

P A R T T H R E E

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BUILDING

A Sanctuary In The Heart

A GUIDE TO SELF-IMPROVEMENT

D'VEYKUS WITH HASHEM, TORAH, TEFILLAH
CHESSED, MUSSAR AND EMUNAH

UNEDITED SPECIAL INTERNET EDITION

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Editor's Preface

Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh (“Building A Sanctuary In The Heart”), Parts One and Two, are sefarim that have received enormous acclaim worldwide. These are sefarim that speak to Jews from all walks of life. Really, we all want to serve Hashem and be close to Him, but we don't always know how. We need a kind of “walkthrough” through the general map in what it means to serve the Creator. From an author who has experience with students who desire to serve Hashem, come these unique *sefarim* - which have to come fill a void: *How do I become close to Hashem? How do I work on myself? What should I start with?*”

The previous two *Bilvavi* volumes published are the “classic” volumes of the series, laying the general outline of how to serve Hashem. Here we present *Bilvavi Part III*, previously published in Hebrew as “*Sulam shel Aliyah*” (“Ladder of Growth”), penned by the author as a separate volume, and later made incorporated into the *Bilvavi* series, to become the “third” volume of the *Bilvavi* series. Therefore, it is not necessarily to be understood as a “sequel” to the previous volumes, but rather as a volume that can stand on its own.

This current volume explains a “ladder of growth” in serving the Creator, composed by the author, which explains how a person can gradually attain *d'veykus* (attachment) with Hashem, with specific emphasis on the areas of learning Torah, prayer, kindness, *mussar*, and *emunah*.

May the study of this *sefer* help us come closer to the Creator in true *d'veykus* in all areas of our *avodas Hashem*.



*Section 1:
Ladder of Growth*

1.1 | To Love Hashem

Loving Hashem

The Torah says, “*And you shall love Hashem with all your heart*” (Devarim 6:5). There is a *mitzvah* to love Hashem “with all your heart”. The sefer *Michtav M’Eliyahu* writes, however, that few people in our generation reach this level. [Even so], it is [still] impossible for a person to really live life when he does not love Hashem.

There are three major “pillars” that we have when it comes to serving Hashem: *yirah* (awe of Hashem), *ahavas Hashem* (to love Hashem), and *d’veykus* (attachment to Hashem). That is to say, even if a person reaches the level that is *yirah* (may Hashem grant all of us to reach it), this is not enough, because he would still lack the other two pillars that are necessary: love for Hashem, and attachment to Hashem.

We will first be introduced to the concept of loving Hashem, so that we can come to appreciate its worth. If a person understands it, he can then develop a desire to love Hashem - for two reasons:

(1) If a person just stays in his current situation and continues to live his life without loving Hashem, his life will not be a real life. Just like a car cannot drive with one wheel, so is it impossible for a person to really live life with just awe of Hashem, because he will feel that he is lacking a vital necessity in life. (2) Only after *contemplating* the importance of loving Hashem, can a person develop a will to acquire it.

What Does It Mean To Love G-d?

First, we will explain what love of Hashem is. Then, G-d willing, we will also give practical applications how to acquire it.

“Love” in Hebrew, is called “*ahavah*”, which has the same numerical value in Hebrew as the word “*echad*”, “one”. The connection is that “love” means to be “one” with another. We love our children naturally because we feel a certain oneness with them, that they are a part of us. We also find that the love between a husband and wife is that they are considered to be “one” with each other, as it is written, “*A bone from my bone, flesh from my flesh.*” (Beraishis 3: 23). So the meaning of “love” is to feel “one” with the beloved.

That was a parable, but now let us return to our topic: loving Hashem. Loving Hashem is to feel a certain sense of being “one” with Him.

The nation of Israel is sometimes called the bride of Hashem, as it says, “*I remember the kindness of your youth, the love of a bride.*” (Yirmiyahu 2:2). Sometimes we find that the children of Israel are called “*My firstborn son, Israel.*” Just as there is love and a sense of oneness between a groom and bride and a father to his daughter, so is there love and oneness between Hashem and our nation.

Only The Soul Can Love Hashem

We will expand upon these words.

A person consists of two parts: a *guf* (body) and a *neshamah* (soul). The body by nature is materialistic, and its nature is to differ from its source: Hashem. But the soul is called a “portion of G-d from Above” (*cheilek eloka mimaal*). Since our soul is a “portion of G-d”, only the soul within us can love Hashem. But after accessing the soul’s love for Hashem, a person after can also merit a higher level - to purify even his body as well, as it is written, “*My heart and flesh shall sing to the living G-d.*”

In order for a person to love Hashem, a person can’t do this through his physical body, because the body is naturally separated from the Creator. Only the soul, which is considered to be a “portion” of Hashem, can bring a person to love Hashem [as opposed to the body], because only the soul in a person can become “one” with Hashem.

The Question

However, many people, (who have not yet reached the level of loving Hashem), have a question: How can a person love Hashem through his soul, if the soul is beyond the grasp of people? How can we use the soul, when we don’t really know what it is?

The truth is, however, that this question can only bother someone who is far from his own self. A person who has this question is far from his own soul, and that is why he thinks that the soul is inaccessible. Really, the soul can be reached totally, and it is the actual essence of a person – who he really is. Anyone who doesn’t feel his own soul has never tasted life on this world.

In order for a person to love Hashem, a person must use his soul, and not his body. We must therefore learn how to reach into ourselves – our souls – which is our very essence. When a person accesses his soul, he can come to love Hashem, a result of becoming one with Him. This will be explained in the next chapter.

1.2 | *Shedding The Body and Uncovering The Soul*

The Two Parts Of A Person – Body And Soul

The Ramchal writes (*Derech Hashem* 1:3), “Hashem decreed that a man be made of two opposites – the intellectual soul and the earthly body; each one is pulled to its own nature. The body is drawn toward materialism, and the soul is drawn toward intellect. There is a war between these two forces, and a man has the ability to lower his materialism and use his intellect and soul.”

We have explained earlier that the only way for a person to reach Hashem is through his soul. Now we must explain what prevents a person from accessing his soul.

The Ramchal writes that if a person lets his materialism overcome him, his body becomes baser, and his soul as well becomes baser with it. To indulge in materialism covers up the soul from being revealed. Let us explain this concept further.

A person has three general parts to himself: his *neshamah* (soul), his *seichel* (intellect), and his *guf* (body). (As an aside, within the intellect itself, there is a natural intellect, and there is the soul’s intellect). Originally, when a person is a baby, only the body is functioning. After some growth, his intellect opens. A person then gains free will to choose between his intellect and his bodily desires. (In the next step we will discuss how to go from the intellect to the soul).

This makes the difference between many people. Most people are driven by their body, and their intellect is only viewed as only a secondary function. There are also those who were born with a strong amount of intellect, and their intellect rules. But even those people who are more intellectual by nature haven’t necessarily freed themselves from being ruled by the body. Intellectuals still have to work on getting their intellect to override the body.

There are always two tools needed to put the intellect in charge: “*Remove yourself from evil*”, and “*do good*”. Removing oneself from evil is accomplished by nullifying the body, and the stage of “do good” is accomplished by putting the intellect in charge and giving it strength – via the power of contemplation (*hisbonenus*).

Distancing From The Physical

We will explain this more.

The Ramchal writes (*Mesillas Yescharim*, chapter 3), “Abstinence (*perishus*) is an act of piety (*chassidus*).” (Piety is a form of loving Hashem; see *Mesillas Yescharim*, chapter 18). This is the way to begin entering our inner world, the world of the soul: by leaving the external, and entering the internal.

What is abstinence (*perishus*)? The Ramchal says, “Whatever is not necessary to survive on this world should be distanced... to judge this one must measure on his own.”

A person, though, should not forget the fundamental rule of the Ramchal (*Mesillas Yescharim*: 16), “One must be careful in trying to acquire abstinence, that he should not jump in one moment to another end; for this will not gain

him anything. Rather, he should slowly abstain, little by little, today he should abstain a little and tomorrow a drop more, until he becomes accustomed to it.”

This is how to remove oneself from evil: to abstain from anything materialistic that isn't necessary (the more a person grows, the more he will see that he needs less and less...), and this will bring him to nullify his body.

The Intellect Must Be Always Functioning

Now we will explain how to “do good”: we must open the intellect. There are two parts to this: the amount of it, and the depth of it.

Regarding amount of it, the Ramchal writes (in sefer *Derech Eitz Chaim*), “The wise ones walk and are constantly thinking; they never cease in their knowledge, and therefore they are successful.” In other words, the intellect should be functioning at all times. A person has to wage a battle within himself for this, and not let his thinking abilities weaken. (One must be careful in this not to try to do this too quickly, as we explained regarding abstinence).

That is only regarding the *amount* of thinking. But an even more difficult aspect is the *depth* of thinking.

Our thoughts need to become filled with more depth, as opposed to remaining superficial. A person should train himself to think thoughts about Torah, awe of Hashem, love of Hashem, and of how he can serve Hashem better - at all times. In any situation, a person should be thinking about one of the three pillars the world stands on: Torah, Avodah\service of Hashem, and *chesed*\kindness.

It is an inner struggle to get used to, but when one eventually overcomes this struggle, it will become natural to a person. The body's control over the person will then be weakened after getting used to this, and the intellect will then be in control.

We should not forget the rule, “All beginnings are hard.” But, we should also remember that this hardship, too, is only in the beginning!

Awareness Of Our Thoughts

There are our thoughts, and then there are signs that tell us about our thoughts. A person might very well be learning a section in Gemara and his thoughts are working properly, but he is not *aware* of his thoughts. The main focus of this *avodah* we are discussing is thus not on the simple thought process, but on the awareness of the thoughts: a person should have awareness to what he is thinking.

1.3 | *Developing Our Power of Thought*

“And You Will Know Today”

After a person gets his intellect to be in control over his impulses, now a person can attempt to fulfill the meaning of the verse, “*And you will know today, and you shall place it on your heart.*”

To explain what this entails, there are three functions in our mind: *chochmah* (wisdom), *binah* (contemplation), and *da’as* (knowledge).

Chochmah is our understanding based on the way we read or hear something. *Binah* is a greater depth of perception of the matter in its entirety. *Da’as* is the result of all of this: how it affects us. *Da’as* is when the thoughts are focused now on what we have learned, and the wisdom becomes existent in our focus now. This is not measured by how much time we spend on thinking of it, but rather by how much we have internalized it in our minds. (For example, someone whose Torah became a “*da’as*” by him is always thinking in it).

The *posuk* says “*And you will know today, and you shall place it on your heart.*” The Torah is telling us here that the way to place something on your heart is through “knowledge” of the matter – *da’as* - as opposed to “*chochmah*\wisdom” or “*binah*\contemplation” of the matter. Only *daas*, “knowledge”, can turn mere intellectual knowledge into a feeling in the heart. By strengthening the mind’s *da’as*, the matter can become internalized in the heart, causing a person to feel the Creator more.

Pure Thoughts

It is thus not enough for a person to only think in thoughts of Torah, awe and love of Hashem and of our service to Him. A person has to also make sure that his thought process is strong, pure, and clear.

It is difficult for a person to have pure thoughts, though, if he has never yet acquired any pure thought. However, a person should still make the effort, on his level, to try to purify his thoughts – even though he currently doesn’t have purified thoughts.

One of the things that prevent a person from having clear thoughts is the many various daily issues that we have. The nature of a person is that he can’t concentrate on many things at once, and it is thus too difficult to jump from one thing to another. For example, a person shouldn’t ask his Rebbi a question on a topic that his Rebbi is not studying (Talmud, Shabbos 3b), and Rashi explains that this is because “his heart is not focused on the topic.”

This is because our brain has an easy time to jump from one topic to another, but our heart has a difficulty with this. A person who only uses his **brain\mind** his whole life won’t experience difficulty in this, as he doesn’t pay attention to his heart anyway. But since a person’s mind must ultimately make use of our **heart** as well to think (because a Jew has to internalize his mind’s knowledge into his heart), it is thus very hard to use the mind to think about so much at once, because our heart isn’t meant for this.

A Person Must Only Delve Into One Topic At Hand

What we are saying (not to jump between different matters too much with the mind) applies to two things: In worldly matters, as well as when it comes to spiritual matters.

It can affect worldly matters as follows. In today's times, the world is full of various issues that make us frazzled: Paying bills, being all the time on the home phone and cellphone, and what to buy for the home. These are some of the issues that bog us down. People are very busy in today's times, and they have no inner peace. These are some of the huge problems that prevent a clear thought process. Clear thoughts can only be in one who is calm and at peace, but people can't think clearly because they often lack an inner peace.

What is the advice we can give for this problem? A person has to remove from himself whatever he doesn't need. "*It is good to have dark bread and be at peace with it.*" The first thing that a person needs in order to serve Hashem is to be calm and at peace! Even the things that we need to do should have a limited time space in our life, and the rest of the day should be spent only in thoughts of how we can serve the Creator.

This is a little hard to work on at first, because our thoughts come to us very fast, and they are hard to get a control of. We will need to work hard on this and remove from ourselves the thoughts about things we don't really need. This should be done slowly, in steps.

Control Over The Thought Process

People also today have a problem even when they think too much about spiritual matters, and they frazzle their minds in doing so.

For example, it is common for a person to be involved in many types of learning when he learns Torah: learning in-depth (*iyun*), learning on a basic level (*bekius*), learning *Halacha*, reviewing one's learning, learning *Mishmayos*, learning the laws of speech, etc. A person usually wants to know all of this very well, and to be an expert in everything he is learning. But it is not possible for his **heart** to be in all these things at once! One should therefore choose one of these areas to work on, and place his heart entirely into that one area which he wants to work on.

(If a person would be on a higher level and he would learn Torah for its own sake, *lishmah*, then this wouldn't be a problem, because the fact that he learns Torah for its own sake is internalized in his heart and it can connect everything together. But this is only true for a person who learns Torah *lishmah* on a constant basis).

A person should be careful that his high amount of thinking isn't taking away from his "**heart.**" Rashi says precisely that "the heart" cannot think of too much at once, not "the mind", because it is the **heart** of a person which needs to put into the topic of learning at hand. If a person merits the peace of mind of being involved in only one area of learning that he chooses to focus on, and he spends his whole focus on just this one area - then eventually his mind will open up, and his mind will then let matters enter his heart.

Soon will we explain what type of thoughts a person can think in order to uproot matters that block the heart from being reached.

1.4 | *Contemplating Divine Providence*

Faith In Divine Providence

In this chapter, we will explain the thoughts that a person should always have at all times – besides for the thoughts of learning Torah that a person needs to fill his mind with.

If a person wants to build himself, the first thing he needs to know is the words of Rav Chanina (Talmud, Chullin 7b): “A person can only put his finger down only if it was announced in heaven, for it says, “Hashem prepares the footsteps of man” (Tehillim: 37), for it says, “As for man, what does he know of his way.” (Mishlei, 20). These words of Rav Chanina are not just an idea, but they help you build up a proper lifestyle. These words are a description of everything that happens to a person, every day: there is no such thing as coincidence, and everything has a precise reason why it happened.

We all know this concept, but a person has to work hard to live by these words. The more this fundamental concept becomes stronger, the more a person can build himself up with it.

Practical Advice On How To Live A Life Recognizing Divine Providence

Now let us reflect on how to live by these words. To give an example, a person gets up in the morning, prays, leaves his house to take the bus and is waiting for the bus, and often, the bus is late. The person is in a rush and he doesn't have much time, and he becomes anxious. But this is going against the rule of Rav Chanina!

A person has to truly believe in Divine Providence, that everything is from Hashem and that nothing happens by itself. He has to believe that everything that Hashem does is good, because He is only good and desires to be good to His creations.

(Even though we don't understand **how** in everything Hashem is being good to us, still, if a person would just think a little that it is not possible to understand the Creator – being that the human mind is limited and the Creator is unlimited in His wisdom, how can he ever understand? A person can only believe wholeheartedly that everything that Hashem does is good!).

Thus, there is thus no such thing as a “bad” event, and everything that happens to us is ultimately good; a person must think, “I don't understand how it is all good, but somehow, it is still good.”

Why should a person act anxious and impatient if really all is well? Nothing is “*b'dieved*” (happenstance) by Hashem. Everything is exacted by Hashem and thought out with His careful planning.

To work on this practically (but a more thinking person will figure it out himself, because he already lives by it): A person should think about this idea twenty times a day! In every instance he goes through, he should take a moment to think: “Everything was supposed to happen - and it was all good”.

This is how one will internalize faith in Hashem, in his mind and in his heart.

Prayer For All Matters

Someone who lives like this all his life should even aim for a higher level: since it has become clear to the person that everything is exacted by Hashem, it therefore follows that the address for everything is Hashem, and we have nothing do with anything else in creation except to be involved with Hashem.

Therefore – before doing any action, a person should always pray to Hashem and ask Him for mercy that he get what he wants in the best way possible.

How To Pray

We will give some examples of this.

A person sits down to learn Torah. How will he have energy to concentrate and learn properly? How will he understand the material properly without getting stuck? If a person knows that the only address to turn to for help is Hashem, he will automatically pray to Him that He help him in his learning and understand it well.

We will say another example. A person is leaving his house to get a few things taken care of. Often, things come up that take up his time. What should he do to get out of this problem? Before he leaves his house, he should pray a short prayer and say, “Master of the world, Help me that I should take care of everything quickly, so that my time not be wasted.”

A person should approach all areas in his life this way, and pray before anything he does, and he should also feel deeply that only Hashem can help him with anything.

This Is The Path Of Our Leaders

The reader should not think that this is strange. You should know that our great leaders did this many times a day, and constantly prayed before anything; they were thereby connected to Hashem all their lives and developed a strong connection to the Creator.

The words of this chapter were very fundamental, and they should be reviewed many times.

1.5 | *Ways To Attain Purity of Heart*

Purity of Heart

After a person has succeeded in internalizing the concept of Divine Providence in his heart, and he also prays before anything he does that Hashem should help him succeed, he should then learn how to purify his heart. We will explain how to do this, but first we should introduce this discussion with a few words.

The root of purifying the heart is to nullify the materialistic desires (*retzonos*). All the materialistic interests that a person naturally has, must become nullified.

A person consists of a body and soul. The body (or the animalistic part of the soul) and the soul each have their own separate desires. The soul desires spirituality, while the body wants to be materialistic. When a person is born, he naturally is pulled after the body's desires, and the soul's desires are hidden. The body is initially in charge, and covers over the soul. To correct this nature, a person must nullify his body's various *retzonos*, and when that happens, he can reveal his soul's *ratzon*.

Now we will explain how to do this.

1- Nullifying The Desires

The first thing a person should know is that there are two types of desires (*retzonos*). The true desire is the desire of the soul, as Chazal say, "Our will is to do Your will, but this yeast dough prevents us." Really, a person truly wants to do the Creator's will. But a person feels something else pulling him in the other direction, and this comes from the "Other Side" (*Sitra Achara*) – the evil force of impurity that is present in the body.

So a person must figure out where his desires are coming from: if they are stemming from his soul, or from his body.

After a person knows clearly where the desires come from, he must now work on nullifying them. He has to nullify them slowly, in steps and not all at once. The practical way to work on this is that every day one should do things intentionally against his will. (It was found in the writings of Reb Yeruchem Levovitz zt"l that he accepted upon himself to do five things every day against his own will).

