entire *avodah* of a person is: To become who he truly is! That is an inner definition of our entire *avodah*. In more external terms, this is called reaching one's personal *cheilek* (share). In other words, the person that we are right now may not even be our true self. There are many things which prevent a person from finding himself, to the point that there are many instances where a person doesn't even want to be himself at all. But our entire inner work is all meant to bring a person to one place - to become who he truly is.

## A UNIQUE CONNECTION TO HASHEM FOR EACH PERSON

We shall explain this now with the following deep fundamental point. What has to be a person's aspiration? The Mesilas Yesharim says that the purpose of life is *d'veykus* in Hashem. It seems, then, that a person's entire aspiration should be: to become completely close to Hashem. Included in that closeness is to become attached with the Torah, with Hashem - with reaching one's personal share in the Torah, and from this to become connected with the Creator (as the sefer Nefesh HaChaim explains at length, how learning Torah brings one closer to Hashem).

So the simple answer to everyone's general aspiration is, to seek closeness with Hashem, and through the Torah. But let us analyze this further. There were "seven shepherds", seven great leaders of our people. Avraham became close to Hashem, and so did Yitzchok, Yaakov, Moshe, Ahron, Yosef, and Dovid. Did they each have the same *d'veykus* to Hashem? Was it all the same *d'veykus*? It's simple and clear to any sensible person that although the Creator is one, there are different wavelengths of being connected with Him. The *d'veykus* that Avraham had with Hashem was not the same *d'veykus* that Yitzchok or Yaakov had.

The One we become connected to will always stay the same, but the ones who connect with Him will each form a different and unique connection with Him. Avraham connected to Hashem mainly through *chessed*, Yitzchok through *din*. It wasn't only that they each connected to Hashem by way of different *middos*. Rather, they each had a unique *d'veykus* with Hashem. There is no creation that has the same connection with Hashem as another.

So even when we consider the innermost point – the purpose of life, which is *d'veykus* with Hashem – it is not the same definition for each person. Dovid HaMelech said "*And as for me, closeness to Hashem is good.*"<sup>4</sup> The commentaries asked, why is he saying "for me"? Isn't it good for everyone to be close to Hashem?

Why is Dovid HaMelech saying it's only good for him personally, "for me"? It was because Dovid HaMelech was saying that he has his own personal closeness with Hashem. There is a closeness to Hashem that's meant for each individual to attain, which no one else can know of. Each individual has a unique *d'veykus* with Hashem that only he can attain.

## THE TRUE ME – MY CLOSENESS WITH HASHEM

In order to become who you truly are, it means to become close to Hashem – to reveal how you are a reality of a "*portion of G-d from above.*"<sup>5</sup> In order to reach it, one has to become connected to his own personal "portion" – for it is his own personal portion that's part of the "portion of G-d from above".

4 Tehillim 73:28

5 Iyov 31:2

This is not merely a general definition that all of the Jewish people are a “portion of G-d from above”. In that collective portion itself, each Jew has his own portion. Each person must take his rightful place in the collective portion of being from Above, and therefore each person has his own personal portion in this closeness (without getting into what exactly constitutes what this portion is. That is an expansive topic discussed elsewhere).

## FINDING YOUR PERSONAL PORTION OF TORAH

Therefore, each person has to become connected to Hashem from his true self, from being who truly is. That is the first step – to become yourself.

The next step is to find our personal share in the Torah. We each ask every day in the blessing “*Give us a portion in Your Torah*”. Everyone has their personal share in the Torah. If one doesn’t reach his own part in the Torah, he is not merely missing knowledge of Torah. He is not becoming himself. He is like a branch without the roots. He is missing his roots! The root of all Jewish souls is in the Torah. Hashem looked into the Torah to create the world from it.<sup>6</sup> We were hewn from the Torah. Chazal said, “Yisrael first arose in the thoughts of Hashem to be created.”<sup>7</sup> We were first conceived in the thoughts of Hashem, in the Torah. We were created from that place where “the Torah and Yisrael are one.”<sup>8</sup> If a Jew can identify well that he is part of Klal Yisrael but he doesn’t have his personal portion in the Torah, he is like a branch without the root. It’s like he is missing his own reality.

When a person works hard to understand Torah, he is doing the active work of exerting himself in Torah. What is he working hard to attain? When he reaches his personal portion in Torah, he has become himself. It is written, “*For in the Torah is his desire, and in His Torah he delves, day and night.*” The Gemara says that at first when a person exerts himself in Torah it is called the “Torah of Hashem”, but after the exertion it is called “his Torah” – it becomes his own Torah.<sup>9</sup> (A higher level than this is when “*Your Torah is in my innards.*”<sup>10</sup>)

This is not to referring to the “48 qualities”<sup>11</sup> needed to acquire the Torah. That is only the first step, and it is for one who is still found outside of the Torah, so he needs to ‘acquire’ it. But once he has reached the Torah and it is called “*his Torah*”, he doesn’t need to ‘acquire’ it anymore with the 48 ways. He has shown how he is rooted in the Torah, how the Torah is his very existence. The true definition of a Torah scholar is one who is connected to the Torah, and then his roots in the Torah become revealed to him. He has become himself, and he has the branch with the root. That is what

6 Zohar Terumah 161a

7 Beraishis Rabbah 1:4

8 Zohar Achrei Mos 73a

9 Talmud Bavli Avodah Zarah 19a

10 Tehillim 40:9

11 The list of the 48 qualities is in Avos 5:2

it means to attain and reach the Torah. If one is getting Torah that doesn't belong uniquely to him, even if he knows a lot, he can still be called ignorant in a sense, because he's not learning yet his own part of Torah. He has a branch without his root. He has gotten Torah in the same way that a person can acquire anything else on the world. But this achievement isn't really his. He is not yet becoming himself!

We need to become who we truly are – both in our root, which is our unique, personal connection to Hashem – as well as in the branch of this, which is the connection we have with the Torah (in relation to Hashem, the Torah is a branch. But in relation to anything else, the Torah is the root of everything).

## OUR UNIQUE CHARACTER IMPROVEMENT

It is the same with repairing our character. Superficially speaking, we need to gain good *middos*. But the truer way to define it is that each person needs to reach his own good *middos*. The Gemara says that just as Hashem is compassionate, so must we resemble Him by being compassionate.<sup>12</sup> But Hashem's *middos* contain an infinite amount of ways of how they can be combined together, and therefore each person can reach a unique kind of compassion, as well as any of the other *middos* which are all offshoots of Hashem's *middos*.

All good *middos* come from Hashem, and therefore each person has to reveal the good *middos* that Hashem bestowed him with. A person may be learning about the subject of *middos* or he is doing inner work together with a group of people working on self-improvement – and yet (or anyone else in his group) may not be able to fix even one of his *middos*. Even if they learn a certain sefer which gives them guidance, the guidance may be good and proper, but they still will not reach their unique good *middos*. Everyone has his own good *middos*. No two people are the same in their *chessed*, or in their compassion, etc. One has to reach his own good *middos* that Hashem has graced him with, and then he reaches his personal share of *middos* and where he is becoming more of himself in the area of *middos*. From there, he can also know how to act according to his personal share as well.

## FINDING HASHEM FROM OUR TRUE SELF

From our own *havayah* (our existence) we can become connected to the greater *Havayah*, the Existence of Hashem. Without being connected to our own *havayah*, we cannot be connected to the *Havayah* of Hashem. In order to become connected with our *havayah* – our very existence – we need to be who we truly are.

Becoming yourself does not mean to reach your own independent existence apart from Hashem, *chas v'shalom*. Your true self is to become “a portion of G-d from above”, to become integrated with

12 Talmud Bavli Shabbos 133a

Hashem's Existence. That is your true self. It would seem that it should be the opposite – we should leave ourselves out of the picture and just surrender our existence to Hashem. There is certainly such a stage that we will need to traverse in our *avodah*, and it is called *bittul* (nullifying the self). But if we analyze it deeper, the depth of our *avodah* is always to become who we truly are. That will lead us to acting how we should, keeping all of *halachah* with all its details, having good *middos*, learning our part of Torah, and reaching *d'veykus* in Hashem and becoming *miskalel* (integrated) in Him. When Avraham was *miskalel* in Hashem, it wasn't the same as when Yitzchok was *miskalel* in Hashem. Each of them had their own revelation. Just as there 70 facets of understanding in Torah, so are there many ways of *d'veykus* and *hiskalelus* in Hashem.

## OBSTACLES THAT PREVENT US FROM BECOMING OURSELVES

What prevents a person from becoming who he truly is? Many times, it is simply because a person lacks knowledge. He wants to improve at everything, at Torah, *avodah*, and *chessed*, but he lacks knowledge about these areas. But there is also another factor that gets in his way. A person has many wishes – not just material wishes (which we are not coming to tackle here) but spiritual ambitions. He wants to cover ground in his learning. He wants to gain deep understanding. He wants to acquire Torah. He wants to acquire good *middos*. He wants to gain *Ruach HaKodesh*. He wants to get certain attainments. He has so many spiritual desires that he has.

If the desire isn't genuine, the person is simply running away from himself. The word *ratzon* (will) is from the word *ratz* (run) because the will and desires of a person can really be a form of running away from his true self, and hence it is running away from the Creator. But if one's desire is genuine, he runs towards the Creator. The few people in our world who are searching to go inward are often plagued with so many different spiritual desires they have. This is usually because of so many different concepts they have heard of over the course of several years, or from things they have read or learned about. Or, they developed these wishes on their own. But these spiritual wishes are not coming from “Who I truly am.”

## ULTERIOR MOTIVES GETTING IN THE WAY

Usually a person begins with *shelo lishmah* (ulterior motives) – meaning that he is not focused on just the goal of his *avodah*. He has other desires too along the way (though they may be spiritual, it is still *shelo lishmah* because he is getting sidetracked from the goal of his *avodah*). Although there is a rule that “*Shelo lishmah* leads to *lishmah*”,<sup>13</sup> Rav Chaim Volozhiner brings from the *Gra* that one has to have the intention to reach *lishmah* (serving Hashem for pure reasons) at the start. So if a person is desiring anything other than desiring to become his true self throughout all that he does - even if he's not conscious of it, or if he temporarily got sidetracked into wanting other goals - then although

he may reach those goals, he still won't uncover his true self. So there are two reasons why people don't become who they truly are. One reason is because they aren't aware that the goal of our *avodah* is to become who we truly are. They simply lack knowledge and awareness about it, so they will never engage in it. A second reason is because people have other wishes and desires, either because of what they heard, read, learned, or developed on their own – and these other wishes get in the way of reaching of their true self.

Chazal said that one of things which take a person out of the world is jealousy.<sup>14</sup> What is jealousy? Upon analysis, jealousy is really a desire to acquire and get something because “I do not want to be myself.” Jealousy is *kinah*, from the word Kayin, who was jealous of his brother – because Kayin was not satisfied with himself, and because of that void, he wanted to acquire, get, and attain. A jealous person isn't trying to gain his true self. If he would be, then he would want to just be himself. If he wants to get something that he doesn't have, it is because he wants something that's not meant for him, and that is jealousy. Once someone wants to get anything other than his true self, he can become jealous, desiring things that other people have.

A clear example of this is reading stories of Gedolim and *tzaddikim*. This seems to be a wonderful thing, but there are two sides to the coin here. When a person reads a story of a Gadol or of the qualities that *tzaddikim* had – the Baal Shem Tov said that stories of *tzaddikim* is like studying the biggest secrets of the Torah – he wants to attain what the *tzaddik* attained. Becoming jealous of a Torah scholar makes one wiser, but *Raboseinu* taught that it still doesn't save a person from “Rotting of the bones is jealousy.”<sup>15</sup> Jealousy makes the bones, the *atzmus*, rot – but it is also a hint that jealousy erodes the *atzmiyus*, the true self of a person. This is because when a person is jealous, he is not looking to be himself.

## SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Let us now summarize the lesson. We need to first realize it and then agree deeply, that all we truly want is: To become who we truly are. That is all that we should be searching for. This is not simply so that we won't be jealous of others who have attained what we don't have yet. It will certainly help for jealousy, but that's not the point. The point is that we need to be building the root so that we can reach our desired purpose, of where we want to get to. When a person agrees to want solely that he should become himself – and he wants nothing else other than this – he will have removed more than half of his problems that he struggles with in his internal world.

If you recognize well what goes on when others try to work on themselves in their internal and spiritual areas of life, and you know of those who are trying and working hard at growing in their

<sup>14</sup> Avos 4:21

<sup>15</sup> Mishlei 14:7

internal worlds (each person at his own level), you can see the main struggles they grapple with. You can understand that most of the struggles that people deal with are stemming from wanting to be involved with something that's not meant for them to be involved with.

Even when people are indeed involved with something that's meant for them, they still need clarity of how to go about it properly. That's already the next step. But the main issue lays in the fact that people aren't involving themselves with their own personal portion. They won't be able to reach anything genuine if they keep going that way. There are many facets to this first step that we are explaining in this lesson, but we will just say one very fundamental and deep aspect. The goal of all our *avodah* – to become who we truly are, to reach our true self, our *havayah* – is to reach what Chazal say “Therefore, man was created individual.”<sup>16</sup> It is to reach the *Yechidah*, the “unique individual” that is inside us – to reach our own personal portion, and nothing else. The truth is that this can only come at the end of all that we do, but it still has to be our desired goal from the start.

We first need to agree to this intellectually and then we should agree to it deeply, in the depths of our soul. Externally speaking, we need to “let go” of everything else so that we can reach this goal, but in more internal language, it is that we need to “agree” that it's impossible to reach anything that's not suitable for us personally. One must agree to want to reach only his personal portion – not to want to “reach” it simply, but to reach the depths of one's own self, to reach one's very *havayah*. That is all a person needs to be looking for, and nothing else.

One who reaches this ‘agreement’ will be able to feel a deep sense of serenity. He is no longer searching for what's found outside of him. Rather, he's looking only for his own internal world. Recognizing this will calm a person deep in his subconscious, when he disconnects from everything else around him and becoming involved only with what's uniquely his.

This will also enable his *neshamah* to radiate more, because pure intentions awaken the light of the *neshamah*, enabling the *neshamah* to guide him more. “*The soul of the Almighty, will teach them.*”<sup>17</sup> (When a person is acting *shelo lishmah*, with intentions that are self-serving and for ulterior motivations, the body's forces are awakened, and there will only be ‘sparks’ of the soul, which won't be enough to allow the person to have a more internal perspective). The *neshamah*'s light, once exposed, will give a person clarity to see the truth of his own inner world, and then it will be as one of the Sages said, “A clear world you see.”<sup>18</sup>

That is all the first step, and the outline, of how we can begin to reach “our portion in Your Torah.”

16 Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 38a

17 Iyov 32:8

18 Talmud Bavli Bava Basra 10b

## THE MAIN TOOL - INTERNAL CALM

*In the previous lesson we explained the inner and precise definition of the root of all our inner work. It is the person's desire to reach solely his personal portion and nothing else. This is Hashem's will that has been engraved onto each soul, to pursue one's own portion that has been allotted to him, willed by Hashem in His endless wisdom.*

### THE TOOL TO REACH OUR INNER WORLD – A QUIET PLACE INSIDE US

When the Torah was being given, it was a lofty time for the world. Everything fell silent. It was a return to the state of before the first sin, which was a state of *“Not in a noise is Hashem found, and not in a wind, but in a soft subtle sound.”*<sup>19</sup> This was most perfect level ever in Creation, in which every creation in the world, and the Jewish people especially, were in a state of utter silence.

The tool to reach the inner world is when a person gains a quiet place for himself, just as when the Torah was being given.

### INTERNAL NOISE – WANTING OUT OF OUR PERSONAL SHARE

But if a person desires anything that's not of his own “personal share” that's meant for his personal soul, this very desire will create a “noise” that prevents him from reaching his soul's personal share.

External noise prevents a person from reaching his internal world, and when a person merely wants to get something which isn't meant for him, that very will creates an inner noise. *“The wicked are like a stormy sea, for tranquil they cannot be.”*<sup>20</sup> The word *rasha* (wicked person) is from the same letters as the word *raash* (noise).

When a person desires many things which are not meant for him this all creates a noise in his soul. When one is trying to connect himself with something that isn't for him, there is resulting noise bothering his soul. When we try to connect two things that are compatible, we can do it calmly. But if we try to connect together two contradicting things which are not compatible to each other, there is just a clash of noise.

A deeper way to understand this is that the soul knows deep down when something isn't meant for it, and when one tries to connect to something which his soul really doesn't want, the desire is bad for the soul, and the soul doesn't want this bad desire which creates internal noise.

Whenever a person wants something that isn't meant for the soul, this can be called a desire of the

<sup>19</sup> Malachim 19:11-12

<sup>20</sup> Yeshayahu 57:20

*yetzer hora*, the evil inclination. The more refined one's soul is, the closer he is to the refined state of *Gan Eden*, and he is more sensitive to this noise. He can feel it more sharply and it bothers him. By contrast, the less refined one's soul is, the further he is from the refined state of *Gan Eden*, and he doesn't feel the noise internally. He hears the sounds of the world and thinks that it's part of the world.

### OUR AVODAH AT THE ROOT OF ALL ROOTS

Our *avodah*, at the root of all roots, is when we agree to get rid of a wish for something that isn't meant for our personal soul to pursue. This is like the state of silence at Har Sinai which stems from the depths of our soul. This removes any wishes for anything that's not meant for the soul to pursue, which only create noise for the soul.

We have three levels of *avodah* – our active *avodah*, our potential *avodah*, and the root of roots. Our *avodah* at the root of roots is the willingness to let go of all our wishes. The tool to recognize our personal portion is through the power of silence.

### BEING ABLE TO LET GO OF DESIRING WHAT'S NOT MEANT FOR US

Practically speaking, whenever we encounter a wish for something and we know clearly that it's not meant for us to pursue, we should use it as an opportunity to calm our soul and let go of the wish. This is very internal work in our soul.

If we have a wish for something and we aren't sure or if we are supposed to be pursuing it or not, and especially if we have just started to work on the concept here, then we should make a "condition" with ourselves: "I am only pursuing this wish on condition that it's really meant for my soul. If not, then I don't want it." This is a deep understanding we can use to calm and quiet down our soul. It is the very root of all inner work.

The superficial perspective is that we have to keep away from forbidden acts and from things that aren't good for us. That is true, but that's not the root. It is only the outcome. The root of avoiding anything bad for our soul is to work from the root – to nullify all the soul's wishes for anything that's not meant for us. The calmer we become inside, the better we will be able to sense and recognize what is meant for us to pursue and what is not meant for us to

### SELF-RECOGNITION VS. INNER CALM

There is also a more external way to figure out what's meant for us to be doing or not. We can examine our personality, which contains 4 elements (fire, air, water, and earth), and gradually clarify and recognize our personal soul. Then one can recognize better what's suitable for him and what isn't

(based on how much clarity about himself is reached). This is certainly a true way [to get to knowing your personal share], but it is only external, because it merely involves intellectual analysis.

By contrast, **the more inner way to recognize your personal share is through the ability of “quieting” yourself down.** That is the method which we are exploring in these lessons.

## THE ROOT OF MOSHE'S ABILITY TO SEE CLEARLY

There was a dark cloud on top of Har Sinai, called *arafel*, and Moshe approached it. Where it was cloudy and murky for the rest of the people, it was clear for Moshe who was able to recognize the gifts he had been given and was happy with it. As we say in the *tefillah* of *Minchah* on Shabbos, the *tefillah* of *Yismach Moshe*, how Moshe rejoices in the gift he was given. He only wanted his own portion and no one else's, and that was why Moshe could see through the dark cloud. Moshe could see all his visions clearly, while the other prophets saw an unclear vision, because Moshe saw a clear world in front of him. When his soul left his body one of the Sages said: “I saw a clear world”<sup>21</sup> where everything was laid out before him clearly.

The inner reason behind this was because Moshe had learned how to quiet down his soul. He had gained this ability from being a shepherd by Yisro. Reb Avraham ben HaRambam writes that Moshe chose to shepherd sheep so that he could be away from people and thereby calm his soul, but this was only the external layer of his calmness. His inner calmness came from his willingness to want only his personal portion and nothing else. Moshe would not go after anything that wasn't meant for him to pursue. Thus he could rejoice in what had been given to him, in his own personal portion, and with his he could be truly wealthy and happy. This is what enables a person to reach a deep calmness in his soul.

## NOISE PREVENTS US FROM BEING CLEAR WHAT OUR PERSONAL SHARE IS

Let us understand, then, that there are several reasons why people do not recognize what their personal share is.

The general reason for this is because even though we have a *neshamah*, a Divine soul, which recognizes its personal portion on this world clearly and very well, it is still covered with a body, and the body darkens and conceals the *neshamah*'s light. The *neshamah*'s clarity is covered and darkened by the body which conceals it, and therefore a person does not recognize his personal share. That is a general way of how to say it. But there is also a more subtle way to explain it. There is internal noise in our soul, which scatters our vision and prevents our clarity.

To give an example from the physical world, a child will taste a food and sometimes eat it happily

21 Baba Basra 10:

and at other times throw away the food, if the food isn't to his taste. Can we ask him, "how do you know if it tastes good or not"? The answer is simple – a person has a natural sense called taste, and with it he can taste and feel the food, and one person's taste isn't like another person's taste, so Reuven can like the taste of something while Shimon will not like it, and vice versa. Each person has their own taste. A person knows clearly if he likes the taste of a food or not. He is clear about what he tastes. All of the senses as well are clear.

The *neshamah* in us is also able to see clearly what's suitable for us personally. But the body covers the *neshamah* over and darkens it, and then the *neshamah* doesn't see clearly. The body actually uses the *neshamah*'s ability to see clearly and uses it for bodily purposes – for example, when it comes to any of our physical senses. A person is clear about which foods he likes to eat or not. The sense of taste is the clearest of all our senses, because it is the loftiest of the senses since we are very clear about what we want to eat and what we don't want to eat.

In our internal world of the soul as well, a person is able to be clear about what his personal share is. "*My soul knows very well.*"<sup>22</sup> The *neshamah* knows clearly what her personal share is. The only reason why one doesn't know it and doesn't feel it is because of the general reason mentioned earlier, because the body covers the *neshamah* and darkens the *neshamah*'s clear vision. But the subtler reason is because when a person has a wish to attain something that isn't meant for him, this very wish will block his clarity.

It is written, "*For a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and sways the words of the righteous.*"<sup>23</sup> There are different forms of bribes that prevent one from seeing objectively: Either a monetary bribe, or an internal bribe, which are a person's various desires and wishes that sway his mind's thinking. This is one of the main reasons why most people do not recognize their their soul's personal task on this world.

But when a person quiets down all of this "noise" since he is willing to only want his own personal share, and is also happy with his personal share he erases all wishes to receive anything that isn't meant for him just as Moshe rejoiced in his own share. He reaches a very calm place in himself, and when he is found in that deep calmness, he can also sense what's closely within his reach as well as what's very far [and hence unrealistic] for him to attain.

One's ability to sense subtle and refined things gets better with the extent that he attains inner quieting. In the order of the spiritual realms, the lower worlds closer to physicality are thicker and coarser, while the higher worlds – the more internal worlds – are subtler and purer. When there is noise, a person can only grasp things that are coarse, and when things are quieter and calmer – when there is a "silent, subtle sound" – one's soul is able to absorb things that are more refined and subtle.

22 Tehillim 139:14

23 Devarim 16:19

We can give a simple example that's very familiar. When a person is learning a *sugya* of Gemara, and he wants to understand the subtleties of the topic he is learning, he will find it much harder to concentrate properly when there is a lot of noise around him. It will be harder for him to pick up on subtleties. The quieter it is, the better he can understand subtleties.

Another example is that when a person is doing physical work, like carrying a package from one place to another, even when it is very noisy, it's not a big deal. The person is busy with what he needs to do, and the noise of people around him who are also carrying things will give him added strength to get it done. Contrast this with a person immersed in a *sugya* of Gemara in-depth, and he is trying to pick up on something subtle within what he's learning. If there is noise around him, he usually cannot concentrate that well. And certainly it is worse for him when he's in a noisy place.

The more quiet that one has in his soul, the better the natural senses of the soul will be to recognize his personal share. Just like a person can sense if something tastes good or if he likes a certain song or not, so does having quiet allow one's internal world to sense what's closer to him and what's further from him.

All of this will sound completely mysterious to many people. Only a person who has already reached some degree of quiet and subtlety will identify with what we are describing here. For example, *Chazal* said that "a person does not learn Torah except in a place where his heart desires, for it is written, *"For the Torah of Hashem is his desire."* When a person is found in noise, his heart desires noise, even when it comes to Torah. But when a person has quieted his soul, then his desire is "Give us our portion in Your Torah." The way to attain one's portion in Torah is through the power of quieting. Through attaining internal quiet, a person can sense what's suitable for him to pursue when he is doing something, and what's not suitable for him.

In short, quieting all of the "noise" – or the very wish to attain anything that's not your personal portion – is the power that brings your soul to a deep calm. That calmness is the tool by which you can sense simply what's closely within your reach and what's distant [and unrealistic] from you.

However, we must also know that there is another kind of "noise" for our soul when we desire so badly to attain our own personal portion.

## WANTING VERY BADLY TO ATTAIN OUR PERSONAL SHARE IS A FORM OF NOISE

Until now we spoke about a coarser kind of noise for the soul, which is when a person wishes for things that aren't of his personal share. But there is also a subtler form of noise – when we want to attain our personal share and because of this, we are afraid that we might not ever reach it. Maybe we fear that we aren't trying hard enough to get it, or maybe we are afraid that because of certain *aveiros*, we can't reach it (just like Yaakov *Avinu* was afraid that perhaps he did an *aveirah* and wouldn't be

safe). So, a person might be very involved in trying to attain his personal share, and he is worn out, both in soul and body, by trying to attain it. All of this creates a noise and anxiousness.

Sometimes we can see people who aren't as serious about growing in their *avodas Hashem*, yet they are calmer than those who are serious about serving Hashem better, who aren't as calm. The reason for this is because those who are serious about serving Hashem have great aspirations and many wishes to grow higher, and while this is good, it also creates a very big noise in their souls, like a raging hurricane. They have a holy fire in them that is propelling them higher, and their spiritual feelings are very active, and their wishes are holy. Their hearts are soaring higher and upward in the way towards Hashem. They have holy yearnings to reach their personal share. But they can still have a lot of internal noise which comes from a lack of clarity of what their personal portion is.

This is a subtle point to know. If a person is clear what his personal portion is, then he can still have a lot of noise in his soul because he very badly wants to attain his personal portion. But at the beginning of his way when he is first setting out on his path of growth, he is not yet clear what his personal share is, and therefore his aspirations will be very general. He will want to become "someone who serves Hashem," and he is very excited about this, and it is his excitement which is propelling him. It is good to have this level of emotion when one is first starting to grow higher in order that he will be able to get past the hold of the body and awaken his G-dly soul. Afterwards, when he has already entered into *avodah*, he now has to do the very opposite *avodah* than when he started out. [Excitement was good for the start, but now he has to attain some inner peace in his soul.] Otherwise, there will be too much noise in his soul, from all of his desire to attain his personal share, and he will be very far from getting further in his *avodah*.

This can be compared to a person wandering in the desert, who really wishes he could find his way out. It seems that if he travels slowly, it will take him longer to find the way out of the desert, and if he moves quickly, then he will get home quicker. But that's only true if he knows the way out. If he is unclear which direction to take, it's very possible that if he goes quicker, he will only run around in circles and get more lost in the desert. Our soul as well doesn't want to run around if our soul doesn't know where it's going. Our soul has no desire to move quickly and forge along on its fiery aspirations if there is no clear way for us to go in. Our soul doesn't want to move quickly if there's a chance that we may end up lost and not knowing the way.

