

BILVAVI

GETTING TO
KNOW YOUR
SHARE

002

THE MAIN
TOOL -
INNER CALM

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

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

When the Torah was being given, it was a lofty time for the world. Everything fell silent. It was a return to the state of before the first sin, which was a state of *“Not in a noise is Hashem found, and not in a wind, but in a soft subtle sound.”*¹ This was most perfect level ever in Creation, in which every creation in the world, and the Jewish people especially, were in a state of utter silence.

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

INTERNAL NOISE – WANTING OUT OF OUR PERSONAL SHARE

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

External noise prevents a person from reaching his internal world, and when a person merely wants to get something which isn't meant for him, that very will creates an inner noise. *“The wicked are like a stormy sea, for tranquil they cannot be.”*² The word *rasha* (wicked person) is from the same letters as the word *raash* (noise).

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

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

¹ Malachim 19:11-12

² Yeshayahu 57:20

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the desire is bad for the soul, and the soul doesn't want this bad desire which creates internal noise.

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

OUR AVODAH AT THE ROOT OF ALL ROOTS

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

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

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

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

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

The superficial perspective is that we have to keep away from forbidden acts and from things that aren't good for us. That is true, but that's not the root. It is only the outcome. The root of avoiding anything bad for our soul is to work from the root – to nullify all the soul's

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wishes for anything that's not meant for us. The calmer we become inside, the better we will be able to sense and recognize what is meant for us to pursue and what is not meant for us to

SELF-RECOGNITION VS. INNER CALM

There is also a more external way to figure out what's meant for us to be doing or not. We can examine our personality, which contains 4 elements (fire, air, water, and earth), and gradually clarify and recognize our personal soul. Then one can recognize better what's suitable for him and what isn't (based on how much clarity about himself is reached). This is certainly a true way [to get to knowing your personal share], but it is only external, because it merely involves intellectual analysis.

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

THE ROOT OF MOSHE'S ABILITY TO SEE CLEARLY

There was a dark cloud on top of Har Sinai, called *arafel*, and Moshe approached it. Where it was cloudy and murky for the rest of the people, it was clear for Moshe who was able to recognize the gifts he had been given and was happy with it. As we say in the *tefillah* of *Minchah* on Shabbos, the *tefillah* of *Yismach Moshe*, how Moshe rejoices in the gift he was given. He only wanted his own portion and no one else's, and that was why Moshe could see through the dark cloud. Moshe could see all his visions clearly, while the other prophets saw an unclear vision, because Moshe saw a clear world in front of him. When his soul left his body one of the Sages said: "I saw a clear world"³ where everything was laid out before him clearly.

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

³ Baba Basra 10:

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given to him, in his own personal portion, and with his he could be truly wealthy and happy. This is what enables a person to reach a deep calmness in his soul.

NOISE PREVENTS US FROM BEING CLEAR WHAT OUR PERSONAL SHARE IS

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

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

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

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

In our internal world of the soul as well, a person is able to be clear about what his personal share is. "*My soul knows very well.*"⁴ The *neshamah* knows clearly what her personal share is. The only reason why one doesn't know it and doesn't feel it is because of the general reason

⁴ Tehillim 139:14

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mentioned earlier, because the body covers the *neshamah* and darkens the *neshamah's* clear vision. But the subtler reason is because when a person has a wish to attain something that isn't meant for him, this very wish will block his clarity.

It is written, “*For a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and sways the words of the righteous.*”⁵ There are different forms of bribes that prevent one from seeing objectively: Either a monetary bribe, or an internal bribe, which are a person's various desires and wishes that sway his mind's thinking. This is one of the main reasons why most people do not recognize their their soul's personal task on this world.