A person who is more strong-minded should work first on areas that he knows that he is weak in. A weaker-minded person, however, should first work on areas that are easier to work on, and then slowly begin to work on the harder things. After some time, what was hard at first will become easy, because he will have gotten used to nullifying his desires.

What To Think As You're Breaking The Desire

Until now we have explained proper actions to take in how to do things intentionally against our will. Now we need to know about what to think when we are actually doing so.

First, a person needs to understand that just like a person's clothing is not the person himself, so a person should view his bodily interests: the bodily interests are only like "garments" upon his true desires. He must think that just as he would never want to do anything a wicked person wants to do, so does he not really want what his bodily desires "want".

In short, the way for a person to nullify his bodily desires is to realize, that these desires do not able to him to recognize his true self – for he is being controlled by a body with its strange desires, which conceals him from his own self.

2- Contemplating The True Desire

Another point needed in breaking bodily desires is to realize the meaning of King David's words, "*And as for me, closeness to G-d is good.*" The *Mesillas Yescharim* explains that "this is the only true good, and anything else that people consider to be good is false."

In practical terms, a person has to think that any desires that don't come from the soul, even if they seem good, are really not good at all. The Vilna Gaon said, "The world is like salty water: it looks like it satisfies, but it only causes more thirst." The only true good that exists is the soul's desire to get close to Hashem and to be attached to Him.

This point needs more contemplation, and the more a person works on it, the easier it will be to break the body's materialistic pursuits.

3- Seeking The Truth

Another point here, and the most important and highest point from all of these is, that a person should know that the truth always is found in what the soul wants; whereas the body's interests for material pursuits are nothing but falsehood. (Truth is anything that is the Creator's will, while falsehood is anything that goes against His will).

In more practical terms: a person was created to do his Creator's will, and the Creator's will is that he break the body's materialistic interests and only do what his soul wants. It is our job to do this because we serve the Creator. We should want to serve Him just for the sake of serving Him. Moshe our teacher is praised for reaching the perfect level of this, for he was called "*Moshe, My servant.*" He totally nullified himself to G-d. He nullified himself completely of all personal desires.

When a person does all this for a while, he will slowly reveal more and more the desires of his pure soul, which is the true desire - the desire to cleave to the Creator.

In the next chapter we will learn how to contemplate matters properly, after breaking the body's interests in various materialistic pursuits.

1.6 | *Attaining Closeness to Hashem*

Closeness To Hashem

After a person works for many months on breaking the body's desires for materialism, as explained in the previous chapter, he will feel in himself that his previous desires that were once so strong are now weakened. He will feel awakened to his inner will, which is his true will, the will to do his Creator's will.

It is now proper for a person to contemplate this properly, on his level, and we will now explain how to do this.

"Hashem Is Always Beside Me"

The *Rema* writes (*Orach Chaim* 1:1, cited from *Moreh Nevuchim*): "*Hashem is always beside me*" – this is a great rule of the Torah and in the levels of the righteous which walk before G-d.

"For a person's sitting and movements, when he is before the great King, as well as his words, are not according to his desire; for the way he is around his household and relatives are not the manner in which he talks in the presence of a king. Surely when a person reflects with his heart on the greatest King, the Holy One, Blessed Is He, whose honor fills the whole world, who stands upon him and watches him, for it is written, "*If a person will hide in a hiding place, do I not see Him, so says Hashem*"; a fear and trembling should immediately grip him, and he should be ashamed from Him, constantly." The *Vilna Gaon* explains that this is the entire description of the level reached by *tzaddikim* (the righteous).

We will try and explain how to make this practical. A big fundamental for a person to know is that the center of our lives is Hashem. On this fundamental, lays every aspect of life. This does not mean that a person should only learn Torah and do *mitzvos* all day. Although this is certainly true, it is not enough! If a person *only* learns Torah and does *mitzvos*, he is lacking the basics. He is like a body without a soul. He is learning Torah and doing *mitzvos*, but he is not thinking of Whose Torah he is learning, or why he is learning at all.

Of course, everyone knows that the Torah is the Creator's Torah, and that he is learning because that's what Hashem said to do (or simply because he is learning to gain respect from others), but that is not enough to know. He will still be something major. He is dry inside, for he never thinks all the time about the following major fundamental.

Before doing anything, a person must know *why* he is doing it. He should review that reason at least 20 times, and maybe even 100 times: the reason why he is doing it is because he wants to get close to Hashem!

However, a person needs to be careful and not lie to himself that he is doing it solely because Hashem commanded him to, when really he is doing it to gain honor. (We have specifically said all this now, after explaining how to break materialistic desires.)

If a person still feels that he does the *mitzvos* in order to gain honor, even after contemplating this, he should work on breaking that very desire for honor. He can do this by having both things in mind: he will try to do it for Hashem's sake, in addition to his own honor. The point is that he should not be doing an act of serving Hashem *entirely* to get honor from it.

To Think About Hashem In All Our Actions, Even In Learning

To summarize, before a person learns Torah or does a *mitzvah*, such as making a *berachah* (the benediction before food), he should think that he is doing it to get close to Hashem.

Sometimes it might even be necessary for one to take a break in middle of learning Torah in order to reflect on this, as the *Nefesh HaChaim* (4:7) writes, “During the time of learning Torah as well, a person has permission to make a short interruption so that his heart not forget awe of Hashem, which he accepted before he began to learn, and reflect anew on awe of Hashem.”

Feeling Dependent On Hashem

Another point that should be made here which is very important: A person should train himself to get used to thinking about Hashem in general. At first, some people will find this very strange. But remember, that all great righteous people lived by this.

Let us explain how to do this. There are a few points necessary to know about with this.

Firstly, a person should review to himself many times that Hashem is the central aspect of our lives. The purpose of everything is to get close to Him, and to cleave to Him and nullify our will. (And we need to nullify ourselves by integrating with Him, and not by merely nullifying our will alone). This is like the words of the Ramchal (*Mesillas Yesharim*: “There should be no other purpose in anything we do... other than to get close to Him.”

After internalizing this, a person must contemplate that “*His honor fills the world.*” This means that Hashem is everywhere, so “I” am always next to Him. (And if one doesn’t understand how this works, he should think: “Whether “I” understand it or not, it is still the truth”).

He should go over this in his mind many times, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* says: “A person should reflect on this matter when he sits, and when walks, and when he lays down, and when he gets up, in order that the truth of the matter should settle in his mind, which is to know that His Presence resides in every place, and we are standing before Him at all times.”

A person should review this fact many times and set aside times to review them, until it settles in his mind; eventually it will become natural to him by doing this, and he will live constantly with a true feeling that Hashem is by his side.

This is not in the imagination. It is only imagination to someone who isn’t on this level. But a person who has worked hard for a long time on breaking his desires and has purified his heart will slowly feel it, not just in his mind, but as a real feeling.

Additional Knowledge To Feel Hashem

There are some people with souls that find it very hard to think about Hashem unless they delve very deep into the matter on a very deep, intellectual level.

The advice for such people is that they should study the writings of the Ramchal, such as sefer *Daas Tevunos*, and sefer *Kelach Pischei Chochmah*, and the third gate of sefer *Nefesh HaChaim*. For a person of Chassidic root, he should learn the writings of the *Baal Shem Tov*, *Likutim Yikarim* and *Toras HaMagid*.

The common denominator between everyone is that all people need to have thoughts of Hashem settle in the mind, and this should become to each person the purpose of one's life.

1.7 | *Lishmah - Acting for Hashem's Sake*

Lishmah

After a person minimizes his personal desires, and he constantly thinks of Hashem, he should aim for an important aspect in serving Hashem: to serve Him “*lishmah*” – for Hashem’s sake. The concept of *lishmah*, “for Hashem’s sake” is well known, but its true meaning is not so known. We will explain how to reach it. (The words in this chapter are only for those who have reached whatever was said until now).

The root of all evil in creation is egoism; the “I” in a person. The greatest good in all of creation is the nullification of the ego – total nullification. The nature of every person is to be concerned for only himself. He thinks about himself; wherever he is and whatever he is dealing with, he views it in relation to himself.

This doesn’t necessarily mean that he doesn’t think of anyone else. It could be that he very well thinks of others, but he mainly thinks of himself. In whatever comes his way, a person naturally thinks of how he can gain from it for himself – whether it is a material or spiritual matter. He is focused on himself. (Anyone who doesn’t feel this way doesn’t know himself well; he is only aware of his external self, and hasn’t yet recognized his internal self).

Egoism Is A Contradiction To The Purpose Of Creation

However, a person was not created just for himself, but for his Creator. His entire existence is to fulfill the Creator’s will and not his own. Even if a person wouldn’t receive reward, he would still have to serve the Creator, because that is the Creator’s will, and a person just has to His will.

This is the truth. A person must internalize this, and it is impossible to escape this reality. A person has to humble himself to this fact of life. Anything that a person wants to do for himself is far from the truth, and to deviate even a little from the truth is to be totally far from the truth.

There are two contradicting forces in a person: darkness within, and truth within. Until now we were dealing with the force of darkness in person: that he likes to do things just for himself. But now we will deal with the force of truth, which is do truth for the sake of truth. (Someone who doesn’t feel that the truth doesn’t obligate him to do anything needs special guidance for that.)

A person must figure out what the truth is, and internalize it in his heart.

The Hardest Decision In Life

After a person clarifies what the truth is, he must accept a very hard decision, and it might be the hardest decision in all his life: He must decide that he is no longer living for himself, but only for his Creator.

He will surely experience difficulty after the decision and it will take time; he will also experience failures, and they won’t be small either. But still, the decision itself is very important and a fundamental point in a person’s life. It is going out of the “I” and into the world of the Creator. It is going out of a world of always being a taker, and

into a world of being a giver - until now he was living for himself, and now he is living for Hashem; and if he is worthy, he will afterwards merit to live his life for others as well.

Concentrating On Our Actions

After a person accepts the decision, his actions must reflect his decision. For example, if he goes onto a bus and there is only one seat, he should give it to another person, even though he got there first. He should never feel his ego, his “I”, at all. In everything he does he should only aim how to give satisfaction to the Creator.

In addition to changing one’s actions, he must also change his thoughts. In other words, even in what he must do, he should purify his thoughts by doing it to give satisfaction to the Creator; not for honor, not to feel like he’s a righteous person, not to get reward in the next world, and not even because he wants to be attached to the Creator for the sheer pleasure of it. He should only think that he wants to give satisfaction to the Creator in doing so.

This should be in his thoughts for all 24 hours of the day. Before anything he does, he should always think in his mind and heart: “I am doing this in order to give satisfaction to the Creator”.

To Live A Life Of Honoring Hashem

After a person gets used to this, he should accept upon himself a deeper point to work on: not only before anything he does should he think to only give satisfaction to the Creator, but that my very *existence* should be to give satisfaction to the Creator.

Just like businessmen who run after making money become so entangled in money that it becomes their whole reason for existence, and this makes them only think about money - so should a person think all the time that he wants to give satisfaction to the Creator, and think of how he can increase honor toward Heaven in the world.

One should get up in the morning with this thought, and think like this all the time. This should be an inner struggle which should give a person no rest.

Self-Sacrifice

If a person is worthy enough and he has reached all the levels until here, he can now proceed to the next level we are about to say: *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice).

Rebbi Akiva said as he died (upon sanctifying the name of Hashem): “All my days I waited to fulfill the *possuk*, “*With all your soul*” – of which the Sages expound, “Even if your soul has to be taken...”

A person’s entire ambition should be to do the Creator’s will, and increase honor toward Heaven, until he nullifies the ego totally, even if he has to give up his life for Hashem! Giving up one’s life means to give up either one’s physical life – or even one’s eternal life. This is reminiscent of the past righteous ones who gave up their portions in the World To Come in order to increase honor toward Heaven. They gave up anything for Hashem, and this was their whole goal in life.

To Truly Worry About Others

One who lives in this way is fulfilling the words of the *Mesillas Yescharim*, “It is proper for every pious individual to concentrate in his actions that they are for the good of his generation, that they should be worthy and be protected by them.” The Ramchal instituted in his yeshiva that the merit of learning in the yeshiva should act for the whole nation.

Many righteous people as well acted this way: they gave up their own spiritual reward so that others can be saved. That is true self-sacrifice others.

To summarize: a person should live only for Hashem and His nation of Israel, and not for himself. Anyone who lives like this will definitely reach his own soul. The body is essentially is all about worrying for oneself. But the more a person leaves his ego, the more he is connected to his soul. Only by working on serving Hashem *lishmah* can a person reach his own soul. May Hashem help us merit it.



Section 2:
Torah

2.1 | *Torah and D'veykus with Hashem*

A Person Must First Reflect On The Purpose Of His Life

The first thing a person needs to do is to contemplate what he wants to do with his life. A storeowner knows clearly that the reason why he has his store is to make money. A businessman is involved in business because he knows that he can't just lay idle all day. So must a person contemplate and think well into the purpose of his life, and what he wants to get out of life.

Of course, there are many people who live their lives to get honor or become rich. But we are not dealing with those kinds of ambitions; any sensible person knows that those people are far from the truth.

Many People Think That The Purpose Of Life Is "To Finish The Talmud In-Depth And Be Stringent In The Mitzvos"

We will probe this matter deeper. Many people will claim that they have a great drive to study Torah, know all of the Talmud in-depth, and perform all of the mitzvos properly, and with all the stringencies involved.

The Ramchal tells us, however, that there is more than that to a person's life. The Ramchal, in the beginning of his sefer, *Mesillas Yesharim*, writes: "The pillar of piety, and the root of wholesome service, is that he should truly clarify his purpose on this world, and to what he should place his outlook on, in all his life's toil. Behold, our Sages have told us that a person was not created except to have pleasure in Hashem."

He also writes, "It is therefore proper that one should devote all his doings to the Creator, and he should not have any other motivation in any of his actions, whether small or big, except to come to close to Hashem; until he pulls himself after the Creator like iron clings to a rock..."

The Purpose Of Man Is To Attach Himself To The Creator

Let us reflect on this. The Ramchal is telling us that the purpose of everything is to come close to Hashem and to have "pleasure in Him." This does not mean to say that one shouldn't know the Talmud; we know that the world can only stand on Torah learning. It must be, then, that the purpose of knowing the Torah is to cleave to Hashem (*d'veykus*).

There is an old argument that many raise. We know that "Hashem, Torah, and the Jewish people are one" (stated in the *Zohar*). So if a person learns Torah, it should follow that he is automatically attached to Hashem; after all, they are both intertwined. If so, it seems that a person doesn't have to strive for personal attachment to Hashem, because it is enough that he's attached to the Torah.

But this is a grave error that people make. According to this erroneous reasoning, a person could attach himself to the nation of Israel – which can surely be him, because his soul is part of the Jewish people – and then he won't have to learn Torah, basing it on the fact that "Hashem and the Jewish people are one." This is an absurd argument that someone might come up with.

It is therefore clear to anyone who seeks the truth that these words of the Zohar cannot be read simply. We need a vast amount of knowledge to figure out the meaning of those words, but the above attitude cannot be the meaning.

In The Mind Or In The Heart?

Another reason why people make the mistake of believing that attachment to the Torah alone is called *d'veykus* is, because people lack the understanding of what it means to have *d'veykus* in Hashem.

A person erroneously thinks that attachment to Hashem is in his thoughts, and he therefore thinks that if his thoughts are attached to the Torah, he is automatically attached to Hashem as well, since “Hashem and the Torah are one. The truth is, however, that being attached to Hashem means something else entirely.

True closeness to Hashem and attachment to Him are not in the mind; it is in the **heart**. Only someone who learns Torah “of the heart” – as it says, “*My heart saw great wisdom*” – can bring a person to become attached to Hashem.

True D'veykus With Hashem Is To Become Close To Him

To be attached to Hashem (*d'veykus*) is: to actually feel close to Him.

We will give a parable to explain this. Reuven is standing next to Shimon, and he is focusing entirely on the Shimon. Yet, he can still be far away from Shimon - as far away as the distance between the sky and the land! This is because his heart is not with him - only his mind. There can only be friendship between two people if their hearts are attached to each other and they love each other.

The lesson we can see from this is that it is not the place that distances or draws one closer to the Creator, but rather the quality of the bond; true love of Hashem is a connection to Hashem.

If a person's Torah learning is *only* with his mind, how can his Torah learning ever become attached to Hashem? Such a person is involved only with his mind, and he's not using his heart. Connection to Hashem involves the heart, and the mind and heart are worlds apart.

2.2 | *Learning Torah With Fear of Hashem*

All Benefits Of The Torah Are Only For One Who Learns Torah Lishmah (For Its Own Sake)

A person must know that all of the benefits are said about Torah learning, which Chazal describe in *Avos*, are only applicable to one who learns Torah *lishmah*, for its own sake. A person who doesn't learn Torah *lishmah* is not connected through his Torah learning to the Creator.

The *Nefesh HaChaim* (4: 6) says, "A person should learn and think in it to connect to his Creator, by connecting all his energy to speak to Hashem." The Torah can only connect one to the Creator only if that is the indeed the desire of the person: to connect through it to the Creator.

The Ramchal as well writes that when people learn Torah not for its own sake, "They are not doing anything at all, and in fact they are corrupting the order of creation. This is how Hashem designed creation, that only learning Torah for its own sake can be the key to reveal all Heavenly *oros* (illuminations)..."

The sefer *Avi Ezri* as well writes, "Although Chazal say "A person should learn Torah even not for its own sake, for that causes one to learn Torah for its own sake", and although learning not for the Torah's sake is a *mitzvah* as well, this is only said regarding the *mitzvah* of learning. But the actual benefits gained through learning Torah – such as being saved from evil traits such as jealousy, desire and honor, which take a person out of this world, can only come to one who learns Torah properly."

A person who doesn't learn Torah for its own sake isn't connected to Hashem in his Torah learning. Rav Chaim Vital writes in sefer *Shaarei Kedusha*, that anyone who says that he is learning Torah for its own sake is going against Rav Meir, for if he would really be learning for its own sake, he would merit many things, as stated in *Avos* (6:6).

One who hasn't merited any of those things is obviously not learning Torah for its own sake. So we don't find anyone whose Torah learning is truly and entirely connected with Hashem.

Torah Without Love And Awe Of Hashem Does Not Bring D'veykus To The Creator

Another fact that should be known is: What is the type of Torah learning that connects one to Hashem? The *sefarim hakedoshim* say in the name of the Zohar: "Torah without awe and love does not ascend to Above." A person can learn Torah his whole life, but if he doesn't truly fear or love Hashem, his learning cannot connect him to Hashem.

Maybe one will argue that most people who study Torah really love Hashem automatically. The sefer *Michtav M'Eliyahu* (Vol. I, p.50) writes, though, that this is not the reality: "There are very few who keep the *mitzvah* of loving Hashem." There are, unfortunately, very few people who love Hashem; and anyone who learns Torah but doesn't have a love for Hashem is not connected in his learning to Hashem.

In Order To Cleave To The Creator One Must Study Torah Will All His Energy

Another condition needed for a person's learning to be connected to Hashem is the words of the *Nefesh HaChaim*: "A person should think as he learns Torah that he is connected to Hashem in his learning, and this means to connect all his energy to Hashem..."