The analogy is very clear. If one is clear about what his personal share is, he can run quickly towards it. But if one isn't clear about his personal share and doesn't know what it is, then one will have to be very gradual and calm when trying to get to it, because if he tries to get to it too quickly, he may end up like the person running quickly through the desert with no knowledge of where the exit is. Once he becomes clearer of where to turn to, he can run quickly towards the exit, but even then, he needs to be in doubt that he might be making a mistake. The calmer a person becomes in his soul, the more

relaxed he is, and the better he can discern what his personal share is and know where to turn to and where to direct his life towards.

There are many people, especially teenagers, who want to reach certain aspirations, and they thought that this would make them successful, but afterwards they realized that it broke them. “Many did like Rabi Shimon bar Yochai, and nothing arose in their hands.”<sup>24</sup> There are very few who succeed in truly growing higher.<sup>25</sup> If one truly ascends higher, he is not here on this world – he is apart from the rest of the world and lives in his own plane, just like Rebi Shimon ben Yochai and his son who dwelled in the cave for many years, separate from all the noise of the world.

## EMUNAH IN HASHEM TO REACH OUR PERSONAL SHARE

After a person has reached the first step of quieting down his soul by only wanting his own personal share and not desiring anyone else’s he has already separated from a large amount of noise in his soul via this action alone. The next step is to recognize his personal portion. That, itself, will quiet his soul – when he can recognize what his personal portion is.

But now we need to wonder: what is the tool that will enable one to reach that calmness?

Some are born with a very calm nature, more or less, but most people are not born with calmness in their nature. One can calm all of one’s doubts and fears about not reaching their personal portion through having *emunah* that Hashem helps you.

This is actually the deep use of our ability of *emunah*. If one thinks that it’s within his power to reach his personal portion, he is only imagining it. He needs *emunah* in order to reach it. The stronger a person’s *emunah* is to the extent that one can feel Hashem escorting him throughout every part of life calms him. From the calmness, he will be able to recognize what his personal share is. It is a cycle of *emunah*, then being calmed from this *emunah*, and then recognizing one’s personal share as a result of that calmness.

Without accessing this *emunah*, a person will be left with a lot of internal noise in the soul. He will become concerned and afraid that he might not reach his personal share. The more anxious he is about this, and the more he yearns to reach his personal share while he is fearful that he may not reach it, the inner noise in him will increase. And that will keep him from recognizing his personal share.

Compare this to the following analogy. A person jumps into a pool with sand on the bottom, which causes the sand to rise to the surface and the water becomes murky. By contrast, when a person wades into the pool slowly and calmly, the sand only rises slowly and the water remains clear, and then he can see below the water.

24 Talmud Bavli Berachos 35b

25 Talmud Bavli Succah 45b

## REACHING A DEEP CALMNESS IN THE SOUL

A person needs to arrive at a deep calmness in his soul. If he is only superficially calm, like if he has given up or he is sleepy and lazy, this calmness will only be to his detriment. A person who sits and does nothing is like a sleeping person. But if he is regularly accessing his calmness – by only wanting his own personal share and no one else’s, and by having *emunah* that Hashem will lead him to his personal share – this will bring him to a deep calmness.

The only condition needed for this is that there has to be a genuine will to get there, because “*In the way a person wants to go in, he is led.*” When a person is found in a deep calmness in the soul, he sees clearly in front of him, and then he will be able to connect to his personal share and avoid trying to get someone else’s.

In order for *emunah* to penetrate one’s heart, though, one needs to keep re-affirming to himself that Hashem is leading him throughout every detail and that He will lead him as well to his personal share (now that he is trying hard to get there). He needs to believe that Hashem will guide him exactly to where he needs to get to, and nothing more and nothing less. He needs to believe firmly that whatever is meant for him will come to him (through Hashem leading him there) and that whatever is not meant for him will not come to him.

This kind of thinking is hard for most people to get used to. Many people are anxious that things won’t work out and that they will be found unworthy of Hashem’s help. But if they would just believe that Hashem is guiding them, this would calm all of their anxious thinking and leave them with one choice alone: to have *emunah* in Hashem.

Compare this to the following analogy. A person is travelling and hits a fork in the road. He can either turn left, right, or keeping going straight. He is in turmoil where to turn. But if he is confident that Hashem will guide him to where he needs to get to, there is an inner compass guiding him on a straight path, and he won’t be in doubt about which path to take. “*G-d made man upright, but they sought many calculations.*”<sup>26</sup> Instead of being involved in the “many calculations,” he has returned to being “upright,” for he relies on Hashem to guide him.

## EVEN FAILURES CAN BE PART OF YOUR PERSONAL PATH TO SUCCESS

Even when one is being guided by Hashem on the straight path, though, he can still encounter failures and mistakes. But this does not mean that he has made a mistake in taking this path. It is the path that he needed to take, because Hashem willed that he should take this path, have some failures along the way, and then get up and continue. Avraham *Avinu* was tested with ten great challenges, and so were Yitzchok and Yaakov tested, as well as Yosef, Moshe, Aharon, and Dovid. All of the Sages and

*tzaddik* in every generation were tested with challenges. If they made mistakes and fell, this does not mean that they were taking the wrong path. It is written “*This stumbling block is under your hand*,”<sup>27</sup> and *Chazal* explained, “A person does not realize the words of Torah unless he stumbled in it.”<sup>28</sup> The mistakes and failures that one encounters can very well be part of the way that he was meant to take.

To explain this concept clearer, the *sefarim hakedoshim* wrote that when a *tzaddik* is being escorted to Gan Eden, he is first brought into Gehinnom to extricate souls from there. Even the *tzaddik* has to pass through Gehinnom. But this is the right way for the *tzaddik* to go in, because he is going there so that he can rescue souls.

Thus, one needs to have clear *emunah* that Hashem will bring him exactly to where he needs to get to, and then one can be calm. A person really needs to be protected so that he won't fall into the trap of desiring any achievements that's not suitable for his personal soul, and it is precisely *emunah* in Hashem which protects a person from this. The *yetzer hora*'s main strategy is to stir a person into desiring something that's not for him. When a person calms that desire, this protects him away from sinning. By calming one's wishes, one can live with *emunah* that Hashem is escorting him to where he needs to be, and he can be calm throughout all of this.

## SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

We have explained how one becomes calmed in his soul by: Letting go of the wish to attain anything which is not meant for one's personal soul, and by having *emunah* that Hashem can guide you to your personal share – to go in the way that's for your personal soul to go in, to only desire your own personal share and not another's.

27 Yeshayahu 3:6

28 Talmud Bavli Gittin 43a

## SEEING REALITY THROUGH INNER QUIET

*In previous chapters, we explained that the root of a person's task is to recognize his personal portion and reach it and become connected to it, for that is his entire havayah (existence). The fundamental way to get there is through inner silence (hashkatah, or sheket), a deep power of the soul. In this lesson we will continue to explain more about it, BS"D.*

### UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES THROUGH INTELLECTUAL ANALYSIS

The way which most people clarify things is to use the ability of intellect. (Our intellect contains the mental faculties of *chochmah*, *binah*, and *daas*.) With our intellect, we can see general information and details and can think into them and come to conclusions, based on how far our mind can comprehend.

This ability is needed in order to learn the holy Torah, but it can also be put to use when people try to understand themselves and recognize their soul, and to know their personal share on this world. People are able to use their minds to analyze what their role on this world is and what they are personally meant to do. The "4 Elements" series which we have given is really explaining how to figure ourselves out and what we are meant to do on this world and what we need to personally avoid by using our ability of intellectual analysis.

### UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES THROUGH EMOTION

A second way to understand ourselves and to know our share on this world is, through our ability of emotion. Just as a person can feel the cold and heat, so can a person feel what's within him and 'feel himself out'. However, people often err with their feelings. Most people haven't yet clarified their emotional realm. Also, ever since we are born, people have a nature to be reactive, and whenever they emotionally react to something, they can often be mistaken. Their emotions lead them to form conclusions that aren't accurate.

If someone tries to understand himself and to figure out his personal share on this world by using his emotions alone, in most cases he will make mistakes – sometimes small mistakes, and sometimes very big mistakes. This is because he hasn't clarified his ability of emotion, and he also becomes reactive because of his emotions. This leads one to form conclusions that are not precise about reality and one doesn't really absorb the reality in front of them as it is.

Emotional understanding of yourself is not totally inaccurate, but it is only a partial understanding of yourself. You can use your emotions to get more inward into yourself, especially when using your strongest positive emotion and your strongest negative emotion. For example, joy is a constructive

emotion, and it opens up a person's heart, enabling a person to open up his inner world more. The Arizal said that his joy was the main key to reach all that he came to understand. Negative emotions, such as pain, are also a way to get very inward into the soul. When a person has experienced deep pain in his soul, this can also lead him to a very inner perspective and open up his inner world to him.

Yet, feelings of the soul are only the branches of the soul, not the soul itself. If we only feel our feelings – whether positive/happy or negative/painful – then we are only at the branches of the soul. If the deepest thing we know of is either our joy or our pain, then although we can get very deep into our soul through these emotions, we are just remaining with the branches of the soul, not the root.

Also, most people haven't had very deep experiences of either joy or pain, and most people cannot easily access any of these emotions on a deep level. This is because the heart of a person is very covered over (like "an uncircumcised heart") and that is why the emotions aren't that strong even when they are felt. The emotions are mixed, cloudy, and unsorted.

But even if a person has very strong emotions which he can use to delve deeply into his soul, usually he hasn't yet clarified or sorted out those feelings. He will just remain with a very emotional perspective, and his emotions aren't calm, so his emotions aren't clear and they won't be able to lead him to a truly accurate perspective.

The softer a person becomes and the more a person refines his emotions, his emotions become subtler and he gets closer to a deep place in his soul, where he is then able to recognize better what his personal share is. But it won't be completely clear, because he is only standing at the place of emotion, which can only offer him a partial perspective.

## UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES THROUGH INTERNAL QUIET

A third way to understand oneself and what one's personal share is through the ability of "inner silence" (*hashkatah*, or *sheket*). This will be the main topic which we shall explain now, *BS"D*.

### THREE REASONS WHY PEOPLE DON'T SEE OR ABSORB REALITY AS IT SIMPLY IS

We can find altogether three reasons why a person doesn't see reality as it simply is – why they don't see the reality of the entire Creation in front of them and why they don't see their own personal reality.

The first reason is simple – people have a narrow or immature, undeveloped perspective (*katnus mochin*). Every person understands certain things, and when he thinks into things, he understands what he's able to, what his mind is capable of absorbing. But his understanding is limited and only offers him a partial perspective.

Another reason, which is very fundamental, is because the mind is "bribed" and biased to think in

a certain direction, and it can sway him into a corrupted perspective (on varying levels) where even the best mind can see truth as falsity and see falsity as truth. The Torah says, “*A bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and corrupts the words of the righteous.*”<sup>29</sup> Not only does taking a physical bribe sway the mind, but even if a person wants something this also influences his mind to think in a certain way. The mind becomes bribed by what a person desires subconsciously, and then he cannot see reality as it is. This is actually the reason why most people don’t absorb reality clearly as it is, besides the reason mentioned earlier, of having a narrowed or immature perspective.

A third reason why people don’t see reality – and this is the main topic which we will explain here BS”D – is because people lack a certain calmness, and without this calmness, they can’t see properly.

### THE NOISY WORLD TODAY IS LIKE A STORMY SEA

We will use water as an analogy to explain this concept. The water in the sea is usually clear and we can see under it, but when there are waves in the sea, or when the water is being tossed around in a storm, the waters are unclear and we can’t see what’s under it. Most people can’t absorb or recognize reality as it is, because the world we are found in – a world of action – is like a stormy sea, with no calm respite for the waters to settle.

The reality of the world today is noisy, turbulent, and unstable. New things are constantly emerging. There are fast movements constantly that quickly run through our world, and our world today is like a stormy sea which don’t let us see into the water. The movement doesn’t let us absorb reality as it is – the reality that can be seen by a person who lives a life of truth. This is a fundamental reason why people don’t have an accurate grasp on reality of the world in general, and why they don’t understand their souls specifically. They can’t see themselves clearly because they see all the storms inside of them - all of the bad character traits which make their soul murky and unclear to them.

The world in general is a noisy place, which makes it hard for people to get a general perspective on the reality in our world today. But there is also the noise that is inside a person himself. A person has all kinds of thoughts, emotions, and desires which are all one big noise in himself. If a person is in a noisy place, he can’t absorb reality as it is. The more a person merits to reach a place of inner silence in himself, the better he can see reality as it is.

### THE ABILITY TO EXPERIENCE REALITY

Today there is a word that is commonly used, called “experience” (in Hebrew, *chavayah*). People go to a certain place and they enjoy themselves there, and this is called an “experience.” This word has no clear root in *Lashon HaKodesh*, but it is rooted in an Aramaic word “*chavi*,” which means to “see.” The Gemara uses this term in many instances. Aramaic is close to *Lashon HaKodesh*. So to experience

a reality is therefore to “see” a reality. But when people equate experience with “emotion” or “feeling,” this is a disastrous way to define an experience. An experience is not based on what we feel. A real deep experience is to see reality as it is. When we see reality as it is, we see an entirely different reality than what most people see. When we reach a place of inner silence in the soul, we can leave behind the perspective of a person in the midst of a stormy sea, who has no quiet or calm. Then, we gain a new ability, to absorb reality as it is.

## THE KEY – INNER SILENCE

It is written, “*For a person is seen to the eye, but Hashem sees into the heart.*”<sup>30</sup> A person sees reality based on what he sees with his eyes, but he is only seeing the superficial layer. To see the inner layer of reality, a person can’t use his eyes. Either our intellect or our feelings can see more internally into the reality in front of us as mentioned earlier. We can understand something or feel something, but still we will not see it, if we are coming from the perspective of our mind or our emotions.

“Hashem sees into the heart,” meaning that with the ability of revealed G-dliness, we can see with our heart. The verse does not simply mean that Hashem can see into the heart and that He can see what people don’t see. Rather, it means that whoever lives with Hashem’s Presence in his heart can see an inner perspective as explained by *Raboseinu*.

Certainly there are levels to how much G-dliness can be revealed in one’s heart, and there are levels within levels to it, but the gateway to it is via the ability to have an inner silence. “*For Hashem is not found in a wind...and not in a noise, only in a soft subtle sound.*”<sup>31</sup> Through silence, a person leaves the perspective of the creations and he enters, so to speak, into the world of G-dliness. There, a new gate is opened, a revelation of G-dliness, in which a person can absorb reality.

People absorb the reality in front of them by using their physical senses. A more internal reality is seen through our abilities of intellect and emotion. When a person is not found in “quiet” and goes out into the noisy world, which is like one big sounding alarm, he will only be able to see the external layer of reality. But when he enters more inward, into a place of internal quiet, to the soft subtle sound in his soul, he enters into a world where he can absorb and experience a more inner level of reality.

## ACCESSING OUR NESHAMAH’S PERSPECTIVE ON OUR OWN LEVEL

On Shabbos we abstain from work. This is really an ability of quiet, to desist from being active. Our *neshamah*, by its very nature, lives in a world of Shabbos, where there is no work and no action. The *nefesh* part of our soul wants action, and the *ruach* part of our soul wants movement. The *neshamah* part of our soul, however, lives in a world of quiet and calmness, and views reality from that place of

<sup>30</sup> *Shmuel I* 16:7

<sup>31</sup> *Melachim I*: 19,11

quiet. Even if a person hasn't yet revealed their *neshamah*, they can still gain a degree of it within his current soul-level. If he is living on the level of *nefesh*, he can still access the *neshamah* -level within the *nefesh*, and if he is living on the level of *ruach*, he can access the *neshamah*-level within *ruach*. When we speak about the *neshamah* here, we aren't speaking of high levels, such as the light of the Next World. Rather, we are referring to a level of *neshamah* that is accessible within our current reach, at whatever level we are on. If a person lives at the level of *nefesh*, he lives in a world of action. If he lives on the level of *ruach*, he lives within the movements of his feelings. If he lives on the level of *neshamah*, he lives with quiet and calm and serenity – he can see reality from a calm place in himself.

### SEEING FROM A CALM PLACE IN OURSELVES

When a person lives in fast movement mode, with everything moving quickly with non-stop emotions, and then he sees something - he barely sees it. It passes by him in a flash, so he can't analyze it properly. But when a person sits quietly and he sees something, he can really see it. He can analyze it and become familiar with it, simply. So too, when a person lives from a quiet place in his soul, he sees the Creation in front of him and really sees reality and can absorb it properly.

Think about the following. The concept we are explaining here is really the inner power in one's soul to recognize oneself. The soul has depth upon depth, as it is written, "*Deep, deep, who can find it?*" and "*Very deep are Your thoughts.*"<sup>32</sup>

When a person tries to understand himself from his intellect, he's approaching himself from the outside. He sees the results of what he has done and the outcomes of his feelings, and based on this information, he attempts to understand himself. A clearer perspective of himself would be gained if he would try to understand himself based on how he feels about himself. Now he is getting closer, he has gotten more within, and he's not coming totally from outside of himself. He is experiencing himself as an emotional, feeling being. But, as mentioned, he can still be in error, because often the imagination is mixed with our feelings. We may be feeling something when really we are fantasizing it, either totally or mostly or partially - we can't totally trust our feelings.

So the best way to understand ourselves is through deep inner quiet. Amidst an inner silence, we can figure out ourselves better, because the quiet in our soul is closer to the soul's root, as opposed to our emotions and rational understanding, which are only branches. From the root we can get to the branches. Instead of trying to understand our soul from its branches, we can try to clarify it from the very place where the soul is – from the place of the inner silence within us. To give an idea of what we mean, whenever we want to understand something and we use something that's external to it in order to become familiar with it, we will only recognize it vaguely. But if we use the very thing itself so that we can become familiar with it, then we will come to recognize it much better. The true method to

32 Tehillim 92:6

recognize our soul – from within the soul itself, and not from its branching abilities – is to approach the soul from a place of quiet and calm. Then we can just see, without thinking, proving, dissecting, differentiating, imagining, or even experiencing. It is beyond emotion – it is just an ability to see reality as it is. Usually, people have used other methods than this ability of inner quiet so they will have difficulty grasping this concept and trying to apply it. But we have to be aware that there is an internal ability to grasp reality and really see ourselves as we are.

If someone has any moments of total quiet, he is able to feel how a certain deeper understanding has become more opened within him. But this usually happens only seldom and not consistently. If a person lives a life of quiet and calm, he can regularly see reality as it is. When a person lives in a more serene place in himself, he can regularly see reality as it is. This is not like a flash of understanding which comes and goes. It is a certain perspective that a person sees, from a quiet place in himself by which he can absorb reality as it is. He is not just feeling something there. Any feelings are only touching the external layer of reality. He is rather absorbing reality as it is.

Just as the physical eye sees physical reality, so can an internal view in ourselves see the inner world as it is. A person like this sees a totally different world than what most people see. And from that ability he is also able to see into himself, into what's going on inside himself. He can view his soul from outside and see into it. This ability gives a person an entirely new viewpoint. It is similar to the ability of being above the garden-maze of life, which is described in the beginning of *sefer Mesilas Yesharim*, the ability to view oneself from outside of oneself and then direct himself. When a person reaches the place of inner silence in himself, he can see things from above it and outside it, similar to the person who stands above the garden-maze who can direct people through the maze.

## THE KEY ABILITY FOR THE COMING LESSONS

This concept is the key to everything that we will explain in the coming lessons. Understand it very well. In the coming lessons, we won't only be using this ability of inner quiet, but will be making use of different abilities, such as intellectual clarification and our feelings, and sometimes we need to use all these abilities at once. Even with the ability to see reality using the power of inner silence, we still have to make use of other abilities. But the main ability we have to use is the "inner silence". If not, then our feelings can't be accurate and we will be mistaken about what we feel, and our intellect won't be able to figure things out (because our mind is so limited) and we will not be able to put things into the proper perspective. But when we have the ability of inner quiet, we can then see reality from afar, seeing many things at once by seeing the general picture of something. Once we see reality, we can absorb it even though we didn't yet have the time to clarify it in our minds. What will take a lot of time for a person to clarify something intellectually will take a second for someone who can see reality as it is from a place of inner quiet. The mind has to take a lot of time in order to clarify something, but the ability of inner quiet can absorb a reality in one moment. Once we gain the ability, we will

figure out things very quickly, but it can take a while for most people to develop this ability, because most people have difficulty when trying to reach this ability of inner quiet.

## THE FAST-PACED LIFESTYLE OF THE WORLD TODAY IS NOT NORMAL

It is difficult to reach a place of inner silence in ourselves, because we have grown up in a world where the life in front of us all seems to us as “normal.” Anyone who wants to do a bit different is considered “weird” and then he has to bring proof to be deemed as normal. Whoever tries to be a bit different, will always have the lower hand. And that is how people live their lives, busy with all their pursuits. The whole world is filled with all kinds of things that people are busy with.

In order to reach a place of inner calm in ourselves, we need to realize that the world today has become like what the Gemara says, that when certain sins are rampant, “Destruction (*andral-musya*) comes to the world.” The world has never been so noisy and loud as it is today. The world lacks an absolute calmness. There were always turbulent times of war, but until today’s times there was never a regular routine of “noise” every single day. Everything today is screaming out loud, and people can’t find calmness. There was never such a reality as in today’s times. This is really one of the ways that the last generation has descended.

We have to understand and internalize that the noise which is found within us is really one big block in our path preventing us from accessing our inner world. It is hard to describe this completely in words. It is a certain way of absorbing reality in front of us, and once a person is *zocheh* to understand it, he suddenly absorbs how daily life today is really a profound *galus* (exile), not just because we don’t have a *Beis HaMikdash* and no *korbonos*, but because the simple, daily lifestyle of today is really an exile of our souls. And this is all because of the great big noise which we are found in.

That is besides for all the *tumah* [impurity of technology and other evil influences of the world today], which is a separate discussion, and which is from the depths of the “50<sup>th</sup> gate of impurity.” The very noise itself which we are found in today is an absolute contradiction to our inner world. (The noisy situation of today is really getting all of its energy from the “50<sup>th</sup> gate of impurity,” and that is why there is so much noise, but the noise is not the impurity itself, only an outcome of it.)

## CREATING A LIFE OF QUIET FOR OURSELVES, IN THE PROPER BALANCE

The way to reach calmness is to choose a life of quiet, where a person can absorb these words and reach an inner recognition and inner decision, that he has to live a “double-life” on this world. One must have times for quiet every day – and of course, he also has to make sure that he is dealing with the world, with his family, with his obligations, his livelihood, his health, etc. A person has to divide his schedule: There are times where he shouldn’t have anything to do with the world, and there are times when he should do what he needs to do. But he has to choose for himself a lifestyle which is

based on calm and quiet. The highest level of this was reached by the prophets and those who would go to the desert or live far from civilization so that they could meditate on what was important. They lived all the time with this. But we don't even mean this here. We can't be on such a level. If only each of us could just reach what we personally are capable of and meant to do, as part of our personal task on this world. Here we are just saying that we need to choose a life in which we have calmness and quiet as part of our daily routine. Part of our day has to be spent on responsibilities, and that too requires a balance. But a recognizable chunk of our life has to be a quieter, calmer lifestyle.

(If we choose to learn Torah during our times of quiet, it should be in a calm way. Though Torah learning requires effort and exertion, heated arguments and yelling should be left out during our quiet time, and instead we should just learn calmly and quietly. Think about what the Mishnah, Gemara or *sefer* is saying, amidst a quiet calmness.)

This is not just advice, but a choice to make, to choose to live a life of calmness. A person who chooses such a life must be prepared to give up many things. He will notice that many necessities of life really bother him and place him under stress. The world in general is a bothersome, stressful environment. We need to be sensible with what we should cut out and what we shouldn't cut out, on what we really need and what we don't really need. But as long as we are prepared to give up things that only create more noise in our life, we can slowly acquire a life of quiet and calm. This is the structure for a good life.

To give an analogy, older people get bothered by the smallest noise, like if there are children living in the tenant above them who are jumping up and down and this greatly disturbs the quiet of the older couple living underneath them. We can be young in our age, but we can have the mentality of an older person, which is: I need quiet and calm. If we have that attitude, we can continue to discuss the further stages in coming lessons. But we first need to make a 'splitting of the sea' – to cross over from the turbulent, crashing waters today - and to choose a life that is quieter and more serene.

It is clear to any sensible person today that there is no calmness in this world. But there is a kind of life we can live which is closer to calmness, as opposed to a life that is far from calmness. When we choose to live more calmly, slowly we become calmer inside, not only avoiding the physical noise of life, but to become internally calmer. The less a person is attached to the lifestyle of the world today, the calmer he becomes inside. He will slowly prefer to be in a quieter, calmer place. When he needs to, he goes back into the noise, and afterwards he returns to the quiet, in a cycle. In this way, a person can be in a place of "*A clear world, I see*" – he sees the world from a quiet place in himself, and from that serene view, he can view reality as it is.<sup>33</sup>

33 There was a fascinating Q&A discussion after the class, which has not yet been transcribed.

## THE WAYS OF QUIETING

*Since we explained (with siyata d'shmaya) the way to recognize our soul through attaining inner quiet, let us now think a little about what these ways of quieting are, and how we can come to the level of "The land feared, and was quieted."*<sup>34</sup>

### CALMING DOWN THROUGH EMUNAH

The foundation of everything is *emunah*. We are "believers, children of believers," and this *emunah* is hidden in our souls. To the degree that a person is actualizing his *emunah* from its dormant state one attains a palpable kind of *emunah*. When one's *emunah* is alive and revealed, not only does one believe intellectually, but can also sense, with his heart, his belief in Hashem running the world.

This is the essential key to becoming calmer. The world is full of problems, worries, and challenges. Many people are enmeshed in complicated situations that create difficulties for them. If a person lives without *emunah*, *chas v'shalom*, a large part of his life is stifling his soul. When one is *zocheh* though to have *emunah* shining in his soul, he is calmed and he can sense tranquility. In order to become calm internally, one needs *emunah* more than anything else, and especially a palpable kind of *emunah*.

### QUIETING OUR DESIRES

Besides the above factor of *emunah*, the root of all soul-faculties is the *ratzon* (will). This can be seen clearly since it is the will which motives and moves all the other faculties of the soul. The stronger one wants something, the more "noise" it creates in his soul. The calmer one is, one is able to nullify his will to Hashem's. We do not mean a sleeplike feeling, but an inner quiet which is based on the power of "It is our will to do Your will"<sup>35</sup> To the extent that one nullifies oneself to Hashem, the noise in their soul quiets down and he becomes calmer inside.

When a person wants many things, and especially if he wants things that are not meant for his personal share, he will have more inner noise. The less he will want certain things – and to be more precise, the more he wants only what's included in his personal share – his soul becomes calmed. When coupled with palpable *emunah* in Hashem, one can nullify his will to Hashem's and desire only his personal share. Most of the noise that comes from his desires will then get quieted. His soul will feel that whatever one has is his personal share, and that whatever he needs to attain will only be attained by him if Hashem wills it.

This should also be coupled with active *teshuvah*, so that our sins won't get in the way, just as Yaakov

<sup>34</sup> For a more expansive discussion of these various aspects see the Rav's sefer גאולתך דע את גאולתך

<sup>35</sup> Talmud Bavli Berachos 17a

*Avinu* was afraid that perhaps he sinned and wasn't deserving of Hashem's protection. When a person lives with constant *teshuvah* and *emunah*, by nullifying his will to Hashem's will with the sole desire to reach his personal share and nothing else, the entire noise of the world dissipates. "We run and they run. They run to the pits of destruction, while we run to the eternal life of the next world."<sup>36</sup> The life of the next world is not simply to live a spiritual existence, and it is not simply a place of reward. It is to reach our own personal share. Every Jew has a portion in the world to come – his own personal portion in it. We are running to the eternal life of the next world – to reach our own personal portion. Each person runs to his own portion in the next world.

