

## Finding Serenity

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### ***“Menuchas HaNefesh” - The Soul’s Serenity***

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*Menuchas HaNefesh* – “serenity of the soul” – is a concept mentioned in the Torah<sup>1</sup> by the blessing given to the tribe Yissocher, of whom it is said, “And he saw that serenity (*menuchah*) was good.”

*Menuchah* does not mean to be slothful or to be sleeplike. It is rather to be in touch with a root power in the soul.

### ***Inner Menuchas HaNefesh***

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There are three inner kinds of *menuchas hanefesh* which the soul can reach. The soul can find serenity in the *EinSof* (Infinite) of Hashem, it can find *menuchah* in the *Shechinah* (Hashem’s Holy Presence), and it can find *menuchah* when one finds the root of his own soul, his *shoresh haneshamah*.

From all of these, the highest and most perfected kind of *menuchas hanefesh* a person can find is the *menuchah* in the *EinSof* (Infinite) of Hashem. This is because the ultimate serenity is to be above all possibility of movement, because movement contradicts the entire concept of *menuchah*; and since Hashem is above all of the movement of this world, connecting to the Infinite would give the soul the greatest possible serenity it can know of. This kind of *menuchah* is beyond this world, and it is only attainable through having absolute *emunah* [which, when accessed, would give the person the ability to transcend this world and connect one to this high dimension].

Lower than that level of *menuchah* is a kind of *menuchah* where a person connects to the root of all souls of the Jewish people, which is known as the “*Shechinah*”.

Lower than this level is where a person finds his own personal soul root, his “*shoresh haneshamah*”. We find this kind of *menuchah* in marriage, of which it is said, “*And each woman shall find her husband.*”<sup>2</sup>

### ***The Lower Levels of Menuchah/Serenity***

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All of the above levels of *menuchah* are the “inner” kinds of *menuchah*. Lower than that on the spectrum we can find additional kinds of *menuchah*, which are closer to the physical body.

“*Menuchah*” has the same root as the word “*chein*” (favor), and the *Gemara* says that there are three things which find *chein*/favor to a person: “The *chein* of a wife to her husband, the *chein* of one’s hometown, and the *chein* of a bought item.”<sup>3</sup> These three kinds of *chein* give some level of *menuchah* to a person and they are more physical in their nature. [There is also a fourth kind of *chein* which is more hidden, which will be discussed at the end of this chapter].

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<sup>1</sup> *Beraishis* 49:15

<sup>2</sup> *Rus* 1:9

<sup>3</sup> *Talmud Bavli, Sotah* 47a

Why do these three things have *chein* to a person? The *Maharal*<sup>4</sup> explains that all of these things involve some kind of feeling of connection. *Chein* is when a person connects to something, because there is a connection between the owner and what he buys, he wants to buy it. A husband and wife want to become connected to each other, thus they are able to get married. So *chein* is what connects two things together.

*Chein* and *menuchah* are interrelated concepts, and they share the same root letters. *Chein* is the *menuchah* which the physical body can delight in. Just like the soul can have *menuchah*, so does the body have *menuchah* in the things that have *chein* to a person, because it is a serene-like feeling of becoming connected to something.

### ***Finding Your Root***

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The first kind of *chein* mentioned in the *Gemara* is, the *chein* of a person's home place. A person feels connected to where he comes from, because that is his root. The Sages state that Eretz Yisrael has a special *chein* to the Jewish people, from all of the lands of the earth, to the extent that if not for the *chein* of Eretz Yisrael, people would be very unhappy with their allotted portions of its land<sup>5</sup>.

### ***Filling What You Are Missing***

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The second kind of *chein* which the *Gemara* mentions is, the *chein* of a wife upon her husband. Not only does a wife have *menuchah* when she finds a husband, but a husband also has a degree of *menuchah* when he finds her. Because she has *chein* to him, that is why he finds *menuchah* with her, and vice versa.

Here the *menuchah* is coming from the completion that they are feeling with each other, upon becoming connected to each other. When a man and woman come together in marriage, their physical bodies find *menuchah*, by being completed by the other. This is because when a person is missing something and he seeks to fulfill it, he doesn't have *menuchah*, whereas when a person fulfills what he needs, he is content and has *menuchah*.

Shabbos is the prime example of this kind of *menuchah*. On Shabbos, "the day of *menuchah*"<sup>6</sup>, we have *menuchah* because "all our work is done".<sup>7</sup> Shabbos completes what we are lacking, it offers us a completion to the point that "all your work is done", and that is why it is the time of *menuchah*.