A person has to use "all his energy"; meaning, all his energies should be used for Torah. Without this, one cannot connect to the Creator. A person cannot be connected halfway; to be connected to Hashem means to be totally connected to him, and there is no such as thing as half connection.

Repentance Before Learning – Every Day

Another condition needed to connect one's learning to Hashem is the words of the *Nefesh HaChaim*: "This is the true way that Hashem has chosen. Any time a person begins to learn, he should sit for a short time with pure awe of Hashem, and confess his sins from the depths his heart, in order that his learning be holy and pure. Then he should connect his learning to Hashem."

Only if a person repents from the depths of his heart every day before he learns can his learning be connected to Hashem, because only a pure and holy Torah can connect a person to the Creator.

Interrupting Learning To Awaken Awe Of Hashem

Another condition necessary is the additional words of the *Nefesh HaChaim*, "Also, while a person is in middle of learning, he is given permission to make a short interruption, so to prevent himself from forgetting awe of Hashem that he accepted upon himself before learning, and he should now reflect anew in awe of Hashem."

Only one who has all these conditions can connect in his learning to Hashem.

To summarize, in order to have a true connection with Hashem, we need: (1) Learning Torah *lishmah*, for its own sake. (2) Before one learns, he should reflect upon awe or love of Hashem. (3) Before one learns, he should repent with all his heart. (4) In middle of learning, he should interrupt himself briefly to contemplate on awe of Hashem [all of this is explain in *Nefesh HaChaim*].

2.3 | *A Prayer Before Learning Torah*

Before Learning, One Should Pray To Merit The Truth

Another point that must be made is that the Torah cannot connect one to the Creator if it is not accompanied by *Tefillah* (prayer). The *Nefesh HaChaim* (4:7) writes that when a person wants to delve into learning a *halachah*, he should pray to Hashem that he merit a clear understanding of the *halachah* and arrive at the truth of the Torah.

His words are not only true when it comes to learning *halachah*; it applies to all areas of Torah. Before a person learns, he should pray a short prayer that Hashem merit him to truly understand the Torah. One who thinks that he doesn't need to pray to understand Torah doesn't understand what Torah is. A person who thinks that he doesn't need Hashem's help, and that he is smart enough to understand the Torah on his own, is missing a basic understanding of the very meaning of what Torah is.

The Torah is the Creator's wisdom. Man's wisdom and the Creator's wisdom are not the same, not just in amount, but in depth. We have no comprehension of Hashem's wisdom. The *Maharal* describes the Torah as a *seichel muvdat*, a "knowledge that is separate". The Torah's thinking is totally apart from the normal logical of people.

Even so, a person must still strive to understand it, even according with his limited human intellect. Chazal state that "It is not upon you to finish the work; but you are not permitted to exempt yourself from it." But a person has to know that he cannot really grasp even a drop of the ocean of the Creator's wisdom.

So the proper approach toward learning Torah is that a person should feel that if he would just use his own mind, he would understand very little. He must therefore ask Hashem for mercy, that he be opened up the gates of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. Only then is there hope for him to understand Torah with his feeble mind.

This does not contradict the fact that a person has to toil in Torah learning. A person must toil according to his abilities, and only after toiling in learning, combined with heartfelt prayers, will he merit Hashem's mercy and be granted wisdom to understand.

The Chazon Ish's Method Of Learning

The method of the Chazon Ish is well-known. He learned in his youth with his brother, who testified on him that after every time when he toiled greatly in the learning and could not figure something out, that they would go into a corner, lift their hands up to Hashem and beg Him that they see the truth, and he would then understand. The Chazon Ish also practiced his own words, in a letter which he wrote: "Learning and prayer are connected to each other; toiling in learning helps the light of prayer, and prayer helps the learning."

Anyone who doesn't do this (to *daven* to be helped with understanding the Torah) will never truly merit understanding Torah.

Why Did Hashem Make Torah Learning Have So Many Difficulties?

We will explain this more. Often a person is learning and arrives at a question he can't answer. Why did Hashem make it this way? Why does a person hit a mental block sometimes when he's learning? There can be three reasons for this:

- (1) The person learning might be impure from his sins, and the Torah cannot enter an impure vessel.
- (2) In order that he should toil even more in learning. (On a deeper note, this is the same as the first reason).
- (3) In order that he pray more.

We will explain. When a person is suffering physically, we understand that the purpose of the suffering is not that he suffer, but that he should pray more; if not for the suffering he would not have prayed with as much fervor, and that is why the suffering came to him: that he should pray now with fervor. (R' Yechezkel Levenstein zt"l would say this constantly).

The same thing applies to learning Torah. When a person has difficulty in the learning, the purpose is not the difficulty itself, but that it should bring him to recognize that "*He does not desire the might of the horse and does not want the thighs of a man.*" Even when a person feels that he is strong in Torah, it is undesirable to Hashem, as it is written, "*Hashem wants those who have awe of Him, those who await his kindness.*"

A person has to recognize that any form of suffering can bring him to the World To Come, whether it is physical suffering or spiritual suffering, such as having difficulty in learning. If a person has a difficulty in learning and he doesn't pray to Hashem, he is destroying the whole purpose of why he has the difficulty, and he doesn't understand that the whole purpose of why he has it so hard is to bring him closer to Hashem .

Cry To Understand The Torah

Another condition necessary to truly understand Torah is: to cry tears over it. A person has to pour forth his tears to Hashem that he should merit to truly understand Torah.

Chazal say (Bava Metzia 59a), "From the day the Temple was destroyed, although the Gates of Prayer were closed, the Gates of Tears were not closed, for it says, "*Hearken, Hashem, to my prayer, and listen to my calling, do not act deaf upon my tears.*" One who cries true tears to Hashem is guaranteed that his prayers will be heard.

At first it seems hard to produce tears. But after praying for a while and being persistent, eventually one's eyes will come to tears, and then his prayers will be answered quickly.

2.4 | *Learning Torah With Happiness (Part One)*

The Torah Is Only Acquired By Someone Who Rejoices In It

In order to succeed in anything in life, a person needs to be happy. If a person is sunken into a depression, he can't do anything. Not only is his heart closed up, but his mind as well cannot think clearly, and his memory is weak.

This applies by anything, but it is especially true when it comes to learning Torah. If a person is learning Torah but he's depressed, he can't grow in his learning. Only if he is happy in his learning can the Torah be absorbed into his very bloodstream and sustain him, and then he can grow.

There are huge differences between a sad person and a happy person. Although it is better to learn and be depressed than to be totally depressed and not learn at all, in order to truly acquire the Torah, a person must be happy in his learning.

Now we will explain how to acquire a true, inner happiness.

The Source For Depression

First of all, we have to figure out what causes depression. If a person wanted something, and he didn't get it, he feels that he is missing something. This feeling of missing something causes depression. What's the remedy to the problem?

(The truth is that everyone has this problem; just the difference between a healthy person and a depressed person is in the things that make them feel missing: what is considered "missing" something?)

Should a person just give in to everything he wants? This will not cure depression. Should he instead give up what he wants? That won't help either, because that will also just bring another depression.

The remedy to depression is that a person must understand that he doesn't have to "want" – in other words, he needs to recognize that what he "wants" is actually not a good thing.

Two Outlooks On Life

A person can look at life in one of two ways:

(1) To pursue whatever looks good. (2) To wonder: "Why am I created? What is the purpose of every event that happens to me? Why did Hashem bring me to such a situation?"

In the first way, if a person lacks something and doesn't get to fulfill a certain desire, than his life is the opposite of a good life. If he gets what he wants, then life is good, but if he doesn't get something he wants, he becomes sad.

But in the second way to view life, everything looks different. He will know that any situation that he is in has a purpose. He knows that whether I am wealthy or poor, peaceful or stressed, in every situation I am serving the Creator.

Also, such a person will not have to ask why Hashem made him poor and not wealthy, because he knows that Hashem made that decision, and since Hashem knows what He's doing, for He is infinitely wise. So every situation that he is in can always be good. He will be able to feel that "Even though I don't always understand why this situation is good, still, it is clear to me one thing: that the human intellect is limited, and cannot fathom Hashem's reason."

To sum it all up, one who always knows what the source of depression is will never be depressed, because he is sure that his situation is good.

Contemplation Every Day Removes Depression

Reading what we have said here just once will not automatically make one realize that all his suffering is good. In order to feel it and live it, a person must contemplate it for a long time.

He should spend 15 minutes a day to contemplate what we have said, until he truly believes it in his heart: that every situation is really the best situation possible. It is a goodness that comes from Hashem, and its goodness transcends all good on this world. It is a good that comes from the Source of eternal good.

How To Acquire Happiness

Until now we have only explained how to remove depression, but we haven't explained how to actually have happiness.

After a person does the above thinking for a while, he will feel in himself that the main source of the depression has left him, and his soul will be calmed. Still, he hasn't yet reached happiness. In order to have happiness, a person must have Torah learning in its proper form – learning with a clear mindset. Then the Torah becomes to him "*the laws of Hashem bring joy to the heart.*"

Happiness and Torah learning work together simultaneously. Without Torah there is no inner happiness, and without happiness, there is no Torah. This will be explained more in the next chapter.

2.5 | *Learning Torah with Happiness (Part Two)*

Happiness Increases With Recognizing The Importance Of What You Are Doing

In order to reach happiness, a person must recognize the importance of what he has. If someone doesn't have importance for what he's doing, he cannot appreciate what to be happy about.

If a person had a check for \$100,000 and gives it to a two year old, the child will certainly enjoy playing with it. But the child isn't deriving the real pleasure of it. If someone lacks the awareness of how important something is, he cannot rejoice in it.

If a person would really understand the Torah's worth – and that Hashem's Torah, the greatest treasure, is found in his own house, on his very table – it's impossible not to be happy.

What is the root of the problem? There are two possibilities. Either one's mind has not internalized its worth. (He can know a lot of the Torah's worth, but he never truly contemplated it...) Or, he can indeed admit in his mind that the Torah is important; just, his heart doesn't feel it. Joy is in the heart, and not in the mind - so he doesn't have yet the joy in learning Torah.

How To Develop Appreciation for the Torah

First we must explain the proper way on how to contemplate the Torah's importance. We will say a few points, and you can add your own.

(1) This world is called *alma d'shikra*, "a world of falsehood". Everyone is running after pleasure, and everyone is concerned for themselves. The one true light that exists on the world is the Torah; it is called the "Torah of truth." It is the source of truth on this world. If not for the truth of Torah that lights up the world, no truth would be able to exist at all. Anyone who has even a little ambition for the truth knows that there is no other source of truth other than the Torah.

(2) If anyone would be given the choice to have either a momentary pleasure or pleasure that would last for a year, anyone would choose the latter. So a person should think that all of this world's pleasures are only fleeting, and that there is nothing else but learning Torah than can bring lasting pleasure. Since the Torah is eternal, whoever is connected to it has eternal pleasure. A person should imagine vividly, with a little thinking, that a day will come when it will be realized that "A person does not take with him anything when he dies."

A person should think about this: all his efforts for worldly pleasures are pointless. If one would truly reflect on this, he will start to realize that any pleasure on this world is momentary. On the other hand, a person is being offered a lasting pleasure – learning Torah. (However, it should be noted that someone who hasn't yet learned how to enjoy his learning needs special guidance on how to enjoy it.)

There Is No Pleasure Like The Pleasure Of Learning Torah

(3) Not only is the amount of pleasure in learning Torah greater than the span of pleasure found on this world, but the very depth of the pleasure of learning Torah is itself the deepest form of pleasure. Any other pleasures found on this world are a joke compared to the enjoyment derived from learning. Someone who never felt pleasure from his learning must pray, beg, and cry to Hashem that He have pity on him and merit to taste the enjoyment of learning!

There is no wisdom like Torah wisdom. The reason is because all other types of wisdom have limits. But Torah is the Creator's wisdom. Its wisdom is endless – in its amount and in its depth. Anyone who has merit to probe the depths of Torah can attest to this fact very well: no wisdom can compare to it.

One Who Wants To Cleave To The Creator Should Cleave To Torah

(4) One who understands that the purpose of his life is to cleave to the Creator must realize that there is no way to connect to Him except through learning Torah. (But only if he fulfills the conditions necessary in learning Torah, as we explained earlier). It is the tool that brings a person closest to Hashem. How can a person ever be unhappy if he knows that every second he has the ability to become so close to Him? If one truly knows it in the depths of his heart, he will never slacken off from studying Torah.

2.6 | *Torah and Kindness*

A Torah Of Kindness

One of the main traits necessary in meriting the “crown of Torah” is to “learn Torah and teach it to others”, otherwise known as “*the Torah of kindness on her lips*”. We will explain this.

There is a rule that “In the way a person measures others, he is measured.” If a person would only put efforts into learning based on his own measuring yardstick, his situation would not be very good. Even though he will understand some things, his perception will be very limited, because he will only attain according to the level he aimed to arrive at.

But if he is bestowing his efforts on others, then he is learning Torah to do kindness. He wants to benefit others that they too should understand Torah. He is then measured accordingly in Heaven, and he is given an abundance of understanding the Torah, each according to his own level; but now he will be meriting an understanding even above his previous level.

How A Person Can Merit Bountiful Blessing

We will explain the matter deeper. If a person wants to have something, there is always one of two ways how he can acquire it: (1) Through rights. A worker receives wages at the end of the day for his work, and so too one receives reward from Hashem for his efforts. (2) As a kindness from the benefactor.

There is a fundamental difference. If a person receives payment because of his actions, he will receive exactly according to how hard he worked. But if he receives it as a kindness, he is receiving something not according to what he did; there is no set amount to what he receives. Hashem’s kindness is unlimited, and a person must strive to receive Hashem’s kindnesses. When he does receive it, he will be endlessly connected to his Creator.

Two Ways How To Do Kindness With Torah

How can a person merit Hashem’s kindness? The Mishnah (*Avos* 6:1) says: “R’ Meir says, “Whoever learns Torah for its own sake... becomes like a fortified wellspring, and like an unceasing river.” Let us explain this.

(1) He doesn’t learn for himself. He doesn’t even learn because he wants to connect to the Creator; because that’s also called learning for himself! He is only learning to give pleasure to the Creator. So his whole learning is in order to do kindness – to be kind to Hashem, so to speak.

(2) He teaches Torah to others, in order that they should benefit from understanding the Torah, and that others’ children as well will study Torah and give pleasure to Hashem.

Such a person who learns Torah, in this way, is learning purely from kindness. Whether he learns by himself or with others, he is totally attached to Hashem, and he stands in Hashem’s gate of kindness. He will merit Hashem’s

kindness, which is endless; and this is what it means to become a “fortified wellspring and an unceasing river.” His learning will become unlimited and won’t cease.

These words are in the Gemara (*Pesachim 50b*): “Rava asked a contradiction. The possuk says (Tehillim 57), “*For your kindness is so great it extends to the heavens*”; and in another possuk it says (ibid 108), “*For your kindness is above the heavens*”. The first possuk refers to one who learns Torah for its own sake, and the second possuk refers to one who learns Torah not for its own sake.”

From here we see that one who learns Torah for its own sake is doing kindness with his learning, and his kindness is a kindness that is above the heavens; it is a kindness that transcends the boundaries of earth.

Acquiring Torah And Humbling Oneself To The Torah

Another important point to make, and the most important point of all we have said, is that there are two aspects of studying the Torah:

(1) Acquiring the Torah, through learning it and studying it in the simple sense. (2) Humbling oneself to the Torah.

A person who learns Torah all day and night acquires a great wealth. He becomes an expert in the Gemara, in its profundity and depth, and the Torah becomes like a part of him.

But there is another aspect as well in learning Torah, and it is entirely different. It is what King Shlomo says, “*I said I was wise, but it (wisdom) is far from me*”. How can this be? Shlomo was the wisest of all men; how could it be that he should be the one to say that “the Torah is far from me”?

This is the secret of what it means to truly study Torah. Hashem has no end, and therefore His wisdom has no end; therefore it follows that the Torah has no end. No one can truly come near the Torah’s depth, because the Torah is endless, while a person is limited. He is always far from it.

Contemplating The Eternity Of The Torah Nullifies Materialistic Pursuits

One needs to ask himself then: What is the point of toiling in the Torah, if the Torah is endless and I will never reach it anyway?

Herein lays the whole secret of life. The purpose of a person on this world is to truly reach a state where he feels like nothing! One’s entire ambitions should ultimately become devoted to nullifying his materialistic desires – totally. So the more a person sees how endless the Torah is, and how limited his mind is, the more he roots out his own ego, the “I” in a person; until eventually he reaches a level where he feels like nothing, in comparison to Hashem.



*Section 3:
Tefillah
(Prayer)*

3.1 | Why We Pray

The Necessity For Prayer

Before anything, a person must know that just as it is impossible without to see without eyes or to hear without ears, so is it impossible to receive any sustenance on this world without praying for it.

This is forgotten amongst people, because our senses delude us and convince us otherwise. Our eyes see that many people do not pray yet still merit good things, and even those that pray receive benefits that they definitely did not pray for – so it seems that our prayers don't really have any effect.

There are many answers to this question, but before we answer this, it should first become clear that our true sustenance can only come through prayer.

Six Scenarios In Which A Person Gets Something Without Praying For It

Why is it that we see that people get things even without praying for it? There are six possible reasons.

(1) Sometimes a person can receive things from Hashem as a gift, and sometimes it can even be like a gift given to an enemy to destroy him. This type of sustenance definitely does not need prayer to receive it, and it's really a curse! (So the person is getting something he wants, and it's really not good for him, but because he is wicked and undeserving, Hashem does not intervene and instead gives him the "gift" that will doom him).

(2) Sometimes, Heavenly sustenance can come through the prayers of a righteous person who prayed for his generation, even for those who didn't ask him to. (Just as the *Mesillas Yesharim* says, that "the way of a pious person is to pray for the welfare of his generation").

(3) Our Sages say that some prayers are accepted immediately, while some can be answered in twenty years from now. Also, it is possible that the person prayed for this a long time ago, and it is also possible that even in a previous gilgul (incarnation) he already prayed for it.

(4) If you ever saw dry ink, you know that at first it looks like permanent ink, but then after some time it disappears. In other words, sometimes a person gets something even though he didn't pray for it, because it's not real Heavenly sustenance – it is fleeting and will soon disappear. Such sustenance is not called Heavenly sustenance.

(5) Evil sinners receive success, but it's all sustenance from the "Other Side" – ("*sitra achara*", the evil side of impurity that will somehow destroy him).

(6) This answer is very fundamental: Since Hashem created the world for a person to utilize free will and choose good, Hashem makes a situation that gives a person the appearance that sustenance comes without prayer. This is in reality a test for him to see if he will pray anyhow.

In the end of the day, it should be clear to a person that it is impossible to get anything without specifically praying for it. The Chazon Ish told someone once that a person should pray for anything that he would ask his father for, even shoes. The same applies for all details in life.

Is It Embarrassing To Ask Hashem Small Things?

There is a difficult point that many people deal with: we naturally are ashamed to ask Hashem for trivial and small things. However, this is a mistaken notion, and we will explain why.

The *posuk* say, “*He who lowers to see the heaven and earth*”. From Hashem’s viewpoint, even spiritual matters such as the heavens are easy to provide, and there is no difference to Him between the heavens and earth. Since Hashem is endless, everything is lowly in comparison to Him, and there are no levels in how lowly something is, in regards to Him.