This way of living ensures that a person will constantly have proper and holy desires which create calmness for him. Practically speaking, whenever a person wishes to attain something that he wants, and he doesn't succeed, on the one hand, he should do *teshuvah* (because maybe he didn't put in enough effort), but after he has done *teshuvah*, he has to have *emunah* that "This was the will of Hashem, that I shouldn't succeed in getting what I wanted." He can then feel settled as his soul agrees to want only his personal share and nothing else. From there he can reach joy, being happy with his own personal share.

This is very clear-cut, and even though we are describing it briefly, it is very clear, of how a person should live. He should have holy desires that are inner and truthful, amidst nullifying his will to Hashem, and in this way he can be calm inside. This is what enables a person to be happy with what he has, with his own personal share.

## QUIETING OUR CHARACTER TRAITS

Besides the above, there are also outer layers of the soul, which contain our *middos*, which contribute a lot to one's inner noise. Anger especially disrupts a person's inner peace, igniting a fire of *Gehinom* that rules over the person.<sup>37</sup> But any of the character traits as well can create noise in one's soul – either when one hasn't yet fixed his greatest weakness, or when one's character traits aren't balanced with each other, where an internal clash is created between his different character traits. To the extent that one repairs his worst character trait and also attains a balance between all of his character traits in general, he becomes calmer inside.

One also has a particular good character trait that counters his worst trait, and this is his main personal share in this world. Reaching one's personal share in this world has several aspects such as his personal share in *emunah*, in *tefillah*, in *chesed*, etc.. One also has a specific good character trait which is [part] of his personal share and root.

When one merits connecting to his personal share, he can be happy with it, and he can have the

36 Recited in the prayer upon making a celebration of completing a tractate of Gemara (Talmud)

37 see Talmud Bavli Nedarim 22a: "Whoever gets angry, all kinds of Gehinnom rule him."

calmness and tranquility which creates inner quiet. To the extent that one connects to his personal portion, he attains deep quiet for his soul, and this is especially true when one becomes connected to his best character trait and actualizes it from its dormant state. When one reaches his true place, he finds serenity, for that is his portion.

## QUIETING OUR SPEECH

Besides the above, one also needs to know that if he has the habit of talking a lot, he is constantly 'going out of himself', and all of this talking creates a noise in his soul. Certainly this is the case with forbidden speech, such as defaming someone, gossiping about someone, slandering, etc. But even idle chatter, and even talking words of Torah when one doesn't cease talking, causes one to leave his soul and lose his inner quiet.

How can one know where to draw the line in how much he's talking? As long as he can remain inwardly calm and focused in his thoughts when he's talking, then generally speaking, it is appropriate for him to talk. But as soon as he loses his clarity of thinking and mentally he isn't calm, it is time for him to "be silent." It was just as Hashem told Moshe not to talk and ask Him any further, "For this is what has arisen in My thoughts." This is a hint that through being silent one graduates from the realm of speech to the realm of thought, and he should cease talking and return to just thinking.

In addition, even when one is in the midst of talking and he is able to stay focused in his thoughts, this still does not mean that he needs to talk more. It is very possible that he really needs to enter more into his thoughts or into his feelings, instead of talking more. Certainly if he's talking and he is losing his inner focus, it is a sign that he shouldn't be talking right now. The only exceptions to this would be if he is obligated to talk right now, like if he has to say *Shema* or *daven*, or if he needs to talk to someone else as a sign of respect. But generally speaking, most of the talking today is way beyond what's necessary for one's peace of mind. It is because most people do not feel how all of this talking creates a noise in their soul. Usually when people talk, they are talking a bit louder than they need to be, and this creates a noise in their soul, which makes them lose their inner quiet.

It is subtle to know how much one should or shouldn't be talking, but the more a person enters inward, the more inner quiet he has, he should talk only to the extent that it won't steal his inner calm. Most people will find this to be strange, and that is because they don't recognize what inner quiet is and they don't feel how talking creates a noise in their soul. But the more a person enters inward, the more he sees that his talking needs to be measured, so that he stays balanced between his inner calm and his talking, making sure not to lose his inner calm from talking too much. This factor is a big part of one's inner quiet – staying properly balanced in the area of how much one talks (and the audibility of his talking).

## QUIETING THE THOUGHTS

Besides the above factors, the area of thought also has to be quieted. A person's thoughts are quick and actively working, and this activates the intellect, enabling one to utilize the potential of the mind. This is obviously a good thing. But at the same time, one's thoughts can be running about, with thoughts racing through his mind, and this makes a person lose his inner calm, because there is internal noise amidst his thoughts.

Just like a person has conversations with another, so does a person converse with himself in his thoughts, and as it is written, "I spoke with my heart," and *Chazal* said "The heart speaks."<sup>38</sup> When most people are in middle of thinking, a large part of their thinking is really a mental conversation. This internal chatter really creates a big noise in the soul. In addition, when one's thoughts are racing, this also takes away his inner calm, and he needs to quiet his thoughts.

There is a section called *Maamar Hashkatah* (Essay On Quieting) by one of the Chassidic Rebbes, which explains two ways to quiet the mind. One way is by emptying out one's thoughts. One can usually do this by looking at a serene view, such as viewing an expanse of land from over a cliff or hill, viewing the sea, and other scenic views. This makes it easier for one to take his mind off his thoughts. The other way of calming the mind is to think of a positive thought that calms the mind, amidst being relaxed.

These two methods are a way to fulfill "Keep away from evil, and do good." We keep away from harm to our peace of mind by emptying out our thoughts, and we 'do good' by focusing on a simple, calming thought.<sup>39</sup>

## CALMING OUR DEEDS

We also have to calm our deeds. Refraining from any of the forbidden activities on Shabbos is one of the ways how to calm our deeds. *Chazal* also forbade physical exertion on Shabbos that isn't needed. Beyond that, one should also generally keep away from doing too much activity, so that he doesn't create noise in his soul from all the action he's doing. Both action and physical movement create noise for the soul. One should be engaged in activities only to the extent that the calmness in his soul isn't being disturbed.

38 Koheles Rabbah 1:1

39 After the class, the Rav was asked: "Does a person also need to calm his thoughts in the middle of learning Torah?" The Rav answered, "Certainly when a person is in the midst of learning Torah, he can't be busy trying to quiet his mind, because then he won't be learning. But in the middle of learning, when a person is learning something and he feels that he's working hard at trying to understand it but he's not succeeding at understanding it, part of how he can help himself is by quieting his thoughts for a bit of time, and then return to thinking about it again from the start. This also resembles the state of when the Torah was given, for *Chazal* said that the Torah was given amidst a state of silence, meaning that a person should calm his mind and then begin thinking again from a quieted mind.

A Torah scholar is not allowed to be disturbed by the community to do any work. The simple meaning is to show respect to his Torah learning, and so that he can be available for the community to help them with his Torah wisdom. But a more subtle understanding of this is because a Torah scholar has to keep away from activity so that he can have the deep inner quiet that is needed in order for him to properly absorb his Torah learning.

## LIVING IN THE PRESENT

Finally, in order for one to have inner quiet and avoid internal noise in the soul, he has to be living in the present and focused, in contrast to dwelling on the past or being concerned in his thoughts about the future.

Hashem “Was, Is, and always will Be” – only Hashem is in the past, present, and future. But a human being has to be in the present. Most people by nature are busy with their past and future. They are consumed with memories of the past, and they are imagining the future. Most of their present moments are being spent on their past and future – they aren’t fully experiencing the present. Because of this, people are busy with what’s no longer here or with what didn’t yet happen, and their present becomes turned into either the past or the future. Their present, and their future as well, becomes turned into the past – because they are always dwelling on memories from their past and on thoughts of what may happen.

As an example, people go on a trip, and they are busy taking pictures. What are they taking pictures for? So that in the future, they will be able to reminisce about the past. In the more ideal situations, people enjoy their first moments of the trip and ‘take in the scene,’ and after they have finished enjoying what they have seen, they begin to take pictures so that they will have memories afterwards. They experience what they see, they enjoy it, and afterwards they take pictures so that in the future, they can have memories. But there are many people who, as soon as they see something unique or interesting, they will immediately take snapshots of it. They are taking pictures of the present for the purpose of the future – and their future is for the purpose of remembering the past – so their entire life is spent dwelling on the past.

For most people, their present and future is entirely turned into their past. To begin with, they want to dwell on their past, and that is how they actually live their lives. The Hebrew for sin, *aveirah*, is from the word *avar*, past, because the concept of sin is to always live in the past and never move on. If a person regularly commits a certain sin, he is called a *baal aveirah*, and while the simple meaning of this is true, it also refers to one who lives all the time in the past.

There are also those who have the opposite problem – they almost never think about the past or future, and they only live for the moment. “*Eat and drink, for tomorrow we will die.*” They try to enjoy the present as much as possible, because “The present passes by in the blink of an eye,” so they

are trying to grab as much enjoyment as they can from the present. They never think about the past or about what will be, and they have no energy to deal with past troubles or to worry about future troubles, they just try to take their minds off from all worries by simply getting pleasure from the present moment.

Each of these issues (living in the past or living only for the present) are opposite imbalances in the soul. On the side of holiness, a person is able to live in the past, present, and future all at once. He can dwell on the past when he makes a self-accounting of his past deeds, where he thinks in the present about what he's done in the past, for the purpose of fixing the past mistakes. He also thinks about the future when he has aspirations to grow and he takes on resolutions to be better. As for the present, he makes sure to utilize every present moment properly and make the most out of his time.

There is also a deeper way to live – when a person lives entirely in the present because he is connected always to Hashem, Whom there is none other besides. This is the depth of his life. As a result, he is living all the time in the present, and every so often he does *teshuvah* for the past and makes resolutions for the future to improve. But he is mainly living in the present, for he is connected to Hashem Who is always Present, and this is the main aspect of his life.

## IN SUMMARY

We have explained here briefly the impaired way of living [dwelling either completely on the past or present or future] versus the repaired way of living [living with the past, present, and future all at once in the way that was described, as well as living mostly in the present by being constantly connected to Hashem].

The impaired way of living is either when a person mainly lives in the past and future, barely experiencing the present. This really means that he turns his present into the future which flips into the past – or, alternatively, when a person is only living for the present and never thinks about the past or future, so he tries to take pleasure in the present as much as possible.

In contrast to this, the holy way of living is when a person deals with the past only so that he can fix it, and he thinks about the future only when he takes on resolutions to improve for the future, and utilizing every moment of the present to its fullest. There is also a deeper way of living, which is to live with the ever-present reality of Hashem, Whom there is none other besides, and accordingly, one lives always with the present.

In the present, we are very limited in how we can be dealing with. If a person is involved with thoughts about his past and future, even if he is trying to fix his past and taking on resolutions to improve for the future, he is expending a lot of energy in the present, and all of this creates a noise in the soul. In the present, we are not able to carry our past as well as our future with us. If our present

could contain our past and future, then there is no past or future, because the present would be all-inclusive of everything. In the current moment, we can only contain our present, and that is how we can have a past and future. Otherwise, we are trying to push the past and future into the present, and this creates a big noise in our soul. It is “like trying to squeeze an elephant through the hole of a needle” (which is an expression of the *Gemara*). When we try to stuff something too big into a small space, there is ensuing noise and chaos. Similarly, if a person is trying to be involved with several things at once, this creates an internal noise for him.

Dealing with the past and the future during the present is too noisy for the soul to deal with. A large percentage of internal noise is due to cramming in the past, present, and future all at once. Even when doing *teshuvah* for the past and taking on resolutions for the future, this has to be done sensibly and within boundaries, because a person mainly has to be dwelling on the present. If a person lives the present, it means that he has times when he learns Torah, he has other times when he *davens*, and he has other times when he does *chessed*. In whatever he is doing at the moment, he has to be focused on just that thing alone. (We will explain more about this with Hashem’s help in the next lesson).

This is the key to attaining deeper inner quiet in the soul, and it is also the way to acquire the ability to be deeply focused, as opposed to a scattered soul, where a person is spread out to think about many different deeds he is involved in. The more deeply focused a person is on what he’s doing right now in the present, the more his soul is connected to what he is doing, and he is calmed because he is concentrating and not caught up in anything else around him. This is the key to acquiring deep inner quiet for the soul.

## IN CONCLUSION

We have tried here to briefly outline the concepts,<sup>40</sup> on how to gain the power of inner quiet. With the help of Hashem, in the next lesson we will continue this path and explain how we can manage our life from amidst the power of being quiet and calm on our inside – and how we can gradually come closer to recognizing and actualizing the personal share that Hashem has given each of us.

40 For a more expansive discussion of these various aspects see the Rav’s *sefer* Getting Ready for Your Redemption דע אַת גאולתך

# STAYING ANCHORED TO SERENITY

## BACK & FORTH BETWEEN SERENITY & FAST-PACED LIFE

It has so far been explained in the previous lesson with *siyata d'shmaya* the ways of quieting, how the power of inner quiet gives the person the power to recognize the inner world, and in particular, the soul.

The more a person is connected to a place of quiet in his soul, his lifestyle also becomes calmer, as a result. He will find that it has become more natural for him to protect his serenity and not to do things that will take him out of his serenity.

A person is not always to be in the quiet. He is involved in a world of action, of turbulence in his various actions, feelings, and thoughts. These are all movements in the soul, which all create a noise for the soul. Whatever a person does, even his wishes and his pleasure, are movements of the soul. Any movement of the soul will always take a person out of his calmness, depending on the intensity of the movement. A person has to be involved with the practical side of life, which will take him out his calmness. But how much will it remove him from his calmness? It depends on how much calmness he has already acquired. The calmer he is becoming, the less his involvement with the world will remove him from that calmness.

The inner way of living is to go “back and forth” between the modes of quiet and movement. A person has to mainly live in the quiet space in his soul, and he needs to be involved with the world when he needs to, but immediately after taking care of his responsibilities, he should return to a quiet space in his soul [to his state of serenity].<sup>41</sup>

“A Torah scholar’s work is done by others” and a Torah scholar is called Shabbos, to show that an internal kind of person lives in a state of “Shabbos”, serenity. The inner way of life is a serene, Shabbos-like state. A person has to leave his serenity to go and do things, and then return to his serenity. One has to do what he needs to do, but he has to return to his serenity.

## WHERE TO DRAW THE LINE

How does a person draw the line of what he should or shouldn't be doing? He must do whatever he is obligated to do according to *halachah*, even if it compromises on his serenity. But if something is

<sup>41</sup> After the derasha, the Rav was asked, “What exactly is the serenity that a person needs to be returning to?” The Rav answered, “Every person has a serenity on the level that he is on. There is no one level of serenity for everyone. One’s serenity depends the level he is on, on whatever calms him. A higher level is when a person can become totally divested from the world, but this is a high level. Each person at the level he is on is able to return to his state of serenity at his current level....Some people become serene from thinking certain thoughts, others become serene from saying Tehillim, others become serene by learning Torah quietly, and others become serene by learning Torah mentally. In any case, this is the person’s serenity.”

not an obligation, he should not do it if it will take away his serenity. He should only do it if he can stay serene or if he can easily return to his serenity.

For example, one may interrupt his learning to do a mitzvah that cannot be done by others. This is because Torah is for acting upon it. The Rambam says however that one must then return to his learning afterwards. Thus, the Rambam implies that if one cannot return to his learning afterwards, he should not do the mitzvah even if it cannot be done by others. If it will uproot him from his learning, he should not do it.

Another example is that there are many things which are *Chassidus* (non-obligatory acts of piety) and which are cited by the *Poskim*. There are so many things which a person does or doesn't have to do. How can a person know what he should be doing and where to draw the line? It is a matter that depends on one's personal level and soul-root. A person can only take on matters if he's at the level of doing it and if it's connected with his soul-root. But even when something meets this criteria, a person should still not do it if doing so will uproot him from his serenity. A person cannot keep every *chumra* (halachic stringency) he hears about it. Only if one can remain deeply connected to his inner world as he takes on non-obligatory matters, should he do them. Otherwise, he should not do it, if he lose his serenity in the process.

Even when it comes to the mitzvah of honoring parents, there are cases where one is not always obligated – when honoring them is causing him to lose his serenity. If there is a case where parents are making too many demands, or if their minds are not well, how far one must go to honor his parents? As long as it doesn't uproot his serenity, one is obligated to leave his country in order to go the country where his parents love, to honor them. But if going to another country in order to honor them will uproot his serenity, he is not obligated to honor them. In such a case, the Rambam says that he should hire someone else to take care of them.

This is also a fundamental for life as well. If we are obligated in *halachah* to do a certain thing, then we must do it regardless. But if we want to do anything that we aren't obligated in, we can only do it if it won't uproot us from our inner world. This is not a rule that applies to people on a high level. It applies to everyone, regardless of what their level is.

There are those who don't have any self-awareness of what their limitations are – they don't know what takes them out of their serenity. So what happens? They get involved in all kinds of good things like doing *chessed* projects or raising money for a wedding, etc., and then suddenly they realize that they are not calm, and that suddenly they cannot concentrate on their learning and can't be focused. One has to act according to the level he is on, and he should only do things that won't uproot him from his inner world – from his state of serenity.

That leads us to what we are saying here – the concept of staying serene. Anything we do will take us

out of serenity, but only if we can easily return to serenity afterwards should we do something (unless it's an obligation). That is the rule for our inner world of how much we need to do and how much we don't need to do.

## FALSE SERENITY

Understandably, there are those who don't know what true serenity is, and they think that serenity means laziness and sleepiness. Two people can go to sleep on Shabbos, and one of them is doing it out of true serenity while another person is sleeping simply because he's lazy (which is only imaginary serenity). Here we are speaking about one who guards his inner world. The clearer a person is living with the depth of his soul, the more clearly he will be in touch with his serenity. At the same time, he will also make sure to counter the tendency towards laziness, by doing small acts of going against his will, so that he doesn't become lazy.

## THE BAROMETER OF HOW MUCH WE SHOULD OR SHOULDN'T BE DOING

Our soul wants to do many good things and grab as much mitzvos as we can (as Chazal said, "Grab and eat", which is referring to grabbing *mitzvos*), and cram in as much Torah learning as possible, to do as much as we can, to do *chessed* and to help others whenever we can, and to daven with our heart, etc. How much do we need to be doing all of this? What is the barometer by how we can measure when to do or not do something? The barometer is: Only if we can remain calm and serene with all of it.

For a more external kind of person who isn't yet in touch with his inner world, the barometer of how much to do versus how much not to do should be measured by discerning if he can return afterwards to his normal routine or not. For a more inner kind of person, the barometer is if he can return to his serenity afterwards or not.

When it comes to learning Torah, there is no amount of how much to learn, one must learn "day and night", but a person also needs his sleep. (The Rambam says to sleep 8 hours.) Part of relaxing the body is to calm the soul. One of the 48 ways of acquiring the Torah is to lessen speech, and the Gra says that one should make sure to talk a little bit with others every day, to stay minimally calm. One cannot learn Torah properly unless he is taking care of his basic needs to stay serene. He needs sleep and he needs to talk a little bit with others every day.

A young, idealistic yeshiva bochur may want to finish Shas, stay up all night learning, and writing his chiddushim on the sugya, but he may become anxious and chaotic about this, staying up all night and losing sleep, and harming himself in the process. A person should learn Torah to the extent that he maintains his serenity and peace of mind. If pushing himself to learn Torah more will take him out of his serenity, he is not obligated – and he should not – learn Torah to this extent.

Certainly this is a delicate concept, and there are those who are in any case anxious, whether they are learning a lot of Torah or not. A person should not *chas v'shalom* waste his time for learning Torah. We are speaking here of someone who has already reached some basic level of peace of mind, so for him, he has to make sure that his time (and approach towards) Torah learning isn't compromising on his serenity.

### TIMES OF TURBULENCE AND TIMES OF SERENITY

Sometimes the responsibilities of life can forcibly take a person out of his calmness and makes him disconnected from his inner world, and he does not have a choice in the matter. But later, he must make sure to return to serenity when he's able to.

Every person has times when he can't be relaxed. Every person has calmer times and times that are more turbulent, relatively speaking. As the *Mesillas Yescharim* teaches, no one has a completely serene life, because there are all kinds of responsibilities, such as earning livelihood, taking care of the family, health, and various worries and concerns that can come up. These things will inevitably take a person out of his serenity, but a person has to learn how to stay somewhat serene even amidst the turbulence of life, so that he can deal with these situations better and not become totally uprooted from his inner world. Therefore, when one has quiet time, that is the time for him to entering a quiet space in himself and developing this space of inner serenity more and more. Then he will be able to stay more serene even amidst situations that are not calm.

### SERENITY - LIVING IN A SPACE OUTSIDE OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD

Shabbos is the time for serenity, it is when the world became serene, it is beyond the world of six days, it is the world of serenity. It is a day that is outside of This World. When we are serene, we are outside of the world. If we are mainly living in our state of serenity, then we are really living outside of this world, and entering it and exiting it when we need to. The Baal Shem Tov said that a *ben aliyah* (truly growing person) is who lives in the *aliyah*, above in the attic - and sometimes coming down to take care of what he needs to do. He mainly lives above the world, and when he needs to, he becomes involved with the world, but his real place is to be above.

This is a completely different life than what most people recognize. Certainly there is a way to misuse the concept being described here, like when people sleep all day, or they try to forget about everything, through various forms of escape (which can even including running away into reading books and immersing oneself in *sefarim*). But here we are describing the inner and healthy use of this concept, of living a serene life.

This keeps us above the confusing garden-maze of life (as described in the *Mesillas Yescharim*, how only a person standing above the garden-maze can guide people to get to the center of the maze,

because he sees everything from above), which enables us to see the world clearly, seeing everything from above and outside of it. It is when we gain the ability to see from a calm, quiet place inside ourselves. This is the goal - to reach our own personal share, and to see it clearly (which we will get to in the next lessons, with Hashem's help).

## PROPHECY VS. WISDOM

There is also another way to "see" from above, and this is generally known as *Ruach HaKodesh*, where a person receives knowledge from a higher source.

The Gemara says that sometimes there are thoughts that fall into a person's mind upon getting up in the morning, and this is a "small prophecy". The person receives knowledge, but he won't understand what just entered his mind. A person may be in a state of *d'veykus* with Hashem or he is learning Torah, and suddenly he receives a thought of *Ruach HaKodesh*, meaning that the initial thought that falls into his mind (after the *d'veykus* or heavy concentration on his Torah learning) is *Ruach HaKodesh*, and many times you can ask him to explain what the thought is and he cannot explain it. He just knows that this is the thought that fell into his mind, and he cannot understand or explain the thought.

To illustrate this concept, there was once a story (and that are many stories like this as well) that someone came to Rav Chaim Kanievsky complaining that he hasn't yet found his *zivug* (mate), and Rav Chaim said to him, "She wasn't born yet." The man left the room bewildered, wondering: "Am I supposed to wait now for the next 20 years until she's born?!" Later he married a woman who converted to Judaism, and Chazal said that a convert is like someone who has just been born [he has been reborn, with his new status of joining the Jewish people], and then he understood what Rav Chaim meant, that his wife hadn't been "born" yet. Later when he came back to Rav Chaim and told him what happened, Rav Chaim said, "I didn't understand what I had said then. It just came out of my mouth."

Sometimes a person is able to receive all kinds of sparks of wisdom that fall into his mind, but he doesn't understand these sudden thoughts, and at best he will only have a partial understanding of it.

In contrast to the above, there is a higher level of seeing – the wisdom that is above the level of prophecy. There is a clearer way of seeing, where a person is not merely receiving kernels of wisdom and partial understanding, but a picture that is clear.

Chazal said, "A wise person is better than a prophet." The Ramchal<sup>42</sup> explains that prophet receives raw information and has to decipher the message, while a wise person is able to see a clear picture. "A wise person sees the outcome", he can see things even before they happen, because he sees it all in its

42 In sefer *Kelach Pischei Chochmah* (138 Openings To Wisdom)

potential form as it's in middle of a process unfolding. He can see the world from the outside, unlike a person who is trapped in this world and who can only see within the world, but not outside of it.

A wise person can see the world from above it and outside of it, and this is through the ability to see from a serene place in the soul that he has reached (as we have been explaining until this point). From a quiet soul, he can see reality as it is – both the Creation as a whole, as well as his soul in particular, and from there he will come to recognize the depth of his soul. This ability is also called the “absence that comes before the existence”<sup>43</sup>, the way to see all of existence from a quiet, calm place that is outside of the world one is found in.

This is the inner way of living, for those who wish to enter inward and find the life of the “wise person is better than a prophet.”

43 Gra to Yeshayahu 11:1

# EXPERIENCING LIFE FROM A CALMED SOUL

## OUR SOUL'S SENSE OF TOUCH

With *siyata d'shmaya* we have been explaining an inner way of how one can come to recognize their true self, and how the main tool to reach it is through internal calm (*sheket*). Now we shall progress to the practical outcomes, which will not be merely 'action-oriented' but rather an inner approach that is being made practical.

We have the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Our sense of touch is used in order to feel things. Not only can our sense of touch feel physical things, but it can also be used to recognize our soul. In addition to being able to recognize our soul through the intellectual and contemplative faculties, we also have a more inner way to recognize our soul – through the power of “touch”.

We shall now establish a very fundamental point. The deeper of an inner calmness that one reaches in his soul, the more precise one's sense of touch will be, and it will feel things more clearly. In contrast, the more “noise” that there is in the soul, the coarser and less precise one's sense of touch will be. We know that when a person is in a reactive state and he touches something, he might not even be aware of what he's touching, whereas the calmer a person is, the more clearly and precisely he can feel things.

## INNER QUIET – THE MAIN TOOL NEEDED IN ORDER TO USE THE SOUL

In previous chapters, we have been explaining, with *siyata d'shmaya*, that **the strongest tool** we need in order to **recognize our soul** is, the ability of **inner quieting**. As we are about to explain in this lesson, the soul's power of touch which we need to use in order to recognize our soul is really dependent, on a subtle level, upon having inner quiet.

A clear example of this is the halachah that the knife of a *shochet* needs to be checked for any nicks by using the subtle, discerning ability of *avanta d'liba*, “heart understanding”. Depending on how much “heart understanding” – or inner quiet – we have, that is how precise we will be able to feel matters of our soul.

Another example is the *halachah* of *yad soledes* in *Hilchos Shabbos* – the temperature of cooking heat that it is forbidden on Shabbos is determined by our hand pulling away from something when we touch it. Only if our hand quickly recedes from it is it considered to be the kind of the heat that's forbidden to produce on Shabbos. If one is unaware that something is hot and he touches it, he will quickly pull back his hand, much quicker than a person who knew it would be hot, who was able to ready and prepared for the hot thing he was about to touch. The feeling of the heat is felt more

intensely by one who didn't prepare himself for it, while it is handled much more calmly by one who prepared himself for it.

The idea to take out of this is that when a person has a state of **calmness**, a person can prepare himself better for something and handle it in a very different way than one who never prepared himself, who doesn't have the calmness and who will elicit an impulsive reaction when he is caught by surprise from something he never prepared himself for. One's inwardly calm state allows him to touch and feel things with **subtlety**. This is how **the soul's sense of "touch"** enables one to recognize the soul.

### FEELING DEEPLY WHAT WE SEE AND EXPERIENCE

Now we shall explain an inner way of how a person can reach an inner recognition of his soul. After all of the introductions explained until this point, comes the next stage: After a person is experiencing reality from a quiet, calm place in himself, he can encounter all kinds of stimuli each day and instead of approaching them superficially, he will **encounter them deeply**.

Usually when we see encounter still objects and plants, there is no emotion involved. We eat a fruit and we just eat it. When we encounter an animal, sometimes our feelings for it are aroused. When we speak with people, we are certainly using our emotions as we relate with others. Of course, some people relate to people and animals in the same exact way that they relate to still unmoving objects and plants, but in general people will use their emotions when they see an animal more than they do with rocks and plants, and certainly when it comes to meeting people. But when a person is **living amidst inner silence**, he is not encountering all of this on a superficial level, he is not merely seeing what's in front of him – rather, he's **experiencing its reality**.