So far we have studied here two kinds of physical *menuchah*. The first kind of *menuchah* mentioned, the *menuchah* that one has in his home place, provides a person with serenity because that is where he finds his roots. The second kind of *menuchah*, the *chein* of a wife to her husband (and vice versa), gives a person *menuchah* because he finds what he's missing.

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<sup>4</sup> *Maharal Chiddushei Aggados, ibid*

<sup>5</sup> *Talmud Yerushalmi Yoma 4:31*

<sup>6</sup> *Beraishis Rabbah 10:9*

<sup>7</sup> *Yalkut Shimeoni Yisro 296*

### ***Gathering Together Your Parts***

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The third kind of *chein* mentioned in the *Gemara* is that of a bought item to its owner. Why is there *chein* between the buyer and his item?

To understand this deeply, when man was created, he was created perfect; after the sin, man's soul became spread out all over the earth, and our holy *sefarim* write that a person's financial assets are part of the makeup of the soul (*tzuras adam*). In every generation there are a few righteous individuals who merit to have all of their acquisitions in one place, but most people do not merit this, and their acquisitions are scattered. The money of a person is considered to be a part of his soul. This is why "Anyone who steals from someone else, it is considered as if he stole the person's soul".<sup>8</sup> Thus, any bought item has *chein* to its buyer, because when a person buys something, his assets have become further unified into one place.

It seems that this kind of *menuchah* is the same as the first kind of *menuchah* (finding one's root), because when a person buys something his assets are gathered together and have found their root. In actuality, however, it is a different kind of *menuchah*. In the first kind of *menuchah*, a person has his roots (i.e, a home) come to him; but when a person buys something, his assets haven't come to him, and it is rather that they have become more gathered.

[To illustrate, there is rule that for everything in Creation, there are 'roots' and 'branches'. When branches are furthered from their root, the disconnection from their root reflects a lack of *menuchah* in the branches. When branches find their root, we can say that the branches have *menuchah*, because they have found their root. However], even when the branches haven't yet found their root, the fact that they are gathered together in one is a degree of *menuchah*.

As an example of this kind of *menuchah*, when the Jewish people were enslaved in Egypt, or even when they were exiled to Bavel, although they were exile and they were furthered from their root (their home place, Eretz Yisrael), they at least had the *menuchah* of being gathered together into one unit. They were not in their true place, they were far from their roots, but they were still all together. This was some degree of *menuchah*. So even when isn't connected to a root, he can still have *menuchah* on some level, if his "parts" are gathered together.

If a person is an exceptional *tzaddik*, he merits to have his roots come to him. But most people have to go out and gather together their "parts" and then sort them all out. If a person's "parts" are scattered, he is like a person who puts his dining room table in the restroom. A person can own many things, but he will need to put them all in their proper place, or else he cannot be at peace with this. When each "part" of a person is in its proper place, he will have some *menuchah*.

### ***How Menuchah/Serenity is attained through Shalom/Peace***

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We have explained this third kind of *menuchah* as the Maharal explains it [the *menuchah* of gathering together your parts], but there is another way to understand it as well, from the Alter of Kelm<sup>9</sup>: that this kind of *menuchah* is otherwise known as *shalom* (peace).

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<sup>8</sup> *Bava Kamma 119a*

<sup>9</sup> *Chochmah U'Mussar, Vol. II, Maamarim*

When a person is scattered and his 'branches' have no 'root' to them, he cannot feel any *shalom* (peace) in his life. When everything in a person's life is separated and there is no point unifying them together, he has no peace in this. "Peace" is only achieved when a person has a root that unifies all his many aspects.

The future redemption will be the situation where we totally find our roots, and all of our many parts and 'branches' will be connected to our root. That will be the total *menuchah*. Yet, even before the redemption, we can still have some degree of *menuchah* - even in this world, and even with *menuchah* of our physical body - when we have the "peace" of gathering together all of the parts of our life, in spite of the fact that we haven't yet found our root.

An example of this kind of peace is what we find with the arguments between the schools of Hillel and Shamai, who constantly disagreed, yet they always respected each other. The students of Hillel always quoted the students Shamai first, out of respect for them, before arguing with them. Another example of peace is what the Talmud<sup>10</sup> says about a father and son, or teacher and student, who learn with each other and debate with each other. They begin as enemies, but eventually come to love each other. Each person is allowed to keep his own opinion, yet still be at peace with his opponent. This is the idea of peace.