This is a deep point. A person views everything from his viewpoint and sees things the way he sees it, but the true way is to see how Hashem sees it, and when it comes to Him, there is no difference between asking for livelihood, a marriage partner, success in learning, or even to ask for new shoes.

To Ask From A Father

(2) There are two general approaches to prayer. Some people approach prayer with the serious feeling that they are praying to the “King of all Kings”, Hashem. There are others, though, who pray for an entirely different reason: “I am asking something from “Abba” - my father, who loves me very much; my father who considers me to be an only child.

(Really, every Jew is like an only child to Hashem. It is indeed hard to feel this; because how can Hashem have thousands who are considered an only child? But this is actually an immature outlook, because Hashem has an endless sea of love in Him, and He loves every Jew more than a father loves his only child!)

One who considers prayer as a request from a father isn’t afraid to ask him for things; a son who feels his father’s love constantly isn’t ashamed to ask his father for even little things. These words should actually not be hard to work on. It is just simply a change in how we approach prayer.

To summarize: a person should pray for every detail in his life, and not leave out anything. He should do this with the thought that he is a son asking from a father, and that he feels a love to Him.

A person should contemplate this a lot for a few weeks, and perhaps a few months, until he acquires it as a feeling in his heart.

3.2 | *Unanswered Prayers*

The Big Question

Another big question that many have when it comes to prayer is, with regards to what *results* from them. Let's say a person prayed and prayed, and he did not get answered; he feels dejected, and he gives up in praying any more. People become despondent from this and have questions: "Why weren't my prayers answered??"

But our Sages say a deep answer for this: some prayers are answered right away, and some prayers are answered only after a certain amount of time, maybe even after twenty years. Anyone who doesn't understand the depth of these words cannot appreciate this matter. Although one might hear this answer and accept it, the answer will not necessarily help him pray with more fervor than before. We will explain these words in a way that will hopefully help a person settle them in his heart.

A Deep Parable To Explain The Matter

We will open with a parable. Let's say a person wants to get a package from Australia to Israel, and there is no direct flight available. First the package will make a stop at a nearby country and it will be there for seven hours. Finally, the package arrives in Israel and is being stored in a building somewhere. He has to send someone to get the package from the storage building to his house.

The lesson is not much different than the parable. The Talmud says (Chagigah 13a), "From the land until the heavens is a distance of five hundred years, and from there until the edge of the heavens is five hundred years, and the same distance is between each heaven. Above that is the feet of the angels...above that is the thigh of the angels... until the Throne of Glory."

So when a person prays to Hashem and he wants to receive from Him sustenance, this bundle has to travel through all the heavens to get to him! A person obviously needs a lot of prayers from the time when the sustenance leaves its place from the Throne of Glory, to pray that it can leave the Throne and come down to the angels and then finally make it to him....

So a person can't know exactly how far away his sustenance is away from him in the heavens, and therefore, he should *always* pray that Hashem bring it close to him.

Just like with the package in Australia we saw that a person needs patience, and he has to pay all his messengers each to bring the package from place to place until it gets to him - so must a person pray more and more and bring the answer to his prayers closer and closer, until it finally reaches him. And this takes time.

No Prayer Is Unanswered

This is a deep point. A person must contemplate it very well until he internalizes it. When he does so, he will be able to feel that no prayer goes unanswered or ever went to waste. Every prayer has some effect.

A person needs strong faith for this, because with our physical eyes a person we cannot see anything spiritual. But a person must believe that just like in the physical world things take time until they get to him, so too in spiritual matters, things take time to get to their destination.

Why The Prayer Of The Righteous Is Accepted Immediately

Now we will say yet a deeper point. We explained that a person must increase his prayers to bring the sustenance closer to him, because there is a big distance between Hashem and a person.

Therefore, the closer a person is to Hashem, the faster his prayers are answered, and if so, the distance can be cut in half. A righteous person, who is attached to Hashem, has his prayers answered immediately, for as soon as the sustenance leaves Hashem and travels toward him, he immediately receives it.

We can learn from this that if a person increases his attachment and connection with Hashem, his prayers will be answered faster.

Why Does It Take So Long For Our Prayers To Be Answered?

So the closer one is to Hashem, the faster his prayers are received; and if he is truly attached to Him, then his prayers are received right away.

Why does it take so long for many people to have their prayers answered? It is because since most people are so far from Hashem, it takes a lot of time for the answers to get delivered. But the closer we become to Hashem, the more results our prayers will bear.

3.3 | *Concentration In Prayer*

Concentration

Another difficult point which many go through in prayer is the area of concentration. A person is tested with concentration in prayer many times; quite often, a strange thought comes into the head during davening and then vanishes.

What is the root of this problem, and what is the solution? Let us turn to the words of Rabbeinu Yonah about *tefillah* for this. Rabbeinu Yonah writes, “Someone who prays must concentrate with his heart... the main focus of our concentration is not on the concentration of the words, but on the purity of heart.”

We will try to explain his deep words. Prayer consists of two areas: having pure thoughts, and a pure heart. In order to have pure thoughts, one needs a pure heart. (Unless it is a time of suffering, in which a person’s thoughts are very clear, because the danger is imminent.) To explain this a bit more, there is a rule that a person doesn’t think what he doesn’t want to think. If a person doesn’t have some sort of liking or interest for something, he doesn’t think about it.

For example, a person isn’t thinking about what’s going on in a country that he has no interest in. The fact that a person is thinking about something shows that he has interest for it.

Two Ways To Master Your Thoughts

What should a person do if he wants to make sure that his thoughts stay focused on a certain thing? There are two possibilities.

(1) He can strengthen his thoughts to not think about the thought he doesn’t want. (This is a very, very hard thing to do, though).

(2) The true way is to nullify his liking toward it. He can’t not think about it; but what he should do is tell himself that he doesn’t want to think about it.

You will ask right away: “How can I do this?” The answer is as follows.

How To Break Our Materialistic Desires

In *mussar* (self-discipline), one of the most important fundamentals is how to work on breaking desires and nullifying them.

We won’t elaborate on this now, and we have already written on this earlier (in *Section One*). We will be brief about this. A person has to know that all of the body’s desires are not his real desires, but just “garments” upon him. It is a person’s duty every day to work on this by doing things against his will, until he feels that the desires have calmed down. A person needs to constantly work on breaking his desires until they leave him totally, and he must do this all his life.

Using this method is the best way to arrive at concentration in prayer. If a person has strong materialistic desires in him, it is impossible to pray even one prayer properly. Only when a person stops having these desires can he prevent unwanted thoughts from entering his head, and only then can his prayers be proper.

These are the words of Rabbeinu Yonah, who writes, “A person should nullify all worldly desires, for upon purifying the heart from worldly vanities, one can concentrate on the exaltedness of Hashem, and his prayers will be desirable and accepted by Hashem.”

If a person still has various worldly desires in his heart, it is hard to think about the exaltedness of Hashem, but if he purifies his heart from those interests, then it will be easy for him.

Being Weighed Down With Problems

Everything we have said until now referred to undesirable thoughts – desires such as pursuing pleasure, hearing the news, wanting honor or money, etc. We have said the antidote for this. But there is another type of bothersome thought that exists – and it is very common in our times: worries.

Worries are more common among men above the age of forty, who have begun to marry off children, and they have run into financial difficulty in preparations for simchos (joyous celebrations). These worries can accompany a person every day, hour by hour, and they are not worries about pleasure, but worries about necessities, such as: How will the debts be paid off?? These thoughts don't leave a person, and it casts a dark shadow on life.

Another common problematic situation is that there are many young men who have just gotten married, and they suddenly find themselves without livelihood; their thoughts are, understandably, preoccupied with how they will get by the month. These nagging worries affect them all day, but it affects them especially as soon as they start to pray.

Prayers need a relaxed mind, and many cannot concentrate even for half a minute because of these continuously nagging thoughts. These people are really suffering inside. We will now devote a special chapter on how to escape this situation.

3.4 | *Dealing With Our Stressful Issues*

Two Views On How To Understand Our Problems

In this chapter we will learn how a person can free himself from worrisome thoughts, such as worrying about livelihood, paying up debts, etc. There are always two ways to go about this.

- 1) A person has an issue bothering him, so he wonders how he can get out of it.
- 2) A person reflects on why Hashem put him in this situation. Since it is clear to the person that every situation is a test, if he will serve Hashem properly in this situation, he must therefore reflect on what is the point of the test.

A test is a “*nisayon*”, which comes from the word “*nes*” – a miracle; because a test is here to uplift a person, just like a miracle. Therefore, in every situation, a person must reflect on what is the point of a test, and it is upon him to understand that Hashem brought him into this situation in order to uplift him in this specific area.

The Reason For The Difficulty Of Making A Living: To Strengthen Our Faith

Now we should reflect upon why we are uplifted from the test of “*With the sweat of your brow*” (making a livelihood). The answer is *emunah* - faith!

We will explain this. The *Mesillas Yescharim* writes, “The only think that can save a person from all of these deficiencies is trust, and this is to throw one’s lot totally on Hashem. A person should surely know that it is impossible to lack anything that was designated for him. But it is not his efforts which help him. His efforts are necessary, and if he has made efforts he has fulfilled his obligation, but the blessings of heaven have already been bestowed on him, and he does not have to spend all his days with effort.”

What appears from his words is that increasing one’s effort does not help one reach his livelihood, and lessening his effort does not subtract from his livelihood. If a person mistakenly puts in less effort than he should, he will not make any less of a living. He is like someone who made a mistake and forgot to sanctify the new moon; it won’t make him lose any livelihood.

It must therefore be that the reason why people overwork at their jobs is because they feel that if they won’t put in effort, they won’t make money, and if they make more effort, they’ll get more money. But this is total heresy, because this attitude is basically saying that Hashem is not in charge.

Hashem has already informed us, though, that He is in charge, though the words of our Sages, who stated that increasing efforts cannot bring a person more than what was decreed on him. How can a person think that he has what to gain by going against the Creator...

Lack Of Faith: From Where Does It Stem?

So this problem can exist by someone for either one of two reasons:

(1) Because he never really contemplated it. If this is the case, he should spend many hours of contemplation and clarify it well for himself.

(2) It is a fact known only to his intellect, like it is written in the *possuk*, “*And you will know today.*” But he is missing the other part of the *possuk*, “*And you shall place it on your heart.*” He knows the truth in his head, but he doesn’t feel it in his heart. In such a situation, a person has to contemplate for many hours about the truth, and pour himself out to the Creator that he should merit to feel the truth.

In addition, he should also work to purify his heart (Just as we explained in *Section One, Chapter Five*). The more a person purifies his heart, the more he can feel the truth.

We will add an additional piece of advice that is tried and tested: A person can go to a faraway place where no one is (maybe to the graves of the righteous) and pour out his heart to Hashem, and speak to Him like someone talking to his friend - that He should help him understand the truth.

The True Way To Make A Living

Most people during a difficult financial situation will look for various *segulos* (charms) to make a living. They say various prayers on *Motzei Shabbos*, or they make sure to always give a fifth of their earnings to charity. These are all nice things, but it is not the true response to have.

The true way to act is for a person to clarify matters of faith for himself; to know that only Hashem is in charge of everything. A person needs to pray for livelihood also, but prayer is not the main thing over here; the basis is to have a strong faith in Hashem.

Often, people make efforts in making a living, and they also pray for livelihood, and this is definitely a *part* of the effort. But this is the mistake people are making: prayer is *not* the effort itself. The inner depth of prayer is the recognition that *Hashem is in charge* of what will happen to me, and how much I will have; and therefore I should ask only Him for livelihood, because *only He is in charge*. That is the point of prayer. A person shouldn’t place any hope in anything except for Hashem, and honestly feel that all other efforts cannot help.

How To Get Rid Of Depression

Another point to be made is that besides for worrying about how to make ends meet, financial stress also causes depression. People can be very depressed that this is their bitter lot in life. It is well known that when a person is depressed, he cannot think clearly. What is the way to get rid of this malady?

There is a clear answer. Depression comes from a lack of feeling or recognition that “Everything Hashem does is for good.” A person should contemplate very well that Hashem is full of love and goodness, and His whole reason in creating the world is only to bestow good. It follows, then, that everything that happens, whether small or big - can only be good. A *person* doesn’t know how it is good; but *Hashem* knows how it is good.

A person has to understand and feel that Hashem wants to only bestow good on him; every moment He is being good to him, and he should therefore be happy with any situation in life, because somehow his situation is very good for him.

In order to internalize this point, a person should think about it for a long time, until Hashem merits him that his heart will become calm and at peace; upon attaining this, a person will find that he is able to pray properly.

3.5 | *Praying Calmly*

Praying Slowly

Another important point in how to meriting proper prayer are the words of the Rambam (*Laws of Tefillah* 4:16), “Therefore, a person should sit a little bit before prayer, in order that his heart concentrate, and then he should pray slowly and with beseeching.” We will elaborate on these words.

First of all, a person should come a few minutes early before the start of the prayers and not do anything except sit in his seat, and contemplate. First, he should think: “Before Whom am I going to pray? With Who am I talking to?”

Of course, a person knows to whom he is praying to; but it’s only in his intellect. In order to feel it in his heart, he has to contemplate it before every time he prays (and the highest level of this is reached by the righteous, who have this feeling at all times even without contemplating it). He should think that he is going to talk with Hashem - with his true Father.

After thinking this, one should reflect even more: “What do I want from my Father? For what reason am I coming to speak with Him? Maybe I want to thank Him, or maybe I want to ask Him for something; or maybe I am just longing simply for my Father...?”

One should know exactly why he is praying, and make this inner assessment. After a person knows clearly why he is praying, his prayer will definitely be different.

Two Aspects Of Praying Slowly

Another important point that the Rambam says is that one should “pray slowly”. There are two aspects to praying slowly – externally, and internally. We will explain.

What needs to be done, externally, is that a person should say the words carefully, as if he’s counting his money, and that he’s not in a rush. To rush while praying opposes everything prayer stands for. A person should say the words slowly, in keeping with the words of the Shulchan Aruch (98:1), “One who prays should concentrate with his heart on the words that come out of his mouth.”

One who contemplates the above words will see that specific emphasis is placed on the “heart” – the heart, as opposed to the mere intellect.

What is the “heart” that is needed here? It is totally different than the intellect. Our intellect just understands the meaning of the words one is saying. But our heart is able to live and feels what one is saying. If one is praising the Creator, he should feel like one who is praising his own father. If he is asking for something, he should feel like a pauper knocking on the door; (like the words of the Rambam, that one must beseech Hashem like a beggar). A person’s feelings must be in line with the words coming out of his mouth.

To Acquire Concentration, One Needs Inner Calm

It is not enough to merely say the words slowly just on an external level, in order to have concentration. A person needs an inner calm and tranquility as well.

If a person begins his prayers already hassled with any sort of pressure, big or small – for example, that he is in a rush to get somewhere, or to get something done as soon as the prayers are over – these thoughts can ruin his entire prayers. When a person begins to pray, he needs to feel that he has unlimited time to pray. He shouldn't feel any sort of pressure to rush through it.

The Problem With This Hasty Generation

But there is a very big problem going on today, maybe one of the biggest there is: our lives are fast-paced and hasty. This generation is very hasty, no matter what lifestyle people are living – whether people learn in *Kolel* or whether they work.

Even a young *avreich* who learns in *Kolel* has to return to his house as soon as he finishes praying in the morning, and be on time to send his children to playgroup or school. Afterwards he has to get to his yeshiva on time at the start of learning sessions. And in the afternoon, he is responsible to pick them up from school. The whole structure of life today lacks calmness, and makes it impossible for one to really grow.

We have to make a great change in the way we run our lives. We have to free ourselves from this hasty way of living, and strive to have an inner calm and peace.

For this, a person should set for himself enough time to spend when he prays in the morning (even if he doesn't spend a long time praying, he should be able to at least have the time available for it). It is impossible to give practical advice to every person on how exactly to do this, but a person still must arrange his daily schedule and try.

For example, if someone prays in the morning for about an hour, he should add on an extra half hour to his schedule before prayer so that he will be able to pull himself together a little before he prays. Other suggestions can be made as well, by anyone who thinks into it.

To Feel Hashem, And To Talk To Him Like A Friend

Another point needed here is the words of the *Shulchan Aruch* (ibid): “And he should think as if the Holy Presence is before him.”

Similar to these words are stated in *Mesillas Yescharim*: “A person should reflect well, that he is actually standing in front of the Creator and dealing with Him, even though his eyes cannot see Him. He will see that it is very hard to conjure up this image in his heart, for his senses are not helping him in this. However one has proper intellect with a little reflection can attain this in his heart the truth of this matter, how he is coming to deal with the Blessed One, and how before Him he is beseeching, and from Him he is requesting, and that He is listening and being attentive to his words just as a person speaks to his friend as his friend is listening and being attentive to him.”

One who practices these words of the *Mesillas Yescharim* for a long time and reflects on its truth will merit to feel Hashem beside him, “just as a friend talks to his friend.” He will see growth in his prayers, and he will be transformed to a totally new level.

3.6 | *Praying for Others*

All Actions Are Either Giving Or Taking

In everything a person does or says, he is either thinking one of two things: (1) He has himself in mind; he needs to take something. (2) He is doing it not for himself – either he is doing it for Hashem, or he is doing it for another person.

The same is true when it comes to prayer: it is possible that a person is praying only for himself, and he never prays for anyone else, only for his own needs. If a person works at it, though, he can learn how to pray entirely to give honor to Hashem, or he can pray for someone else. This is the choice people have: either to use prayer as a way of giving to another - or as a form of taking for himself...

The Life Of A Pious Person

The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes (Chap. 19): “The pious one, besides for all his service in his actions of performing mitzvos for this reason (to give pleasure to his Creator, “for the sake of His honor”), must also surely feel the pain of the exile and the Destruction, for it has caused a great damage to the honor of Hashem, so to speak. He should desire the Redemption, for in it will come the raising of Hashem’s honor. He should pray constantly for the redemption of Israel, and for the honor of Heaven to return to its greatness.”

He writes additionally, “And he should think this while he is serving Him and actually praying to Him: that he should pray for his generation, that all those who need atonement should be atoned, and that all who need to repent should repent.”

We will elaborate on these words (We already spoke of this in the first section, “*Ladder of Growth*”: Chapter Seven). In order to serve Hashem purely for His sake (*lishmah*), a person has to stop being a “taker” and become a “giver.” This applies to prayer as well. When a person leaves his ego, and begins to care a little about Hashem, and about his other brother Jews, in such a state a person’s prayers are readily accepted by Hashem.

Practical Examples How To Pray For Hashem And Not For Oneself

As an example: we pray, “We beseech of You, knowledge, understanding, and intellect” – each according to his own way. Why do we pray for wisdom? Why do we need knowledge?

Naturally, a person will respond that he wants knowledge in order to know the Torah. However, there is a deeper answer: because one wants to be close to Hashem, and the only way to become close to Him is through Torah.

When a person removes from himself all egotistical kinds of thoughts, his prayers will be much different. His only intention will be that he wants to know the Torah, simply because that is Hashem’s will!

An even higher motivation to have is that by asking of Hashem to know the Torah, that there will be an increase in the honor of Hashem in the world. The person who prays this way is thus not thinking about himself, but rather on how he can give more pleasure to the Creator.