With no inner silence, one cannot experience anything other than the noise of what he's encountering. But the more a person is silencing himself and living a calmer life, he will encounter things and really experience what's happening and what he's seeing.

Of course, one cannot experience every small detail he comes across all day, but certainly with the bigger and more meaningful things he encounters, he will be experiencing their reality more. In this way, he is living in a way where he **feels the reality** of what he encounters. This does not mean that he is physically touching each thing with his hands. Rather, he is feeling and touching each thing with his soul. It's hard to explain this fully, because it's an inner state, a "soul matter", but we are trying here to explain this in the written language as best as possible.

The way of living this internal kind of life is really a daily life every day in which we are experiencing everything we encounter. There are gains (quality of life improved) and disadvantages (pain involved) to it. The following are some examples of the disadvantages, followed by the gains of it.

## THE PAIN THAT COMES ALONG WITH HEIGHTENED AWARENESS

When a person lives in the way being described here, and then he person meets with others who are far from Torah and mitzvos and who are living very much in the impure world of today – or, if he meets people whose *middos* (character traits) are far from desirable, and who are very not balanced and who are extreme in their behaviors – he will find any of these scenarios very difficult upon his soul. Why? Because he is really “feeling” these people he meets and the reality which they are in, and as a result, he feels the *tumah* (impurity) that they’re steeped in, or he feels how low their character is. He is feeling the reality in front of him which he picks up on.

When a person really senses the bad character of another person, it stinks to him like a rotting corpse. Chazal bring a famous story where Eliyahu HaNavi who met a certain person who was involved with lowly sins, and Eliyahu said to him: “How do you smell so bad? You smell worse than a corpse.” It is hard to meet with people who are living lives that are a direct contradiction to the internal world which we are striving to live in. When we are feeling the reality of what we encounter, then we will also be meeting with things that are undesirable.

That is why living in this inner way will also cause a person to want to separate himself from many people [who are either sadly connected to the impure world of today, or who have very negative character traits that they haven’t yet fixed, or both], and he will wish to have nothing to do with this world - even from people whom it may even be *halachically* permissible to be involved with, he will want to stay away from them because being involved with them is disturbing to his inner way of living. He is encountering the reality of each thing and immediately feeling how it contradicts his whole reality and existence.

That is the difficulty which inner living (living from a calm, silenced inner state) presents us with, and we have to be aware of this well. But, even with this difficulty, the gains of it are far worth it.

## EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL OUTCOMES OF EXPERIENCING REALITY

This way of living, in which one is experiencing the reality he’s encountering, has both an external and internal layer to it.

The external layer of it is where a person is experiencing the surface level of what he’s encountering: He meets a person and then “experiences” that person, he meets a wild animal or peaceful animal and experiences its reality, he observes the quick nature of the ant, etc. The internal layer though is to experience the inner reality. It’s clear to any sensible person that every person has a certain way of how he experiences the reality in front of him.

## EXPERIENCING YOMIM NORAIM: EITHER CONTINUING WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW, OR GOING THROUGH IT WITH A FRESH NEW PERSPECTIVE

For example, Yomim Noraim arrives. A person experiences Elul, Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur with a certain perspective. These days are a change of routine from regular day-to-day life, but the more a person is living more inwardly, he experiences more deeply even the reality of day-to-day life. He experiences reality in a way that gets absorbed in his soul, and he becomes aware of what he feels in different kinds of situations and periods.

We aren't speaking here about the reactivity a person feels, but the way a person experiences realities, no less than how a person can feel with his hand how something is either soft or hard, cold or hot. It is the ability to feel the reality he is in from a place of internal silence, to be connected to the reality, to feel what he's connecting to, and then feeling how his soul is relating to it – to know how his inner state is reacting.

This way of living creates a myriad amount of experiences of reality. If one tries to enter this state too quickly, he will overwhelm his soul with a flood of experiences. This is like a person whose brain cannot handle learning more than a certain amount of topics a day and if he overdoes it, he will become overwhelmed. The same is true with our soul's ability to experience. A person cannot deeply experience too much in one day, or else he overwhelms the soul. Just like we have our physical limitations of how much energy we have and how much we can carry or not, so is our mind limited in how much we can think about and so is our soul limited in its ability to deeply experience. That is why this ability of the soul to experience reality must be developed very gradually.

When one does encounter and experience what he's meeting, what is he experiencing? He is meeting the surface of what he's encountering, but he is also meeting objects or even non-physical concepts such as time or certain periods of the year, where he is experiencing certain thoughts about what he encounters – in whatever situation he finds himself in, he is able to discern what his soul is feeling about it.

## PREVIOUS IMPRESSIONS BLOCK US FROM BEING IN A SPACE OF INNER QUIET

Here are some examples to illustrate better the idea. A person hears a song and he is asked, "How is the song?" One person will say "It was nice" and another will say the opposite. That is an example of two people reacting differently to the external information of what they encountered. But a person can listen to the song deeply with his soul and try to see what experience it's doing for his soul as he hears the song. This is not about if the song makes him in a better or sadder mood, but a question of: What is the internal experience I have when hearing the song?

Let us explain more what we mean. If, before hearing the song, you have already heard an opinion on

it from someone else, then you are already inclined to have the same opinion on it, because now that you've heard a certain opinion on it, you're anticipating that very opinion because subconsciously you don't want to be very disappointed. You're already leaning towards a certain opinion on it even before you've entered the reality of something. The more inner way is to experience it from a quiet place in yourself of just accepting it as it is and not anticipating anything. In this way, you can experience things the way as they are and for what it is, and how you, personally, experience it.

Most people are in fact not deeply experiencing what they encounter, because they are in a state of internal noise, they have no internal quiet, so they don't experience properly. Their way of experiencing what's in front of them is coarse and unrefined – they are experiencing the “noise” of something but they are not experiencing the “reality” of something. For example, a person goes on the bus or gets to the bus stop. There is noise all around, so he isn't mindful to the bus or to the bus stop, and all he is experiencing is the noise. This is the main reason why people don't experience the reality they're in – they are being distracted with something else.

There is also a subtler reason why most people aren't experiencing reality as it is: They first have a certain opinion that they're inclined to, so they experience their opinion instead of actually experiencing what they're in.

Though the first reason mentioned before is the more fundamental reason, the deeper reason why people don't experience something as it is because they already have an opinion on it and that is what they are inclined to. This is like a judge taking a bribe, which sways the judge's mind from thinking objectively and giving an accurate judgment, because he has been paid beforehand to give a certain conclusion that will benefit the one who paid him. It is therefore very hard for people to experience reality from a pure, quiet place in themselves and experience any reality as it is with nothing else attached to it.

As an example, a person opens a sefer. He already knows who the author is, he knows others who disagree with that author and others who agree, and then reads the sefer. He is now reading the sefer with an already formulated conclusion on the author. Or, a person hears a song and he knows who the singer is, so he's experiencing the song with his opinions on the singer.

## HOW TO EXPERIENCE REALITY FROM THE INNER QUIET IN THE SOUL

The way to experience reality from a quiet place in the soul is to begin from a clean [non-judgmental] state where one is **not “leaning” or does not feel somewhat compelled in any way towards any certain opinion** on what he's experiencing. One needs to be in a state where he is entering anything from a completely quiet, calm place in his soul where he isn't drawn towards any certain notion. Otherwise, he already has some internal noise and he cannot experience anything from a quiet place in the soul.

### EXAMPLE 1: HOW WE EXPERIENCE YOMIM NORAIM

For example, during Yomim Noraim, most people have pre-conceived notions about what Elul, Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kipur and Succos has to look like. When these days have passed, a person might say, “I didn’t go through it properly, I didn’t succeed at growing during this time.” Why? Because he was anticipating a certain thing, and it didn’t exactly turn out the way he wanted, so he saw it all as a failure.

Certainly there’s an outer part of our soul which wants to do our personal part and do teshuvah to Hashem during these days of Hashem’s mercy and forgiving, but there’s a deeper place in our soul which can enter this period from a quieter place that’s trying to experience these days as it is, with no agendas or pre-conceived notions attached to it. With that mindset, a person can learn sefarim or inspiring words about Elul and Yomim Noraim and he sees a whole different side to it that he has never before seen.

The Gemara has an expression, “If not for lifting up the garbage pile for you, you would not have found the diamond underneath it.” Every person has impressions from childhood about what Yomim Noraim is, and when he is an adult, that childish impression usually continues, though he may add on some more points and a bit more depth to what he knows. He’s already wired to think a certain way about this time period of Yomim Noraim, so his soul is constricted to a certain view, and any additional input that he receives is only just building up the approach that he’s already familiar with.

### EXAMPLE 2: FRESH PERSPECTIVE WHEN LEARNING THE SAME SUGYA/MASECHES AGAIN

The following is an example which early sages have used, and which brings out the point.

When a person is learning a sugya of Gemara or a new, uncharted tractate for the first time, it is fresh to him and he knows nothing about it as he starts to learn it. But if he already learned it when he was younger, and a couple of years later he learns it again, he is beginning from his previous impression about it. A Kolel man who has learned the same tractate several times is beginning each time with his previous impressions on what he learned. Those learning Torah for several years are familiar with certain concepts and each sugya they have learned is re-learned with the same approach, the same *chiddushim* (novel insights) they remember from last time.

There is a more inner way to learn, though, which our sages spoke about it: Even when re-learning what you already learned, you can begin learning it as if you never learned it before.

This is not easy to do, because you’re already familiar with what you’re learning, but the secret to success lays in this concept.

Here is another related example. When you learn the weekly *parshah*, you saw certain insights last year, and this year you might review last year's notes or remember them or look for a new interpretation of something in order to renew your thoughts and feelings about a certain topic that's connected to that week's *parshah*. But the more inner way is, in addition to reviewing what you already know, you also can begin to learn it as if you never learned it before.

## INNER QUIET - BEGINNING FROM A FRESH, NEW PLACE (AYIN/NOTHINGNESS)

A person might say, "How can I start learning something as if I never learned about it before?! Don't I first have to know all the words of Chazal about it?!" But while there is truth contained in this, it is being superficial. It is written, "*And wisdom, from where (m'ayin) it can be found?*" [The posuk is hinting that we draw forth wisdom from "*ayin*".] The inner layer of our soul draws wisdom from *ayin*, from a place of nothingness, and not from the current place we are at but from a place of starting anew from a quiet place.

This is how a person can experience reality each time beginning anew from a new place. Otherwise, a person is beginning from a place of noise and he's already leaning towards a certain conclusion as soon as he starts something, and then he never really experiences the reality as it is.

## SUMMARY

To summarize thus far, the inner way to experience reality is to attain a space of inner quiet in the soul (which hopefully we have developed thus far by putting into practice the previous lessons) and experiencing what we are trying to connect to, and to discern how our soul feels towards what we are experiencing. This experience of our soul has to be from a place of beginning from scratch.

Though we can give many more examples of it, the concept is clear – we need to enter into something without any pre-conceived notions or information about it, so that we can just experience it as it is. This is how we enter into something from a clean, quiet and calm place, slowly connecting to what we are experiencing and thereby "experiencing" it.

## BACK-AND-FORTH BETWEEN LEARNING AND STARTING AGAIN ANEW

There is a back-and-forth process that is needed here. This is the rule known as *ratzu v'shov* (advancing and retreating) which applies to all areas of growth. For example when learning a *sugya* of Gemara and you encounter a difficulty you can't get past, one of the fundamental ways to answer the difficulty is to begin learning the *sugya* again from the start as if you never learned it before. When you are connecting to the information in front of you, you sometimes need to pull away from it and start again anew, and then you can experience it many times, each time from the beginning – and that is how you reach greater clarity on it.

Without doing this, a person remains with a collection of previous impressions towards anything he enters, and then he never really experiences what he enters. It is difficult to explain this in words, but when we think about it, it's astounding – without being able to access a fresh place in our soul, we are always beginning from the middle and then we approach everything based on the previous impressions we have towards something, and then we never fully experience what we are going through, because we are still stuck in our previous impressions about it and constricted to that way of thinking.

## THE DEEP WAY TO GO THROUGH YOMIM NORAIM & THE DEPTH OF DOING TESHUVAH

This concept also has particular ramifications of the days of *teshuvah* we are in, Elul, in which we are beginning again anew to prepare for Rosh HaShanah. The root of these days of beginning is the power of *teshuvah*, which is essentially the ability to return to our beginning point, as in the verse, “*I today gave birth to you*” and as we say in the Rosh HaShanah *davening*, “*Today is the birth of the world*”, beginning a new world. That is the inner way to live life: always starting from a completely new place.

## BECOMING RE-BORN

That is how a person quiets and calms the knowledge and information that is stirring in his brain for so long, enabling a person to reach a deep inner silence.

When a person has gathered together an endless amount of impressions on his mind about something, it stresses the soul, and a stressed soul doesn't have the calmness or quiet that it needs in order to properly experience. Most people as they get older gain more knowledge and more experiences that they've gone through in life, including difficulties, failures, and successes – each person has gone through what he's gone through – and the result of all this is a great pile of stress upon the soul. We can see people when they get older who are stuck to their old ways of thinking based on all that they've experienced and gone through.

But when a person gains the ability to cleanse his soul and reach a place of always being able to start anew, he is constantly being re-born. He will be able to experience everything in a new, fresh way each time, no less than a child growing up in his house and observing everything for the first time, getting to know his parents and siblings and toys, etc.

There is a verse that when righteous people get older, they are “*Satisfied and youthful they will be, to tell over that Hashem is upright.*” An older person can become youthful again when he has the ability to start from a new place and he isn't drawn after any mistakes, and then he can say “Hashem is upright” because he sees a straight, objective view, he sees reality as it is.

## IN CONCLUSION

These words have really been very brief, and it describes a very deep way of living, in which we are living from a quiet place in ourselves. The previous lessons described this concept with regards to the ways of internal quieting, and here in this lesson we have explained the inner depth that is behind these ways of quieting and a way to live life.

The ways of quieting are essentially a way to erase any previous impressions and to start anew – but there is also another side of the coin, and that is, that we have a *mitzvah* to remember our Torah learning by reviewing it and asking those wiser than us for advice. That is the outer part of our life – and the inner part of our life is to gain the ability of being able to start from a new place, living from amidst a deep inner quiet and calmness in our soul. Just as a newborn child is beginning life, so can a person begin each day of his life from a new place.

This is how a person can reach a life of quiet and calmness that is very deep. Though a person has already lived for several decades on this world and he has gathered much information until today, all of this still doesn't reach the soul's innermost depth, for it is only at the innermost place of the soul one begins from a new place and thereby connects to everything from there, receiving new impressions and experiencing reality from a pure place.

With Hashem's help we will continue in the next lesson to explain how this inner way of living helps a person experience and recognize his soul with greater clarity.

## Q&A

**Question 1:** *But there is a feminine ability which women have, in which they can experience something deeply with strong, raging feelings - even though they're not in a calm place in their soul?*

**RAV'S ANSWER:** We explained that there are several parts which cause people to have an inaccurate experience of what they go through. When a person is experiencing a certain thing from a reactive place in himself/herself, this creates noise in the soul. A large part of what he/she is experiencing is really internal noise, rendering the person unable to properly discern the refined subtlety of what he or she is experiencing/analyzing. Even more so is that the experience is being founded upon previous impressions, so the person is not experiencing it from a new place in himself/herself – so it is not a first experience but an experience that's already leaning towards the previous impressions that one has, and such an experience will be an inaccurate experience.

That is why usually most of what people experienced was really an imprecise, inaccurate experience – they didn't genuinely experience what they went through. Without accessing the soul's space of inner quiet – this ability to start from a new place every time – one is not able to accurately experience what he/she encounters.

**Question 2:** *So the idea is to take this feminine power but just apply inner quiet to it so that it becomes more accurate?*

**RAV'S ANSWER:** Good question – we need to sharpen what we are saying here: When an experience is being experienced through internal noise, our experience itself is reactive and we are only experiencing the external layer of what we are encountering – we are not experiencing the actual reality of what we're experiencing. For example when a *shochet* has to check a knife for nicks, he can't do it when he's excited about something, because he's not in a calm state of mind to properly feel out the knife. He wouldn't be sensing the reality in front of him – the status of the knife – he would only be experiencing his reactive, excited state. To the degree that a person reaches inner quiet, he experiences reality as it is. His ability to experience is then coming from a quiet place, and what he experiences is the reality as it is. Whereas when he is experiencing his reactive state, he is experiencing through his excited or reactive state, and he will only be experiencing the “noise” of something, not its reality.

**Question 3:** *Is the ability to begin from a new place the same ability as “renewal”?*

**RAV'S ANSWER:** It is the ability to erase previous impressions, and thereby arrive at the ability of renewal.

**Question 4:** *Is this process an example of “an absence that must precede the existence of something”, a nullifying or negating of something which is then followed with a renewal, which then enables one to truly grasp reality?*

**RAV'S ANSWER:** “He renews in His goodness every day the acts of creation”, so the world we are in this moment is not the same world it was a moment ago. One who is accustomed to experiencing reality as just a continuum is not experiencing reality – he is experiencing a world that's far past. One who can experience something anew is able to feel the reality as it is today. It's possible to speak to an older person who talks with the same perspective he had when he was a child or teenager. He thinks he has changed a bit since then, but really his attitude has stayed the same. It is hard for him to absorb that the world today has changed totally since his younger days.

Similarly, reality is changing every moment but one cannot experience it if he keeps continuing the past and never starts anew – he already has many beliefs that he is inclined to, so he cannot experience reality as it is.

**Question 5:** *If the abilities of renewal and grasping current reality are two opposite concepts, is there a way to integrate them together?*

**RAV'S ANSWER:** There is the unchanging reality and there is also the ever-changing reality that Hashem keeps renewing “existence from nothing”. We aren't speaking here of the ever-constant reality

[of Hashem Was, Will, and Will Always Be] which is a deeper concept than what was discussed here. In this lesson we spoke about the ever-changing reality and not to keep remaining with the present reality.

**Question 6:** *If a person has strong thinking abilities can he easily acquire this ability to experiencing or will he naturally resist it?*

**RAV'S ANSWER:** Strongly developed thinking abilities create clarity. The logical intellect will naturally oppose emotional or reactive experiences, but it will easily accept objective experiences of reality. The intellect connects easily with clarity and doesn't resist unclear experiences. The intellect can clarify something as it is. Though logical intellect and experiencing reality are two different abilities, they don't contradict each other – they can work together, because the intellect merely clarifies the experience.

# REFINEMENT

## OUTLINE

This lesson progresses to the next stage, the practical action stage of recognizing our personal share – by using the soul’s sense of touch to “feel out” things.

As mentioned in previous chapters, there are two parts to the soul’s sense of touch, an external and internal use. The external use of the soul’s sense of touch is the ability to be reactive and emotional, while the internal use of the soul’s sense of touch is to feel out the reality of something. In order to experience and recognize properly the reality in front of us by using the soul’s sense of touch (as described in previous lessons), one needs to reach a space of deep inner silence in the soul.

Now we will organize these concepts more and go more into detail, explaining one step after the other, with Hashem’s help.

## SELF-RECOGNITION – THROUGH THE MIND’S INTELLECT AND THE HEART’S TOUCH

As it is well-known, [the inner makeup of] a person is comprised of the brain’s thinking abilities and heart’s abilities to feel and recognize. Each of these abilities independently enable a person to recognize oneself.

The intellect contemplates, learns, takes information apart and connects information together – and all of this can also help a person recognize himself. The heart can feel and sense things, and this is the heart’s ability to “touch” or feel out information and thereby “feel out” the reality that’s in front of a person.

There are times when a person mainly has to be using his thinking brain. When learning Torah in-depth and trying to understand what one is learning, this is the time to be using the brain’s thinking abilities, so that one can get to all the nuances in what he is analyzing.

Then there are times where one needs to be using his heart: The prime example of this is davening, which is called “service of the heart”, “Pour out like water your heart, in the presence of the countenance of Hashem”. When we daven, we are actively using our heart’s feelings, and our intellect is less involved in this. If we apply intellect to our davening, we would only be trying to gain insight into the words we are saying (this is called *iyun tefillah*, analyzing our prayers), but the main ability we need to be using when we daven is our heart’s feelings.

However, even when using the heart, there is another kind of “intellect” which we need to actively use – let us explain what it is.

## THREE ASPECTS OF INTELLECT WHEN LEARNING TORAH – GUIDING, ORGANIZING, SEARCHING

As mentioned, the main time to use intellect is when we are learning Torah. The Torah is from the word *horaah* (guide), for the Torah guides us, and the Torah is also from the word *tor*, as in the verse “And when the *tor* (report) of Esther daughter of Avichayil came”, which hints that the Torah is orderly, and *tor* also means “looking”, such as when the Spies were sent to spy (*l’tor*) the land – to see and search. Thus the intellect’s role in learning Torah serves three functions: guiding, organizing, and searching.

### GUIDING

When the heart’s feelings are active, the intellect is not giving order or searching, it is being a guide. The ability to give a Torah ruling is the intellect probing what reality is, and Chazal said that one needs to daven from a state of *halachah pesukah*,<sup>44</sup> which is this ability of *horaah*, being a guide. This is the active ability when *davening*.

It is also called the power of *habatah*, objective seeing. This is not the intellect’s ability to give definitions and dissect information, but that does not mean that the intellect isn’t active at all in this power. It’s not like when a person is going to sleep, where the emotions are awake and the intellect is gone and replaced with the imagination: “*I am asleep, but my heart is awake*”. When the heart is actively feeling through its power of touch and recognition, the intellect’s role then is to look on from afar. The wise sages are called “eyes of the congregation”, they watch from afar, because when the heart and feelings are active, the intellect’s role at this time is to look on curiously and observe.

This is called *habatah* – looking on. There are two ways how this power is used. One way is to glance: The Gemara questions if glancing at an ownerless object is enough to acquire it. Another way is to see thoroughly. “He looks at the earth and it shakes.” This is not a mere glance but an ability to see reality, become connected to it, and experience it.

### INTEGRATING THE ABILITIES OF LOOKING ON AND HEART’S TOUCH IN ORDER TO RECOGNIZE REALITY

There is a deep and subtle ability created from the integration of the heart’s ability to feel/touch, with the intellect’s ability of *habatah*/looking on. Emotions alone are a reaction, while the heart’s deeper feelings can experience reality. The intellect alone can contemplate and recognize a reality by calculating logically in various ways. But when the heart is meant to be active, the intellect’s role is to integrate with the heart and look on, as if one is looking at something from afar: “*From the distance, Hashem appeared to me*”<sup>45</sup>, and this is a way of becoming connected to the reality.

44 See Talmud Bavli 31b

45 Yirmiyahu 31:2

## HABATAH (LOOKING ON) – A VIEW OF CONNECTING TO THE REALITY

Let us elaborate more on this to understand it better. Hashem told Moshe, “*From afar you may see the land, but there you will not come*”. Clearly Hashem didn’t just let Moshe see Eretz Yisrael in the plain sense, but He allowed Moshe to see Eretz Yisrael in a way that would connect him to it, to the reality of Eretz Yisrael. Chazal said that there is a bird which can cause its female counterpart to lay an egg just by looking. Though intimate connection is normally called “knowing” (*And Adam “knew” Chavah*), this bird can bring about a profound connection just with its eyes. This type of looking is not contemplative, rather it is visual.

When the heart’s sense of touch is recognizing a matter and when this is combined with the intellect’s ability to look on from afar, there is an integration and union between the intellect and heart – the ability to recognize reality from this fusion of the intellect’s *habatah*/looking on with the heart’s ability to touch/feel.

In order to live this way, one needs inner silence. Without inner silence, one will try to look on and observe but he will get busy contemplating and he won’t stay focused. When a person has inner silence, he experiences reality from that calm state, and the calmer and quieter he is on the inside, the more accurately he can feel reality when he uses the intellect’s ability of looking on (*habatah*) together with the heart’s ability to feel. This opens up a window of a new world, of recognizing the reality – to recognize reality in general, and specifically, to recognize the reality of one’s personal soul.

Certainly one cannot live all the time like this throughout the day. It is only for a certain amount of time that a person can set aside to work on this.

## USING THIS POWER WHEN LEARNING TORAH

When learning Torah, a person first reads the words and then contemplates it in-depth so he can sharpen his understanding about it. But there is also an ability in which one can take a phrase in the Gemara and repeat it several times, pleasantly and keeping the focus on the words he is saying, and this connects him to the words he is saying – and then, deeply, he can suddenly receive a clarity of understanding on the words he has learned. This clarity does not come from contemplating, but from looking on at the words and becoming connected to the words – the ability of *habatah*. By repeating the same words from an internal, quiet connection to the words, he becomes connected to those words. The

Ramchal in *Derech Etz Chaim* says that Torah is like a coal which needs to be blown upon, in order for the ember to turn into a flame. This ‘blowing’ is done through verbally repeating the words of Torah one learns, whereupon the person becomes connected to those words and perceives them with deep clarity.

## EXPERIENCING REALITY THROUGH FUSION OF INTELLECT AND HEART

When it comes to recognizing the world and one's personal soul, this fusion of intellect and heart enables one to gradually experience reality as it is. This is not the heart's emotions alone, nor is it just through the heart's ability to feel and recognize. It is a fusion of the intellect together with the heart's ability to feel out reality.

At first, one will only be able to use this ability for a few moments where one momentarily experiences total silence in the time he sets aside daily to have total quiet (as the Chazon Ish says to do). During this quiet time, one can try to experience reality by looking on, from afar, at reality. This experience may either be in one of two ways: "from the outside in", or "from the inside out".

### FROM THE OUTSIDE IN

One way is "from the outside in": One sees or hears something, such as an object, and he tries to connect to it, and then he sees how his soul reacts to it, how he absorbs it.

It is hard to explain this in with words. It's like trying to describe different kind of sounds – it cannot be described fully. It is possible to somewhat explain how the mind processes information, and it is a bit harder to explain how feelings work.

In any case, a person is able to slowly learn, during times of quiet, how to experience reality, by absorbing the reality of something from the outside - for example, an object he sees, or words he has heard, or a wind or smell that he feels and breathes in, or the sunlight – and many more examples as well. This is "from the outside in", and it is one way of how a person can slowly absorb experiencing of his own reality.

For example, the sun rises in the morning and the whole world sees it, each place at a different time zone, but not all people are experiencing the sunrise in the same exact way. Chazal taught that in the future, Hashem will remove the sun from its sheath, which will heal the righteous and give pleasure to them, and which will judge the wicked. So there are three ways how people in the future will experience the sun – some will experience judgment from it (the lowest level), others will get pleasure from it (the highest level) and others will get healed from it (the intermediate level).

Certainly there are many more examples of the concept, and a person can't analyze every detail in Creation. So one just has to talk any points that speak to him and which are effective for him, which make a stronger imprint on him, and use those areas to slowly gain the ability of experiencing the reality.

This all is the inner, deep way of living that is "from the outside in".

## FROM THE INSIDE OUT (RECOGNIZING THE SOUL'S MOVEMENTS)

But there is also an additional part: Acting “from the inside out”.

There is never a moment in which our brain isn't actively thinking of something or when the heart isn't feeling. Certainly there are alternating times in which are more or less thinking and feeling, and sometimes we are simply imagining, but most of the time, our soul is moving by producing thoughts and feelings. However, every person, each on his own level, can access a few moments where he can go beyond thought and feeling.

Most people are busy and preoccupied, so they are less aware to the thoughts going through their minds and to the feelings they experience. But when a person has quiet time, and when he can use his intellect to look from afar and when he can use his heart to touch/feel, experience, and recognize reality – he slowly learns to clearly feel the reality of what he's feeling at that time, whether the feeling is love, fear, joy, sadness, anger, etc. He learns to recognize how these experiences are being absorbed in his soul.

For example, in childhood, one's intellect is limited, and as one gets older, his intellect slowly matures, and the same is true with the ability to experience and absorb reality – the more a person enters the state of inner quiet, the sharper experiences he will have.