Another example of peace is what we find by Aharon HaKohen, who would make peace between two people who were quarrelling. Instead of disproving each person, he let each person remain with his opinion, yet be at peace with each other. Peace doesn't come and negate each person's view; rather, each person is allowed to remain with his opinion, without ruining the peace between them.

Peace is called the "vessel which contains blessing"<sup>11</sup>. Peace is only a "vessel", not a root, yet it can be a tool for bringing things together. When something is unified under peace, it is at peace, even though it hasn't been connected to its root.

### ***Serenity on Shabbos and Serenity In The Six Days of the Week***

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There are essentially two different kinds of *menuchah* found on this world. The first one, as we mentioned, is in finding one's root. The second type of *menuchah* is in making "peace" between one's 'branches', even when there is no 'root' to unify them; when there is peace within the 'branches' themselves.

This is also the difference between the six days of the week and Shabbos. Shabbos is a "day of *menuchah*" for the entire world. Why? (Earlier we explained how Shabbos is *menuchah* for a person, but now we will explain why it is *menuchah* for the entire world as well). The reason for this is because Shabbos is the root of all creations. Shabbos is the "source of blessing" for all that is in Creation, and therefore the six days of the week are the "branches" of its root, Shabbos. The six days of the week 'wait' for its 'root', Shabbos, and on Shabbos it finds its root and then the six days of the week have *menuchah* in their root.

But the six days of the week can only have *menuchah* with itself when there is 'peace' within itself. The six days of the week represent the six different directions (north, south, east, west, up, and down), so they are six different 'branches' with no root. The only *menuchah* to be found in the six days of the week is when one can have access to "peace" within the six days of the week.

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<sup>10</sup> Kiddushin 30b

<sup>11</sup> Uktzin 3:12

Shabbos, though, is the *menuchah* of finding one's root. This is similar to the *menuchah* that one has in connection to his home place, which is his root. Therefore, if a person hasn't yet merited to discover his own soul's root, he will only know of the *menuchah* that can be found in the six days of the week can, which is the *menuchah* of finding "peace" (*shalom*), and this is how the Alter of Kelm explained the *chein/menuchah* a person has when he buys an item.

### ***Practically Applying These Concepts***

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Now that we have explained the concept of *menuchah* when one gathers his 'parts' together, let us learn of how to apply this practically in our life.

There are different many forces within our soul – many 'branches'. When a person knows how to use each ability of his soul properly, even if he hasn't yet revealed his soul's root (*shoresh haneshamah*) and he only knows of his soul's branches, he will be able to have *menuchah*, because he at least knows how to utilize his soul's abilities properly. But if a person doesn't know how to use his soul's abilities, he lives constantly with inner contradictions. One part of his soul opposes a different part of his soul, and this causes a person to feel an inner turmoil.

The classic example of a person who lacks *menuchas hanefesh* is someone whose thoughts often digress to either the future or the past, where he is never focused on the present moment. A person really needs to be in the here and now, but if he is thinking about the future, he is mixing the future into the present moment. When a person spaces out like this, there are inner forces in his soul that are at a contradiction with each other. This obviously prevents a person from having *menuchas hanefesh*.

Another lack of *menuchas hanefesh*, related to the above, is when a person's soul experiences contradicting emotions. In the soul, there are many forces that can oppose each other. A person's soul has feelings that expand, such as the feeling of happiness and enthusiasm, and feelings that contract, such as sadness and laziness. Each emotion has a rightful time when it should be used. When a person doesn't use each ability properly, there is clashing within the soul, and then there won't be any *menuchas hanefesh*.

For example, take the emotions of laziness, haughtiness and lust, which are normally detrimental. Each of these feelings has times where they can be used for holiness. A person needs to be "haughty" when it comes to believing in himself that he can reach high levels of *avodas Hashem*, as it written, "*And his heart was high in the ways of Hashem*". A person can use the trait of lust to have a great desire to connect himself to Hashem. But when a person uses the wrong emotion in the wrong place, there is an inner turmoil which doesn't allow him to have *menuchas hanefesh*.

The first example we discussed was a person who isn't present. He is either imagining about the past or the future. It is easy to understand why this is a lack of *menuchas hanefesh*. Any person, as long as he can think clearly, can catch his thoughts and realize that he isn't focusing on the present moment. But it's hard to be aware of what's going on inside one's soul, because the soul is hidden from us. And when a person doesn't understand his soul's abilities, he misuses them in the wrong place and in the wrong time – and this clashing of the soul's abilities is a lack of *menuchas hanefesh*.