Another example: we ask Hashem in davening, “*Selach Lanu*” (“Forgive us, our Father.”) Why do we need Hashem to forgive us? The simple answer would be because we are afraid of punishment in *Gehinnom*. A deeper answer, though, is that a person should understand that a sin causes a distance between man and his Creator. We want to be close to Him, and therefore we ask to be forgiven, for that will enable us to be closer to Him.

One who has divested himself of all self-absorbed thoughts and only wants to give satisfaction to his Creator thinks very differently. His thoughts are based on the fact that sin conceals the honor of Hashem, and therefore he asks for forgiveness, for by being forgiven the honor of Hashem is increased.

We have given only two examples, but someone who truly seeks to give satisfaction to his Creator will understand on his own to always pray in this way.

Praying For The Jewish People

Until now we only spoke of praying for the sake of giving satisfaction to Hashem alone. But there is another matter to pray for, which the Mesillas Yesharim said. It is to pray for the nation of Israel, our brother Jews. We will explain how to do this.

Upon reflection, one can see that the entire order of the silent prayer is written concerning the public. “We beseech You, Return us, Forgive us.” The Sages did not institute prayer that a person should only pray for himself. The right way is to include everyone in one’s personal prayers. For example, we pray, “We beseech of You.”

By nature, a person is thinking as he asks Hashem for wisdom, “Give me wisdom.” But the proper way is to think that Hashem should give wisdom to all of us, and it just that I am included among the collective whole. In other words, a person should not be focused on himself when he prays - he should be asking that he be at least equal to everyone else.

The same goes for the rest of the blessings, when we pray. The intention as we pray should be concerning everyone in the Jewish people. One should contemplate this very well during every blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei*.

There is another important point to be made: A person should train himself, upon hearing any misfortune, to immediately pray for a salvation. A person should also pray right away for another if he sees that his friend lacks something.

Prayer For Hashem’s Honor And Others

All the words in this chapter can be applied on two levels.

(1) Some people care about the honor of Hashem, as well as for the good of others. Such a person prays for the honor of the Creator and for the good of others, and he prays from the inner recesses of his heart.

(2) On the other hand, there are others who don't feel this way. Such people have an *avodah* to keep it on their own level. They should keep contemplating these matters, and eventually, their heart will be opened, and they will then begin to feel a love for the Creator and a love for the Jewish people.

3.7 | *Prayer and Praise*

Praise

Prayer is divided into two categories: requests (*bakashah*), and praise (*shevach*). Until now we dealt only with requests, and now we will speak about praise. Praises also are divided into two parts.

(1) Praises that a person gives to his Creator for all His greatness and exaltedness, etc; praise on His actions, such as that He made the sky and the earth, the oceans and everything in it, and the like.

(2) Praises on what Hashem has given us, such as when we say, “*On Your miracles that You do with us every day.*”

We will first elaborate on the second type of praise, which is easier to reach than the first. Prayers are full of praises and thanks to Hashem; yet we see from experience that it is difficult for a person to feel what he is saying. How can a person internalize the words from his mouth to his heart? There are two suggestions for this.

The sefer *Kav HaYashar* writes (Chap. 18): “It is the conduct of the Early Sages that upon any event that happened them, they gave praise and thanks, and immediately recognized the Divine Providence of the Creator, and it was formed in their hearts that they should not forget the Divine Providence of Hashem.”

These words are also found in *Chovos HaLevovos* (The Gate of Serving G-d, Chap. 7): “One should always mention the goodness of G-d constantly on his tongue, and he should increase his gratitude and praise to Him.”

To Reflect On Hashem’s Goodness To Us

We will elaborate on these words.

Hashem is good to us every second, and everyone believes this. The only question that remains is, how much is a person living his life by this fact? How much does he feel it at all times? This is our mission: to turn this mere knowledge into a feeling in the heart.

How do we do this? There are many ways how.

(1) A person should sit and reflect well on all the good that Hashem does for him. Firstly, Hashem created him, and He keeps him alive.

(2) In addition, He gave him many wonderful senses (it is helpful for this to study see *Emunah U’Bitachon* [written by the Chazon Ish zt”l] and sefer *Chayei Olam* [written by the Steipler zt”l]).

(3) In addition, one should reflect on how Hashem watches over him every second with Divine Providence, as if he is an only child.

One should give importance to this and want to write this down, in order that these facts should be arranged in his mind properly.

How To Feel His Goodness

After a person clarifies in his mind well all the good that the Creator bestows on him, now the avodah is to internalize these words on his heart. How can this be done?

Anytime a person wants to internalize something from his mind into his heart, the best advice is *to speak it out verbally*. A person should tell himself, verbally, the simple facts that his mind already knows. He should talk and talk, many times to himself, as if he is trying to explain something to a child.

(The Alter of Kelm said one time that we are adults only in our minds, but in our hearts we are all like little children (unless we work on this).

One should speak out, verbally, a fact to himself many times until it finally enters his heart. This is a rule that applies to any area we want to work on, and it applies no less to our topic, prayer. A person should speak it out, with his mouth, many times - of all the good that Hashem does with him.

Talk “with” Hashem, not “to” Hashem

There is another basic point which is also important to mention. If a person just says to himself, “Hashem gave me this, and this, and this”, then he is really just talking to *himself*, not to Hashem, and this defeats the purpose here.

A person should really talk to *Hashem*. He should not say in third-person, “Hashem gave this to me.” Rather, he should talk to Hashem, in first-person, saying, “*You*, the Blessed One, gave this to me.” Everything said should be in first-person to Hashem, “*You*.”

At first this will feel strange, because you won’t feel like you’re talking with Hashem. But if a person practices this for a while and doesn’t give up, he is guaranteed to eventually feel that he is actually talking with Hashem, “like a man speaks to his friend.”

It is recommended that one do this in a quiet place, with no one around. The Chofetz Chaim did this, and so did many other of our great leaders.

How This Can Change A Person

After a person practices all we have said for a while, he will begin to feel Hashem in his life. He will also feel a change in his whole life!

It is hard to describe what it will be like in the written word; there will be a big change in the whole person. In such a state, a person will find it easy to praise the Creator in all things, even praises which have nothing to do with anyone; and he will have great pleasure to thank Hashem for everything, as well as to sing to and praise His Father.



*Section 4:
Chessed
(Kindness)*

4.1 | *Six Reasons Why We Are Kind*

Is Today's Generation Practicing Real Kindness?

Our generation has is blessed with doing many acts of *chessed* (kindness). There are even many types of *chessed* organizations (*gemachim*) in which you can borrow anything without charge.

At first glance, this seems like perfect kindness. But upon more reflection, we will see what it means to practice true kindness, and we will see what is lacking in the kindness of today's generation.

Six Levels Of Kindness

At first we will establish the six levels of kindness and explain each one.

(1) There is kindness that we do by rote. (2) There is kindness that we give only in order to receive something back. (3) There is a kindness that we give to our children and those who are close to us, because we love to give to them. (4) There is a type of kindness when a person recognizes in his mind that this is the right thing to do and therefore he gives to others. (5) There is kindness when people give because it is in their nature to give. (6) There is a type of kindness that people give, simply because Hashem created a person to give to others.

We will explain each one, and each person should determine for himself which type of kindness he is practicing.

Kindness By Rote

Let's say a person grew up in a religious household where acts of kindness were commonplace. It became part of his own nature to be kind, and it is a part of his life to be kind; it is ingrained him from how he grew up to always do *chessed*.

However, such a person never contemplated its depth: "Why do I have to be kind? What should I feel when I am doing an act of kindness? Kindness without such thoughts is just acting robotic (*melumadah* – "by rote").

It could even be that a person is in charge of wonderful *chessed* organizations that do great acts of kindness, and he is engrossed in it many hours of the week. But it can all be just by rote – mechanically and with no inner meaning to it.

Giving In Order To Receive

Another type of kindness is when people give to others, but only in order to receive. There are many examples of this type.

Reuven's neighbor is knocking on his door and he needs 200 dollars. Reuven thinks to himself, "Tomorrow I also need to borrow money; if I don't let lend him money now, I won't feel right asking him tomorrow to lend me the money, so I'll lend him the money now..." If he lends him the money now, he is doing kindness by lending

him, but his whole intention is so that tomorrow he can get a favor and borrow money from him. It is not an act of giving, but it is more like a business deal.

Another example: a person is praying, and a collector is around to receive charity handouts. He doesn't want to really give anything, but he sees everyone else giving, so he gives also, out of shame if he won't give. So he is only giving charity to save himself the shame that people shouldn't think he's stingy. Even though he is giving, his intention is not at all to give, but just so that he won't look stingy. So really he isn't giving at all; he just doesn't want to feel like a bad person.

There are many such examples in which we act very giving and it appears that we are being very kind, but it's all based on external factors, and not because of a will to truly give.

Giving To Those Close To Us – Because We Love Them

A third type of kindness practiced is when we give to our children and those who are close to us, because we love them.

Why do we only naturally give to our children and close ones? Because we feel that our children are part of us; so when we give to them, we are giving to the part of ourselves that is in them.

Yet, this is not yet true giving; it's still giving to oneself! There are people who "give" and "give" their entire lives, but only to their children. If you would ask them for a donation, they will respond that they already have financial responsibilities to their married children. Such people, who give only to their children, might think that they are "supporting Torah", but they never stop to think that all their giving is really steeped in egoism. They have no desire to really give; they only give to those whom they love and are close to, because it feels like they are giving to themselves.

Giving Intelligently

There is a fourth type of kindness: Some people give because they realize in their minds that it is "the right thing to do".

For example, a person is sitting and contemplating the purpose of life, and he comes to the conclusion that the world stands on three pillars: Torah, prayer, and kindness. Therefore he makes sure to connect to these pillars, from an intelligent viewpoint. But he still doesn't feel a love for it in his heart; it is just an intellectual thing.

It is definitely better to think this way than all the other types of kindness that were mentioned, because the other three types were not called giving at all, while this category is indeed a true act of giving. But it is only a mere knowledge to the person – "*And you will know today*", and it lacks the heart of the matter, "*And you will place it on your heart.*" Such a giver is lacking the true approach to doing kindness, for his kindness only stems from his intellect, and his heart isn't it.

Natural Givers

A fifth type of kindness we see in some people is that they give because they are natural givers by nature. These people have been born with a gift from Hashem: a “good heart.” It is in their nature to love to nourish others with goodness.

What could be missing here? There is still a lot is still missing from the picture: *Hashem* is missing from the picture! We will explain. Everyone’s purpose is to act in the ways of Hashem, because that is His will. It is not enough to just do actions, even though one enjoys doing them. Of course, a person has to love doing *mitzvos*, but there are two conditions for this. (1) That he do it because it is Hashem’s will, (2) That he loves to do it.

If a person only fulfills one of these conditions, he is missing a lot. In the next chapter we will explain the sixth category of kindness, which is the true type of kindness.

4.2 | *The True Kindness*

True kindness: Giving for the sake of Hashem's will

Now we will explain what true kindness is.

True kindness is when a person is good to others because he recognizes that his purpose on this world is to be a giver, and not a taker. This is why Hashem created a person. Anything that a person does is because it is the will of Hashem that he should do it; not out of fear of being punished, or because he enjoys doing it, but because this is how is serving Hashem.

It is from a recognition that “I am servant, and I do whatever Hashem wants, and Hashem wanted me to be good to His creations; therefore I must do so.”

The difference between Jewish kindness and non-Jewish kindness

This is the fundamental difference between a Jew's act of kindness with kindness of gentiles. The non-Jews also do kindness. If you would ask them why, they would say because it is good and proper. This has nothing to do with Hashem; it is something which the intellect obligates any normal person to do, when you think about it. It makes sense to be nice to people. A Jew's attitude, though, is supposed to be much different. The Torah's reason for kindness has much more meaning to it.

A Jew doesn't act kind simply because his intellect tells him to, nor because of his feelings to do so. He does it because he knows that there is a Creator, and he is His servant. A true Jew's thinking is supposed to be, “I am serving Him, by doing kindness, because that is His will.” A Jew serves Hashem; he is not merely following his mind or feelings.

The book *Nefesh HaChaim* writes in the introduction, “This is the entire existence of a person: he is not created for himself, but only in order to help others, however he can.” The entire purpose of life is to be a giver, and this is what our lives are all about.

How can I help others?

We will say a practical example of this. Rabbeinu Yonah writes (*Shaarei Teshuvah* 3:53), “A person is obligated to think of ways of how can help his friend, and this one of the main acts of kindness, for it says, “*Oil and incense give joy to the heart...*” (*Mishlei* 27: 9).

We find similarly in the words of the *Mesillas Yesharim* (Chap. 19), “A person should always bestow good to others and not be bad to them, in his body, money, and soul. He can help with others with his body by trying to help others in whatever he can and ease their burden.

This is to bear the yoke of his friend. If his friend suffers any physical damage, and he can eliminate or remove it, he should exert himself to do it. He should help him with his money by helping him with whatever he has and save

him from damage as much as he can. Surely he must make sure that no damage result from him to any individual or group. Even if right now there is no incoming damage, he should remove anything that may affect him.

The Sages say, “Your friend’s money should be precious on you like your own.” One can do kindness with his soul to others by doing anything to your friend that makes them feel good, whether it is honoring them or other things. It is a pious act to do whatever one knows that gives enjoyment to his friend.”

The Alter of Slobodka: A Life of Giving

There is a story that is a great description of kindness, told of the Alter of Slobodka: “All his thoughts were on how could do kindness with people. He was ready to give himself up for anyone’s good. He would look for opportunities to do kindness. Anyone who would come to him would be showered with all his goodness. If he did not have the opportunity to do a kindness, he would express it with his mouth: he would bless anyone, and pray for everyone’s peace.”

One who goes in this way will eventually open his heart to another, and he will begin to love another; not merely because it is a truthful thing to do, Hashem’s will – but that it should be second nature to want to give to another.

But we shouldn’t forget that we need these two things together – a love to give, and a will to give because it is Hashem’s will. The main thing is that the reason why we are giving should not be just out of a love to give, but from the recognition and the feeling that we are doing so *because it is Hashem’s will*.

It is a big deal, though, to get our feelings to become in line with Hashem’s will. A person shouldn’t just do things because Hashem wants it and just that! His feelings also have to be happy that he is doing this, and he should love what Hashem’s will is. It shouldn’t just be “Hashem’s will” alone to him; it should become part of his nature.

These are deep words. (In a deeper sense: from the viewpoint of free will (*bechirah*), a person should do so because it is Hashem’s will. And from a viewpoint of knowledge (*yediah*), a person should do so because it is rooted in him to so...)

In the next chapter, we will see how to do true kindness.

4.3 | *How To Practice True Kindness*

How to achieve true kindness

In this chapter we will explain how to achieve true kindness.

In anything involved when it comes to serving Hashem, a person has to fulfill the *possuk*, “*And you will know today, and you will place it on your heart.*” A person first has to clarify in his mind what he is doing, and why. Only after this can he internalize it in his heart.

The same goes for kindness. First a person should understand well what kindness is, and then clarify why he does kindness. We will now explain what true kindness is, and how to do it.

Defining Kindness

The concept of kindness is that a person bestows good to another; it can be physically, financially, or spiritually, as quoted before from the *Mesillas Yesharim*.

There are two types of bestowing good: compassion (*rachamim*) and kindness (*chesed*). Compassion is to give to another because the other is lacking something. Kindness is to give even if he isn't lacking; it is to give just to make another's situation better in any way, and it is thus a greater level of bestowing good upon others.

Why do we have to do kindness? There are two answers why. One is for someone who serves Hashem not for His own sake, but for other motives, and the other answer is for someone who serves Hashem for His own sake (*lishmah*). First we will address someone who serves Hashem not for His own sake. Why do we have to practice kindness? There are two reasons.

- (1) It is like any other of the *mitzvos*; one will receive reward if he does it.
- (2) A deeper reason is to raise a person's level, so that he should be treated better in Heaven's records.

The Sages say, “In the way a person measures others, he is treated.” If a person doesn't do any kindness and never goes above his ordinary obligations, Heaven will judge him the same way and not be kind to him. But if he is truly good to others, Heaven will react accordingly to him, and be good to him even if he is undeserving.

So someone who gives and bestows upon others opens up for himself the gates of heaven, and it is a wonderful way to abundance from Hashem, even if he lacks enough merits.

We explained before that there is kindness, and then there is compassion. Compassion is when someone sees his friend suffering, and it is hard for him to see him like this; therefore he gives to him. But kindness is to give to another even if he isn't lacking. Someone who has compassion to another will get Heavenly compassion in return, but this has its limits. Only when something is hurting him will he receive Heavenly compassion, for that is how he acts to others. But someone who practices kindness in addition to compassion will receive Heavenly kindness; he will receive abundance even if he doesn't need it. Is there anyone who wouldn't want this...?

But it should be noted that these words only apply to someone who serves Hashem not for His sake, and now we will explain the level of one who serves Hashem for His sake – *lishmah*.

Why do kindness for Hashem's sake?

To give to others for the sake of Heaven means to give for the sake of giving. It is to not await something in return – it is “kindness of truth” (*chessed shel emes*). True kindness is to not await any reward for the act. But why should I do this?? Why should I just give if I won't receive anything back? There are two answers for this. One answer has to do with the intellect, and the other has to do with the heart. From the viewpoint of the intellect, the answer is as follows. We know that there is a *mitzvah* to do kindness for others. A person is obligated in the Creator's commandments.

But there is a deeper aspect, and it is a viewpoint from our heart. The Sages say, “Cleave to His traits. Just as He is compassionate, so should you be compassionate, etc.” The first trait of Hashem is that He bestows good on others. It is the reason of creation, because His whole desire is to bestow good on His creations. So if someone wants to cleave to the traits of Hashem, he should first cleave to the trait which is the main focus of life: kindness to others.

Although a person should cleave to all of Hashem's traits, this is the main trait that he must cleave to all his life. Just as when Hashem does kindness He doesn't await any reward in return, so must a person do true kindness and not want anything in return. He should do kindness for the sake of being kind; this is the way for one to cleave to the Creator.

The soul longs to give

Until now we explained what kindness is, as an intellectual knowledge – something which our mind can know of as a fact, but not necessarily internalized in our heart. Now we will explain it in a way that is only reached upon internalizing what kindness is in our heart - how to be kind out of the pure goodness of the heart.

The true, internal reason to do kindness is because the soul has a longing to give to others. This is because the soul is a part of G-d from Above, and has in it imbibed traits of the Creator. Our soul therefore resembles the longing of Hashem to give to creation.

When a person reveals his soul, he looks for ways to give. In doing so he is like Avraham our forefather, who was always looking for guests in every situation. (To know how to reach the soul, see *Section I, Ladder of Growth*).

In the next chapter we will explain how a person can actually work to internalize these matters in his heart.

4.4 | *Practical Ways To Become Kind*

Practical ways to do kindness

In this chapter we will explain how to take what we know in our minds and to internalize them into our heart. We need to give a few examples in order to feel what it means to truly give, and to give for the sake of giving.

(1) Kindness with your neighbors

1) A person often lives in an apartment building, and he has a next-door- neighbor. One should set aside some time to think, and reflect: “What can I do for my neighbor? Is there something I can help him with? Does he have where to learn Torah?”

2) If he doesn’t learn Torah, does he need a job? If he doesn’t, maybe you can help him find a job.