## A GAN EDEN-LIKE EXISTENCE

In the term Gan Eden, the word Eden means “bliss”. At first glance, when people visualize Gan Eden, they envision a place of pleasure and bliss, and they think that with age and maturity, we gain more pleasures in Gan Eden. This is a mistake, and the correct definition is that the more mature a person becomes, the more refined he becomes, and he can now absorb the refined subtleties in something.

For example, 10 people hear a song. Though it may sound sweet to all of them, and each of them is hearing its sweetness on his own level, one kind of person will understand the refined subtlety of the song, and he experiences the sweetness of the song on a much more profound level.

The more a person matures, the more his ability becomes refined to absorb deep subtleties of the spiritual world. This is the level of Gan Eden: to sense refined subtleties. There are two levels of Gan Eden – Upper Gan Eden and Lower Gan Eden. Upper Gan Eden is intellectual bliss of grasping subtleties, while Lower Gan Eden is to feel subtle things. The lesser one's spiritual level is, the coarser his sense of pleasure is. Though coarse people can still get into the garden before Eden, the “Gan” part of Gan Eden – there are others who have become so coarse, due to their haughtiness, and they remain in their coarse, unrefined perspective which cannot enjoy the subtlety of spiritual pleasure.

The true level of one's soul is determined by how much subtlety (*adinus*) he can sense. This is not something that is always discernible to others. Sometimes a person acts and moves in a refined manner, or he has refined expressions, or he walks in a very refined way, etc. In these cases, we can see physical refinement, but this is not a definite sign that the person has gained true refinement. Many times though, it is a sign of true, inner refinement of the soul.

### RECOGNIZING REFINEMENT AND SUBTLETY – THROUGH THE FUSION OF HABATAH AND HEART'S TOUCH

Let's understand well that in order to become connected to that inner world in which a person is living these refined subtle experiences of the spiritual, one needs inner quiet, the heart's ability to touch/feel and "listen" to reality (as explained earlier). This is how a person comes to recognize himself, and without this, even if a person tries to understand himself intellectually – such as trying to get to know his four elements of the soul and other information – though he may be recognizing himself through experiencing himself, the experience will be coarse, not refined.

Every person has an "animal soul", which contains in it a coarse animal and a refined animal. When one is trying to work on his *middos* (character traits), without the inner method here he will only be recognizing the "coarse animal" within his animal soul, and he won't know of the "refined animal" in his animal soul. He will only be working on the external level of his soul, with the "coarse animal" part.

Everything has its spiritual root in the upper realms. In the upper realms, anything starts out refined and subtle, and when it comes down to our own world and takes on physical form, it becomes coarser. Therefore, anything coarse really has a refined source to it. At its root, the coarsest physicality is really something very refined and subtle. The soul's ability to deeply absorbing reality is when it is attuned to the refinement of something.

This can be manifest both in the intellectual and emotive realms. In the intellectual realm for example, this can be expressed in the concept of how each thing divides into several categories, such as the 4 elements, which each subdivide into another 4 elements, for a total of 16 elements in each thing. This is all intellectual refinement. There is also emotive refinement – as an example, the heart's ability to feel out information won't divide something into parts the way the intellect does, but it absorbs the refinement of something, connecting to the subtlety of something.

Learning Torah has two parts to it. There is knowing the external information of the Torah, down to the actual *halachah*. There is also in-depth study of the Torah's words. When learning in-depth, a person needs a refined intellect and very logical thinking, as the Rav Chaim Volozhiner cites in a well-letter about the Rishonim, but in addition to this, one needs the ability to absorb subtleties in what he learns. This applies not only to Gemara but to all areas of Torah learning, and it also applies

to how we absorb our own souls – our own self. We have in us a G-dly soul, and a lower level called the animal soul, which contains a refined animal and a coarse animal within it.

This is the inner way by which one can recognize his soul, and this is all part of intellectually studying our soul (the information about our soul) and the ability to pick up on subtleties, and through this we acquire the ability to observe information from afar.

## SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Let us now summarize. In order for one to experience his personal share and to clarify what his special part on the world is, he needs a deep inner silence in the soul. One needs to set aside quiet time every day for this, and during the quiet time, one needs to learn how to make use of two abilities: the heart's ability to touch and feel out reality (whether from the outside in or from the inside out), and the mind's ability to observe by becoming connected with the information. During the time when a person uses these two abilities to become connected to the reality that he experiences – whether it is an external experience like people he meets or sees, whether it is an inner soul-movement that he experiences within himself (a thought or emotion) – from this, there are inner roadways that become opened to him by which he can come to recognize reality.

What a person discovers after this will not be anything novel. A novelty is something that wasn't previously known and now becomes revealed, but if something was already here and it was simply hidden from sight, it needs effort for it to be found and to become revealed. This is the inner way by which a person can experience and recognize, from mentally looking on, the internal reality that exists within him.

In this lesson, we have entered the beginning state of practical work. These matters are still closed and unlocked at this point, and with Hashem's help in the coming chapters we will explain it more clearly so that we can learn how to act upon what we are learning here.

# HONING IN ON YOUR SOUL'S PREFERENCES

## SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS LESSON

As explained so far with *siyata d'shmaya* in the previous lessons, the proper, inner way to live life is to calm the soul, silence one's thoughts and feelings, and then one's actions will be influenced accordingly, acting from a calmer and quieted place in himself. Then a person's mind views the world through the lens of "eyes of the congregation", the ability to see true reality, and from binding the heart together with these parts, a person is acting from a place of seeing the reality with an internal lens, experiencing reality in an inner way. In order to get there, one needs internal quiet.

The higher way to experience reality is not by being within the information but by being outside of it, and by deeply connecting our heart to it which enables us to have a soul-connection to what we're experiencing and seeing. That is the basis which enables one to act properly and accurately experience what he's experiencing. When a person is living by these root concepts, it feels natural and you don't have to teach it to yourself, just like you don't have to learn if something is cold or hot and just like you don't have to learn how to know if a food tastes bitter, sweet, or spicy. You experience the reality and you feel it deeply. But the change will be clear.

If a person does not take the path that has been explained in the previous lessons, his soul's powers remain dormant in a hidden state, and he barely recognizes them. He will be like a blind person groping in the dark when it comes to recognizing his soul's powers and recognizing true reality. In such a state, the most self-awareness he can have towards himself is intellectual, but not more than that.

## RECOGNIZING OUR SOUL IS BASED ON BASIC SELF-AWARENESS OF OUR LIKES AND DISLIKES

What are about to say the very core of the internal attitude that's needed at recognizing ourselves properly.

Self-recognition – recognizing oneself properly – is usually perceived by people in terms of what they have learned, read, and thought about this subject, and while that is certainly a part of it, people mistakenly think that this is everything there is to self-awareness. They think that it's all about intellectual clarity and dissecting everything they learn about. But they are not yet at the depth of it. What gets to the root of self-recognition is a far simpler thing than what seems to most people.

The following is subtle but it's also simple. The ability to recognize oneself is exactly the very same ability as recognizing anything else on the world which we perceive as an absolute reality. It is just that we've revealed the ability to see and sense physical reality, as we see that even a baby can feel what's

cold or hot, but we haven't yet revealed the ability of recognizing oneself. However, once we get to the point where we can recognize from within, then just as we recognize the world through any of our five natural senses, so can we naturally recognize the internal world of our soul. It comes natural to us when we take the path that has been explained in the previous chapters. It sharpens our ability to recognize.

A person for example can feel if something's hot, cold, dry, or wet, and he can taste if something is spicy or sweet, and how much and how little. People can become very clear about if they like or dislike a certain food, and when asked "Why do you like it?", the simple answer of course "Because I just like it", but the more precise answer would be when he knows all the different kinds of tastes of food that there are because he is familiar with them, and he is able to say precisely that he likes a certain food for its sweetness or spicy taste based on how it compares with other foods that he has tried. His recognition is sharper.

This is all an analogy to the ability of recognizing oneself. Any person with a bit of basic self-awareness about what he likes or dislikes – this is the level of the animal soul, not the higher parts of the soul – is able to answer very well and very clearly about why he likes or dislikes certain foods. He doesn't have to be brilliant to take apart the information. He's eaten so many times and so many types of food and he knows that he likes a certain amount of sweetness in his good and a certain amount of spiciness in his food.

Now let's take this further. If there are many foods in front of you at a meal, and you taste a sweet food and immediately after you taste a spicy food, followed quickly by a vinegary-tasting food, in most cases this disturbs your taste buds. This is like quickly going from a dark room to a brightly lit room, then immediately back into a dark room, and then quickly back into a brightly lit room – it is disturbing to our eyes. Though each of the physical senses are pleasant to experience, they are disturbing when experienced in quick succession after the other. Any person knows himself well enough to this degree, that he cannot handle such a disturbance to his physical senses. There are many more examples we can say, and each person can add on his own. Some people are clearer about and some are less clearer, but most people have certain definitions that are accurate, on the foods they like or dislike, and in what amount, and in what mix.

Another example is the summer and winter, the heat and the cold. Some people enjoy the cool weather better and they are uncomfortable from hot weather, while others love the hot weather and hate cold weather. If you ask any person "What do you like better, summer or winter?", most people answer the fall and spring, which are in-between weather, because summer and winter are extremes. But, within the extreme seasons of summer and winter, what are people more comfortable with? Some can't handle the cold of the winter and they would rather endure the heat of the summer, while others are the opposite.

The clearer of a life a person is living, “*A clear world I saw*”<sup>46</sup> – when he is clear about his physical preferences, he can slowly learn about what his soul is drawn towards. Just as we can know what physical tastes and seasons we are more drawn to, so do we have the ability to know what our soul prefers or doesn’t prefer.

When a person lives with more clarity (as explained in the previous lessons) he gradually can come to recognize his soul to the same degree that he can recognize his physical needs and tastes. It certainly requires thinking, but it is not complex, it is simple and natural for the soul.

### DISCERNING IF WE “CONNECT” OR NOT TO SOMETHING

Now we will move on to the next step. When a person is acting from a quiet place in himself and he is connecting to each thing he comes across, he can slowly sense if he is (1) Connecting to something, (2) How much he is connecting to it, (3) The nature of his connection to it.

### DISCERNING WHAT KIND OF TORAH LEARNING WE PERSONALLY CONNECT TO

For example, a person is learning a *sugya* in-depth or learning *bekiyus*. Even when learning in a manner of *iyun*, there are different kinds of *iyun*. There are also several styles of *bekiyus* – there is Gemara plain, Gemara with Rashi, Gemara with Rashi combined with “quickly learning” Tosafos, or learning it more slowly, etc. There are many possibilities of learning. But **if a person is approaching his learning from a place of inner quiet in himself, he can slowly feel how much his soul connects or not to a certain style of learning.**

A person can’t figure this out right away, because he may be used to a certain style of learning and therefore he can’t connect to anything else (even if it’s meant for his soul) simply because he’s not habituated to this, or, because he hasn’t yet revealed his true nature and his soul remains out of touch from him. That is why a person may not be able to connect to or feel out what’s really meant for his personal soul.

But **when a person gradually cuts out whatever he feels is “not me”, he gradually becomes more precise and his soul is able to recognize and feel what his personal part in Torah is, as well as what his personal part in the mitzvos is** (a person is obligated in all of the mitzvos, but with mitzvos that are non-obligatory he can feel if he has what to add to it, and even in the obligatory mitzvos, he can see how to perform them with greater care, etc.)

When a person gains this ability to deeply connect, he will find spiritual areas to be tangible to him. He will be able to feel out his connect to something, seeing if he connects to it or not. He will be able to feel out the quality of the connection. Getting more subtle with this, there is connection and

there is also pleasure in something. One kind of connection to something can be quiet and calm, but another kind of connection to something is when we feel a pleasure from the very connection to it.

## HOW TO DISCERN WHAT HASHEM WANTS YOU TO DO

The *Chovos HaLevovos* said that there are always three areas - forbidden, permitted, and mitzvah – and that there is no ‘middle ground’ in what’s permitted. If we don’t know what something is, then it’s either a *mitzvah* or an *aveirah* to do it. What is the way to understand this? Certainly the general definition here is that if something is the will of Hashem then it is a mitzvah to do it, and if it is not the will of Hashem, then it is not a mitzvah to do it. If a father commands his child to do something, the child has a mitzvah to honor his father and do it, and even if the father didn’t explicitly command something but the child knows what his father wants, he has a mitzvah to do what his father wants even though his father didn’t tell him outright to do it.

But the deeper understanding is as follows. The word mitzvah is from the word *tzavta*, connection, while the word aveirah is from the word *avri d’nahara* – the ‘banks of a river’. When a person feels a connection to something, it is like a mitzvah for his soul to do it, whereas if he does not feel a connection to something, even though it is not an aveirah in the halachic sense, it is like an aveirah for his soul. It’s like being caught between two banks of a river – he is not connected to the thing, he is separate from the thing. That is why anything is either a mitzvah or aveirah – it is either meant for soul to do because our soul feels a connection to it and therefore Hashem wants our soul to do it, or, it is not meant for our soul to do because our soul doesn’t feel a connection to it and therefore Hashem doesn’t want our soul to do it.

## THE PROCESS OF CLARITY

We cannot start our process of growth with this concept, nor can we finish our way with this concept. We will always need mental clarification to check out our feelings. Only with intellect and feeling together can we build anything complete.

At the beginning of our way, we cannot guide ourselves by seeing if we feel connected or not to something. This is because, when we start off, nothing is clear to us yet, and we are like a child exploring the world and learning things. A person learning a craft has to start out slowly learning the craft, a Posek starting off is not able to immediately decide upon queries and he first needs tutelage under another Posek to see and learn how questions are answered, and slowly his awareness is sharpened. It is the same with getting in touch with our soul’s needs. We cannot have any clear definitive conclusions when we start out – rather, we can come to certain conclusions that become clearer as we go further. It is a process of learning.

This is the way for us to go in, but we must realize that it is only a path where we haven’t yet arrived at

any definite conclusions about what's meant for our soul. We don't find conclusions at the beginning, or even at the end, of this path. Rather, it's a process of gaining more and more clarity as we go along. In fact, we can never be sure about ourselves, because the soul is so vastly deep and complex.

## FOLLOWING YOUR CURRENT CLARITY

For this reason, a person always has to suspect himself: "Maybe the reason I don't feel a connection to something - or maybe the reason why I do feel a connection to it - is, because I have something else motivating me that I'm not aware of which is causing me to lean in that direction (like taking a bribe, which sways the mind)." A person always has to suspect that perhaps he hasn't yet clarified something enough, and yet at the same time, he should rely on his current conclusions, since there is a rule: "A person does not see except what his eyes see."<sup>47</sup>

So on one hand a person cannot assume he has reached a definite conclusion about what his soul needs, since he always needs to be learning about himself more and more and it's a process of growing self-awareness, and the soul is very deep to know. At the same time, a person needs to act upon whatever temporary conclusions he has so far understood about his soul. When one is actually starting out, though, he should not act upon any temporary conclusions he has reached about himself, because his internal senses are still clouded. But the more one continues the process and gets into it, he will be able to reach certain conclusions about himself [though he still doesn't know anything for sure].

Obviously, deciding on what's appropriate for our soul or not doesn't apply to areas that are either a mitzvah or aveirah, but to the in-between areas which we aren't sure about. When we don't know if something is the will of Hashem or not, we need to decide using our clarifying power, to the best of our ability, to feel out what's appropriate for our soul. Although for all of our life we are aware that we cannot reach absolute clarity on anything (the only One Who has total clarity is Hashem), still, our avodah is to go from one clarification to another, to the best of our ability. Clarification is a process for us, and the most we can see is what our judgment tells us.

To say this in simpler language, each person has to conduct himself according to the level that he currently perceives. **The level of clarity that you are currently capable of is the way that Hashem wants you to go in right now.**

Chazal said, "Make for yourself a Rav" (Torah teacher). There is also a statement of Chazal that Avraham Avinu learned Torah from himself, from his two kidneys which became like two teachers to him and gave him advice.<sup>48</sup>, meaning that he understood how he must act by clarifying as best as he could what he needs to do. This is exactly the idea of how a person needs to progress through the path of recognizing reality and recognizing what he connects to.

<sup>47</sup> Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 6b

<sup>48</sup> Avos d'Rebbi Noson, chapter 53

## DISCERNING OUR LEVEL OF CONNECTION TO SOMETHING

The clearer a person becomes, not only does he clarify if he should connect to something or not (if he should do it or not), but he also can discern how much he is or isn't connected to something – by examining if he gets pleasure out of it, and how much.

He can also become aware if it is a simple kind of connection, and what the quality or depth of the connection is, and slowly he learns about it.

He can also become aware of the feelings he absorbs about something when he does something: “Do I feel connected to this, or not?”

One is able to know if he connects to something only a bit, and he is able to see that there are other things he connects to more, and other things which he connects to even more. Then he is able to gradually magnify the parts which his soul feels more connected to.

## WRITING DOWN WHAT YOU OBSERVE

It is important to remember that one would need a very clear-thinking mind and an ‘internal-based’ memory in order to remember many details he comes across, and without this, he loses his temporary clarity as the many details confuse him. There are rare individuals who deeply connect to information and therefore they have a good memory of what they encounter – not the external use of memory, but an ability to remember that comes from inwardly and deeply experiencing information.

**Most people, at the beginning of their way and even after that, will therefore need to write down the details** they learn about themselves along the way. Without marking it down, it is very difficult for most people to absorb any information learned, all the more so if they want to think about anything noteworthy.

In any case, after a person has gone through these two stages (“Do I connect to this or not? What kind of connection is it – is it simple or pleasurable? What is the quality of the connection I feel to it?”), he slowly learns what he needs to become connected to. Just like a person is able to learn what foods he likes or not, so is a person able to learn about which areas his soul connects to.

As mentioned, most people don't have that good of a memory and they also get confused by all the details they learn about, and they don't know how to ‘connect the dots’ between all the different points they feel connected to, so they should write down the information they learn about themselves and not try to rely on their memory. When you look at what you wrote down and you think about it, you slowly see the different kinds of areas that your soul connects to. Instead of a childish perspective which focuses on one part at a time and not being able to see a greater picture, the written list will enable you to see a more encompassing view of all the different areas that you feel a connection to.

This enables you to slowly see which things your soul connects to more and which things your soul connects to less. You slowly learn to connect the dots between all the areas you feel more connected to and all the areas you don't feel connected to [and you get to learn the common denominator of what pulls you and what doesn't pull you].

## LEARNING ABOUT YOUR SOUL-TYPE

This is how your soul becomes clearer and clearer to you. You get to see what your soul generally is drawn towards. There are two different extremes your soul may be drawn towards: Either towards *chessed* (kindness) or *din* (fairness), either towards going beyond bounds or staying within bounds, either towards organizing and working with what's already here or towards improvising and creating.

There are many other examples as well, of two different extremes that our personal soul may be drawn towards. But in any case, you will start seeing the general direction that your soul is drawn towards. In this way, a person clarifies more and more if he connects to a certain area ("Do I connect to this or not?") and how much he connects to it ("Compared to other areas, how strongly do I connect to this?") and what the quality of the connection is ("What is the common denominator between all the areas I connect with?")

## RETURNING TO ANALYZING THE DETAILS

The third clarification mentioned shows you what general direction your soul is drawn to, and it will take more time, since it involves connecting the dots between many details you come across. This is how a person slowly receives clarity about what his personal soul is generally drawn towards. The more a person refines his clarifying abilities, he absorbs more and sees more of the different areas that his soul is drawn towards.

After a person receives clarity about the general tastes of his soul, he can now analyze each of the details independently. Until now, we explained how a person gathers together different details and works his way from there to figure out the general direction of his soul. In this third step, a person analyzes those details and explores them further.

Whereas until now he only saw these details and didn't see the bigger picture of how all the dots connect, he now has the maturity of understanding to connect all these dots together and see the collective whole behind all of them. Now that he has become clearer about the general direction of his soul, he can return to the details he gathered with the clarity that he has received from knowing the general direction of his soul, and now he can experience each detail, with all of its subtle parts that are found in it.

## PICKING UP ON SUBTLE ASPECTS OF PLEASURE

Each detail contains coarser parts to it and subtler parts to it. Some people connect to the coarse parts in something while others are able to identify how they connect to the subtle parts in something. For example, if you ask most people if they enjoy going to a wedding of a friend, they will say “Yes”. If you ask them both, “What exactly made you happy about this wedding?”, there are different answers. Most people will answer vaguely something like, “There was a happy atmosphere in the air”. There are no exact definitions that each person can give of what made him personally happy by this wedding. But if a person is more sensible, he is able to name all the different enjoyable factors of the wedding and analyze all the parts that contributed to it.

One person will say, “The chuppah was so emotional.” Another will say the opposite: “The chuppah was too serious, the whole atmosphere there was too intense and too serious, it was more like Yom Kippur. What I loved there was the dancing.” Each of these details can be split into further details: What joy did the emotional atmosphere by the chuppah give you? When a person learns how to break something down into parts, it gives him clarity. He is now able to sense what he feels more connected to and what he enjoys.

Here is another very simple example of the idea. There is a concept that everything on this world is really an imitation of something that's found above in the spiritual world. On this world, it is in a thicker, coarser version, while above in the spiritual world the very same thing exists in a subtle form. When a person has no idea that there is an internal world, he thinks simply that there is a physical world with coarse physicality in it and a spiritual world that just has angels in it. This is really a fantasy. The higher and lower worlds have exactly the same things in it, and the entire difference between them is that the lower world is coarse while the higher world is subtle. When we see a person on this world, made of 248 limbs and 365 tendons, we are really seeing a coarse version of the higher world, where this all exists in a subtle, refined version. We see skin and flesh on this world, but above in the higher world there is also skin and flesh, except that it is not physical. The Manna was spiritual food, and the quails that fell from the sky in the desert were more spiritual than regular meat found on this world. This is a very fundamental concept about the spiritual world.

Without knowing this, a person learning about the internal world is entering a murky, unknown world which seems to him as completely abstract and esoteric which he cannot see, and of course he knows that he cannot see Hashem, so he won't be able to relate to the internal world at all. All he knows about the spiritual world is that he sometimes gets feelings of holiness, but it is all unclear to him, and he will be trying to understand a murky world trying to feel holy feelings towards it. But all we have to know is that everything found on our physical world exists in spiritual form in the higher world, and our entire task is to refine our understanding about each concept we come across on this world, and that is how we enter more and more into the roots behind each thing. So, instead

of dealing with the unknown, we can be dealing with the known – and it's just that we do not know the subtle form of each physical thing we come across.

Compare this to a person learning a sugya of Gemara, and he explains something based on his own understanding. Either he will explain a coarse understanding of the matter, or he can give a refined understanding of the matter. It is the same exact reasoning, but it depends on how it is said. When a Rav delivers a derasha, one person hears the mere shell of the words while another person will hear something more refined and subtle in the very same words. One who has become more refined and subtle will be able to absorb the refined subtleties in something, and he will get a subtle pleasure from this. Without this refinement, he may be aware that he is hearing something good and nice. The same words can be understood by two different person on two different planes – one person understands the coarse exoskeleton of what's being said, while another person will hear something more subtle in it.

This is the entire difference between the physical world and the spiritual world, and it is an example that most people can identify with. Other things are harder to explain. For example, when you look at fire you can see that it's a subtle element whereas earth is a coarse, thick element – the earth definitely does not look like fire, and the fire does not look like earth. They are two different elements. How do you see something subtle? A good example would be the element of water. We are able to see water as it is, but water also evaporates and takes on a subtler form that can't be seen easily.

Though we can give more examples of the idea, the clearest example that we can relate to is the example of how the same words and explanation can be understood on two different levels – and how a person is able to enjoy hearing words that he gains a subtle understanding in.

With this idea in mind, a person can slowly learn about the higher world from observing the lower world. He can slowly see the general direction his soul is drawn towards: **Step 1** - Do I connect to a certain area? How much do I connect to it – is it a simple connection or an enjoyable connection? **Step 2** - What is the quality of the connection? In this way, you begin to connect the dots between all the different areas and details that you feel connected to.

### STEPS 3-4

The third step is to 'connect the dots' between all the areas that you generally feel connected to and see the common denominator between them. You will notice that you feel a connection to a certain area and another area and another, so try to see what the common denominator between all these areas is, and like this, you can see what general direction your soul is drawn to.

The fourth step is where you essentially discern the refined subtleties in a certain detail, and that is how you are able to see the parts of something that you enjoy as well as the parts in something that

you don't enjoy. You might find something that contains a certain aspect that is very enjoyable to you, but at the same time it contains another aspect that you find very not enjoyable – yet, the part that you enjoy is strongly outweighing the bothersome part and allowing you to still want to be connected to it. Slowly you are able to connect together different actions and feelings (and different subtle aspects within them) and this is how you become clearer about the subtleties in something that you connect to, as well as the subtleties in something that you don't connect to.

### EXAMPLES OF DISCERNING WHAT YOUR SOUL CONNECTS TO

Here is a fundamental example: There are those who love to understand things clearly. Others love to develop fundamental conclusions after they have reached clarity about something. Others love to hear a penetrating insight, something novel. One kind of person likes to produce a certain understanding based on the words he learned, while others develop a certain understanding beforehand and they want to insert it into what they are learning and see if it fits or not. (Most people love to end off their learning with clear fundamentals that they can walk away with, and to catch anything important that may be hidden in what they learned.) So there are those who want clarity, and there are those who want to uncover depth in what they learned, and there are others who want a penetrating novel insight.

In either scenario, a person is able to slowly discern in each thing what he's interested in [“Do I want clarity? Do I want depth? Do I want never-before-heard insights?”]

Another example: When Chanukah is approaching, some people want to enter into Chanukah organized about it, knowing the halachos properly, setting up the Menorah way before and making sure everything needed is there, and learning all the halachos so he is clear about it. Others want to arrive at Chanukah by understanding its depth, really understanding the Gemara's question of “What is Chanukah?” Others are looking for a new insight that they didn't come across last year. This is just an example of how our soul can slowly become clearer and clearer about something.

As mentioned, it is better to write this down. The mere writing makes an imprint on our soul and also helps us organize the material better, and in addition, once the words are written down, one can read them and keep attaining more clarity.

### IN CONCLUSION

With Hashem's help we have understood the outline of the most fundamental principle thus far in becoming clear about our personal share – by developing the ability of the inner attitudes, and recognizing the natural sense that is hidden within oneself, to come to recognize oneself.

Understandably, we will try to explain the details further in the next lesson, with Hashem's help.

## Q&amp;A

**QUESTION 1:** When a person dislikes something in the physical world for example when he doesn't like a certain kind of food, does this come from something in his soul or character traits?

**RAV'S ANSWER:** Good question. The true answer is, that at the root of roots, a person is created to be compatible with anything, but ever since the sin of Adam and with the further we are from the original pure state, other mixtures have entered each of our souls, and therefore our tastes are not always true to our souls, because it's coming from the mixtures that have entered us. It's like kilayim (forbidden mixture) in our soul. This is part of the exile that our soul has to go through, especially in the later generations, when a person has sparks of souls that are not his own, and there can be all kinds of sparks of other souls in him. This causes many times a contradiction in one's soul, where one feels pulled towards a certain physical thing but he's pulled to something else that's spiritual at the same time. Part of one's clarification process is to see if his physical leanings are compatible with his spiritual leanings or not. Usually a person will feel a pleasure in a certain spiritual thing but he also feels pleasure in something physical that contradicts the spiritual pleasure he's getting from the spiritual. He may have a leaning towards something physical that gets in the way of the pleasure he's getting from a certain spiritual area, but he has a pleasure in something physical that's compatible with the pleasure he's getting in something spiritual. But in other cases the pleasures don't match. He enjoys something spiritual that reflects a certain pleasure he has in something physical, but that's not his main characteristic. But sometimes his animal soul wants one thing while his G-dly soul wants something else entirely, and then he can really see the contradiction in his soul, and this is one of the most difficult areas of self-recognition. But this is part of the soul's exile.