## ***Being Content In Your Current Situation***

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Earlier we brought from the *Gemara* that there are three kinds of *chein*, but there is also a fourth kind of “*chein*” we find [in addition to those three], which also shows us another kind of *menuchah* that exists.

The Sages state that Yosef found *chein* by others, even though he was imprisoned, for he was above the influence of the evil eye.<sup>12</sup> We can see from this that a person can have *menuchah* even if he was “imprisoned”. When a person is released from prison, that is a kind of *menuchah* which is obvious, but even when a person is imprisoned, he can still find a degree of *menuchah*.

How can a person have *menuchah* if he is imprisoned? *Chazal* say that a bear has no *menuchah*.<sup>13</sup>, because even if it is in its rightful place, it still wanders around and it is never content. But this implies that if one does have *menuchah* in the place where he is currently found in, he can find *menuchah* right now where he is. This is a *menuchah* of being content with one’s current situation.

Yosef had *chein* to others even when he was in prison, because he was content with the situation; and since *chein* and *menuchah* bear the same root [as we explained before], this meant that he also had *menuchah* there. He was content there and he didn’t seek to escape it. When a person is in a predicament and he always wants to escape it, he will not have *menuchah*. However, if he is content with his situation, in spite of the fact that he knows he is in a predicament, he will have *menuchah* there.

There were two kinds of *menuchah* that the Jewish people experienced as a whole. One kind of *menuchah* was when we left Egypt to receive the Torah and settle in Eretz Yisrael. We had *menuchah* when we settled in Eretz Yisrael because we found our home place, our roots. But there was another kind of *menuchah* we had: when we were still in Egypt! Even during the Egyptian exile, where we hadn’t yet been freed from this great prison, we merited the revelation of Hashem in the land of Egypt, by the final plague, the death of the firstborn, where Hashem revealed His open Presence and proclaimed, “Behold, I am going out amidst Egypt.” The death of the firstborn was a certain kind of *menuchah* to us, showing us with clarity that Hashem is here, right now, amidst our exile.

Being that we know Hashem wants us to get out of this exile, and we are required every day to wait for Moshiach’s arrival, as we recited in the *Ani Maamin*, “Although he tarries, I still wait for him” - it would seem contradictory for us to feel *menuchah* in our current situation today, where we are in exile and we are longing for the future redemption. If we are able to have *menuchah* in our current situation because we know that Hashem is always with us, how do we reconcile this with the fact that we must long to come out of it and await the redemption?

The answer to this is that our soul contains two different kinds of *menuchah*. There is the *menuchah* of the perfect Shabbos, which is to find our soul’s root, the *EinSof* of Hashem. That is what we will have in the future, and it is that that we long for. However, there is still another kind of *menuchah* which is not as sublime as this, yet it can still give us some degree of *menuchah*, even in our current situation. This is the *menuchah* that is attainable with “the six days of the week”, as we explained about before – the ability to have some level of *menuchah* in spite of our current exile.

How can we have access to this kind of *menuchah*? It is when we are content with whatever situation we happen to be in. For example, if a Jew knows that he has must be exiled to Persia or Babylonia, exile, and he accepts this

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<sup>12</sup> *Berachos* 20a

<sup>13</sup> *Kiddushin* 72a

situation [as the will of Hashem], he accesses a level of *menuchah* where he is content with whatever situation Hashem has sent him.

These two kinds of *menuchah* (connecting to our root, and being content even before we have found our root) are really very deep abilities in our soul. We have an ability to get out of our situation and desire a more perfect one, while we also have an ability to be content in whatever situation we are in, from knowing that Hashem has put us into the situation for some purpose.

### ***Three Levels of Being Content – Higher, Lower, and Intermediate***

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This particular idea of *menuchah*, where we feel content in our situation, has three levels to it.

The higher manifestation of it is transcendental, where we connected to the *EinSof* of Hashem in our current situation, through having complete *emunah*. [In the beginning of this chapter, we explained that this kind of *menuchah* is beyond this world, but it can be attained through having powerful and absolute *emunah*].

When it is brought down to a lower level, it is a power that is used for evil - when a person becomes so content with his situation that he acts sleeplike and lethargic.

But the middle level of it is an ability that every person can have: the ability to be content with your situation when we know that this is the place where Hashem desire us to currently be in.