

UNEDITED INTERNET VERSION
V2

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR INNER WORLD

Attaining Inner Peace
the Torah approach to “Detachment”

Adapted from the hebrew shiurim of דע את יחודך
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Editor's Preface

Da Es Yichudecha teaches us how we can reach our essence which is our true self. It is a *sefer* which is an actual manual and guide to navigating through the various parts of your soul. It requires contemplation.

The author states that the purpose of this *sefer* is to explain how to know and cling to our Creator (which is the purpose of our life) by knowing our soul. The knowledge of our soul is vast and complicated. We must try to know what our soul is as much as possible.

The first six chapters are an introduction to “understanding our inner world”. The author shows us how we can reach our actual essence, which is essentially the art of *menuchas hanefesh*. It is explained how we can learn to detach from the outer layers of our soul, “wearing” and “removing” our soul layers at times when we have to. By detaching from our soul layers, we are able to reach our very essence (*havayah*) as we go deeper and deeper into our soul.

Chapters 7 – 11 describe “detaching from your soul faculties”. The author explains the root causes for sadness and how we can actually reach the self; it is essentially the *avodah* known as “*halbashah*” and “*hafshatah*” (“wearing” and “removing” our soul’s abilities).

Da Es Yichudecha is the culmination and climax of the “*Da Es*” series that included *Da Es Atzmecha*, *Da Es Nafshecha*, *Da Es Middosecha*, *Da Es Hargoshosecha* and *Da Es Machshovosecha* and *Da Es Datcha* and *Da Es Havayatcha*. In previous volumes, the author introduced us to the soul and its abilities, as well as our behavioral traits, our feelings and our thoughts.

The next in the series, *Practical Advice with Your Middos* explains how we can work to fix our four basic elements (earth, water, wind and fire) by using the solutions given in this *sefer*.

01 | *The Roots of Our Inner World*

Our Task of Self-Knowledge

“Hashem, the Torah and the Jewish people are one¹.” Just like the Torah is “more vast than the sea and wider than the earth”, so is a Jew’s soul endless, because it is part of Hashem and His Torah.

Rabbi Avraham ben David² explains to us what our task on this world (to come to “know G-d”) requires self-knowledge of our own soul. He wrote, “You must know that everything which Hashem created on His world is all inside man, for it is written, *“Let us make man in our image and in our likeness.”* All of this was so that we should see the hidden wisdom in what is revealed, for it is written, *“And from my flesh I shall see G-d.”*³

What we learn from his words is that a person was created in a heavenly image, and that in order to know the ‘heavenly’, a person has to know what’s first down here, below. (In other words, one must know the essence of the human self). That is why *“From my flesh I shall see G-d”* – when I truly recognize myself, I will be able to recognize my Creator from there.

There are many places in which our great teachers spoke about the human persona, but these teachings are usually not all gathered into any one place; their words are spread out and scattered all over our many *sefarim* that described this wisdom. There are mainly two holy *sefarim* that spoke about our soul: *Tikkunei HaZohar*⁴, and *Sefer Yetzirah*.⁵

Tikkunei HaZohar explains the soul, but there is no order to the information there. *Sefer Yetzirah*, however, explains the soul in a very organized fashion. Thus, the main *sefer* which we use to study our soul is *Sefer Yetzirah*; it describes both our physical and spiritual makeup and shows us how to integrate them.

Knowing about our soul is one of the most complicated matters there is, and it is like an endless ocean. Although every part of the Torah is endless, the study of our soul is a classic example of an endless study. Anyone who doesn’t think so doesn’t really know about the soul.

However, “it is not upon you to complete the task, nor are you exempt from it⁶.” It is our mission to clarify what our soul is, more and more; *“They go from strength to strength.”*⁷ We must learn about our soul more and more until we come to recognize the Creator, which is when we

¹ *Zohar, parshas Achrei Mos, 73a*

² *Known as “Raavad”, 10th century Sage and Kabbalist*

³ *Iyov 19: 26*

⁴ *Attributed to the authorship of the sage Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai*

⁵ *Attributed to the authorship of Avraham Avinu*

⁶ *Avos 2:16*

⁷ *Tehillim 83: 4*

realize with utter clarity that there is nothing else besides for Him, just as when He revealed Himself to us at Sinai.⁸

The Ladder That Reaches The Heavens

There are three things we need to recognize: our body, our soul, and our Creator.