**QUESTION 2:** What does it mean that he's not compatible with a certain spiritual area – does it mean he doesn't feel comfortable with it? How can one determine this?

**ANSWER:** Certainly when there's compatibility one will become more relaxed. But when there's no compatibility, besides for the basic tug-of-war between the physical and spiritual, he will also have to deal with the contradiction of the very nature of the spiritual and the very nature of the physical. This certainly creates turmoil for the soul, and **that is the concept of the soul's exile. Many people suffer from this and they aren't even aware that this is the reason.**

**QUESTION 3:** What can a person do to resolve this contradiction in the soul?

**ANSWER:** It cannot be solved totally, because one cannot make compatibility between two factors that aren't compatible, and that is precisely the soul's exile that it is found in. For example, in the mitzvah of *yibum*, the brother of the deceased must marry the wife of the deceased, and Raboseinu revealed that the child born from *yibum* is really a soul-reincarnation of his deceased father – so now the soul of the deceased brother is in the son of his very brother (his brother has now become

his father). On one hand he is himself, at the same time his brother has taken his place and how his brother has become his father. Here we have two realities in one. It's impossible to figure out the entire mixture in the soul, but gradually a person can come to recognize what **his main leaning** is (what he is mainly drawn towards) what his second-to-most dominant leaning is, etc. It may be his own nature, or it may be from another soul. These are very subtle concepts. **After a person uncovers his true existence, he is able to feel which of his abilities are his own and which of his abilities are merely from others and accompanying him. This is a very subtle thing to sense**, and if only ever person could know what his main leaning is. To know one's entire soul in all of its complexities and admixtures of others is too far-removed from us to know, so we need to just keep the focus on knowing what our main leaning is. We have given several series to explain how to uncover our true nature – and that is the root upon which everything else stands.

Whatever parts of ourselves we uncover after that, great - and the more details about our souls we uncover, the more at peace we will be. When a person gets to his true existence, he gains serenity at reaching his root, but he may still be missing serenity in his branching aspects, because he hasn't yet become clear about his branches. But we cannot tell people that they need to get to know all the subtleties of their branching aspects – that is not realistic to know. But what is realistic is, for people to try to get to their main aspect, their main point. Though this isn't easy either and it takes work, it is possible for one to reach it. And once a person reaches it, it illuminates the rest of his soul as well – all his other parts.

Will it give him clarity about every single subtle aspect in his soul? Usually, no. He will not reach total clarity. But it will give him the ability to feel what his true essence is, to feel what's true to who he is. Will he be able to discern if something is part of him or if it's external to him? One would have to be very deep to discern this. If each of us reaches our main aspect, let that alone be our reward. Once one reaches it, he is really connected to the root of everything. The rest of the details are an “explanation, go finish it”. If we try to understand all the details about our soul, we will get overwhelmed by this and lose any desire to know ourselves a bit. We need to at least become connected to our root and grab onto it, and the rest of the details and parts about ourselves will come at a later time. Our goal has to be to get to our root. Whatever else we will reach, we will reach, but if only everyone would reach just their root alone. As long as a person isn't in touch with this root, he's really disconnected from himself. It's like *kares* (soul-excision), because he's severed from his root, since he doesn't have access to it. Most people aren't aware of their root, and that is why they have no serenity. They are not completely connected to their own soul, because they haven't yet revealed their personal root. When one reaches his personal root, he has serenity at his root, he's connected to his root, and he can get constant nourishment from there. When one reaches it, he is not the same person anymore.

**QUESTION 4:** When one reaches the root (his actual existence) is everything there already contained there?

**RAV'S ANSWER:** Everything found on this world has its root above in the spiritual realm from which it extended. Any physical sustenance that came to us in a permissible manner, through having emunah in Hashem, is part of our personal share on this world. If a person tries to go beyond his personal share on this world, and certainly if he commits sins (like stealing) then any physical benefits he earns from this are not part of his real share. Chazal said, "One who steals a coin from his friend, it is as if he stole the other's soul" – why? Because one's financial earnings are really part of his soul. That is why even the animal or slave of a Kohen can eat *terumah* – anything owned by the Kohen is part of his soul. Of this Chazal were referring to when they say "Tzaddikim take care of their financial possessions", Yaakov risked his life to go back and retrieve his small pots, for they were part of his soul. Obviously, one's financial possessions have to be viewed as a tool to use [and not as one's soul], and all physical possessions have to be seen as a means for "Hashem desired to make for Himself a dwelling down below".

**QUESTION 5:** If both one's physical and spiritual situation are part of one's personal share on this world, why then must one view his physical possessions merely as a tool?

**RAV'S ANSWER:** You are asking a very good question. It is possible that one is living in a house that's not his, even if halachically he owns his house – how? Because 40 days before a fetus is formed, a Heavenly voice proclaims what his life will be like – whom he will marry, and Chazal said that it's possible for a person to daven to marry a certain person and "take away" the destined spouse of someone else. The same thing can be with a house – a certain house was supposed to go to him, but someone else can come and get it before him. That means that the other person has taken a house that isn't really part of his personal portion on this world. Part of the depth of the soul's exile is that one is connected to shares of other people that weren't meant for him. When the soul is re-incarnated in another lifetime as a *gilgul*, it is able to get "impregnated" with another's soul [either for good or bad] and then the soul is living in another's soul – which is not this soul's true place – and that is the depth of the exile for the soul. Even when it comes to physical matters, though, what happens to the soul when one becomes connected to that which isn't his personal share? If this is needed for a *tikkun* (soul-correction) then it is all for the purpose of achieving some *tikkun* (correction), but it is still difficult for the soul when it has to be involved with something that isn't part of its personal portion.

One's personal portion includes his physical situation as well. In spiritual areas as well, a person may be drawn to certain areas because a different soul has become impregnated in his soul, drawing him to a certain mitzvah. Part of exile is sometimes a person is drawn to something physical or spiritual that isn't part of his personal share, and sometimes there can also be a contradiction between what he's physically drawn to with what he's spiritually drawn to.

**QUESTION 6:** There are those who are weak-minded and have a hard time understanding their Torah learning. What would help for this? *Davening*?

**RAV'S ANSWER:** The soul's light has to be contained in a physical container, which is the brain. When a person is mentally gifted, his brain is a fitting container for the light of his soul – the status of the light and container are equal and they synchronize together. But there are people who have a “container” that isn't of equal strength to the light of their *neshamah*. For example, if a person is born with weak mental strengths, but his *neshamah* contains an intense amount of light and he doesn't have the brains to properly contain it. Though *davening*, one of two things happen: Either the light of his *neshamah* is able to expand the width of his “container”, or, he receives *Ruach HaKodesh*. *Tefillah* causes the light of the soul to dominate and reveal the container (the brain's mental strengths). How does a person gain more mental strength, how does his brain expand? Either his container has been widened and is has become sharper, such as how the Torah “makes the foolish wise”, and sometimes the person gets *Ruach HaKodesh*, which is something from nothing, which is not a natural occurrence but beyond nature. There is a very big difference which way the change happens. If a person doesn't really have a brain for high-level perceptions and it just that he expands his consciousness through *davening*, then his brain will only function well when the flow of higher consciousness is pouring into him, but when it isn't, many times he doesn't have the mental strength to be able to learn Torah – since he never yet expanded his mind. In contrast, one who is *zocheh* to have his brain made wiser [through persistent Torah study] expands his container to properly hold the light of the *neshamah* that's coming in, in the same way that Eretz Yisrael expands and contracts – he essentially expands his brainpower. Every person has times when his brain isn't able to think properly and he can't learn Torah well then. But when a person has expanded his mind [through Torah study] and it is able to contain the light of his soul, even when his brain isn't functioning well he is able to learn Torah because he has become a properly developed container, and this isn't merely sparks of the soul.

**QUESTION 7:** After working at the concepts here, what happens after?

**RAV'S ANSWER:** This is a process and the results are not seen right away as soon as he starts. Gradually a person sees more clearly. To get to a state where the light is penetrating into one's container, or to get to a state where the light is expanding one's container – this usually doesn't happen right away at the beginning of one's way. Sometimes, if a person is *moser nefesh* [if he dedicates his soul to the cause and goes beyond his nature], or if he has a special *zechus* (merit), then he can gain these states even at the beginning of his way.

But most people only get it after working hard at it for several years. Even when you hear stories of Gedolim who weren't smart but they worked hard at learning Torah and became brilliant from all the effort they put in, usually this does not happen in a year or two – it was stage of great effort on their part, either through *davening* or through working very hard at learning Torah, so they were able to “penetrate” very far. Every rule has its exceptions that are out of the norm, but usually, it happens at a much later stage.

**QUESTION 8:** When it comes to trying to grow spiritually (in Torah or in growing to higher levels) does a person just need to try hard or does he need other means to aid him, such as getting “impregnated” with another’s soul in order to become a total tzaddik?

**RAV’S ANSWER:** Every person has their personal share, and there are 2 possible ways of how a person connects to a share that isn’t his. One possibility is, as you mentioned, through the concept of *ibbur* - another’s soul becoming “impregnated” in yours. This has an advantage and disadvantage to it. The disadvantage to it is that it isn’t yours. The gain of it is that it gives you access to a higher level. When you connect to a higher level, you don’t become transformed into that higher level, because it’s not really you, it’s just becoming impregnated in you. It creates a deep contradiction in the soul. The person has his own level yet he has a spark of a higher level in him that isn’t his – he doesn’t feel that it’s his own level.

This is also the same concept as trusting in the sages, leaders, and tzaddikim. Connecting to a tzaddik essentially means that you are connecting to a power that’s beyond your current level, and there is certainly a contradiction between your current level with the tzaddik’s level that is only being granted to you through soul-impregnation. But when you nullify yourself to the tzaddik, the tzaddik’s light is shined onto you. Similar to this, when a tzaddik’s soul becomes impregnated in you, the tzaddik’s soul radiates within you (the tzaddik’s light can shine onto you whether he is alive or not). The more inner way is to connect to your soul-root (*shoresh neshamah*), and this is the more precise way to connect to a higher level than your current level. It is at all of our soul-roots that all souls of the Jewish people are unified.

If a person simply tries to connect to a higher level simply speaking, he is only imagining it. How can one properly penetrate to a higher level? Either temporarily through soul-impregnation, which is not really his own level, or, though connecting to the root of his soul. Our personal root is in the collective unit of all souls of the Jewish people, and there a person can connect to everything, for included in the unit of all souls of the Jewish people is one’s collective root which is contained with everyone else’s all at once. Though there are differing levels of soul-roots – some are kings, and some are a Kohen Gadol, etc. – this is a part within the greater unit, and one is able to go back-and-forth between his higher root and basic root. One is able to access a desire to connect to the collective root of souls which goes beyond his personal soul-root, and then he can return to his personal root, his own individual soul-root. Connecting to one’s soul-root is the sensible way for one to go beyond his current level and connect to a higher level.

**QUESTION 9:** After a person rises to a higher level where he does he need to return to?

**RAV’S ANSWER:** He returns to the state of going back-and-forth. When he wants to advance to a higher level, he is having *mesirus nefesh*, going beyond his current nature. While the simple meaning of *mesirus nefesh* is to die *al kiddush Hashem*, the deep definition of *mesirus nefesh* is to give of one’s

private self to Klal Yisrael. Chazal said “The messiah will not come until all coins (perutah) are used up from the wallet”, and Reb Zusha of Anipoli interprets “perutah” as “peratiyos”, private existence, that Mashiach cannot come until one gives of his private existence to others. This is not merely referring to giving up the ego, which is the lower part of one’s self, but even giving up one’s individual existence for Klal Yisrael, to go beyond himself and connect to the greater whole of all souls of Klal Yisrael. This is the true meaning of “giving up the soul”, to give up one’s very existence, to connect to the unit of Klal Yisrael. After desiring this, one needs to return to his own soul-root.

**QUESTION 10:** What is the difference between connecting to a higher level through (a) receiving a soul-impregnation, (b) connecting to one’s soul-root, (c) connecting to a tzaddik?

**RAV’S ANSWER:** The tzaddik is not merely an individual to connect to, he is a head of souls, a revelation of the unit of souls that are Klal Yisrael. Those who aren’t connected to a tzaddik are trying to connect to the collective unit of Klal Yisrael without connecting to the head of Klal Yisrael. The question is if a person can connect to the unit of Klal Yisrael directly, or if he should connect to the soul that reveals this collectivity. Connecting to the Torah as well has a back-and-forth process of going higher and then returning to one’s own root. Connecting to the Torah is really connecting to the collective unit, to all 600,000 souls of the Jewish people who are the 600,000 letters of the Torah, so when one connects to the Torah he is really connecting to the collective unit. That is the higher level to connect to, and then one returns to his personal portion in the Torah. An example of connecting to the higher level in Torah is when Beis Hilel first quoted the words of Beis Shamai before stating their own view – they first aspired to connect to the collective unit that is above their personal root.

**QUESTION 11:** In summary, what are the ways to check how we can know which area of Torah is meant for our personal soul.

**RAV’S ANSWER:** Ask yourself these questions: (1) Do you connect to a certain area of Torah more than other parts? (2) If yes, how much do you connect to it? (3) What is the quality of that connection on a general level? (4) How is this connection expressed specifically? (5) Do you connect together other parts of Torah which the general area of Torah you are drawn to? (6) Do you connect together other details in Torah within the details you are drawn to?

# INTERNALIZING & MIND-HEART INTEGRATION

## OUTLINE OF PREVIOUS LESSONS AND GOING FORWARD

In previous lessons we explained the inner way to live life, which is by experiencing life from our heart's power of "recognition".

Sometimes a person can access this ability by thinking about something as if he is outside of the matter (this is called *habatah*, "looking from afar"), and at other times a person accesses this ability by thinking more deeply into something that he wants to understand. These abilities, when combined, are an actual way to live an inner kind of life. Now we will explain the depth of such a life.

## TWO KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE: INTELLECTUAL-KNOWLEDGE AND HEART-KNOWLEDGE

It is well-known that there are two kinds of knowledge that exist: intellectual knowledge and heart knowledge. Our mind thinks of something, and usually such thoughts don't penetrate the heart, they just stay in our mind. Such thoughts are called "a bird flying in the sky", thoughts that have no bearing, and these are most of the thoughts in the world. Chazal taught that it is detrimental when one's wisdom is greater than his actions<sup>1</sup>, because such a person's thoughts aren't connected to the heart and they don't lead to any action. The ideal kind of thought is when it is internalized in the heart.

## INTERNALIZING METHOD #1 – REPEATED SIMPLE THOUGHTS

How can a person internalize his thoughts into his heart? Through thinking the same thought again and again, one can penetrate the heart, like water dripping on a rock that eventually breaks the rock. If a person trains himself to think of the one simple thought, calmly and quietly, again and again, hundreds and thousands of times – without exaggeration – the thought will become internalized in the heart, drop by drop.

The heart is called "heart of stone"<sup>2</sup>, and by water dripping on it again and again, the heart of stone can become turned into a soft heart of flesh. The same thought again and again is like the drops of water that eventually break the rock.<sup>3</sup> When people think many thoughts these thoughts don't penetrate the heart. It is because most of these thoughts are quick and they are not done simply and calmly, they don't come from inner calm, and that is why they don't affect the heart.

When one learns Chumash, Mishnah, Gemara, Rishonim and Acharonim, usually most of the thinking involved is very quick, and the person also goes through a lot of inner noise as he plumbs through the information and thinks through it. But there is a more inner way to learn – to internalize

each thought on the heart, by reviewing the same statement again and again simply and calmly, the thought can penetrate. It will be like water dripping on a stone, which eventually breaks a rock. That is one basic and clear way.

### INTERNALIZING METHOD #2 – FIXING THE MIND ON A THOUGHT

Another way, which is the path of the teachings of the *Chabad sefarim* is *tekias hadaas*, to fix one's mind on something strongly, which then connects him to it, which then affects his heart – this is not merely to think, but to strongly fixate his mind on a thought, and the stronger he focuses his thoughts deeply on something, he has transferred the thought from his mind to his heart.

It is hard to fully explain this concept in words, but just as we can use our feet to walk from place to place and just like our eyes can dart from one place to another and stay transfixed on a car driving further away, so do we have an ability to guide our thoughts, by fixing our mind on something, and then we can guide our thought into our heart so that we are feeling what we are thinking. You are able to sense the thought moving down from your brain, down your throat, and into your chest and heart.

The *Chovos HaLevovos* says that our thoughts are like a candle that we can use to see our way into the cracks that are in our soul. Just as we use a candle to search for the chametz, so are we able to guide our thoughts from one place to another in order to examine what we come across. We are not talking here about thinking about what your heart is and what is contained in it, but how our very power of thought itself is able to guide our heart's emotions.

Though it is hard to explain this in words, this is the outline of the inner path, and though the *Chabad sefarim* do explain this concept, it is only explained vaguely and not in a clear manner. The *Chabad sefarim* mainly explain the first part – fixing the mind on something. The rest of this path [which hasn't yet been explained anywhere] is how to continue keeping the mind fixed on something (not merely to remain focused on a thought, but to guide the thoughts to the heart), which allows the mind's knowledge to penetrate into the heart where it becomes "heart knowledge", where the heart connects to the mind's knowledge. To understand this more deeply, the mind and heart integrate together and the knowledge becomes a fusion of mind-and-heart awareness of something.

### INTERNALIZING METHOD #3 - CONTEMPLATING

There is also an additional method of internalizing, as follows.

When a person gets used to contemplating subtleties amidst a state of silence, he slowly thinks from amidst a state of deep silence until his mind's knowledge penetrates his heart. There is a fundamental difference between mind-knowledge and heart-knowledge. The brain can know a lot of information,

but it is not necessarily clear about what it knows. Heart-knowledge though is a clear knowledge of the information. The more a person is using the powers of inner silence and clarifying when he contemplates things, slowly the knowledge of what he learns becomes settled on his heart. As long as the knowledge isn't clear to him, he can know it all intellectually but it's not settling on his heart [his heart won't be at peace with the information it knows]. But the clearer one knows something, the more it settles on his heart. Internalizing our mind's knowledge is to allow our mind's information to settle on our heart with clarity.

## SUMMARY OF THE THREE WAYS OF INTERNALIZING OUR KNOWLEDGE

So far we have mentioned three ways of internalizing our knowledge. Let us briefly summarize.

The first approach mentioned is, “water grinding a rock” – we can think simple thoughts again and again, amidst a calm quiet state, until the thoughts eventually penetrate our heart.

The second approach mentioned is to strongly fix our mind on something, which then settles the knowledge on our heart. To say it more precisely, one guides a thought that he fixes his mind on and brings it into his heart, in order to settle on his heart any specific knowledge that he wishes to internalize.

The third way mentioned is that when one thinks deeply into something and contemplates it, he uncovers subtlety and clarity in it, and that clarity becomes settled on his heart and penetrates it.

## A FOURTH METHOD OF INTERNALIZING: THE MIND-AND-HEART INTEGRATION

There is also a fourth method of internalizing, which is the topic of our current lesson and which is part of the process we are learning about here.

Most people throughout the day are involved with light kinds of thoughts and feelings that aren't intense. While there are those who are more emotional, others have sealed off their emotions more and they are usually thinking of lighter thoughts that aren't intense. This is the way that day-to-day life looks like for most people.

If a person is on the level of a true Torah scholar, not only does he sit and learn Torah and he knows what he learns, but he is also “inwardly” a Torah scholar: he is constantly thinking wherever he goes, as the Ramchal describes. He lives in a world of deep thought, meaning that he is thinking deeply about the matters he is currently learning about – each person according to his own level. Amongst genuine Torah scholars, some of them are immersed in the discussions of the Gemara, whether in a manner of *bekiyus*, or *iyun*, or *halachah l'maaseh*, or *mussar*, or *agadta*, or *Kaballah*.

However, while the mind is very active here, the heart isn't regularly connected with the mind's

knowledge. This is because the mind thinks, while the heart merely reacts and gets excited through different emotional states. What happens as a result of this? Throughout most of the day, there is a total split between one's mind and heart. The mind is living in its own world while the heart lives in another world.

Most people are thinking throughout the day of external, simple thoughts, and the heart sometimes is inactive and sometimes reactive, relatively speaking. The mind and heart aren't integrated together. Even when both the mind and heart are working and active, the mind is working in its own way while the heart is working in an entirely different way, and there is no connection between them, for the mind is occupied with its thoughts while the heart is reacting with emotion.

If one suddenly hears good news, he is happy, and his thoughts about it will be superficial while the reaction will be joy. The mind and heart are both reacting to the same information but they aren't working together – the heart simply knows about it from the brain's information and therefore reacts to it with joy. This is the way that most people go through life, and it doesn't lead to internalizing what one knows. Though people can set aside some time to internalize what they know, it isn't yet their way of life.

In contrast to this, the more inner way to live life – which is the process that is being explained until here – is that whenever one encounters any action, word, thought, or feeling, he experiences its reality, not as an emotional reaction but by feeling it out, which is the heart's power of recognition. In this way, when a person is involved with something intellectual, not only is he thinking about it, but his heart is feeling out his thoughts.

This is a profound way of discovering refined subtleties – whether you want to feel out if something makes sense or not, or whether you want to notice details about something. When you learn a statement in the Gemara and you think a little into it, you see that it can be broken down into more parts and details.

There is a methodical, intellectual method explained by the Ramchal in sefer *Derech Chochmah* and *Derech Tevunos*.<sup>49</sup> which shows you how to break down a concept into several parts.<sup>5</sup> Here, though, we are explaining a “soul-oriented” approach, which is to feel out the information we come across. When you feel out something, you are feeling what it is comprised of – what its parts are, and what new insight it contains. When one lives in this fundamental way, his mind and heart are not working separately from each other but working together.<sup>50</sup>

49 English translation available as “The Ways of Reason” from Feldheim Publishers.

50 Editor's Note: In a question asked to the Rav about why people don't follow the Ramchal's methodically developed approach of learning Gemara, the Rav answered that as we can see what happened throughout the generations, the Ramchal's mussar and kabbalah sefarim became widely accepted amongst Klal Yisrael, but for some reason that we don't know, the method of learning Gemara which he developed did not become the mainstream path for Klal Yisrael and is therefore not that well-known.

Of course, there are times when our heart expresses and feels emotions and we need to let it be, even though it is not being aided by the accuracy of the intellect. We can realize that our heart is reacting, and we can then calm the emotion by trying to feel it out, and then we can examine the feeling better sometime later. For example, when we attend a joyous celebration, we can allow ourselves to rejoice and later we can break down the joy and see the different factors of the wedding that brought us joy, as well as any other soul-faculties that accompanied the joy. We should do this only when we have time and according to our capabilities.

We are speaking here of an entire life that is structured with an integration of mind-knowledge and heart-knowledge, where the intellect and emotions are not each operating alone as separate systems.

### LIVING A LIFE OF A SETTLED MIND

When applied to a life of Torah learning, one is living with a mind-and-heart integration and thereby he will learn Torah from a calm and quiet state, feeling out what he learns – he is experiencing reality. When he is not sitting and learning at the moment, like when he is davening or doing chessed or even when he's involved with physicality (each person according to his needs) he is experiencing the reality of what he is doing, and he contemplates it.

Here is a simple example. A person gets up in the morning and sees people running about going to work or to wherever they have to get to. Any normal person is running about in the morning, and if you ask him why he's running, he will say, "The same reason that everyone else is!" If he is *zocheh* to learn Torah for most of the day, then he is running to a life of the Next World, but in any case, any normal person is running around because he knows that it's normal to be running around in the morning. But if a person is living the inner kind of life being described here, he will not simply run about in the morning the same way everyone else is. He may be running around physically, but in his soul he is calm. He sees an entire world running and he sees all of them, experiencing this reality, the movement of people running around in the morning with all the pressure that's on them.

For most people, the morning is a pressure-filled time. Some have to drop off their kids at school, others have to get to work on time, others have to get to davening on time, others have to get to their Kotel on time. There is a pile of stress or pressure on the soul of what has to get done that day - and a person can be able to see this all as a movement of an entire world running around, and to experience this reality, seeing where each person is running to and what the depth behind all this movement is.

### RAV SHACH'S OBSERVATION

To illustrate the idea better, I was speaking to someone who learned in Yeshivas Ponovezh who had a close connection with Rav Shach. Once he was walking with Rav Shach after davening Minchah in yeshivah after the morning learning session ended, when everyone was exiting the building, and Rav

Shach asked him, “What do you see?” The other answered, “I see many *avreichim* who have just spent the morning immersed in learning Torah and working hard at their learning, each of them reaching whatever they have reached, each on his own level.” Rav Shach then asked, “That is what you see, but I’m seeing something else entirely. Do you want to know what I see? I see on each person where his true life is. You are looking at how they have just left their morning learning session, as if that is all they have right now. But I see now an *avreich* coming home who is thinking about his daughter who needs to get married, another who is thinking about his son, another who is thinking about health issues, another whose thinking about how he doesn’t have children yet, another who is thinking about his livelihood and another who is thinking about how to raise his children properly. Each of them has their own world, an entire world on his shoulders, and with all it entails – and even so, he is walking!”

If only each of us would be at the level where we are thinking in-depth about what we learned that day as we are walking home and that is what fills our hearts. If only our learning would fill our hearts even after the moment we end our morning learning session. But, as we know, this is not the reality. The reality of people’s lives is a lot more complicated.

I see here in front of me a complete world: One person is mainly focused on his Torah learning, and another person is focused on his wife, children, and some already have grandchildren, and they have a lot more going on in their lives too, all that life entails – I see him as a person who is carrying his entire life with him.

This is the perspective that people see when they experience reality, and this is also the ability that enables a person to lead and guide others, which can only come from seeing a comprehensive view of what’s happening, not just seeing one aspect, but seeing an encompassing view that includes everything. That is a clear, fundamental example of the concept.

### THE WORLD OF REPAIR – TWO KINGS THAT SHARE ONE CROWN: WHEN THE MIND AND HEART ARE INTEGRATED & WORKING TOGETHER

When a person lives like this, his mind and heart will be “like two kings that share one crown”. [Though normally the rule is that two kings cannot share one crown – referring to the sun and moon, which also represent the mind and heart respectively – that is only from the impaired perspective. There is a higher, repaired perspective in which “two kings that are able to share one crown.”]

This is also called the “world of repair”, the ideal state of affairs. This is in stark contrast to the “world of separation”, where Hashem told the moon to go down in size, where the sun is the main dominant force, and the moon only receives from the sun’s light. In terms of our soul, our mind is like the sun (*chammah*/sun has the same root letters as the word *moach*/brain) and our heart is like the moon (*levanah*/moon has the same root letters as the word *lev*/heart). It is mainly the sun/mind

which is dominant in most people, yet this is not even the mind itself, but distant rays of the sun, like sparks of sunlight, in which people have thoughts but they are not using the very power of thought itself.

Still, the definition is very clear. Ever since after the sin, when Hashem demoted the status of the moon, people are busy most of the day with the “sun”, with light thoughts, which are really sparks of the sun. Every so often, their heart gets awakened, and each person reacts to different things. When people live like this, the moon (heart) and sun (mind) are functioning independently from each other, and it is like how the sun rules by day and the moon rules by night – there is no integration between their minds and hearts.

But a person can set aside time in which he will internalize what he knows, by using any of the three ways mentioned before, and even more so, when it becomes his very way of living, his mind and heart then become like “two kings that share one crown.”

Most people aren’t able to act upon all that they know, their “wisdom is more than their deeds”, because the amount of knowledge that they have internalized in their heart is only a drop in the ocean compared to all of the knowledge that they have. They remain with a treasury full of wisdom that far eclipses any knowledge they’ve internalized in their hearts, and as the Alter of Kelm taught, the distance between the mind and the heart is greater than the distance of the land from the sky. But when a person lives with an integration of mind and heart together, it is like “two kings that share one crown” – anything that his brain examines will be felt out by the heart.

