

BILVAVI

GETTING TO
KNOW YOUR
SHARE

004

WAYS OF
QUIETING

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Since we explained (with *siyata d'shmaya*) the way to recognize our soul through attaining inner quiet, let us now think a little about what these ways of quieting are, and how we can come to the level of "The land feared, and was quieted."¹

Calming Down Through Emunah

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

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

Quieting Our Desires

Besides the above factor of *emunah*, the root of all soul-faculties is the *ratzon* (will). This can be seen clearly since it is the will which motives and moves all the other faculties of the soul. The stronger one wants something, the more "noise" it creates in his soul. The calmer one is, one is able to nullify his will to Hashem's. We do not mean a sleeplike feeling, but an inner quiet which is based on the power of "It is our will to do Your will"² To the extent that one nullifies oneself to Hashem, the noise in their soul quiets down and he becomes calmer inside.

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

¹ For a more expansive discussion of these various aspects see the Rav's sefer גאולתך דע את

² Talmud Bavli Berachos 17a

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This should also be coupled with active *teshuvah*, so that our sins won't get in the way, just as Yaakov *Avinu* was afraid that perhaps he sinned and wasn't deserving of Hashem's protection. When a person lives with constant *teshuvah* and *emunah*, by nullifying his will to Hashem's will with the sole desire to reach his personal share and nothing else, the entire noise of the world dissipates. "We run and they run. They run to the pits of destruction, while we run to the eternal life of the next world."³ The life of the next world is not simply to live a spiritual existence, and it is not simply a place of reward. It is to reach our own personal share. Every Jew has a portion in the world to come – his own personal portion in it. We are running to the eternal life of the next world – to reach our own personal portion. Each person runs to his own portion in the next world.

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

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

Quieting Our Character Traits

Besides the above, there are also outer layers of the soul, which contain our *middos*, which contribute a lot to one's inner noise. Anger especially disrupts a person's inner peace, igniting a fire of *Gehinom* that rules over the person.⁴ But any of the character traits as well can create noise in one's soul – either when one hasn't yet fixed his greatest weakness, or when one's character traits aren't balanced with each other, where an internal clash is created between his different character traits. To the extent that one repairs his worst character trait and also attains a balance between all of his character traits in general, he becomes calmer inside.

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

³ Recited in the prayer upon making a celebration of completing a tractate of Gemara (Talmud)

⁴ see Talmud Bavli Nedarim 22a: "Whoever gets angry, all kinds of Gehinnom rule him."

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

Quieting Our Speech

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

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

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

It is subtle to know how much one should or shouldn't be talking, but the more a person enters inward, the more inner quiet he has, he should talk only to the extent that it won't steal his inner calm.

Most people will find this to be strange, and that is because they don't recognize what inner quiet is and they don't feel how talking creates a noise in their soul. But the more a person enters inward, the more he sees that his talking needs to be measured, so that he stays balanced between his inner calm and his talking, making sure not to lose his inner calm from talking too

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much. This factor is a big part of one's inner quiet – staying properly balanced in the area of how much one talks (and the audibility of his talking).

Quieting The Thoughts

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

Just like a person has conversations with another, so does a person converse with himself in his thoughts, and as it is written, "I spoke with my heart," and *Chazal* said "The heart speaks."⁵ When most people are in middle of thinking, a large part of their thinking is really a mental conversation. This internal chatter really creates a big noise in the soul. In addition, when one's thoughts are racing, this also takes away his inner calm, and he needs to quiet his thoughts.

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

These two methods are a way to fulfill "Keep away from evil, and do good." We keep away from harm to our peace of mind by emptying out our thoughts, and we 'do good' by focusing on a simple, calming thought.⁶

Calming Our Deeds

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

⁵ Koheles Rabbah 1:1

⁶ After the class, the Rav was asked: "Does a person also need to calm his thoughts in the middle of learning Torah?" The Rav answered, "Certainly when a person is in the midst of learning Torah, he can't be busy trying to quiet his mind, because then he won't be learning. But in the middle of learning, when a person is learning something and he feels that he's working hard at trying to understand it but he's not succeeding at understanding it, part of how he can help himself is by quieting his thoughts for a bit of time, and then return to thinking about it again from the start. This also resembles the state of when the Torah was given, for *Chazal* said that the Torah was given amidst a state of silence, meaning that a person should calm his mind and then begin thinking again from a quieted mind.

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movement create noise for the soul. One should be engaged in activities only to the extent that the calmness in his soul isn't being disturbed.

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

Living In The Present

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

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

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

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

There are also those who have the opposite problem – they almost never think about the past or future, and they only live for the moment. “*Eat and drink, for tomorrow we will die.*” They try to

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enjoy the present as much as possible, because “The present passes by in the blink of an eye,” so they are trying to grab as much enjoyment as they can from the present. They never think about the past or about what will be, and they have no energy to deal with past troubles or to worry about future troubles, they just try to take their minds off from all worries by simply getting pleasure from the present moment.

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

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

In Summary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In Conclusion

We have tried here to briefly outline the concepts,⁷ on how to gain the power of inner quiet. With the help of Hashem, in the next lesson we will continue this path and explain how we can manage our life from amidst the power of being quiet and calm on our inside – and how we can gradually come closer to recognizing and actualizing the personal share that Hashem has given each of us.

⁷ For a more expansive discussion of these various aspects see the Rav's *sefer* Getting Ready for Your Redemption דע את גאולתך