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# WEEKLY SHMUESS

## Parshas Be'halos'cha

Passionate Heart & Torah Mind

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## ***Behaloscha – Passionate Heart & Torah Mind***

### ***The Soul – The Internal Flame of Man Which Desires The Spiritual***

In the beginning of *Parshas Behaloscha*, Rashi brings the statement of *Chazal* that “the flame should rise on its own.” The *Gemara* compares the *neshamah* (the Divine soul of a Jew) to a *ner*, a flame, for it is written, “*The flame of G-d, is the soul of man.*” Just as the *menorah* was kindled in the *Beis HaMikdash*, where the flame would then rise on its own after it was lit, so must the soul of man, which is compared to a flame, rise on its own.

In the early stage of life, the soul is for the most part concealed, covered over, and hidden. Man has the task to inspire himself and awaken the passionate spiritual desires of his soul, to reveal his *neshamah*.

At first, one must exert himself to acquire this spiritual passion, but eventually, his “flame must rise on its own” – it should come to him as natural.

The soul of man is an inner flame, and just as a fire gets bigger and bigger, so must a person increase his spiritual desire.

As long as the soul/inner flame of man isn't yet revealed, and it remains in its concealed state - either totally or for the most part – the deep spiritual desire in man will remain dormant.

### ***The Five Levels***

There is a sharp statement of the *Chofetz Chaim*, who said that this world is not at all like the heavenly world. In this world, there are all kinds of people with different opinions and tastes and mannerisms, which all make up this world of falsity. But in the upper worlds, in heaven, in *Gan Eden*, there are only five levels - those who had a heart that was either spiritually:

- 1) Frozen [completely callous and indifferent].
- 2) Cold [mostly callous and indifferent].
- 3) Lukewarm [a bit of feeling].
- 4) Warm\Hot [enthusiastic].
- 5) Boiling [very passionate].

Those are the five levels – a person either has a heart that is frozen, cold, lukewarm, hot, or boiling.

### ***Frozen and Cold***

The frozen or cold heart is what is known as a “heart of stone”. In the future, Hashem will erase the “heart of stone” amidst people and introduce a new heart. When the heart has become spiritually frozen, it is like when water freezes. It becomes hard as stone. The element of earth, according to one opinion of *Chazal*, was formed from frozen water [snow]. A frozen heart is like frozen water, which has

become a “heart of stone” [callous to the spiritual].

A level that is a little better than the above, but still cold to spirituality nonetheless, is when the heart of a person is simply cold. This is also called “Amalek”, the paradigm of being cold and callous to the spiritual; Chazal compared the nation Amalek to a person who jumps into a scalding hot bath and cools it off, hence, Amalek is personified as the cold.

In the generation we are in, there is not only Amalek, but there is also the Erev Rav<sup>1</sup>, who are worse than cold souls – they are totally frozen, so their hearts are “hearts of stone”.

### ***Lukewarm, Hot, and Boiling: Passion to Serve the Creator***

But when one merits to grow a bit spiritually, his heart becomes lukewarm, and when he merits further, he can gain a heart that is warm to spirituality; and, finally, he may gain a heart that is burning strongly for the spiritual. The heart can burn within him, as a great burning desire to serve Hashem – a desire for Torah, mitzvos, fulfilling Hashem’s will, for purity and holiness.

### ***The Level of One’s Heart Influences How Well One Sees Reality***

From a simple, superficial perspective, it appears that having a spiritual heart means to have spiritual feelings, and that there are varying levels of feelings – frozen, cold, lukewarm, hot, or boiling; that there are some who have hearts that are more sensitive to the spiritual, and some have less, with varying

levels. But if the Chofetz Chaim said that there are these five levels in Gan Eden, it is clear to any sensible person that this is not just about having passionate feelings. It is important of course to have passionate feelings, but this is not all there is to spirituality. There is much more than that.

The level of one’s heart determines how one views the reality in front of him. If one has a frozen heart, a “heart of stone”, he will not see the depth of reality in front of him. If his heart is only a bit cold, he will see a little better into reality. If his heart is lukewarm, he will see deeper, and if his heart is hot, he sees a different reality. And if his heart is boiling, he will see an altogether different reality than the above views.

These five levels of the heart, which are degrees of a person’s spiritual level, are five different perspectives on reality – therefore, one with a colder heart cannot view reality as deeply as one whose heart is more warm and alive to the spiritual.