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

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

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

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

⁵ Devarim 16:19

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If there is noise around him, he usually cannot concentrate that well. And certainly it is worse for him when he's in a noisy place.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The analogy is very clear. If one is clear about what his personal share is, he can run quickly towards it. But if one isn't clear about his personal share and doesn't know what it is, then

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one will have to be very gradual and calm when trying to get to it, because if he tries to get to it too quickly, he may end up like the person running quickly through the desert with no knowledge of where the exit is. Once he becomes clearer of where to turn to, he can run quickly towards the exit, but even then, he needs to be in doubt that he might be making a mistake.

The calmer a person becomes in his soul, the more relaxed he is, and the better he can discern what his personal share is and know where to turn to and where to direct his life towards.

There are many people, especially teenagers, who want to reach certain aspirations, and they thought that this would make them successful, but afterwards they realized that it broke them. “Many did like Rabi Shimon bar Yochai, and nothing arose in their hands.”⁶ There are very few who succeed in truly growing higher.⁷ If one truly ascends higher, he is not here on this world – he is apart from the rest of the world and lives in his own plane, just like Rebi Shimon ben Yochai and his son who dwelled in the cave for many years, separate from all the noise of the world.

EMUNAH IN HASHEM TO REACH OUR PERSONAL SHARE

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

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

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

This is actually the deep use of our ability of *emunah*. If one thinks that it's within his power to reach his personal portion, he is only imagining it. He needs *emunah* in order to reach it. The stronger a person's *emunah* is to the extent that one can feel Hashem escorting him

⁶ Talmud Bavli Berachos 35b

⁷ Talmud Bavli Succah 45b

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throughout every part of life calms him. From the calmness, he will be able to recognize what his personal share is. It is a cycle of *emunah*, then being calmed from this *emunah*, and then recognizing one's personal share as a result of that calmness.

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

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

REACHING A DEEP CALMNESS IN THE SOUL

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

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

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

This kind of thinking is hard for most people to get used to. Many people are anxious that things won't work out and that they will be found unworthy of Hashem's help. But if they

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would just believe that Hashem is guiding them, this would calm all of their anxious thinking and leave them with one choice alone: to have *emunah* in Hashem.

Compare this to the following analogy. A person is travelling and hits a fork in the road. He can either turn left, right, or keeping going straight. He is in turmoil where to turn. But if he is confident that Hashem will guide him to where he needs to get to, there is an inner compass guiding him on a straight path, and he won't be in doubt about which path to take. "*G-d made man upright, but they sought many calculations.*"⁸ Instead of being involved in the "many calculations," he has returned to being "upright," for he relies on Hashem to guide him.

EVEN FAILURES CAN BE PART OF YOUR PERSONAL PATH TO SUCCESS

Even when one is being guided by Hashem on the straight path, though, he can still encounter failures and mistakes. But this does not mean that he has made a mistake in taking this path. It is the path that he needed to take, because Hashem willed that he should take this path, have some failures along the way, and then get up and continue. Avraham *Avinu* was tested with ten great challenges, and so were Yitzchok and Yaakov tested, as well as Yosef, Moshe, Aharon, and Dovid. All of the Sages and *tzaddik* in every generation were tested with challenges. If they made mistakes and fell, this does not mean that they were taking the wrong path. It is written "*This stumbling block is under your hand,*"⁹ and Chazal explained, "A person does not realize the words of Torah unless he stumbled in it."¹⁰ The mistakes and failures that one encounters can very well be part of the way that he was meant to take.

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

Thus, one needs to have clear *emunah* that Hashem will bring him exactly to where he needs to get to, and then one can be calm. A person really needs to be protected so that he won't fall into the trap of desiring any achievements that's not suitable for his personal soul, and it

⁸ Ecclesiastes 7:29

⁹ Yeshayahu 3:6

¹⁰ Talmud Bavli Gittin 43a

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is precisely *emunah* in Hashem which protects a person from this. The *yetzer hora*'s main strategy is to stir a person into desiring something that's not for him. When a person calms that desire, this protects him away from sinning. By calming one's wishes, one can live with *emunah* that Hashem is escorting him to where he needs to be, and he can be calm throughout all of this.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

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



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