3) If he has children, one should think: “Does he need help in raising his children? Are they all taken care of properly?”

4) So should a person reflect, on all details of life, and maybe he will find that his neighbor indeed lacks something vital and that he should be helped somehow.

5) A person should also wonder if his neighbor is happy enough. Maybe he can strengthen him by talking to him sometimes.

6) Besides for offering ways to help him physically, you should make sure that he is well spiritually. Is his spiritual situation doing okay? If not, think: “Is there a way how I can help him?”

After thinking about this, one should reflect that maybe his neighbor does indeed need spiritual help, even if he is religious and keeps the Torah and does *mitzvos*. If he is a man or woman, maybe his\her faith could use some strengthening, and if she is a woman, maybe she could use some help in becoming more modest (If you’re a woman who can help her out an encourage her).

There is no greater kindness than to help someone in spiritual matters. Someone who helps another in material matters helps only for a short time, while someone who helps another in spiritual matters does a kindness with him eternally.

(2) Kindness with your wife

A person lives with his wife, so if a person wants to work on kindness, he should first practice improving kindness toward his wife, before anyone else. (However, a person should not loaf around in his house just to do kindness with her; the point is that one’s wife comes first before anyone else).

One has to reflect on what his wife is lacking. He shouldn’t have to wait for her to need him and only then help her; one has to set aside some time to think how he can do goodness with her.

Think: “What is she lacking? Does she have all her needs being met?” First, a person should think what she does from morning to night, and go through all the details of her schedule, and see if maybe she is missing something. Then he should think: maybe she needs new clothing, or other things that a woman needs. He should reflect on details in her life and see if she has everything she needs.

After he reflects on her material needs, he should then think about her spiritual needs: “Is my wife happy with life? From where does my wife derive her pleasure from? Is it hard for her to bring up the children and run the house?” He should help her if she needs it.

All these things a person needs to think about, **before** the problems start – not because it is better to think about it to prevent problems, but because he should want to do kindness with his closest person possible – his wife.

Someone who is kind only to strangers, but not to his own wife, is not really kind. True kindness begins in the house, and only then can it spread outwards.

(3) Kindness with a Chavrusa

One who has a *chavrusa* (study partner) should think that his *chavrusa* is not just a mere learning partner. A *chavrusa* is mainly someone whom one shares a relationship with in learning Torah, but although the main aspect of a *chavrusa* is to learn Torah with him, you should also strive to have a personal connection to your *chavrusa* by being concerned for him, and you should take a true interest in him. There should be a real feeling of caring towards a *chavrusa*.

If it becomes known to a person that his *chavrusa* is having difficulty in anything, he should immediately think how he could help him, and that he is personally responsible to help him. Even if one’s *chavrusa* doesn’t have difficulties, he should think how he can benefit him, and how much he can still help him in some way.

(4) Kindness with anyone you meet

With anyone a person meets, one should try to show a pleasant looking face, take an interest in his situation, ask about his welfare, and try to compliment him with true good things about him.

Compliments have to be given sincerely. Don’t tell someone compliments that aren’t true. He will know that what you are telling him isn’t true, and he will then not believe any compliment you give him.

Try to show him the good things in his situations, and make him view the “cup” as “half full” rather than “half empty”, and in general, give him over a good and positive feeling about things.

If, in middle of conversing with him, you see that he needs something, help him, and do whatever you can to help.

However, you should know that the biggest kindness you can do for someone is to help him in spiritual matters. You should try to strengthen one’s simple faith (*emunah peshutah*) and his other spiritual matters. You should help him in both physical and spiritual matters, but there is no bigger kindness than helping him spiritually.

We will mention here a short comment that can be relevant. When it comes to kindness, a person needs to be careful not to become immersed in other people's lives. The point of becoming kinder and more caring should be to grow, to develop our soul; the purpose is not to become caught up in other peoples' personal lives.

4.5 | *Sacrificing for Others*

Self-Sacrifice To Do Kindness

After a person works on how to be good to those that he meets, and he becomes used to helping others the whole day, he should now progress to a higher level: to be self-sacrificing for another (*mesirus nefesh*).

We will quote for this the words of Rav Yechezkel Levenstein (*Ohr Yechezkel: Middos*, p. 170): “How can a person come to this level of having self-sacrifice for another? The only way is at a time when he loves to do kindness. Loving kindness is to worry for a friend even if he doesn’t need something; it comes from a burning desire to bestow good on another, and this is included in “loving your friend as yourself”. A person should be self-sacrificing physically for his friend, and it is really very difficult to reach this level.

How can a person ever reach it? It must be that only if a person ascends above his nature, he can reveal the hidden internal part of him, which is a Godly piece of Above.”

Nullifying Our Personal Interests For Others

We see from his words that in order to reach the level of self-sacrifice for another, a person needs to reach the Godly part of himself - his soul. In it lays the power of *mesirus nefesh*.

(In the first section, “*Ladder of Growth*”, we spoke of how a person can reach his soul, and we spoke of this level of self-sacrifice, only after writing about the level of serving Hashem for His own sake. The reason is because only someone who serves Hashem for His own sake can reach his soul, and only then can he be self-sacrificing for another.)

However, even if someone who hasn’t yet reached the level of serving Hashem purely for His sake, he can still reach sparks of his soul - by doing *acts of kindness* for Hashem’s sake. We will explain.

How To Reach This Level

We will try to give practical examples on how to be self-sacrificing for others. First of all, a person should know that *mesirus nefesh*\self-sacrifice is a deep concept. The Hebrew word for “soul” is *nefesh*, which can also mean “desire”. This shows us that to be self-sacrificing means to give up our personal interests for others, and there are many points contained in this.

A person has many desires; some are weaker and some are stronger, and everyone is different in this aspect. An example: no one wants to sleep in the street. This is a strong desire in a person. However, the difference between someone choosing between living in a nine-room apartment and a ten-room apartment is a weak type of desire.

Giving up personal desires for others

In order to be totally self-sacrificing to others, a person has to give up even his greatest desires for another person. He should begin though by giving up even small desires for others.

For example, he can start by giving five dollars to charity, in order to get used to the act of giving. Slowly he should nullify his desire more and more for another, and give more. He should continue this for a few years until eventually he reaches a point that he can give up even big desires for another. One who trains himself in this way and recognizes what giving is will be able to come to a situation of total *mesirus nefesh* for another person.

(The great *tzaddikim* reached the most sublime level of *mesirus nefesh*, sacrificing their lives in atonement for the sins of their generation, out of their great love for the Jewish people.)

After reaching this level, one can add on another level: to be willing to give up not only this life's pleasures for another, but even to give up even his portion in the World To Come for another. There were great *tzaddikim* who did this.

Achieving True Connection To Hashem

One who lives in this way will be able to totally nullify himself, and then he can become very connected to Hashem. This is because the thing that holds a person back from being connected to Hashem is egoism, as it is written, "*I am standing between Hashem and them*"; the deeper explanation in these words is that egoism holds back a connection between Hashem and a person.

One who nullifies his ego can be connected to Hashem all 24 hours of the day, and develop a very strong connection to the Creator of the world.



*Section 5:
Mussar
(Self-Discipline)*

5.1 | *R' Yeruchem Levovitz On How To Learn Mussar*

Once a young yeshiva student asked Rav Yeruchem Levovitz: “How does one learn *mussar* (self-discipline)?”

Rav Yeruchem responded, “The same way you learn Gemara.”

We will try to explain Rav Yeruchem’s words. Every Torah student knows that when he approaches the Gemara, first he works on the simple understanding of the text. But it is clear that he hasn’t yet begun to reach the main points: the depth and understanding of the topics at hand, and the differences between all the various laws learned in the topic. In order to know it one needs tremendous effort and toil. Just as when we learn Gemara we need to get to the root of every law in order to understand the law, so too when we learn *mussar* do we need to get to the root. Just as when we learn Gemara we must learn how to funnel out the “diamonds” from the “sand”, so must we do so when we learn *mussar*.

How to go from a mundane life to a spiritual life

It is clear to all of us that by learning *mussar*, we leave our mundane life and enter a spiritual life. So first we need to understand what the difference is between a mundane life and a spiritual life, and though understanding this we will know the correct way to learn *mussar*.

The Chazon Ish writes (*Kovetz Igros Chazon Ish, Vol .I: 3*), “The Sages say, “The words of Torah can only exist in someone who kills himself over them.” To “kill oneself” means to leave the simplicities of life - and to enter into the deepest parts of life.” These words of the Chazon Ish reveal to us that when a person lives a materialistic life, he is living an external kind of life. Only when he has spirituality can he reach the depth of life itself. We will explain his words more.

An inner look on life

A person who lives without faith or believing in Divine Providence (even if he is aware of it, yet he doesn’t live with it) encounters a difficulty and only sees the difficulty. But one who has faith reflects upon the difficulty: “Why am I going through it?” He comes to the conclusion that it is an atonement for his sins. His outlook is totally different than one who lives an external life.

One whose life is materialistic only sees events without ever pondering their depth, while a spiritual life makes one ponder. A materialistic person only sees the external factor in everything, while a spiritual person sees the reason in everything.

Our early sages compare this to a fruit covered with a shell. Someone who only looks at the outside of the fruit sees nothing but a shell. But someone who peels it sees that the shell is only there to protect the fruit.

The same is with everything. Our world is really a world full of inner meaning, but it is all concealed. Materialism makes everything appear external, while spirituality reveals the inner part of everything. This is not just

in mundane matters, but even in Torah and mitzvos. One who doesn't contemplate their inner meaning will only see the external factor of it. When one learns *musar*, he uncovers the inner meaning in everything and searches for ways to incorporate it into his life.

5.2 | *Why Do We Learn Mussar?*

Problems When Learning Mussar

Our eyes can see that many people learn *mussar* yet they give up on it as time goes on. Even those that remain steadfast to *mussar* are not significantly changed. Many people who learn *mussar* can feel this problem, but they rely on the words of Reb Yisrael Salanter, who said that even if one sees that learning *mussar* he is not changing him dramatically, he is still being affected; and that it is just like Rebbe Akiva who saw the water constantly dripping on the rock, which eventually disappeared.

In these next few chapters, we will explain what the proper way is to learn *mussar*.

Why do we learn mussar?

First, we have to know why we learn *mussar*.

This world exists because Hashem wanted to bestow good on His creations. If a person would get reward without any effort, it would feel like “bread of shame.” Therefore, Hashem created good and evil, so that a person can have free will to decide between good or evil. If a person chooses good, he receives reward. It is like payment rather than a gift, so he doesn’t feel ashamed.

A person has in himself both good and evil. Where are they found? They are both hidden deep in a person. A person’s goodness can be felt openly, but the evil that lies in a person cannot be felt, except when it gets very strong.

The *Chovos HaLevovos* writes, “Son of man, you should know that the greatest enemy in the world is your evil inclination, who lies in the faculties of your soul and is mixed into your spirit. He is together in your physical and spiritual senses. He knows your soul’s secrets and hidden weaknesses. He is advising you in all your movements.”

So a person has good and evil deep in him, and it is up to us to uproot the evil. If someone doesn’t know where his evil traits lie in, how will he know how to uproot it? Because of this, we learn *mussar*. We first need to recognize where the evil in us is located, and then we can fight it. This can only happen with learning Torah and *mussar*, as we will see.

Why some people get depressed from mussar

There are those who learn *mussar* and discover their weaknesses, and this makes them become depressed.

Such people are lacking a basic understanding of why we are here on this world. A person is not in charge of deciding his weaknesses; often, a person doesn’t understand that the whole reason why he is on this world is because of these weaknesses. If he wouldn’t have these weaknesses, he wouldn’t be here. A person has to know that this is why he is living – to work on himself and fix himself. This is the truth, and it cannot be escaped.

Anyone who naturally wants to pursue the truth is drawn after *mussar*, and anyone who doesn’t learn *mussar* is far from any truth.

Upon approaching learning *mussar*, the first thing a person has to know is to figure out what his unique purpose is. A person has to discover: “What are my bad *middos* (traits) that were given to me by Hashem?” If he approaches *mussar* with this perspective, he will be happy.

There is no greater joy than knowing one’s purpose on this world, and what Hashem wants from him. How sad is a person who will only know after 120 years why he was on this world; he never knew why he lived. Is there a greater joy than knowing it?

Why are so many people distant from truly serving Hashem?

What is the reason that people don’t pursue the truth? There are two reasons: (1) Laziness. (2) Various desires.

A person knows that serving Hashem is a big undertaking. People naturally want to relax, and they don’t want to push themselves and work hard in serving Hashem. This is laziness, and it is a mistake. A person has to know that it was decreed on him that he has to work hard on this world. He has the free will to decide if he will pursue materialism or spirituality. But there is no way to run away from working hard. A person should therefore be smart and choose to work hard in spirituality. *“A person was born to toil; praiseworthy is one who toils in Torah.”*

Furthermore, someone who wants to relax should know that the ultimate relaxation is to be connected to Hashem. All other forms of relaxing are imaginary forms of relaxation. The Sages say, “The wicked start out with tranquility, and end in suffering.”

The second reason why people fail are the various personal desires that people have. One thinks that serving Hashem will automatically make him suffocate his desires, but this is also a mistake, because there is nothing more enjoyable than being connected with Hashem. People are giving up the ultimate enjoyment - for mere scraps!

It is definitely hard in the beginning to avoid materialistic pursuits, but as time goes on, the pleasure in connecting to Hashem increases greatly, and it becomes easier to avoid desiring materialism.

5.3 | *Hidden Evil*

Another Reason Why We Learn Mussar

In the previous chapter we learned why we learn *mussar* and how to avoid pitfalls. Now will say more reasons why we learn *mussar*.

The psyche consists of two general factors: the intellect and the feelings. In both of them, there lies evil. But *mussar* can cure it.

In the mind, there lies a certain evil: impure mentalities, as well as mentalities that are off-base. A person has to know that he must learn Torah and love Hashem and have fear of Him, but if he only “knows” this information, then his mentality is external. He doesn’t know the inner meaning of Torah, the inner meaning of loving Hashem and fear of Hashem. He thinks he understands everything, but really he doesn’t know anything.

The *Mesillas Yescharim* testifies in his introduction that “Awe is wisdom, and only this is wisdom. Wisdom is surely not acquired without deep study. Deep study is required to truly know everything, that they should not merely be imagined – and surely in acquiring and understanding it.”

So a mere glance at *mussar* is a mistake. If one doesn’t strive to understand the concepts such as awe and love of Hashem, he doesn’t know what these concepts are.

In order to correct this, one needs to acquire knowledge of all the *sefarim* that discuss *yirah* (awe of Hashem) – from the early Sages to the latter Sages – and study them deeply, as when one learns Gemara. One must elaborate greatly on the subject of awe of Hashem, until he has it clear. All the details need to be studied in depth, no less than when one learns Gemara.

A healthy outlook is necessary for mussar

R’ Yechezkel Levenstein zt”l told over he asked the Alter of Kelm: “What does one need to learn *mussar*?” One of the things the Alter told him was that a person needs a “healthy head”.

In other words, *mussar* is not just for awakening oneself. It is the way to look at the inner meaning of life. One who learns *mussar* and doesn’t change his outlook on life is not understanding what *mussar* is all about.

Two types of evil that lurk in the heart

Until now we spoke of the problems which our intellect can present and deter us from the gain of learning *mussar*. Now we will speak about our heart, and the problems in our heart which need to be fixed, in order for us to be able to grow from *mussar*.

Our heart can have two different problems. One problem is when there is a lack of feeling for spiritual matters, and another problem is when in the feelings are incorrect.

A spiritually healthy heart is able to feel spirituality in everything, and is drawn after it. It can dismiss all physical matters of the subject as irrelevant, and therefore is not drawn after the physical. An unhealthy heart is the opposite. It considers the physical aspect in everything to be the good part of something, while it doesn't really have a feel for the spiritual part of a matter, so it is not drawn after the spiritual.

It follows, then, that someone who has an unhealthy heart is only using his mere intellect when he does anything spiritual; he has no feeling for it. (There are definitely healthy parts in his spiritual heart, but there is unhealthiness too in his spiritual heart, which is being a deterrent.)

Such a person must fix this by doing two things: he needs to awaken the good in him, and he must also root out the bad. How does one do this? Firstly one needs to contemplate that the only good thing is the spirituality of the matter, as the *Mesillas Yescharim* writes, “*As for me, closeness to Hashem is good*” – for only this is good, and anything else that people consider to be good is nothing but falsehood and vanity.” In other words, a person has to firmly believe and say to himself that there is no true good except spirituality: Hashem. One needs to understand it well.

One needs to also reflect on the evil of materialism. A person can see how many pitfalls are caused by going after materialism, and that in the end a person dies and doesn't take any of it with him – upon thinking all this, a person can reflect on the lowliness of materialism in all aspects.

Learning mussar with passion that can cause us to cry

There is another way how to awaken the good in a person, and root out the bad: to learn *mussar* with feeling. One can hum to himself while he learns *mussar* to a tune that touches his heart. One should study the section that focuses on the good – the section that deals with closeness to Hashem. He should read this section hundreds and maybe thousands of times with a sweet voice, and awaken himself to tears, until he feels that his inner desire for good has been awakened.

The same goes for rooting out the bad. One should review the sections that deal with the pitfalls of bad traits. It is told of Reb Yisrael Salanter zt”l that for an entire night he reviewed the dictum, “One who doesn't learn is liable to death.”

So learning *mussar* consists of two parts: To learn it in depth, in order to understand the concepts; and to awaken in oneself the good and root out the bad. This can only be through contemplating, as well as learning with deep feeling, on a steady basis.

5.4 | *Internalizing Mussar*

The Alter of Kelm's Method on How To Learn Mussar

In this chapter, we will continue the general rules in how to learn *mussar*, and we will try, with the help of Hashem, to explain these ways.

The Alter of Kelm once explained how we can learn anything, especially *mussar*. His method was that after a person learns a certain concept, he should reflect: “What did I think before I saw this, and what is new to me now that I have learned this?” One should clarify to himself what exactly he didn’t know before he learned what he has learned, and what exactly he has discovered in his learning. Let us try to explain his words.

The secret of success is to live in a clear world. (As one of the Sages said, “I see a clear world.”) A person needs to get used to clarifying things he encounters.

We do not mean that when one learns Gemara, he should make sure to come up with difficulties and to stay that way. This is impossible. Rather, we mean that a person should know exactly what he does understand – and what he doesn’t understand.

The Alter of Kelm thus advised that in order to clarify what you learn, you should think about how you thought beforehand, and what has become new to you. This should not be a fleeting thought; you should think into it deeply. If you try this, you will see how helpful this advice is.

Write Down Your Mussar Thoughts

It is also recommended that each person should write down his conclusions, as this helps greatly to clarify to oneself what he learns. Many times as a person writes down his thoughts, he sees that he’s confused about something. If one learns *mussar* in-depth (in the way we described in the last chapter), he should write it down in an orderly fashion.

This might be the intention of the words of Rabbeinu Yonah, who wrote that “one has to write down entire discussions about matters of fear of Hashem.”

Clarifying Matters Through Thinking Into the Opposite

Another aspect which helps you clarify things more is by using a method called “opposite thinking.”

To illustrate what we mean, when you place a white shirt next to a black shirt, you can see the contrast, and the black shirt brings out the whiteness of the white shirt. Comparing opposite concepts always helps you understand the concept you’re trying to understand. This should shape your mentality: always think about the opposite of what you’re dealing with.