In the current world we live in, of *ikvesa d’meshicha* (the footsteps heralding Mashiach’s arrival), where there is *tum’ah* (spiritual defilement) that has infiltrated into even the most sheltered of our society, surrounding us on all sides, on the outside and on the inside (*Rachmana litzlan*) – with a heart that is only lukewarm [towards Torah values], and certainly if it is cold or frozen [towards Torah values], a person will not be sensitive to the situation of today. It will appear to him that there are simply some problems, some issues we have to deal with today, but nothing more than that to be concerned about.

<sup>1</sup> *the Mixed Multitude; refer to Erev Rav Talks*

But if one's heart has become "warmer", more receptive to the spiritual, then he will see a different world. We all live in the same world, but two people can see two totally different views in front of them, depending on the spiritual level of their hearts. Shlomo HaMelech said, "*My heart has seen much wisdom*", the heart can see wisdom. The level of one's heart determines how well one will see reality.

A person may view a certain matter and it will not seem like a problem to him, because it does not contradict *halachah*, while another person will see it as totally forbidden and against all of *halachah* – even though they are both looking at the same exact reality. This is not a question of whose logic is correct if it's permissible or forbidden. Rather, it is an issue of how one sees, and when reality is seen a certain way, the logic of the mind will then fit that reality, and vice versa.

### ***A Passionate Heart For Truth Is Needed For Spiritual Survival Today***

In the era we live in of *ikvesa d'meshicha*, where the world is filled with *tum'ah* – which Hashem has arranged in His wisdom, in His great plan – as long as one's heart is not burning for truth, one will not see the reality he is found in. When he doesn't see the reality he is in, it almost indefinite that he will fall into the *tum'ah* which surrounds him, "as a dog laps up its vomit".

Only with a heart that burns for truth can a person absorb the reality he is in, realizing that he is in a world where almost of all of Creation, without exception, lives contrary to

the Torah and to Hashem's will. He will see things that others who are less sensitive to the truth won't see. One person will think that a certain matter is permissible *l'chatchilah*, while another person will see it as unquestionably forbidden, because his heart burns for the truth.

There was a story that when the Chofetz Chaim attended the *Knessiah Gedolah* (gathering of all Jews to hear messages from the Gedolim), there was a dispute about how high the *mechitzah*<sup>2</sup> should be, to separate the men from the women. They asked the Chofetz Chaim to decide, and he ruled that the height of the *mechitzah* should be raised. They asked him: What is the source for this ruling? He responded: "It is written here in this verse: "*Write it on the calendar of your heart.*"

When the heart burns for truth, a person sees reality differently and he sees things that other people don't see. That is why an *adam gadol* may render certain halachic rulings and decisions that others don't understand.

As the *tum'ah* increases with the further we enter into *ikvesa d'meshicha*, the hearts of people have slowly become more and more indifferent – more lukewarm, colder, and more frozen. There is a lack of feeling for the spiritual, for the issues at hand today, especially in those who are born into homes where there is a lukewarm or cold attitude towards truth. Children are being born into homes where they are like "captured children", born into a cold and apathetic

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<sup>2</sup> *partition that separates men and women*

attitude towards true *Yiddishkeit*. What was once clear to our fathers and grandfathers as totally contradictory behavior to the Torah, has now become totally *l'chatchilah* for many.

What Hashem is asking from people in this generation is that the heart should be burning for His truths, His Torah, to fulfill His will. This was always the task throughout all generations, but in previous times, there were varying levels in spiritual greatness; the more one's heart burned for truth, the higher of a level he attained. But in the time we live in today, if the heart is not burning for truth, he will simply following the environment around him, and the environment today is found in the 50<sup>th</sup> gate of defilement, and even worse.

In our generation, what Hashem asks of us is that our hearts should be warm and passionate towards the truth. When the heart is burning for truth, a person will feel the contradiction between Hashem's will with the reality in the world today. That burning passion will serve to separate him and distance him from the entire defiled world that is found in our generation today.

We should understand clearly that there is a need for our generation to have a passionate heart which burns for truth, and that this is not a high spiritual level to reach. Without that passion, a person will become captured by his physical senses today, even if he is in the world of those who strictly observe Torah and mitzvos; because while something may seem permissible on a "*halachic*" level, a person who is sensitive to the truth will see a different reality in front of him, and he will

see how it is *tum'ah*, the depth of this difficult exile which we are found in.

Understandably, we must deal with the exile by making use of our power of free will to choose correctly, to put up a fight against all that isn't true, and to *daven* and beseech Hashem to be saved. But when the heart burns for truth, one will do even more – he will separate himself entirely from the world of evil today.

Thus, having a warm, passionate heart that burns for the truth is absolutely necessary today in order to have a basic spiritual survival.