Though every person is sometimes preoccupied and chaotic, in his day-to-day living he will still be using his mind and heart together. When he learns any part of the Torah’s wisdom, his heart will be feeling out what he knows and his knowledge will settle on his heart. When he examines heart-information, his brain will help him figure out what he’s feeling. For example, when learning about the middos, which are found in the heart, he will learn about them deeply and contemplate them, and then whatever he recognizes in his heart will be sharpened through his mind’s knowledge, where it will fuse together, and he will be feeling out what his brain knows.

In this way of living, the mind and heart keep receiving and learning from each other, “like two beloved friends that are inseparable”, like two kings that share one crown. Sometimes the mind becomes clear about something and the heart can feel it out and open it up further, and sometimes the heart becomes aware of something and the mind examines it and adds a more accurate understanding to it. The heart then feels an enlightenment and helps the mind expand its understanding.

This is the way of living that is inner and true. This is also the meaning of how Torah is called

“endless waters”. Simply it is endless because Torah is “*longer than the earth and wider than the seas*”<sup>51</sup>, but it is also “*Very very deep are Your thoughts*”<sup>52</sup>, there is a frightening depth that a person can uncover with this way of living, for every seemingly small matter will be seen as something profound to understand, since he can take each thing and break it down. The words of Abaye and Rava are called a “small matter” because it seems small, but upon thinking into their words, one reveals so much complexity and depth within depth in any of their words.

## IN SUMMARY

To summarize, the process of recognizing one’s personal share, both internally and externally, is a very inner way of living, and it is not merely a means to know one’s personal share. With a little bit of time, one can realize many things that others cannot pick up on. Even more so, what takes most people a lot of time and work is a normal part of life for him. He breathes his thoughts, feels them, and thinks about everything through his heart’s recognition. He thinks about what he already recognizes, and his entire way of living connects together his mind’s knowledge with his heart’s recognition so that he becomes very clear about things.

## THE BENEFITS OF THE MIND-AND-HEART INTEGRATION

When a person lives in such a way, he doesn’t need to set aside time for learning mussar, since he has a mind-heart integration that is regularly active.

There was an argument about how much time one needs to set asides to learn mussar, as well as how to learn it. The Vilna Gaon said that when there is Torah, there is no need for mussar. Meaning, that when one is living in the right way, he doesn’t need to learn mussar.

While there are others who are comfortable even if they are not really connected to what they learn, the internal way of living is to live and breathe what one knows, to experience the reality of what one learns, on a regular basis. It is not simply about focusing on quality over quantity. It is not really a compromise on the quantity of how much one is learning in favor of internalizing what one learns – rather, it fosters even the quantity of how much one learns, because when one becomes clear about what he learns, his soul is calmer and he will be able to continue to learn more and more.

There are those whose minds are not connected with their hearts, so they are able to gain a lot of Torah knowledge and even understand it well, but they are disconnected from reality. We can plainly

51 Iyov 11:9

52 Tehillim 92:6

see those who can be brilliant in their vast Torah knowledge but their souls are simply disconnected from reality, and it is precisely because they know so much that they become disconnected. Since they are somewhat disconnected from reality, there is nothing restricting their soul so they can progress very quickly, but they are not living the reality. They are not living the depth of the Torah's worlds they know, and they have no heart recognition of it, because it is all just knowledge to them which their mind keeps running towards in their desire for knowledge. But the opposite way from this, which is the truth, is a person who is footed on the world but at the same time his mind and heart are connected together.

This is just an outline, but it is a very inner and fundamental way of living: to live in the “world of Hashem”.

# CLARITY & BEYOND YOUR PERSONAL SHARE

## OVERVIEW

The previous chapters explained the inner path by which one can come to properly recognize oneself. This self-recognition is developed through three different internal powers that we need to make use of:

(1) Inner quiet – this is called *hashkatab*.

(2) Observing ourselves from a distance, as if we are above our own soul and looking down at it and all its parts. This is called *habatah*.

(3) Feeling out, or sensing and experiencing, our reality. This is called *mishush* (the heart's sense of touch). The *Mesilas Yesharim* mentions this ability with regards to becoming aware of our deeds and examining them.

The previous lesson (chapter 9) elaborated on how the internal, truthful way of living is to live with a mind-and-heart integration (where our intellect and emotions are working in tandem with each other, creating a deep awareness of the realities we experience).

This involves (1) Using our mental abilities - not just by pondering, examining, and contemplating, but by using our mind to “observe” as if we are on the outside of something and looking at it from far. (2) In addition, it involves using our heart's ability to “feel out” any information we encounter and analyze. This is called heart-knowledge (the *daas* of the heart).

To clarify, heart-knowledge is not referring to internalizing the mind's knowledge into the heart, but something deeper: a way of living in which the heart and mind are working in tandem with each other to perceive information, creating an integrated awareness of both the mind and heart. This is also called “two kings that share one crown”, in which the mind and heart – the “two kings” of our inner psyche - are “ruling” together, working together at the same time.

So, unlike **internalization**<sup>53</sup>, this way of living does not involve two steps of first knowing something intellectually and then internalizing that knowledge in the heart [where the knowledge is more clearly felt], rather it is an ability in which both the mind and heart are working together to begin with, and one is acting from within that integrated awareness.

<sup>53</sup> The ability of internalizing our mind's knowledge into the heart is discussed in *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh* (Building A Sanctuary In The Heart), volumes 1 and 2.

## A SHORTCUT TO FIXING ALL YOUR MIDDOS

Let's understand deeply that when one lives in this way, his work of character-improvement (*tikun hamiddos*) will not mainly involve actively working on uprooting his negative character traits - let us explain why.

It's clear that character-improvement takes work. When we have any *middos* that are not refined or not balanced properly, we need to do things that go against it so that we can uproot the nature of that character trait. But, besides for actively going against our nature, when we live with a mind-and-heart integration (as explained in the previous lessons), we are doing the inner part of our character improvement – where, instead of taking our knowledge/education/learning and then trying to internalize it in our heart, the knowledge is already present in our heart.

The Torah says “*And these words shall be upon your heart*”, and the Kotzker Rebbeh famously taught that the Torah's words are “upon” our heart, on top of it and not yet “in” our heart, and our task is to enter the Torah's words into our hearts. That is one way, and it applies when our mind and heart are not integrating together but each operating separately. That is when we need to internalize our mind's knowledge [the truths of the Torah] into our hearts, to make it go from “on” our heart and let it go “in” to our heart.

But when one is living with a mind-and-heart integration, with the mind and heart working together at once, the mind's knowledge will be **a lot closer** to entering into the heart. Once he becomes clear about something, a large part of his awareness will enter into his heart, either partially or totally - and while it remains true that a person must actively remove the “blockage on the heart”, a large part of his awareness naturally enters into his heart, for “a bit of light pushes away a lot of darkness.”

When the mind is clear about something and it can also examine the information objectively and thereby deeply connecting to the information, the mind is truly “seeing” the information and bonding with it. When that is the case, most of the internalizing happens from the mind's clarity alone.

When one is not living with a mind-and-heart integration and his mind and heart are operating separately, and then even if he has very clear knowledge, there will still be a giant gap between his mind and heart. As the Alter of Kelm taught, the distance between the mind and heart is longer than the distance between the earth and the heavens – and there is an entire celestial layer in between. But when one's brain and heart are closely working together, **even if the integration is not complete**, a large percentage of his mind's awareness will have already quickly entered his heart, and in this way, one's *middos* are changed.

The Rambam describes all of the *middos* in a section called “*Hilchos De'os*”, the laws of “ways of thinking.” It's clear that when a person works on any character trait without an understanding of it, it is like a “container” with no “light”. The inner, truth approach to go about it is, on one hand,

to actively work hard on fixing the character trait, and this is the external, “container” part of the work here, while simultaneously learning about the root of the character trait so that one has an understanding of it, knowing its concept and its true definition, and how it becomes impaired and extreme - and this is all the internal, “light” aspect of the work.

One who takes the inner approach doesn't first start working directly on any character trait, rather he learns about the concept of the trait in question. If he wants to work on *zehirus* or *zerizus*, he learns about what these concepts are. He may check *sefer Nesivos Olam* of the Maharal. Corresponding to the learning aspect is the hands-on *avodah*, which entails doing certain actions to go against one's nature in order to uproot the negative trait in question (for example, if one has laziness, he makes sure to act fast, and if one is too quick, he sits and waits before he acts), and he also attains clarity of understanding on the trait that he wants to fix.

Taking this concept even further, since the mind-and-heart integration allows for “two kings that share one crown” (meaning that a person is able to draw himself close to the level of the “world of repair” before the moon became downsized, which essentially means that it was before the root of Adam's sin), the very clarity that he is having in understanding the concept of the *middah* in question is already repairing a large part of the *middah*.

When a person lives in such a way, when he recognizes clearly the negative trait in question, he has already uprooted most of it. For example, if he gains a clear understanding of the concept of laziness, he has already fixed most of his laziness just with this clarity alone, and if he gains a clear understanding of *zerizus* (acting enthusiastically) then his very recognition of *zerizus* already causes his *zerizus* to become a part of him – though it may not yet be completely a part of him, it is certainly true partially.

This is not a mere piece of information to know, it is an awareness that transforms a person, in which his mind and heart are working together. It is how our mind can know something deeply, where it becomes largely known by our heart as well.

This is the inner way for one to work on his character traits, which uproots any negative traits by way of the mind's power to analyze ‘from a distance’ and the heart's power to ‘touch’ and ‘feel out’ a reality. A person is able to recognize his character traits well by ‘feeling them out’, examining his deeds, traits, emotions, and thoughts, and he can observe them objectively and truthfully, seeing and contemplating what the proper way is. Then the information settles on his mind and also on his heart, and now his heart can feel out what has to be done. Through this alone, part of the negative character trait has already been uprooted.

## TWO DIFFERENT WAYS OF ACQUIRING DAAS

There are two different abilities of *daas* (knowing). The Sefer *Tanya* describes the concept of strongly fixing the mind on a thought, which involves intensely focusing, but here we are describing a different approach: a simple, pleasant connection to a thought.

For example, when the Torah says “*Adam knew Chavah his wife*”, using the term of *daas*, this was not through a strong, intense connection that would feel forced upon Chavah, but a pleasant, calm connection of *daas* which involved words of appeasement beforehand. This is also a hint to the very depth of life, of how to become connected to the knowledge of our mind and heart.

## REVEALING THE LIGHT OF OUR NESHAMAH (SOUL) THROUGH DEEP CLARITY

We are generally comprised of two parts: a soul and body. Our soul (*neshamah*) is hidden by the body, and at death, the body’s hold is removed and the soul becomes revealed. But the soul only becomes revealed to the degree that a person worked hard at revealing it during his lifetime. Most people during their lives remain out of touch of their souls, while their body is very much revealed. There are ways during one’s lifetime to reveal the soul’s light upon the body, which we will now explain.

The Torah is called the “soul of the world”, and Torah is called “Torah of light”. The Torah illuminates the soul and removes the materialism and earthiness of the body. The soul is clear and pristine, while the body is materialistic and coarse, created from the earth. The more one reaches the soul’s clarity [attained through learning Torah], to that degree will the soul’s light radiate and illuminate the body. The stronger one’s clarity, the more the earthiness of the body will be removed and he will become closer to the soul’s perspective.

If one’s clarity is only external and superficial, the soul’s light that he will reach will only be mere sparks of light. He will only know things superficially, and although he will receive “sparks” of the soul from this, it won’t be enough to illuminate the body. But when one reaches **deep clarity** through taking the path of the previous lessons – not superficial clarity in the same way you know that two plus two equals four, and not merely intellectual clarity, but clarity that comes from the heart coupled with the mind – he is then able to use his heart’s clarity and ability to feel out what he knows, living with a mind-and-heart integration.

His heart then becomes a “*pure heart G-d created me with, a proper spirit He renewed in my innards.*”<sup>54</sup> His blocked heart and heart of stone will give way: “*And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.*”<sup>55</sup> His heart softens, refines, and becomes clearer, and he is given “wisdom of the heart” and clearer feelings of the heart. This in turn allows the soul’s light which

54 Tehillim

55 *Yechezkel* 36:26

resides in the brain, and the part of the soul which resides in the heart, to become more and more revealed.

The calmer that a person is on his inside, the more he will connect to information and experiences with greater intellectual clarity that settles upon his heart, and gradually the soul's light will radiate in him more and more. Usually this comes "drop by drop", as Chazal said of the Redemption that it comes in a drawn-out process<sup>56</sup>, just as the sun doesn't quickly illuminate the horizon all at once but slowly rises, at first with dawn when its first rays can be seen, later at sunrise, and later at its zenith when everyone can see it plainly. It is the same with the process of our soul's light becoming revealed upon us. Our internal light, the soul's light, slowly becomes revealed, drop by drop, and that is how a person becomes transformed into a different person.

## A REVEALED SOUL SHOWS ONE WHAT HIS PERSONAL SHARE IS

Many different benefits happen after one reveals his soul (*neshamah*). Firstly, his true inner self becomes revealed, so his **personal share** on this world [in Torah and *avodah*] begins to become clearer to him.

In contrast to the many different paths that exist in the world of working "from the outside in", where one has to essentially try to figure out his personal share (and indeed, there are different possibilities of how one can gain this knowledge), the more that the soul's light is radiating within, it shows the person who he really is. The soul – the *neshamah*, the inner life-force of a person, lights up the way for him. **Internally, he will sense what his unique share** is, and it will become the source that he mainly draws his spiritual energy from. Coming to this awareness will be an immense benefit for him!

## CLARITY IN TORAH LEARNING

An additional gain of living like this is that the light of the soul within once a person, once it is shining more, it will come through with clarity.

When people are working hard at learning Torah, most of their time is being spent on two parts: gaining knowledge of Torah, each person on his own level, and reaching clarity in every topic learned in all the parts of Torah he learns (and applying it to all the different parts of his *avodas Hashem*). This is in line with what Chazal say that "First a person should finish, then explain"<sup>57</sup> – one first has to gather Torah knowledge, and then go back to what he learned to try to understand it more clearly.

<sup>56</sup> See *Midrash Tanchuma Devarim 1*: "At the time when Hashem will reveal His *Shechinah* upon the Jewish people, it will not be revealed to them at once, for they will not be able to withstand all of this good all at once...So what will Hashem do? He will reveal it to them only drop by drop....at first he will rejoice the desolate, for it says "He will gladden the desert and dry land"... and afterwards, they will see the Glory of Hashem."

<sup>57</sup> Gemara Shabbos 33a

To the degree that one's inner light is shining within him, he will be able to understand his Torah learning with better clarity. What would normally take him much time to understand will now be instant.

This can be compared to a person in a dark room looking for a certain object. Either he can feel his way around until eventually he feels the object he's looking for, which may take him a lot of time, or, he can on the light switch and then he will in one sweeping glance he will spot the object and immediately grab it.

Not only does understanding Torah increase when one reveals his soul's light, but even when one is first learning before he has attempted to really try to understand it, he will easily remember what he learned and won't easily forget it, since he has become closer to the words of Torah and to the inner world.<sup>58</sup>

## BYPASSING THE NEED FOR INTELLECTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF ONESELF

In any case, it is precisely through the depth of the soul's light when it shines within the person that one is able to receive an entirely new way of understanding in all parts of *avodas Hashem*, in all parts of Torah, and in all of one's life.

**Taking this path also requires a lot less “intellectual clarification” of taking apart information and breaking it down in order to understand oneself – for example, the path of studying one's personal four elements** – and it also requires a lot less analyzing through our minds and trying to feel out the information through our hearts. Though these methods are always needed, they aren't needed nearly as much when the light of one's soul is shining within him.

He will not have to do that much thinking, because his “initial thought” about something will accurately reflect what his personal share is. Normally, one's initial thought about something tends to be mistaken, and this is because of the rule “the shell comes before the fruit.”<sup>59</sup> Even when reaching the “fruit”, it is still upon a person to clarify what personal share he will have in this “fruit” – as we know that there are three different quality fields.

There are many parts to Torah and to *avodas Hashem*, and one has to clarify which parts are more for him. It takes many years of exertion to figure out this point. But to the degree that one's internal light (the *neshamah's* radiance) is shining more and more, **one's own personal share will become shined within him!**

58 (A higher level than this is when a person gets a perception in the words of Torah even without having actually “learned” it, but this is a sublime level where one is drawing forth Torah wisdom from above the soul, from the space of “*ayin*” that is above the mind.)

59 Cited in the name of Reb Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin, *sefer Resisei Laylah* 32, *sefer Divrei Chalomos* 25, and based on the concept that “There is no light except from preceding darkness” (*Zohar II 184a*)

The more one's *neshamah* is shining within him – until one reaches the depth of his *neshamah*, which is his actual personal share – then that means his personal share will shine within him, and he will realize simply where his personal share is. This clarity will strengthen and it will also become more revealed even in the most external layers of the soul. In order to reach it, one needs a deep internal connection that comes from inner quiet and clarity, until slowly it turns into his nature – the revelation of the light of his *neshamah*.

For most people, their initial nature is to follow their body's instincts while their soul is deemed as something novel to them – they don't view their soul's instincts as their initial nature. But the more a person draws closer to the light of his *neshamah*, it will become his initial nature, and that is where he will live and experience his personal share on this world, and it will come natural to him.

Chazal taught, "Three people Hashem allowed a taste on this world resembling the Next World: Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov"<sup>60</sup>, meaning that their portion on the Next World was shining for them already on This World. On This World, everyone is mixed together into one place. It is one place that with many people on very different levels.

But in the Next World, each person is given his own chamber as befitting for his spiritual stature, and there it is established what one's personal share and perception is. It is a clear world, and no one is mixed together there. Those who tasted a semblance of the Next World already on This World essentially reached this through the *neshamah's* light that shined within them, which removed their *yetzer hora* from them<sup>61</sup>, and in turn, the depth of the internal light of their revealed souls was revealed to them – and this was essentially their personal share.

The internal world is represented by three spiritual powers, each represented by our three Avos, and to each of them was revealed their personal share, which was the semblance of the Next World that Hashem allowed them to taste on This World: (1) Avraham – kindness. (2) Yitzchok – awe. (3) Yaakov – truth.

One's personal share is a deep connection within his soul where a person lives in a calm state. Just like a person can eat something and say if it tastes good or not, so does a person found in the inner world able to learn something in Torah and feel if this is his personal share or not. That is the simple nature of the soul - to feel out the reality and sense it, no less than how one can taste if something is good for him or not. In the inner world, one is able to sense naturally what his personal share is (what's meant for him to be involved with) and what isn't.

60 Talmud Bavli Berachos 17a

61 *ibid*

## BEYOND YOUR PERSONAL SHARE

We can now understand another, deeper point.

A person in his childhood eats something and it tastes enjoyable to him, or he enjoyed looking at a certain scene, but when he gets older, he finds other foods enjoyable and enjoys looking at something else. Sometimes this change occurs due to the physical differences between a child and adult, and sometimes it is because his interests change. This is all true about the external, physical world. In contrast to this, when it comes to the inner world, one's personal share consists of two parts. One part is **his actual, personal share**, and besides for this, since there are 600,000 souls in the Jewish people, everyone also has **a part that joins together with others**. This "connecting" power to others is different with each person, but in any case it takes a person beyond his private, personal existence.

Your personal share is comprised both of your **private** share, as well as another personal aspect that **connects** to others. To illustrate the concept, just as a person has seven *halachic* relatives who he may not marry, and after that there are more distant relatives that are forbidden Rabbinically to marry. In our soul as well, besides for our personal share there are also parts of our soul connected with others. Therefore, the next step after recognizing your personal share is to recognize any part(s) of others that you need to connect yourself to. Our personal share belongs to us and it cannot change, but the share of others which we can connect to can include connecting to another and then to another, until being connected with all of the Jewish people. This makes it all-inclusive of every possibility.

## WHY WE SOMETIMES WANT SOMETHING & LATER LOSE INTEREST

Without this clarity, sometimes a person will feel that there are certain things that are part of his personal share, but after some time he feels that it's not for him. Superficially, the reasons for this may be clear: What he had originally felt as his personal share was not accurate. Now that he enjoyed it and got pleasure from it, he no longer gets such vitality from it, and he is now continuing on to something else. This is not because his personal share changed and it isn't his personal share anymore, but because **it was never meant to be of his personal share to begin with**.

## BEING CLEAR ABOUT WHAT WE WANT TO ADD ON TO OURSELVES

In the depth of the soul is one's personal share, which one can feel as his own and uniquely his, and there is also an additional part of one's personal share which connects to others, where one recognizes the difference between his own share (which stays the same) and the part that he is connecting to (which can change).

To illustrate the concept, at first a person exists as a single entity. Later he gets married, and a "wife is like his body", an added piece to his existence. He now gains a father-in-law and mother-in-law,

additional aunts and uncles, etc. He has children, and eventually grandchildren. His children marry and he has *Mechutanim* now. Ever since he has gotten married, he now has a part of himself that is connected with others and which keeps expanding and widening outward to include more in it.

Our soul keeps expanding beyond its borders, receiving added energy and growth from the part in us that connects outward to others, taking us beyond our own personal share. We can keep becoming connected to others until we are connected with the whole unit of the Jewish people. The one who reached this total connection was Moshe Rabbeinu, but Moshe's soul extends into every generation and into every soul, and therefore every person on his own level has several parts of connecting to the shares of other souls in the Jewish people, and he can receive spiritual energy from these shares of others.

This is an added facet of clarity, in which a person is able to feel what's connected with his essence and what "additions" he has annexed onto his soul. One's "essence" is his personal share, while his "addition" is anything that he has gained by connecting to others [i.e. by seeing their qualities and accomplishments, by learning and growing from them].

When one lives in this way, the result will be that he recognizes **clearly** what his personal share is (though of course there are so many levels of clarity), and after that, one needs to connect to the shares of others, at the same time being aware that he is adding these parts onto himself and that he is not merely trying to get another's personal share.

### THREE PARTS OF OUR PERSONAL SHARE

Chazal said, "Who is wise? He who learns from every person", every individual has his (1) personal share in the Torah<sup>62</sup>, and every person has (2) a **Rebbi (Torah teacher) which is his soul-root to receive his personal portion in Torah from**, and in addition to this, (3) since one must learn from every person, one also connects to others and learns from them.

### SOUL-IMPREGNATION

In this way, one expands beyond his borders, little by little, and slowly he becomes clearer about which parts in others he can connect to and incorporate [into his own Torah and avodah] - and which parts of others he cannot incorporate into himself. There is a concept of *ibbur neshamah*, soul-impregnation (receiving a spark of someone else's soul for a short duration of time). This is also the deep reason why sometimes a person will feel for a certain period of time an interest to learn a certain part of Torah, and after some time he will lose interest. Sometimes this happens due to external, superficial reasons, but it's very possible that there is an inner reason for this: During the time in

<sup>62</sup> The source for this concept is in the morning prayer we say every day, "And give us Your Portion in Torah", and it was expounded upon further by the *Gra*.

which he felt a strong interest to learn a certain part of Torah, it was because he received another's soul for a certain amount of time, and after some time this soul-impregnation left him. During the time that another soul's was impregnated within him, he had interests that were coming from this newly impregnated soul in him, but when the soul-impregnation finished, the interest left with it.

In deeper terms, these are the steps of becoming connected to parts outside of oneself which belong to others and making them "yours" by becoming connected to them. Your main spiritual vitality has to come from your unique share of Torah, while any additional sources of spiritual vitality that you annex onto yourself [which you learn from others] is from the part of your personal share that connects to the share of another. Even in this, there is a gradual clarification process of what your personal share is, whether it comes to the amount of Torah knowledge you encompass, or the style of learning that is most suitable to you, and the different styles of Torah *chiddushim* of our previous Gedolim.

## SEEING WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM OTHERS, THEN RETURNING TO OUR OWN SHARE

Until now, we explained that a person's main aspect is his personal share, while his secondary aspect is what he learns from others. Now we shall add on a final point.

Every person has to alternate back-and-forth between these two areas – between his own personal share ['Who I am', etc.] and the share that he acquires from others. When we want to grow higher, we need to connect to the share of others and learn from them. But then we need to return to our own personal share (this is the cycle of *ratzu v'shov*, advancing and retreating). Normally we are in "retreat" mode, and that is when we are involved with our own personal share, but there are times when we want to advance and grow higher, and that is when we need to learn from others, where we leave our personal share and we learn how to become surrendered [and in awe, of others who show qualities we don't have or whom we can learn or grow from].

Your own personal share is where you draw forth serenity and inner peace from, but you also need to grow higher at times by coming out of yourself, connecting to other parts that aren't yours and learning from the good that you see in others. The most complete level of this connection is when you are connected to the entire unit of the Jewish people, and it is absolute when you completely connect with Hashem by being entirely surrendered to Him. This is the true way to live life.

So, the beginning of one's growth is to become connected to his own share, and after reaching it, the next step is to become connected with the shares of others. But, even then, one has to make sure to stay connected to his own share [and not 'lose himself' or fall into the mistake of trying to 'become another' or even trying to imitate them.] Finally, after one is able to maintain this contradiction [of staying with his own unique share and being himself, but at the same time seeing what he can learn from others], one needs to be able to feel surrendered to others and to the parts of growth that he is

able to get from others. Here is a clear and practical example of the concept. The Chofetz Chaim wrote many sefarim, and he said that the main reason he wrote all these sefarim was to help his generation, and that these sefarim wouldn't be necessary for the generation then he would have immersed himself in other parts of Torah. Here we can see an example of living of someone who surrendered his own share (the parts of Torah that he wanted to learn) for the sake of Klal Yisrael.

Obviously, this is something that depends on one's soul-root and what his main avodah is. While externally it seems that the Chofetz Chaim lost out on his own growth and his own share by being immersed in certain areas of the Torah that needed to be explained for his generation (and these areas of Torah were not of his personal preference, because he was really drawn to learn other areas of Torah than this), the deeper way to understand this is that after he had connected to his own personal share, he rose to the level beyond his own personal share.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

To give an outline of this lesson, getting to know one's personal share is the first step in one's personal *avodah*, and after that one has to learn how to surrender to what he learns from others, but even when surrendering, we cannot completely lose ourselves and our own personal *avodah*, we just have to advance forward and seek growth by connecting to others and learning from them, and then retreat back into ourselves, and repeating the cycle [so that we can do our *avodah* properly and not lose sight of our personal task] of advance-retreat-advance.

How much should we seek growth by learning from others, and how much should we retreat back into our own personal share? This will differ with every person.

All of the lessons until now (1-10) are all explaining how we reach our personal share (and this includes learning from others, as we have explained in this lesson), but this is not the last stage. The next lesson, with Hashem's help, will explain the last stage to get to, and it will be broken up into different subtle aspects. So far, we have outlined the process of how a person can reach his personal share, and how to go back-and-forth between one's own share and connecting to beyond one's personal share.

## Q&A

### TOPIC: WHAT IF INNER SILENCE ISN'T GETTING ME IN TOUCH WITH MY INNER SELF

**QUESTION 1:** How does one "reveal his inner light" (the light of his *neshamah*) through being in a calm, quiet, centered state (*sheket*) as the Rav explained, if he is not able to access his inner self even as has this inner quiet?

**RAV'S ANSWER:** Sometimes he reaches it and sometimes he doesn't, it is not definite. If his inner silence is so powerful that it gets him to the deepest place in him, then slowly his soul will begin to radiate. This was described in this lesson. But any level of inner silence won't necessarily bring a person to a recognizable level of soul revelation.

## TOPIC: IS MIND-AND-HEART INTEGRATION A REVELATION OF THE SOUL?

**QUESTION 2:** If a person has gotten to the ability where he is using both his intellect and heart, this is not yet revealing the soul and it can still be an external ability?