We can give an example of this. When a person is learning the laws of “*Borer*” (forbidden mixtures) on Shabbos, he has to know what’s considered a mixture. A salad is an obvious mixture, and two cups on a table are obviously

not considered a mixture. But let's say we have a bunch of forks and knives piled together – here we have a doubt: is it like a salad, or is it like two cups? In order to know the answer, it's not enough to wonder if the knives and forks together are considered a mixture or not.

You need to know: What's a definite mixture, and what's definitely not a mixture? What is the in-between level? The in-between level is always a gray area and up for debate. This is an example of trying to clarify something.

Let's give another example. A person is thinking what *chessed* is, and what it really means to do *chessed*.

There is "*Chessed shel Emes*", which is to give even though you're not getting anything back in return. The opposite of this is hurting someone else, which is all about being selfish. Is there anything in between these two opposites?

If you think about it, yes. There is a gray area, and that is if someone just sits by himself and doesn't give to anyone. He's not hurting anyone, yet he's not acting nice either. Another gray area is someone who acts kind but expects something in return. Can we consider this kindness? It's something we need to think about. Compare it to *chessed*, and then compare it to selfishness. See which one it resembles more.

If you think about it, there are four levels of how to treat people: cruelty, pure kindness, and two levels in between which we mentioned. (There are more, and it is up to each person to figure them out on his own!)

By getting used to this and taking apart information, a person sees the two extremes and the gray areas in between. Slowly he will be able to clarify where the gray areas belong under, and he will discover that things which he thought he understood are really very hard to define.

Know Before Your Internalize

Although our mission is to internalize our knowledge into our hearts, you can only internalize a matter in your heart if you "know" it first. Although our goal is to internalize our mind's knowledge, first we must make sure that we "know" matters on at least an intellectual level.

Take things that appear simple to you and probe into them. You will discover suddenly that what you thought was simple is actually very deep.

Without doing this, a person hasn't even begun *mussar*. We need to know what even simple matters are and to clarify them. If someone can't do this, then he needs a different method to help him, and the discussions here are not for him.

5.5 | *Making Resolutions, Part One*

Working On Mussar

Until now we have clarified why we need to learn *mussar* and what the way to learn it is. Now we will explain how to work on these matters – the actual *avodah* of *mussar*.

The *Chovos HaLevovos* mentions a concept called “*pizur hanefesh*” – “scattering of the soul.” We need calmness, both in physical matters and in spiritual matters. When there is a lot of “quantity”, often this takes away our “quality.” For example, it is better to have all of one’s income come from one steady job, as opposed to many jobs. The same goes for spiritual matters – it’s better to work on one thing alone and concentrate on it rather than to work on many things at once, which will result in a half-baked job.

A Mistake About “Making Resolutions”

This applies very much in spiritual matters. We will explain why.

Many people, who want to grow in their service to Hashem, especially when *Rosh HaShanah* approaches, make a *cheshbon hanefesh* (self-accounting) with themselves and make *kaballos* (resolutions) for the coming year.

The first thing one has to know about this *avodah* is: not to take on things that are too hard to implement. Just take on small changes that are feasible for you to work on. But there is more you should know about this. There must be a sensible way how to take on a resolution.

Let us clarify what we mean. Let’s say a person makes a *cheshbon hanefesh* with himself and realizes that he has a bad *middah* of anger, or that he has evil desires, or laziness, or gossip, or a lack of concentration when he makes a *beracha*. He then takes on to improve in all these areas. This is a big problem, because he just works on a bunch of things at once, and there is no connection between them.

He is working on his anger and also on his evil desires, but there is no connection to both of these two resolutions. He is just working on five separate things at once. This is total *pizur hanefesh* - he has scattered himself around.

The Proper Way To Accept Resolutions

What, then, is the way that one should take on resolutions to change? The advisable method is to take on one thing and stick to it. This one point will eventually lead you to everything else you need to improve.

What is that one point that a person needs to focus on? There are generally two ways to get there. One way is to realize that all evil in us comes from our body, and our mission is thus to reveal our soul outward. The second way is to act *lishmah* (for Hashem’s sake).

The First Way – Fighting The Body

Let us explain this more in detail.

In *Section One (Ladder of Growth)* we explained that there are two ways in *Avodas Hashem*, and now we will review them and learn them more in-depth. We explained that a person is made up of a body and a soul. All evil comes from our body's hold on us, and all good comes from our soul. Our purpose is to find our soul, our true self, and realize that our body is just a mask over our true essence.

The body masks our essence in two ways. Firstly, it contains our bad *middos*, such as haughtiness, anger, sinful speech, evil desires, and laziness. Let's say a person is trying to work on his *gaavah* (haughtiness). He should not be thinking, "I want to become humble, and get rid of my haughtiness." You don't "get" humility – it is already in you, because you have a soul, which has all the good in it you need. The only issue is that our soul is hidden from us, and that is why we don't feel humility.

So our job is not to "get" the *middah* of humility, but rather, to reveal our soul. *Avodas Hashem* is not about working on this detail and that detail, because that would be impossible, since there are endless details. The sensible way is to uproot the root of our problems, which are the body's interests. So we need to nullify the *body* – not merely the *desires* that come from the body – with the intention that we are trying to reveal our soul.

By focusing on one point alone in your *Avodas Hashem*, you leave the attitude of "separateness" and instead involve yourself with "unity." All the various details in your *Avodas Hashem* will then be unified by one point – the fact that you are trying to nullify your body's hold on you. That should be the focus; don't get caught up in the many details.

If someone reads these lines and thinks that this is too hard to implement, it means he hasn't understood them.

The Second Way - Lishmah

Another way to unify all the points we work on is, through serving Hashem *lishmah* (for His sake).

People have all kinds of desires – honor, money, physical desires, peace of mind, etc. These are all a bunch of separate desires in a person that have no connection with each other. Compare this to a father who asks his son for a cup of water. The desire of the son is only one desire alone – to give satisfaction to his father. This is an example of one single desire that unifies many desires into one.

If a person is serving Hashem, but he's doing it all for himself, he has all sorts of agendas that aren't unified with each other. He learns Torah either because he wants to know *Shas*, or because he wants others to think he's a *lamdan* (intellectually gifted). He does the *mitzvos*, but only because he's afraid that he'll go to Gehinnom otherwise. He wants to go to Gan Eden also.

But when someone serves Hashem *lishmah*, he does everything with one intention alone – to give satisfaction to Hashem. Of course, there are still many details besides this that one has to do; there are 613 *mitzvos*, with many branches to them as well. But his intention is all one – to give pleasure to Hashem. If someone acts like this, then all day, he is focused on that one thought alone, which is the sensible approach to take.

5.6 | *Making Resolutions, Part Two*

How To Use A Notebook for Resolutions

Many of the great people who taught about *Avodas Hashem* would keep a notebook in which they would write down their resolutions, and they wrote down their successes and failures.

However, people who try to practice this often make a mistake: they get too uptight from this. For example, a person accepts upon himself that he will concentrate more by *davening*. After each *davening*, he writes down if he had concentration or not. But the problem that results from this is that even while he is *davening*, he's already thinking about what he will write down afterwards: "Am I *davening* good or not...?"

The point of the notebook is not to live with it 24\7. You should write down your experiences in it and the changes you feel in your life, and the point of this all is to change your perspective on life. But you should not keep being involved with it throughout the day. That is not the way to use the notebook.

Four Times of Teshuvah

In the *sefarim hakedoshim*, it is explained that there are four times to do *Teshuvah*: Every night before one goes to sleep, every *Erev Shabbos*, every *Erev Rosh Chodesh*, and *Erev Rosh HaShanah*. A person should try to utilize these times to make a *cheshbon hanefesh*. But we should know that there is a difference between every day and *Erev Shabbos*, than the *cheshbon hanefesh* that one makes on *Erev Rosh Chodesh* and *Erev Rosh HaShanah*.

Let us explain. As we said, the point of taking on resolutions is to change your perspective on life, and to be practical. The practical changes in your life are utilized by the *cheshbon hanefesh* which you can make at night before you go to sleep and on *Erev Shabbos*. A *cheshbon hanefesh* should be done calmly, and not out of pressure. Pressure causes a lot of damage to one's *Avodas Hashem*.

Changing your perspective on life, however – how you feel and think – should not be practiced so regularly. Don't make an introspection each day on how you think and feel and if you've changed or not. If you do feel that your perspective has changed, you can write it down, but don't sit down specifically to make a *cheshbon hanefesh* on what your perspectives (*hashkofos*) are.

On every *Erev Rosh Chodesh* and *Erev Rosh HaShanah*, take out the notebook and see what has changed in your life. Ask yourself what you thought beforehand, and what has changed in your perspective. If nothing new has come to you during a whole month, something is wrong here, and it means you need more specific guidance in *Avodas Hashem*.

Exceptions to the Rule

Know that all the rules here have some exceptions to them. For example, sometimes a person feels a tremendous change in his life that needs to be written down, although the month isn't up yet. These are extreme situations.

Generally speaking, though, one has to be more organized, and he should only write down his changes once a month.

Please be sensible with the guidance here and realize that although we have given the rules, there can always be exceptions. Part of the wisdom of *mussar* is to know when to follow the rules, and when to make exceptions.

Don't Take On Long-Term Resolutions

Another important point we need to add on is that you shouldn't take on things that are for a long time to practice. It is advised to only take on a small change for a few days or a week. After a few days, see if you have kept to your resolution.

Taking on a change for a long time usually doesn't work out, for two reasons. First of all, when you know that you have to do something for a long time, it's very hard to put into practice. Secondly, what's good for you now doesn't necessarily apply to you next month. Use your judgment to see if it's the right time to work on whatever it is that you want to work on.

Happy To Change

Also, all *mussar* work has to be done happily. Realize that it is a *zechus* (merit) to work on this - to get to know yourself better, to fix yourself. Therefore, don't take on anything that causes you sadness, pressure or anxiety. Feel happy that you have taken on a change.

If you are scared of taking on a certain resolution to change, it's a sign that you shouldn't do it. It's above your level right now to work on. We don't mean that you should take on resolutions which make things easy and comfortable in life. We are supposed to work hard at this, but it should be a kind of working hard that gives us satisfaction and happiness inside, not internal pressure and anxiety. Many people do not understand this point, and thus they don't keep their resolutions.

5.7 | *Simplicity In Mussar, Part One*

Mussar Needs Simplicity

Another fundamental point about *mussar* is that it needs *pashtus* (simplicity).

A person has in himself a mind and a heart. As a person gets older, his mind usually matures; this is definitely the case as a boy goes through yeshiva and thinks more into the Gemara. His thinking gets sharpened. But the heart often remains immature. The Alter of Kelm said that a person can have the brain of a grown and mature man, but his heart is the heart of a child. There is a big chasm between the mind and the heart, when it is left undeveloped.

This chasm between the mind and heart creates the following big problem. When a person wants to internalize an important matter, he attempts to use his intellect, and he doesn't know how to use his heart. What results from this is that he attempts to internalize things which his heart isn't on the level to absorb.

We can compare this to a father who talks to his three year old son and has with him an adult conversation. The child won't understand a thing. Since the mind is generally more mature in a person than the heart, a person's heart isn't yet ready to absorb the knowledge he has in his mind, because his heart is still immature and hasn't grown yet.

This has led to many a downfall. The hearts of many people are closed up, and they aren't aware of this. They try to internalize in their heart deep facts that the mind knows about. This cannot work, because the heart hasn't been developed yet.

What a person should do is instead only work to internalize *simple facts*, which the heart can comprehend. A person can teach his heart about simple matters, not deep matters. The heart of a person starts out very immature, like a child, and therefore it can only be taught simple matters, not deep matters. We must understand that.

Examples of Simple Facts

We can give many examples of "simple" facts that we can teach our heart about.

A person is sitting and learning Gemara. He can think: "Who wrote this Gemara? The answer is, the *Tannaim* and *Amoraim*. This is a simple fact, but we never think about it."

Then he can think: "Where did they get this knowledge from? The answer is that they exerted themselves in the Torah and *davened* to Hashem that they be able to understand the Torah and explain it, and Hashem blessed them with the great wisdom to do so. "

Then one can ask himself: "How could it be that human beings could know such a profound kind of wisdom as the Torah?" The answer is, "It is Hashem's endless wisdom, and if someone really attaches himself to Hashem and works hard to understand the Torah, Hashem bestows upon him this wisdom."

Then he can ask himself: "Who printed this Gemara? The answer is, Hashem gave people the ability to print *sefarim*."

One can keep thinking into all the simple facts of life, and to keep seeing how Hashem is behind all of it.

Simple Reflection Can Bring A Person to Endless Knowledge

The next step is to think: “What is this Gemara standing on? It is on a table. Who created this table? Hashem. He created trees at the beginning of Creation, and from there comes wood to make tables with.”

A person can then ask himself: “So many trees?! He can answer to himself: “Yes – billions of trees, because Hashem is endless.”

When a person begins to contemplate about things that are endless, he opens himself up to the concept of the Endless. By getting used to thinking into the Source of all details in life, a person can get even his immature heart to receive new levels of growth.

5.8 | *Simplicity In Mussar, Part Two*

Relating to Hashem as our “Father”

Another name for Hashem is *Avinu*, “Father”. A person who relates to Hashem as his Father lives a whole different kind of life, a life full of love. Without this attitude in life, a person doesn’t taste life on this world.

In the last chapter, we were really explaining how we can serve Hashem on a level of *Malkeinu*, “our King.” This is a relationship of awe toward Hashem. Now we are learning how to have a different aspect of our relationship with Hashem – a relationship based on love.

The Jewish people are called the “children” of Hashem. Every single Jew is Hashem’s child, and Hashem loves each and every Jew like a son, even more than the love that a father has for his own son. What we need to do is open ourselves up more and feel His love for us.

In order to do this, we need to think about all the details of our life and see how much Hashem loves us, and how much He worries for us, just like a father worries for his child. We should see how in everything we have, Hashem gave it to us out of love.

Examples of Feeling How Hashem Is Our Father

We can give many examples of how to acquire this perspective on life.

A person is sitting at the table and he is ready to start his meal. He has in front of him a table, a chair, a plate, utensils, cheese, vegetables, bread, salt, etc. He can think: “Who gave me all this? Where did so much come from? It came from my Father. Why did my Father give me so much? Because He loves me!”

Now think more: “For how long has Hashem loved me? I am a soul, which is a piece of Hashem. If so, Hashem was good to me way before today. He has given me everything: food, clothing, health, etc. He created me to bestow good upon me. It is not only today that Hashem has been good to me, but ever since the day I was born, He has been good to me. After all, the reason He created the world was to bestow His goodness upon His creations.”

Another example of how you can work on this is that as you are sitting and learning, before you begin to learn, think: “Who told me to learn Torah? Hashem. Why does He want me to learn? Because He loves me, and He wants me to be close to Him. Thus, he gave me His Torah, so that through His Torah I will become close to Him. A father wants his son to be close to him...”

Another example is *davening*. A person should think right before he *davens*: “What am I going to do now? I am about to talk to Hashem. Why should I talk to him? Because I am missing this and that in my life, and therefore I need Him to give me my needs. Why doesn’t He just give them to me without me having to ask for it? Because He is my father, and He wants me to speak with Him, and He wants to hear my voice.”

Davening to Hashem is all about the closeness of a son with his Father. It is a longing of the Father to hear His son’s voice. If you approach *davening* like this, it will change your *davening* entirely.

The Question of Many

There are people who will read these chapters and think this is so strange: How many times can a person repeat to himself all these simple facts?!

But this is a grave mistake. These are not intellectual matters – they are matters of the heart. First they need to be thought about simply, and they need to be sensed. It's not enough to think about these things on an intellectual level.

The father-son connection that one can have with Hashem is not an intellectual matter – it is a heart matter, and it needs to be thought about in terms of a very real relationship between a father and a son. Of course, this is not an easy realization, but this is the way: to think about it simply with your mind, and then to try to sense it more with your heart. Think about all the many different ways how our relationship with Hashem can resemble a father-son relationship.

If you do this for many months, you will receive help from Hashem in this, and your heart will be opened up to sense how He is your Father.

5.9 | *Lishmah*

Lishmah and Pashtus\Simplicity

In the first section (Ladder of Growth, chapter 7) we began to explain the concept of “*lishmah*.” Now we will explain how we reach *pashtus*\simplicity (which we have begun to explain in the previous chapter), through *lishmah*.

The *Mesillas Yescharim* (chap.19) writes that to serve Hashem for His sake alone, *lishmah*, means that one is serving Hashem in order to give Him honor. We will try to explain how one can do this practically.

The Rambam writes that every person can become like Moshe Rabbeinu. The Chofetz Chaim (brought in *sefer Kovetz He'aros*) explained that this does not mean that one can become entirely like Moshe Rabbeinu, but rather that one can become just as devout to Hashem in his life just as Moshe Rabbeinu was, on his level. Reb Elchonon Wasserman zt”l testified that his rebbi, the Chofetz Chaim, did everything for the sake of Hashem and never acted for himself.

What does it mean to act *lishmah*? We can give a few examples.

A person is *davening Shemoneh Esrei*, and he comes to the blessing of *Selach Lanu*. He should think: “Why am I asking for forgiveness from Hashem?” There are many possible reasons: (1) The person is afraid that he will go to Gehinnom. (2) He is afraid that he will get punished even on this world. (3) He doesn’t want to sin because he wants to be on a high level. (4) He wants to enjoy spiritual pleasure, and sin will hold this back.

Any of these intentions have nothing to do with *lishmah*, because they are all about one’s self. The real reason why a person should be afraid of sin is because this disgraces the honor of Hashem.

Another example is the blessing of “*Attah Chonen*”. A person asks Hashem for wisdom and understanding. Why does he want to know the Torah? The real reason should be because He wants to increase the honor of Hashem on the world.

Eating lishmah

Another example: a person is sitting down to eat. He can think: Why am I eating? If he is eating simply because he is hungry, this cannot be *lishmah*.

He can think: “Who made me hungry? Hunger doesn’t happen by itself. Hashem made a person hungry – He made our physical bodies become hungry when we need to eat. Why did Hashem make it that we have to eat? It is because He wants us to utilize this to increase the honor of Hashem.”

How do you increase the honor of Hashem through eating? Firstly, when you make a *beracha* on the food and you thank Hashem for it, there is no greater honor to Hashem. Reb Yeruchem Levovitz zt”l once said, “People think that you make a *beracha* in order to eat, but really, we eat so that we can make a *beracha*.” The nature of people is that when they feel pleasure, they are able to thank Hashem more easily, and this sanctifies the food. (There are deeper intentions as well in eating, but this is just a basic intention one can have).

Living to Increase the Honor of Hashem

A person has to understand that he should live his whole life for Hashem. Whatever act he does, he should do it with the intention of increasing the honor of Hashem. Even though we do not understand how our actions increase the honor of Hashem, Hashem commanded us to act this way, and the fact that we are doing His will is an increase of His honor.

5.10 | *Subtle Feeling In Mussar*

The Ability of “Subtle Feeling”

Reb Chatzkel Levenstein zt”l once asked his *rebbe*, the Alter of Kelm: “What is necessary in order to learn *mussar*?”