### ***Too Much Emotion Can Weaken the Mind***

However, the following point must also be clarified. When the heart becomes warmer and more receptive towards feeling the truth, sometimes this can be problematic for those who are weak in their intellectual abilities.

There are two kings in man: the mind and the heart. When the mind\intellect is the dominating force in man, usually, the heart\emotions are less activated, and the vice versa: when the heart\emotions are more dominant, usually the mind's intellectual abilities are weakened. Too much emotional passion may be a problem for those who were weak in their intellect to begin with, and sometimes, too much emotional passion can also lead to a weakened intellect.

The *Mesillas Yescharim* says that there are people who think that those who are into serving Hashem are people with weak minds [because they have a very emotional nature].

Indeed, strong emotions and feelings can weaken the intellectual abilities of the mind, or it may come from a weak intellect.

There are four elements in the soul: earth, water, wind and fire. The mind works like cold water – its “coldness” enables it to think rationally and objectively, without getting sidetracked by an emotional feeling about something. The heart, though, works like a fire. It is a warm, passionate force which sees an emotional perspective in something. In fact, Chazal state that if not for the lungs which blow air and cool the heart’s heat, a person would become burned on his inside, due to the immense heat of the heart.

When the heart’s emotions overpower the intellect, whatever is found in his heart will “go to his head.” There are two negative character traits which stem from the element of fire: conceit and anger. When a person is conceited, he rises [in his mind], meaning that the element of fire in his heart “goes to his head”. The conceit goes from the heart to the mind/head, and this weakens the mind’s intellect.

We also see this with anger. The Gemara<sup>3</sup> says that a person when he is angry loses his wisdom, and the *Nefesh HaChaim*<sup>4</sup> explains that this is not a punishment – it is due to the workings of the body and soul. Since the element of fire is in the heart, and anger stems from the element of fire, the anger from the heart rises to the mind, overpowering the coldness of the mind and overtaking it with its

heat. This causes the mind to lose its rational abilities, thus, his wisdom leaves him.

We see from the above two examples (conceit and anger) that when the emotions are too strong, the heart will overtake the mind, which weakens the intellectual abilities of the mind. In the cases of conceit and anger, a person will lose his ability to rationalize. But in fact, even if a person’s feelings are holy, if these emotions are stronger than his mind, this can also weaken the intellect.

Here is a clear example. When a person has very strong feelings and reactions towards anything holy, he may act without thinking things through enough, and he will do things that contradict *halachah*. He may be impulsive and react too quickly, without thinking first of what needs to be done. His heart becomes enthused and he becomes so emotional that it overtakes his mind, and he loses his ability to see things more objectively. Then he may do certain acts which, while stemming from a pure feeling for holiness, are still incorrect. His mind has become weakened from the intense feelings of his heart, and when the intellect is hampered, it cannot think properly and he will come to err.

Going further with this, the depth of the inner task of man, and the deep wisdom about our entire task in life is, that on one hand, we need a very passionate heart that burns for truth – not just lukewarm or hot, but “boiling”, as the Chofetz Chaim said - but on the other hand, we need to counter our passionate feelings with a strong amount of intellect, which will keep us in balance.

<sup>3</sup> *Pesachim 66a*

<sup>4</sup> *Nefesh HaChaim: Perakim: 1*

Without a strong intellect, the intellect becomes weakened and the emotions will be too powerful, and a person will not see objectively. For example, there are people who have such powerful spiritual feelings that they don't have the mental energy afterwards to learn Torah in-depth.

Torah learning requires subtle analysis, scrutinizing, and paying attention to nuances, which all requires a refined mind. Some people have a hard time with learning Torah in-depth because they have weaker intellectual abilities to begin with, or because their minds are elsewhere so they have a hard time focusing on the information in front of them. But in cases where a person often experiences powerful emotions, the intellect simply cannot function as it should.

To illustrate, the Chasam Sofer said that after Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, he became so emotional with feelings for the spiritual that he could not concentrate on learning Gemara in-depth, so instead, he wrote liturgies and poetries of praise to Hashem. He was aware that his heart had overtaken his mind for this bit of time. This was only for a small amount of time [but the rest of us may struggle with this problem on a daily basis!].

### ***Maintaining the Balance Between Intellect and Emotion***

In order to live correctly, if one wants to live a life of truth in this generation, firstly, he must have a heart that burns for truth. If not, he is indefinitely in spiritual danger. One must yearn for truth, for purity, for holiness, for

sweetness in Torah, for closeness to Hashem and doing His will.