**RAV'S ANSWER:** If the intellect and heart are working in tandem with each other, this is already a strong tool to allow the soul's light to radiate. When a person is too attached to materialism of this world, this will prevent him from getting inward. However, just having a very integration of mind-and-heart already creates clarity, and this is already a certain level of disconnection from the confusing-creating world of materialism, which includes 2 aspects:

(1) Coarse materialism itself, and (2) The earthiness that's found in that materialism [which ties a person down to it]. The more clarity a person is living with, the more that he leaves the earthiness of materialism [so even though he hasn't left materialism totally, at least he has left the earthiness of it and he is no longer tied down to it].

## TOPIC: ROOTING OUT THE EVIL WITHIN

**QUESTION 3:** Is this lesson aligned with what the *sefer Tanya* teaches about *is-kafya* (forcing yourself to go against the evil inclination's will)? Or is it something else?

**RAV'S ANSWER:** Here we are not taking the approach of *is-kafya*, but a gentler approach through combining together the intellect and heart. The *sefer Tanya's* approach is to strongly focus the mind on a thought in order to counter an unwanted thought, but here we have taught an approach that uses a different faculty of the mind: "simplicity", which works in tandem with the heart. It involves a pleasant state of mind to enter, and instead of strongly concentrating the mind on something. The approach of *is-kafya* described in *Tanya* is to use force and strength.

To give a deeper definition of the approach here, it is to use the "beginning point" that comes before any evil develops. This is the ability of "two kings that share one crown", which is the state of repair before the moon became downsized, when both the sun and moon ruled equally and there was no root of evil yet, when the moon didn't complain yet and it wasn't yet told "Make yourself smaller." It is tapping into the original sublime point where there is no root of evil yet. That is the subtle definition behind the approach here.

# LIVING IN YOUR PERSONAL 50TH GATE OF HOLINESS

The key to surviving the world's negative influences today – being attached to your unique relationship with Hashem that only you can reach

## FINDING YOUR INDIVIDUALITY IN DIFFERENT AREAS

The previous lessons explained a fundamental, inner way of how to “recognize oneself” in general, and his “personal share” [the areas of Torah and *avodah* that are meant for him personally to do, as tailored to his unique soul] in particular.

Our soul's essence (*atzmiyus*) is clothed by the soul's garments (*levushim*). Our essence is comprised of certain *mochin* (spiritual consciousness) and *middos* (deep character traits and emotions) that are unique to who we are personally, while the soul's garments contain the powers of action, speech, and thought (with thought being the innermost garment). One has his own personal share in each of these aspects. Every person has something he can do in terms of action, words, and thinking, etc.

For example, the Gemara uses the term *baal maasim*, someone who does many good deeds. This is not just a person who does a lot of good, but a person whose soul-root is in the faculty of action, meaning that his personal share on this world is to be more involved in the realm of action (good deeds). Every person has certain good deeds that are his unique share, and that is an added subtlety to the definition of the *baal maasim*.

A person whose soul-root in the realm of speech is the kind of person “whose mouth does not cease from Torah learning”, and this is connected with the power of leadership and being able to lead and rule, using his command of the word. A person whose soul-root in the realm of thought is what the Ramchal describes as “The wise will think constantly wherever they go.”

Every person has his own share in each of these soul-faculties of the soul's garments (action, speech, and thought), and one of these soul-faculties will also be his main aspect. One's role on this world - in general, as well as individually - is to recognize his individual share in each of the soul's faculties. He has to know the general area of the soul that he is the most meant for him to be involved with. The way to know this is by taking the path of the previous lessons [of developing the internal powers that enable one to discern what his personal share is].

## YECHIDAH – REACHING YOUR PERSONAL SHARE BY FINDING YOUR UNIQUENESS

There are 5 general parts to the soul, or 5 different names that the soul is called by: The *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, *Chayah*, and *Yechidah*. The highest and most sublime aspect of one's personal share is in the Yechidah-level of the soul.

There are two major ways to understand why the *Yechidah*-level of the soul is called *Yechidah*, which means “individual.”

One reason is because this highest part of the soul is the container for the *Yachid* (Individual One) of the world, a “masculine” term for Hashem, and the part of our soul that “receives” His Presence to dwell within us is therefore referred to in the feminine: *Yechidah*. At the giving of the Torah, Hashem went out to greet *Klal Yisrael* as a *choson* (groom) goes out to greet his *kallah* (bride), hence Hashem is referred to as the masculine while we, *Klal Yisrael*, the “bride”, are regarded as “feminine” by our role of being receivers of His Presence. Hashem is also called “One, Individual, and Unique” – He is called *Yachid*, meaning that He reveals Himself to us by way of his Individuality - and the container that receives His revelation of *Yachid* is called the *Yechidah* aspect of our soul.

An additional reason for the term *Yechidah* is because “Man was created individual”<sup>63</sup>, every person has an “individual” aspect in the same way that the first person, Adam HaRishon, was created as a single individual, containing all souls within him. The “individual” aspect that we are all born with is essentially each person’s uniqueness [“In what ways am I unique?"]. Adam HaRishon was clearly an individual, while every other person in history is one of the many, uncountable creations that Hashem has created. Still, though, the individual aspect that Adam HaRishon was created with is rooted into each of our souls, since all of us were contained in Adam’s soul. This “individual” aspect that’s rooted into us is the “*Yechidah*”-level of our soul, and is each person’s uniqueness.

Therefore, working hard to recognize one’s personal share on this world can essentially be defined in another way – it is all a way of discovering the areas in which our *Yechidah* aspect is revealed.

In clearer terms, there is the general revelation of *Yechidah*, which we express [in the *Hoshanos*] as “*Chavukah u’ddevukah becha*”, “Clinging and attached in You,” the depths of our *neshamah* which is attached and integrated in Hashem, making our soul into a container for the Individual One. There is also an individual *Yechidah*-revelation in each part of our soul, meaning that each person can be unique in any of these areas: “All of their faces are not equal and all of their ways of thinking are not equal”,<sup>64</sup> each of is unique.

Therefore, the depth of recognizing one’s personal share is really about shining the *Yechidah*-level of the soul onto each area of our soul. While the collective *Yechidah*-level of the soul will only be reached by Mashiach, every person can reach an individual share in the *Yechidah*-illumination. In fact, this is a task given to each individual specifically. Each person is able to figure out his personal share. Just as the general Redemption for everyone will be the coming of Mashiach and this will be the revelation of *Yechidah*, so is there is a personal Redemption for each of our souls, a personal

63 Gemara Sanhedrin 38a

64 Gemara Berachos 58a

revelation of Yechidah for each of our souls – which is reached when we reveal our “unique” aspect. Each person can discover his uniqueness in each area of the soul (as explained) and he can also know which area is his main personal share. When one merits recognizing it, he is found at the level of personal Redemption: “*My soul has drawn close to her redemption.*” He has left the soul’s exile and entered into the soul’s redemption.

### IN SUMMARY

Let us now summarize thus far. The way to recognize your personal share is through the clarity that comes from the illumination of your individual Yechidah-level of the soul. The Yechidah-level of our soul includes all of the areas that you are unique in, and it also serves the purpose of recognizing the Individual One of the world. Each of us has our own personal and unique way of how we recognize the Individual One. Though Hashem is One and the same to all, each individual has a unique recognition of Him.

### YOUR UNIQUE RECOGNITION OF HASHEM

At the depth of every Jew’s soul is an illumination of the Yechidah-level of the soul, and this is the power of *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice). By way of this illumination in the soul, a person can recognize the Individual One of the world with a recognition that no one else has. That is why it is called “Yechidah”, since it is the way for one to access a unique recognition of Hashem that no one else can know of but him.

As an example, when Hashem took revenge against Egypt at the splitting of the sea, He appeared to them as a young warrior. At that time, the Jewish people’s recognition of Hashem was that he was He was a mighty, youthful Warrior ready to fight all their wars for them. Later at Har Sinai when Hashem came to give them the Torah, Hashem appeared to them as a merciful looking for old man<sup>65</sup>, since it was more appropriate to have Torah given to them in this manner. Though Hashem Himself stays the same, the ways which He is revealed and appears are many. He is always One, but there are many different ways by how He reveals His Oneness.

Chazal said that when Hashem wanted to create the world, His first revelation was His Light: “And let there be light”, which was a Light that was already there.<sup>66</sup> Hashem wrapped Himself in a garment (as it were) and allowed a radiance of His Glory to shine from one end of the world to another.” Hashem’s “garment” is the way by which Hashem reveals Himself to the world He created<sup>67</sup>, for it is “forbidden to see the King unclothed.” He did not reveal His Truthful Existence as it was, but only

65 Pesikta Rabasi 21

66 Beraishis Rabah 3

67 [there are “ten garments He made for Himself”, corresponding to the Ten *Sefiros*, as taught in the prayer of *Petach Eliyahu*, which are essentially different ways of how He is revealed to the creations]

through a garment.

This “garment” is the essentially our soul’s deep recognition of Hashem, and each person has a certain subtle aspect of Hashem’s revelation that only he can access, a certain revelation of Hashem which no one else but him can know of.

This is the depth of what Chazal taught that in the future, Hashem will make a circle for the tzaddikim and sit among them in Gan Eden, and each of the *tzaddikim* will point with his finger and say “*This is Hashem, we hoped for him.*”<sup>68</sup> [This will contain both a collective and individual revelation of Hashem.] Hashem will be in the center of the circle, so if a line is drawn to each tzaddik sitting around the circle, the line will be of equal distance to each *tzaddik*. There are many lines to get to the center of the circle, and each person will have his own line. That line will connect the created being with the Creator. This is why the word “line”, *kav*, is from the word *tikva*, hope, “*Hope to Hashem*”, “*To Your salvation I hoped, Hashem*”. Each person will point with his finger – which has the shape of a straight line. Each person will have not have an equal revelation of Hashem, for it will be experienced uniquely by each person: “This is Hashem, we hoped for Him” – each person will have his own “line”, his own unique connection to Hashem [and recognition of Him].

On a simple level, the reason that this revelation of the Creator will not be equal for each person is because each person has his own *avodah*, and according to the amount of *avodah* one put in, that is how much he will be rewarded. “*Today is for doing, and tomorrow is for receiving their reward.*” Since every person has a different “work” to do, each person will be “paid” according to the work he put in. The main “payment” will be to enjoy the revelation of G-dliness, and that will extend to the revelation of the Torah’s secrets, and each person will have different perception in this. Understanding Torah is granted based on how much effort one put in, “You toiled, you found”<sup>69</sup>, each person has his own efforts in Torah and thereby “find” understanding in Torah according to the amount of effort he put in.

But there is also a deeper way to understand why each person in the future will have a unique understanding of Hashem and His Torah. It is because each person has a different perception according to his unique soul-root (*shoresh neshamah*).

## WORKING OUR WAY UPWARDS VS. WORKING OUR WAY DOWNWARDS

One’s personal share is therefore comprised of a personal share in each of the the soul’s garments (beginning from the faculty of action, speech, and thought) as well as a personal share in each of the soul’s faculties and levels, all the way to the deepest level of the soul, which is recognition of the Creator – the Yechidah-level of the soul.

68 Gemara Taanis 31a

69 Gemara Megillah 6b

through a garment. This “garment” is the essentially our soul’s deep recognition of Hashem, and each person has a certain subtle aspect of Hashem’s revelation that only he can access, a certain revelation of Hashem which no one else but him can know of.

This is the depth of what Chazal taught that in the future, Hashem will make a circle for the tzaddikim and sit among them in Gan Eden, and each of the tzaddikim will point with his finger and say “This is Hashem, we hoped for him.” [This will contain both a collective and individual revelation of Hashem.] Hashem will be in the center of the circle, so if a line is drawn to each tzaddik sitting around the circle, the line will be of equal distance to each tzaddik. There are many lines to get to the center of the circle, and each person will have his own line. That line will connect the created being with the Creator. This is why the word “line”, kav, is from the word tikva, hope, “Hope to Hashem”, “To Your salvation I hoped, Hashem”. Each person will point with his finger – which has the shape of a straight line. Each person will not have an equal revelation of Hashem, for it will be experienced uniquely by each person: “This is Hashem, we hoped for Him” – each person will have his own “line”, his own unique connection to Hashem [and recognition of Him].

On a simple level, the reason that this revelation of the Creator will not be equal for each person is because each person has his own avodah, and according to the amount of avodah one put in, that is how much he will be rewarded. “Today is for doing, and tomorrow is for receiving their reward.” Since every person has a different “work” to do, each person will be “paid” according to the work he put in. The main “payment” will be to enjoy the revelation of G-dliness, and that will extend to the revelation of the Torah’s secrets, and each person will have different perception in this. Understanding Torah is granted based on how much effort one put in, “You toiled, you found”, each person has his own efforts in Torah and thereby “find” understanding in Torah according to the amount of effort he put in.

But there is also a deeper way to understand why each person in the future will have a unique understanding of Hashem and His Torah. It is because each person has a different perception according to his unique soul-root (shoresh neshamah).

## WORKING OUR WAY UPWARDS VS. WORKING OUR WAY DOWNWARDS

One’s personal share is therefore comprised of a personal share in each of the the soul’s garments (beginning from the faculty of action, speech, and thought) as well as a personal share in each of the soul’s faculties and levels, all the way to the deepest level of the soul, which is recognition of the Creator – the Yechidah-level of the soul.

The function of the Yechidah-level of our soul is to recognize our Creator, which contains a unique

revelation that only you can know of and no one else. The root of the word Yechidah, which is the word “*Yachid*”, means “unique” – implying a unique recognition of the Creator that only your soul can know of, since this recognition differs with each individual soul. Every soul has its own unique recognition of Hashem that it must come to, and this is the ultimate goal of all our life.

[There are two ways to get there: working our way upwards, from below to above, and working our way downwards, from above to below.] Working our way upwards, all of our soul-faculties are for the ultimate purpose of reaching our personal recognition of Hashem. When one works hard at figuring out his personal share, the rest of his soul becomes part of the structure that he is building in order to get to the top ‘floor’ – and there is where a person reaches Hashem. There, a person reaches the root of his personal share.

The other way is to work our way downwards, by first reaching our personal recognition of Hashem and then reaching our personal share in the Torah.

The light of the future is to have a personal recognition of Hashem. Three people experienced a semblance of the Next World on this world – Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov.<sup>70</sup> Each of them composed one of the three daily prayers. This is because each of them had their personal recognition of Hashem. Thus they lived a life of the future already on this world.

Most people are working their way upwards, from below to above. They go step by step, figuring out what’s suitable for them personally, through external and internal clarification: externally, by thinking about it, and internally, by developing the internal powers that are necessary in order to clarify it [as explained in previous lessons]. When one reaches his personal share in something, he now has the key to rise to the next level, and there he must once again work hard at reaching his personal share, working his way upwards.

The path of going “from below to above” – working your way upwards - takes a lot of effort and inner work, because the person will feel like he is in dark, looking for the light. If a person is *zocheh*, he starts from above. This can happen either from working step-by-step to get to the highest level, or because he has “jumped” there – through having *mesirus nefesh*. The power of *mesirus nefesh* is the root of skipping all levels, and it enables one to penetrate to the depths of his soul, and there a person can have a clear recognition of his personal share in recognizing the Creator, a unique recognition that no one else has.

This is something that cannot be described in words. “To my heart I revealed it, to my mouth I did not reveal it.” Though we cannot adequately describe it with our mouth, our soul knows what it is and recognizes it completely. It is a recognition that takes place at the depth of our soul. It is a recognition of something intrinsic that is beyond any kind of expression or definition.

When this light is accessed, one's personal share will illuminate from there. It enables one to reach a recognition that is much clearer than the path from below to above. After one is at this highest place, he can return to the lower levels and shine his unique recognition of the Creator upon all areas of his life. He will be "*walking in front of Hashem, in the lands of the living*", with Him and near Him. In every aspect of his soul, he will be walking with his *Yechidah*-awareness, and then he will see in each aspect a personal recognition of Hashem. From that place he will see reality, absorbing the depths of his soul and understanding even his outermost aspects. In everything he sees, in all of Creation, he will see his own personal share.

This is what our souls hope for. If one is not as worthy of this, he is not conscious of this inborn desire of the soul and it remains as a deep subconscious desire in his soul. If one becomes worthy of this, he becomes conscious of his soul's desire for this and he will be walking with Hashem in all areas of his life. The last chapter of *Mesilas Yesharim* explains that naturally a person cannot be connected with Hashem all the time since he has a materialistic body that gets in the way, which makes him forget about the Creator – meaning that he forgets about his inward connection to the Creator - but when a person is living at the level of *d'veykus* in Hashem, it begins with effort and eventually turns effortless and becomes a gift to him.

What is the depth of this gift that one is rewarded with? When one is strongly accessing a certain spiritual level, he will only have it constantly if he lives in the world of souls, where it becomes his normal level. But if a person is found on This World, his attachment to the physical will prevent the spiritual from becoming his normal level. Being involved with his own physicality, as well as the mere involvement with the mundane affairs of others, will prevent him from having clarity about the spiritual world. But when one reaches his personal share in recognizing the Creator, he is walking the world "alone", though actively he may be involved with people.

## LIVING INTERNALLY IN YOUR PERSONAL SHARE

The *Chovos HaLevovos* says that the *Chassid* (devout Jew) lives alone with Hashem even as he walks among many others. It seems that this is an ability to simply disconnect from one's surroundings, and although that is true, there is more to it. It is because when one is living with his unique recognition of the Creator, and he is connected to his personal share in every aspect of his life, he is really living in an internal world within the world we walk on.

This resembles the concept of living in an "Ark of Noach" on this world, but it is even more than that. In the Ark of Noach there was Noach and his family (Shem, Cham, Yefes and their families) and all of the animals there. But having a personal, unique connection with Hashem is the true, inner Ark of Noach that closes off a person from all of the negative influences on our world today. Though it cannot close off a person totally, it is very effective. For when a person is attached to his individual

connection with Hashem, even as he's among people he remains connected to his internal world - to his personal share.

So while a person can be found externally with others, and inwardly he needs to be in a state of loving the rest of the Jewish people - but even within his love for others, he should make sure not to lose his "individual" status. Though a person can be in a state of being unified with everyone, he can also be separated from them even within that unity. He walks together with the rest of the world, together with his individuality. Wherever one goes, one can remain alone in his individuality. Even if momentarily he gets bombarded with something, in most cases he can quickly and easily return to his Torah learning, to his internal world, to a place where he is found alone and individual.

## SURVIVING THE WORLD'S NEGATIVE INFLUENCES TODAY

This is a subtle approach that keeps a person from being mixed with the world and all the lowliness of materialism that is found in the world in general, and in this last generation especially. Without being able to do this, one will be very influenced by his social surroundings and environment. The more external way to avoid the negative influences of the world today is to view them as being not normal and immature and running after nonsense, enabling one to feel disconnected from the world. But the approach being explained here is the inner way to view the world, to walk with Hashem constantly throughout one's life.

**Though the world is currently found in the "fiftieth gate of impurity", one can be found in the fiftieth gate of holiness – in the individuality of his soul, when he is in touch with his unique aspects, which is the very antithesis to the fiftieth gate of impurity.<sup>71</sup>** This is an awesome, profound

71 Editor's Note: Due to the vast scope of the topic, some background may be helpful to understand this better. The "50th gate of impurity" is also called "Eirev Rav", a giant mixture of negative and spiritually harmful forces, named after the evil souls of the Erev Rav who are the worst souls within Amalek who are at war with Hashem and His Torah and His people. The method of destruction that the Eirev Rav uses is to mix others into their influences and thereby swallow them up to the 'point of no return'. Throughout the generations, ever since the devious influences of the Eirev Rav have entered our world (first with the Serpent, who is the root of the Eirev Rav, and later with the sin with the Golden Calf), the souls of the Jewish people through all their different lifetimes and soul-reincarnations have been going through a "sorting process" to prove their loyalty to Hashem, if they wish to be part of Hashem's people or part of the Eirev Rav (who are Amalekites), and this is by going through the general tests of the times that are given to each generation. The Ohr HaChaim (Shemos 3:8) and others taught that in the final generation, the final level of defilement and moral depravity, called the "50th level of impurity" - a flood of terribly evil influences and denial of G-d and worldviews diametrically opposed to the Torah way of life - will be released upon the world. Rebbi Nossan of Bresslev applied the term "50th level of impurity" to the Haskalah (Enlightenment), which gave birth to Reform and Conservative movements, which introduced a flood of heresy into the Jewish people, taking many would-be observant Jews with it. The Chazon Ish and Satmar Rebbe zt"l applied the term 50th level of impurity to the Zionist movement, and in our times, where immorality fills the world, the devices of modern technology (internet-capable devices) as the Rav shlit"l and others have stated clearly, is the latest tool of the 50th gate of impurity to ensnare Jewish souls into it. This is all the outcome of the unseen harmful evil force called the "Eirev Rav" which is attempting to suck the Jewish people into its churning whirlpool of negative influences, and withstanding the materialistic culture and moral depravity in our times is therefore the way for each individual to prove himself loyal to Hashem and not join with all that the Eirev Rav has to offer us. The key to empower ourselves to withstand the 50th level of impurity that is the Eirev Rav in our times is by using the 50th level of holiness. There are several ways to use it, and in this lesson, the Rav has explained it in terms of accessing the holy

depth by which a person can be able to walk on this world and not become mixed with the rest of the society today. Though the Sages taught “One should always be like-minded with others”<sup>72</sup>, that is only if he can remain with his individuality, **because when he remains with his individuality he never really becomes mixed with the reality around him.**

To illustrate the idea, in the laws of *taaruvos* (mixtures of kosher with non-kosher), a being is not able to have a status of being nullified to a mixture. When something is considered to be its own being, it always stands on its own and it cannot become nullified to the mixture it’s in. [By contrast, if it is not its own being, it becomes “nullified to the majority” of the mixture]. The idea to take out from this is that when a person is living with his individuality and uniqueness, he does not become mixed with others, since one’s individuality by its very definition cannot become mixed. A mixture is only possible where each of the elements in the mixture are similar, but if something is unique, it is the antithesis of becoming part of a mixture.

When one reaches his uniqueness and individuality, this is not only in a certain detail or aspect where one’s individuality is recognizable. It is a revelation of the *Yechidah*-level of the soul, one’s personal share, in every aspect, starting from the highest level – one’s personal recognition of Hashem – all the way down to one’s unique aspects. If it wouldn’t be, then when a person reaches a certain point where he can’t be an “individual”, then he becomes mixed with those around him. What will happen to him then? He will become “nullified to the majority”, just like in a mixture (he ceases to exist, and he simply becomes melted into society around him). But when one’s individuality is shining strongly in all areas and throughout his soul (starting from his unique relationship and recognition of Hashem, all the way down to his unique aspects), he will always be his own separate entity, and then he will be able to live regularly all the time attached with Hashem.

Of course, this does not mean that one can ignore the fact that he lives on a material, physical world with all that it entails, and one will always have to take care of various responsibilities of life that bombard him. But **in the depths of his soul, he can be living as an entirely separate reality from all those around him. Really, every single person is designed to live in this way, and it is just that each person has to reach this internal place if he wants to be saved from getting mixed together with the rest of the world.**

## SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Let us now summarize. The internal way of living is to live one’s personal share. The root of one’s personal share is in the *Yechidah*-level of the soul, which extends to all others of the soul and all areas of life [meaning that one’s personal, unique relationship with Hashem can be extended to all areas of

---

“individuality” within us – to be connected with our individual aspects, namely, for each person to access their unique relationship with Hashem which only that individual can know of.

72 *Talmud Bavli Kesubos 17a*

life, so that one can discover a unique relationship with Hashem in every single area he comes across].

To the extent that there are individuals who are accessing this power in their souls – not just by merely accessing their uniqueness, but by discovering their unique relationship with Hashem – from there, they will be able to illuminate all parts of his soul with this individuality that they have reached.

This is the deep, internal work of drawing closer to one’s personal Redemption in every area, and understandably it is also the sparks of the revelation of the collective Redemption for *Klal Yisrael*.

Let us end off with a *tefillah* that Hashem should merit us to understand the lessons here and even more so, to realize that “it is in your mouth and in your heart to do it”, that each person should merit recognizing his personal share.

**It is upon us to know that eventually each of us will be *zocheh* to it, and the only question is when. Will we be *zocheh* to this before Mashiach comes, or with his arrival? One thing is certain – anyone who will be *zocheh* to see the Light of Mashiach, with the revelation of Mashiach, will merit exactly this: He will merit reaching his own personal share, besides for the general light of the complete revelation of Hashem’s Presence that will come to the world.**

May it be Hashem’s will that each individual should be *zocheh* to reach their personal share, truly and wholesomely.

## Q&A

**QUESTION 1:** The Rav explained in this lesson that the way to reach the highest level of one’s personal share (Yechidah) is through *mesirus nefesh*. Does that mean that all the previous lessons do not require using the power of *mesirus nefesh* (and just using the ability of “mind-and-heart integration” as the Rav explained)?

**RAV’S ANSWER:** There are two steps to get to *mesirus nefesh* – either by climbing one level to another until one gets to the level of *mesirus nefesh*, or by “jumping” there through having a clear understanding of the level. In order to acquire any level fully, one needs *mesirus nefesh*. No level can be acquired fully without *mesirus nefesh*. But there is the regular, step-by-step *avodah* that a person has to understand and perceive what a level is (as it is written, “*Through wisdom, a home is built*”), building the structure with thinking and understanding – but in order to acquire any level fully, one needs to be *moser nefesh* for that level. Even more so, after one has built a large part of the “structure”, there is an *avodah* of *mesirus nefesh* to reach Hashem, and one who isn’t *moser nefesh* won’t acquire any level fully.

**QUESTION 2:** It is possible for one to “reach Hashem” [a personal, unique relationship with Him] without “reaching oneself”?

**RAV'S ANSWER:** It is possible when one “jumps” there [our sefarim *hakedoshim* refer to this as *dilug*, skipping or jumping past the regular system of orderly growth], and this is accessed when a person has *mesirus nefesh*. However, when one “jumps”, he has skipped many levels of growth, so many times when a person tries to only act with *mesirus nefesh* and he never builds himself from within, he is taking a risky path, because on one hand he is living at the highest heights but on the other hand he does not have the “structure”, and easily he can fall and end up in a bad place. When there is no structure, he’s hanging onto the air with nothing to hold onto so he is bound to fall.

**QUESTION 3:** How is a person able to feel that he is “unique” in his relationship with Hashem if another person also has a unique relationship with Hashem? How can a person ever be a unique individual?

**RAV'S ANSWER:** Each of us is an individual, and in that way all of us are similar to each other, because all of us can become unique individuals! We can be as different from each other as can be, yet we are utterly similar to each other at the same time. We are each so different from each other because each of us is unique and no one else is like you exactly, but at the same time, all of us are very similar to each other because all of us share one common property: all of us are unique!

**QUESTION 4:** This sounds like a contradiction. If I am truly an individual, then the other doesn't exist.

**RAV'S ANSWER:** Why doesn't the other exist? You are unique at one thing while he is unique at another. If both of you would be the same unique at something, then that would be a contradiction. But if Reuven is a unique individual when it comes to something and Shimon is a unique individual at something else, then it is not a contradiction to say that they are both unique individuals.

**QUESTION 5:** The previous lesson explained 4 ways to internalize knowledge into the heart: (1) The ability of “like water grinding a stone”, to keep repeating a thought until it sinks in. (2) Clarity. (3) Fixing the mind on something. (4) “Feeling out” information. - Are each of these paths dependent on one's personal soul-root, like are there certain kinds of people who are meant to take any one of these approaches more than the other? And, are all these 4 paths needed in order to complete the other? If a person is missing clarity, for example, does that mean that he will gain nothing from using any of the other paths mentioned?

**RAV'S ANSWER:** Certainly, every person will have one particular way that's more tailored to their personal soul-root and personal share. But, every person really needs all of these paths. The only question is how much one needs to make use of each of these paths – and that depends on every person, since every person has a different soul-root and personal share.