The Alter answered him that there are three things, and one of them is “a subtle feeling.”

There are two reasons why we need an ability of “subtle feeling” for *mussar*. The first reason is because we have to internalize our knowledge into our heart. First we need to know something in our mind, and then we need to internalize it into the heart. First we need to think about something on an intellectual level, and after that, we need to see and feel where our heart is found. We need to reflect on the contradiction between our intellect and heart, and feel how much our heart contradicts the intellect.

A person has to know clearly what his level is – where his mind is, and where his heart is, and which point he is trying to internalize. Many people are mistaken and think that what they know in their minds is considered “internalization.” This mistake comes from a lack of having a “subtle feeling.” The person doesn’t pay attention to the fact that his heart – his subtle feelings – has never absorbed the information in his head. When a person never clarifies to himself what his feelings of the heart are and he doesn’t see how his heart contradicts his mind, all his Avodas Hashem is in error.

Since most people do not have subtle feeling, they will not understand what we saying here. “A dead person has no feelings”. This is a big problem that affects many people – people do not recognize the level of their heart, and they mistakenly think that their heart has internalized what they know, while the truth is that they haven’t.

If You Don’t Have the Subtle Feeling

If someone is reading this and he does not identify with what the words here, it can be because of two possible reasons.

It could be that he does have subtle feeling, just he is not aware of it. If that is the case, he should open it up more by paying attention more to subtle things such as honor, anger, happiness, etc. These are subtle feelings, and he should pay attention to them when he feels them.

The other possibility is that he doesn’t have subtle feelings, and he should thus daven and cry to Hashem that his heart be opened to begin to feel subtle feelings.

Consciousness and Sub-Consciousness

Another reason why subtle feeling is needed for *mussar* is because we need to realize what’s going on in our sub-conscious (“*teis hakarah*” in Hebrew).

A person is made up of consciousness (*hakarah*) and sub-consciousness (*teis hakarah*). Consciousness is when a person is aware to his thoughts. The sub-conscious is what you're not aware of. When a person purifies his consciousness, it is now upon him to work on his sub-consciousness; *tzaddikim* work on this point until their last day on earth.

How A Person Can Recognize His Sub-Conscious

The question is: How do you recognize your sub-conscious, if it's something you're not aware of? There are two ways.

One way is, sometimes a thought falls into your head, and you have no idea where the thought came from. These are thoughts that come from our sub-conscious – and in these thoughts, our hidden, inner world is contained. For example, sometimes a person gets a temptation to steal someone else's money or object, and then he quickly pushes away such a thought, thinking, "I would never do such a thing." But although he didn't steal, the thought to steal came from his sub-conscious, because deep down, he has some desire to steal.

We only gave one example of this concept, but if you think about it, you can uncover many hidden desires from your sub-conscious.

Using Subtle Feeling To Recognize the Sub-Conscious

Another way to recognize the sub-conscious is through the ability of "subtle feeling".

The truth is that if someone has the ability of subtle feeling, he doesn't need to see the words here, and if he doesn't have the ability, he won't understand what it says here. However, there is still a point in writing this: so that if one realizes that he doesn't have subtle feeling, he can *daven* and cry to Hashem that his feelings be opened up, and then he will be able to know what's going on in his sub-conscious.

The Common Mistake

We can see many times that people work very hard at their *Avodas Hashem*, yet they are still far from true *Avodas Hashem*. This is because they don't know themselves well, and they don't know where their hearts really are. They know everything in their head, but they don't know what the "heart" really is. People mistakenly think that the heart is something that you use to clarify matters with intellectually, but really, the heart is used for simple feelings - an ability to recognize simple realities.

How can a person know if his heart is opened? If he sees that when he *davens*, his heart pours out to Hashem in prayer and his tears flow freely and simply, and not because he strained himself to cry – this is a sign that his heart has been opened up.



***Section 6:
Emunah
(Faith)***

6.1 | *The Chazon Ish on Faith*

The Chazon Ish: the world is a “closed riddle”

The Chazon Ish writes (*Emunah U'Bitachon* Chap.1), “The trait of *emunah* \faith is a subtle point in the deepest part of the soul. If a person is concerned for his soul, and he is calm from hungry desires, and his eyes are amazed at the sight of the height of the heavens and the depth of the land, he feels awesome trepidation, for the world is before him like a closed riddle, a wondrous secret; and this riddle surrounds his heart and mind....”

We must understand who the Chazon Ish is referring to when he says that the “riddle of this world takes holds of him”. Is he talking about someone who doesn’t believe, and he is on a quest to figure out who created the world? No - he is speaking about himself. Surely it applies to us as well, any true Torah student. It is perplexing, though. Didn’t the Chazon Ish know the answer? Why did he have to try to figure out anything which he already knew?

Herein lays the secret of *emunah* (faith). There is intellectual faith (*emunah sichli*) – and then there is a feeling of faith (*emunah chushi*). The Chazon Ish is writing from his heart, from his highly developed feelings, and not from his mere intellect.

This is what a person needs to work on: to live with a faith in G-d that he feels, faith that is tangible to him no less than how he feels a table or a chair. Without this, a person is missing the main part of life.

How to have actual feelings of faith

How can a person truly feel faith in Hashem?

There are two aspects here: in his thoughts, and in his speech. In a person’s thoughts, a person should contemplate simply that Hashem created everything, every last detail, and reflect on how this happened: Who did this, and from where does everything come from, etc.¹

In the end of the day, a person has to have alive, awakening thoughts that everything was created by a Creator. A person has to get to a point in which it comes naturally to contemplate everything, and this will lead him to see Hashem in everything.

Speaking about faith

Regarding a person’s speech, it is written, “*I believed, for I spoke.*” The commentators expound: “*I believed*” – when did I believe? “*For I spoke*”. This means that if I accustom myself to speak matters of faith constantly, I will have faith.

¹ See *Section V: Mussar, Chapter Six*.

This is also the meaning of the *possuk*, “Faith has been cut off, it is gone from their mouths.” When is faith cut off from the heart? When it is “gone from the mouth”. Therefore, everyone must train his mouth to always speak words of faith in G-d.

When one speaks words of *emunah*, they do not have to be lofty, intellectual matters; they can be very simple words of *emunah*. All of a person’s speech should be saturated with words of *emunah*: when he walks, when he lies down, and when he gets up; and in all of his dealings, he should be connected to *emunah*\faith. It should be a true connection, and not merely an external, superficial lip service.

How to speak in matters of faith

We will give examples of how to talk more in an *emunah*-oriented way.

We do not mean for a person to say “*Baruch Hashem*, I will be successful.” This is just a superficial lip service. Instead, one should say, “*Ribono shel olam* (Master of the world), I know that if You do want me to be successful, I will be successful, and if not, not; therefore I am asking You, that if it is proper that I do this, that I should be successful.”

When a person sits down to learn, he should say, “If You, Hashem, want me to understand what I will learn then I will surely understand, and if not, not. Therefore I ask of You that I should be worthy to understand my learning.”

When a person is about to *daven*, he should say, “I know, *Ribono shel olam*, that if You want to help me to pray properly then I will pray properly, and if not, not; please help me pray properly to You.”

The same goes for everything else: a person should precede the matter with words of *emunah*\faith, both in his thoughts and in his words - from an inner recognition of this, from a simple feeling for the truth of these words. They should be words from the heart, and not just from the intellect.

Faith is at all times and situations

Emunah\faith is the beginning of our service to Hashem, and it unifies all that we do. In every service we do, faith in G-d is at the core. Anyone who doesn’t understand this doesn’t know what faith is; he might know of it in his intellect, but he is lacking the main kind of faith: faith in his heart. He is missing a faith that bonds him and attaches him to G-d.

R’ Yechezkel Levenstein zt”l would say in his old age that he feels that if he would forget about matters of faith for even a few moments, he would immediately fall. There are people who think this is an exaggeration, but one who lives with true faith feels this very well.

6.2 | *Faith Is The Root of Everything*

Faith is the unifying matter of all our avodah

The *possuk* says, “*And the righteous man will live by his faith.*” The holy book *Noam Elimelech* explains that *emunah*\faith is what unifies all the aspects of our service to Hashem into one unit.

We know that a great part in rectifying evil character traits is by having true *emunah*\faith. We will therefore explain here how even bad *middos* (traits) can be rectified by faith.

Let’s take jealousy, for example. Jealousy is to when I cast an eye on a friend’s object, and I want it for myself. Sometimes I even wish to be cruel to him so I can get it; as long as my friend doesn’t have more than me.

How does a person rectify jealousy? With *emunah*! We will explain. A person must know clearly that Hashem created the world, and that He created it with a purpose, and that everyone has the tools necessary to reach his purpose. No one is lacking anything he needs to serve Hashem, and whatever I don’t have, I don’t need. Everything that I have is exactly what I need.

Also, whatever my friend has is exactly what he needs in order to fulfill his purpose. If I would have my friend’s item, it would only be detrimental to him. The same is true for my friend; if my friend would have my items, he wouldn’t be able to reach his purpose either.

In short, a person doesn’t have anything on this world that is his. Anything that one has is a tool to serve Hashem with, and Hashem gave everyone their unique tools to serve Him. Just as no one serves Hashem in the exact same way that another serves Him, so is there no person who has the same tools as his friend.

So really, someone who desires another’s objects is deficient in his *emunah*. He must review with himself the facts, that Hashem created the world, and He created him with a unique purpose, and with specific tools to serve Him. There is thus no place for jealousy.

The question

Many people have a question, though: Why did Hashem create me with this specific purpose with these specific tools – why couldn’t He give me a different purpose, with different tools?

The answer to this is the *possuk*, “*For my thoughts are not your thoughts.*” Only Hashem really know what’s best for a person, and no one can comprehend it.

This is a deep and fundamental point: everything Hashem does is good, even though I do not understand His ways at all. This is a total nullification of one’s desires. A person must understand that Hashem’s thoughts are endless and cannot be comprehended. A person can reach this understanding by nullifying his desires, something which takes a lot of self-work.

Deep Faith In Hashem Also Cures Depression

When a person lives like this, he will also be happy.

A depression can only come on a person when he feels that he is lacking something. However, if a person internalizes a deep faith in his mind and heart and realizes the truth about G-d – that whatever he has is exactly what he needs, and what he doesn't have he doesn't need, and if he would have that thing it would only be detrimental to him – this will remove any depression from him. He will not feel that he's lacking anything, because he isn't lacking anything. With *emunah*, he will realize that there is nothing that he needs that he doesn't have.

The root of joy

When depression is removed from the person, joy can enter. The reason for this is that the soul of a Jew is a piece of G-d from above. About G-d it is written, "*Glory and joy are in His place.*" The soul is intrinsically happy. What holds back joy? The body! The body wants various desires and feels that they are necessities. Feelings of lacking are created, and this makes one depressed.

If a person is in control over his body, and he nullifies his feelings of any lacking, he will remove the covering of the body from the soul, and then the soul will naturally return to its ordinary state: "*Glory and joy are in his place.*"

6.3 | *The Viewpoint of Free Will Vs. The Viewpoint of Knowledge*

Rectifying hatred and anger through faith

In this chapter we will explain how to rectify the traits of hatred and anger, through *emunah* \faith. We will begin by examining anger.

The nature of a person is to get angry if things aren't going his way, or if someone belittles him. The reason for anger is rooted in egoism – the feeling of “Me”. A person naturally thinks, “I decide what should happen, and I am very important. Who is anyone to be brazen enough to start up with me?”

How to we rectify anger? With *emunah*!

Let us explain: *emunah* means that a person knows and believes that “a person cannot point a finger downwards unless it is announced above in Heaven.” So therefore, if I am on my way and someone comes and hurts me, the person did not hurt me; Hashem sent him to do this, and “Hashem told him to curse.” If this would not have been decreed Above, so-and-so couldn't have hurt me. If so and so hurt me, then it was the will of the Creator that he do so.

Knowledge vs. free will

People ask a question, “Why is the one who belittled me punished for belittling me? If Hashem wanted it to happen, it's not in his free will anyway! I thought it was *supposed* to happen...!”

This question was actually asked in earlier generations, and many answers were already given: (1) It was decreed upon me that I should suffer belittlement, but it was not decreed who should do it to me. Therefore the one who carried out the abuse is punished, because he chose to be the emissary of abuse. (2) There is a deeper answer, and it is even more truthful: There are two different viewpoints to have.

The lower viewpoint is called *bechirah* (“free will”), and the higher viewpoint is called *yediah* (“knowledge”).

From the viewpoint of *bechirah*, it is logical for me to want to feel hurt, because the abuser used his free will to hurt me. The one who meted out the abuse was supposed to choose not to hurt me, and I am naturally upset at him for hurting me, because he is responsible for his actions. But from the higher view, *yediah*, I know that Hashem already knows what will happen, and He decreed for whatever reason that this person should hurt me, so there is no real reason to be upset at this person who hurt me.

From the victim's view

Let's say someone starts cursing me. How should I react?

I have to view the situation from a viewpoint of “*yediah*”. I should not think that the other person has the free will to curse me; I should instead think that Hashem wanted this to happen. Otherwise, it's basically being angry with Hashem (G-d forbid). Just like if a person trips on a rock and falls, he doesn't complain to the rock for hurting

him - because he knows that it's from Hashem, and the rock was just an emissary of Hashem – so must I view a person who hurts me.

So should I view myself from the *other's* point, not from *my* viewpoint. The other person who hurt me was just an emissary of Hashem, and I have to view this that it had nothing to do with his free will.

Even though this way of thinking seems to go against the rule of free will (because the abuser used his free will to hurt me, so logically, I should be upset at him), still, the Rambam quotes of this matter the *possuk*, “*For My thoughts are not their thoughts.*” This is because the viewpoint of *yediah* is also logical, but it is just that human comprehension cannot understand it.

The human mind cannot comprehend an answer to this apparent contradiction, and a person's duty is to accept that his mind is limited and cannot comprehend even a little of these matters. Even in what appears logical to a person, one has no real proof that it is logical, because according to the real facts, which are endless are in their comprehension, it may very well also make no sense. So whatever a person can comprehend with his mind cannot make any difference. We do not understand.

It follows then that a person should serve Hashem simply for what He says to do, and not solely from a logical perspective. In situations that Hashem wishes for a person to use his intellect, he may do so, but if Hashem doesn't want a person to try to understand, then he shouldn't try to understand.

Reacting to anger is such a case – here, Hashem's will is that we should not use our logic, because we do not understand how the abuser can be justified.

From the abuser's view

So the proper way to view the situation is as follows: If someone wants to curse and hurt someone, the *abuser* should know that he will be punished for it, because he has free will. But even if he does choose to curse or abuse, the *victim* should know that Hashem wanted this to happen, and the abuser didn't do anything.

Although this is an apparent contradiction, herein lays the secret of *emunah*\faith in Hashem: there are two viewpoints going on at once, and it is upon the victim to understand that he was supposed to be hurt by the abuser, in spite of the fact that the *abuser* is not allowed to justify himself with hurting him. This is a very deep matter.

The same applies for the trait of hatred. If a person knows that something was supposed to happen to him, he cannot come to hate the abuser. The abuser should be viewed by the victim as someone who was forced to do so; why should someone hate another who was forced to do something to him...?

Summary

To summarize: a person must understand that Hashem decides everything. If a person has complaints, he should know that he is complaining to Hashem. He is thinking that what Hashem did is not good. So he really doesn't believe fully that Hashem is entirely truthful and good; he lacks a basic part of faith. A person must know that Hashem does everything, and everything He does is good and true. I do not understand how it is true and how it is good, but it is.

6.4 | *Fixing Arrogance Through Faith*

Rectifying arrogance through emunah\faith

In this chapter we will explain how a person can remove arrogance from himself and come to have humility – through *emunah*\faith in Hashem.

The Ramban writes in his famous letter, “And now my son, know and see, that one who is arrogant in his heart on others is rebelling against the kingship of Heaven, for he is glorifying himself in clothes of Heaven, as it says (Tehillim 91:1), “*Hashem is King, He wears clothing of glory.*” Why should a person be arrogant? If he has wealth, it is written, “*Hashem makes destitute and wealthy.*” If it is honor, only of G-d it is written, “*Wealth and honor are before You.*” How can a person glorify himself with honor that belongs to his Creator?! And if he does glorify himself because of wisdom, it is written, “*He gives language to the faithful ones, and takes the taste from the elders.*” So everything is equal in regards to Him, “*for in His wrath He can humble arrogant ones and in His will he can uplift lowly ones.*”

It is apparent in these words of the Ramban that everything that a person has is from Hashem. There is therefore no place for arrogance, and if he is arrogant then he is denying Hashem and claiming that his achievements are his own.

Similar to these words are the words of the *Mesillas Yescharim* (Chap. 22), “However one who has an upright intellect, even if he has merited great wisdom, should really reflect that he has no place to be arrogant and have pride. For someone who has more intellect than others is only acting upon his nature, just as a bird flies because that is its nature, and an ox can work due to its strength because that is its nature, so is a wise person only acting upon his nature; and one who is not a wise as him can also be as wise as him, so there is no place for arrogance and pride. What can this be compared to? To servants of a house, in which everyone is given a specific job.... there is no place for arrogance.... when this becomes clear to him, then he can be called a truly humble person, for in his heart and inside he is humble.”

How to view yourself and another

A person has to know that since everything comes from Hashem, he must view himself with this outlook, and thus attribute no personal honor towards himself because of his accomplishments. When you look at other people as well, however, the view should be the opposite: they are fully deserving of honor.

The Ramban writes in his letter, “Every person should be greater than you in your eyes, whether he is wise or wealthy – it is upon you to honor him, and if he is poor while you are wealthy or wiser than him – think in your heart that you are guilty while he is innocent, and even if he is a sinner, think that he is mistaken while you are intentional.”

You have knowledge, while your friend has free will

Anyone who sees these words and thinks into them will find this very hard: How does it make sense? If I am wealthy, I should not attribute it to myself, but to Hashem; why, then, should I honor another because he is wealthier than me? Doesn't wealth come from Hashem? If so, why is my friend to be honored from this...?

There are many answers to this, but we will say the deeper answer.

In the previous chapter, we explained that there are two perspectives – *yediah* (“knowledge”) and *bechirah* (“free will”). *Bechirah* is the lower perspective, and it implies that since people have free will, it is logical for me to feel hurt at someone else for treating me wrong. *Yediah*, the higher perspective, is to see everything from a viewpoint of faith in Hashem. It is to believe, “I was supposed to be hurt, so I cannot be upset at this person who has wronged me, even though he was wrong for making such a choice. I was supposed to get hurt, because that is what Hashem decreed.”

This concept was applied before to the traits of anger and hatred, and now we can use it as well to solve arrogance. When it comes to my own accomplishments, I have to use the view of “*yediah*”, which is that I have nothing due to my own accord, since everything is from Hashem. But when it comes to how I view another, I must honor him due to his various accomplishments, because then I have to use the view of *bechirah*.

This seeming contradiction is only a contradiction when I look at the things from the viewpoint of *bechirah*, but if I use the perspective of *yediah*, then there are no contradictions, because it is essentially a viewpoint of faith in Hashem – that every matter is entirely from Hashem.

Chazal state that “Humility is greater than all these things.” (Avodah Zarah 20b). This meaning behind this is because the essence of humility is to totally nullify oneself and integrate with the Creator.