But on the other hand, one must balance this with a strong, powerfully developed intellect, so that the strong emotions in his heart shouldn't overpower his mind. One needs the "cold water" of intellect, which will enable him to think calmly and objectively and to learn Torah in-depth, together with the "fire" of the heart's emotions, which will enable him to be sensitive to the spiritual and to burn for the truth.

A true, inner life of the spiritual is to have this balance, of in-depth Torah learning combined with deep feelings for the spiritual and for truth. When one has the balance between these two extremes, he can live a true life. His mind will be connected to where it should be, and his heart will be connected to where it should be. Such a person will be able to maintain objective thinking even as his heart is passionate with emotion.

### ***The Mind\Intellect vs. the Heart\Emotions***

This leads us to a subtle point of life. There are different soul roots which Hashem has created. When one has both a strongly developed intellect (through Torah learning) and a strongly developed heart (passionate feelings for the spiritual), which of these will be more powerful? Will one's strong intellect overpower his strong heart, or will his strong heart overpower his strong intellect?

If one of these forces is totally dominant over the other, there is a lifelong task of maintaining a balance between them. But let us ask a different question: When one has a

strongly developed mind as well as a strongly developed heart, which of these will be more powerful?

The mind and heart are compared to the “two great luminaries”, the sun (represented by the mind’s intellect) and the moon (represented by the heart’s emotions). The sun and the moon were at first the “two great luminaries” in Creation, two kings, just as the mind and heart are the “two kings” in man. The sun and moon said to Hashem: “Can two kings share one crown?” Hashem then made the moon smaller and lowered its status. That is why a person’s mind needs to be more powerful than the emotions, in order for him to act correctly.

Chazal said that “one’s wisdom needs to be stronger than his actions”. The Alter of Kelm said that the distance between the mind’s understanding and the heart’s understanding is like the difference between the heavens and the earth. Since the moon was lessened, the emotions generally play less of a role in the personal development of man, and for this reason, most people have greater thinking\rational abilities and generally show less emotional development.

But when one merits to enthuse his heart with feelings for the spiritual, it is like a return to the state of before Creation, when the moon was still king and it was prominent. Together with a strongly developed mind, he can have the “two great luminaries” – a sun\mind, and a moon\heart that are both equal in size. He will have these “two kings” to lead him and guide him.

Which of these will be more powerful, when one has both of them? It will not overpower the other in the sense of totally disabling the other force from working properly, as in the case of one who hasn’t yet developed either of these abilities. Rather, a person will be slightly and subtly drawn towards either one of these forces.

For this reason, our great leaders throughout the generations had different leanings towards either the mind or heart, depending on their soul root. A discerning eye can see which of our leaders were drawn more towards intellect, and which were drawn more towards the heart. It is a matter that depends on the different roots of souls.

The deep power of free will which each soul can choose is not about choosing which is a “better” approach, either the mind\intellect or the heart\emotions. Rather, the deep power of choice given to each soul is for one to reach one’s “unique share” in the world, and that is where a person will either be more drawn towards either the mind or the heart. But this can only be determined only at the end of one’s spiritual ascent, and it is far from most people to reach.

### ***Developing Our Minds and Hearts Through Torah-Study and Mussar-Study***

The main kind of *avodah*, which is the one applicable to most people is, on one hand, to awaken the depth of the heart, more and more; Reb Yisrael Salanter developed a path that develops the feelings for the spiritual, by learning *mussar* (ethics), with in-depth study of the words of the Sages that are meant to



awaken self-improvement, along with a passionate verbal review of the words. And while mussar requires in-depth analysis, the need for in-depth analysis is mainly to be used with the study of Gemara, the main area of the development of the mind.

When one has in-depth study of Torah on a regular basis, together with a heart that burns for truth, he lives the true Jewish life, the life that he should live, the way it's supposed to look like. When one lives in this way, it resembles lighting the *Ner Tamid* (the constant flame) in the *menorah* in the *Beis HaMikdash*, where the flame would rise on its own after it was lit. A mind that always thinks about Torah thoughts, together with a heart that constantly burns in its passion to serve the Creator, is the complete balance.

In the future, both the mind and the heart will be completely rectified, when they will again become the “two great luminaries”, equal in status. One can also have these “two great luminaries” even now, when he has a strongly developed mind (through Torah study) and a strongly developed heart (feelings for the spiritual).

### ***In Conclusion***

May we merit, with the help of Hashem, to awaken in ourselves a love for Hashem, and to build our minds through the study of Torah in-depth, and to fuse them both together, so that we can have perfected service to the Creator.