All of Creation is like “a ladder which is placed on the earth, with its head reaching the heavens.” There are rungs in our ladder which precede the rungs on top of them. Recognizing our body is a step toward recognizing our soul (of course, this is only when a person learns about his body in a way that helps him learn about his soul), and recognizing the soul is the step toward recognizing the Creator. Learning about our soul is thus the tool to receive the light of the Creator.

We will give a parable that will help us understand the lesson. *Chazal* state that learning Torah is great, for it leads one to good deeds.⁹ If a person wants his learning to bear results, he must plumb the *sugya*¹⁰ to its depths with all its many details. After this he must connect all the details, and it is then that his learning is “great”; through this he will come to good deeds.

But if someone is learning *only* in order to come to act upon it, he doesn’t learn it well enough, and he definitely will not arrive at the good deeds.

This applies to us in that if a person only strives to recognize the Creator, but he doesn’t work on knowing himself – body and soul – he will definitely lack recognition about the Creator. This is because the person is attempting to get to the goal without going through the necessary prerequisites. To try to know the Creator without knowing the soul is like receiving a great light with nothing to contain it and hold onto it. It is like a soul without a body, and it doesn’t last.

A person should not either think that self-recognition is secondary to knowledge about the Creator. Although recognizing the Creator is the goal, it is no less important to understand ourselves. Knowing ourselves is a discussion in and of itself, which we must know.

Thus, the way to truly recognize the Creator is through recognizing yourself.

To Live In “A World of Clarity”

Another reason that we must know our soul is because it is necessary if we want to work on ourselves and fix our *middos* (character traits).

Many people want to work on themselves and improve their *middos*, but in order to really improve, a person has to understand how the soul works. We need to know how to use our soul’s

⁸ *Pesikta Rabbasi*, chap. 20

⁹ *Kiddushin* 40b

¹⁰ section of *Gemara* (the *Talmud*)

abilities – when to use them and when not to use them, and how much. If a person doesn't understand his soul, he will not be able to work with his soul and fix his *middos*.

In addition to this, everything we do involves many parts of our soul. The details to this are endless. Everything we do must be coming from the right place in our soul, and later we will explain how we can work on this. Thus, if a person doesn't know himself well, most of what he is doing is off-base, and he will be making many mistakes in his life that he doesn't realize.

So, a person has to know himself well for two reasons: in order to be able fix his soul and his *middos*, and in order not to act erroneously.

To give an even sharper and exact definition, a person must know himself well in order to be able to live in “a world of clarity.” This is like what one of the Sages said, “You see a clear world.”¹¹

To give an example, there can be a person who learns a *sugya* and is able to learn all its details, and he knows as well how to think logically and even know what the Halachic conclusion is; but if he doesn't work hard at clarifying the entire *sugya*, his learning is like “*Toras Bavel*” – *Bavel*, from the world *bilbul* (confusion). He will be very confused, and his learning lacks order to it. Such learning cannot be considered a “world of clarity.”

But another kind of person learns a *sugya* and tries to work hard at it and understand it as best as he can, with the goal of giving it order and really trying to comprehend it. He learns each *sugya* in this way, **clarifying** all the information, refining it so well until it becomes like fine flour that has been sifted and grinded.

The same goes for clarifying one's soul. A person has to work hard his whole life at learning about his own soul, so that he can leave all his confusion and instead live in a clear world.

However, we do live in a very confusing world. The Hebrew word for “world” is *olam*, which has the same root of the word *he'elam*, confusion. The real meaning of life is very hidden from us; this world we live in is confusion amidst confusion. Because of this, we can never really understand our soul with absolute clarity (on this world we live in). In spite of this fact, a person's life should still be directed toward this goal, which is to live in a world of clarity as much as he possibly can.

We need to always clarify who we are, more and more, throughout our life. This is the right kind of life to live – leaving our confusion, and entering into clarity, as much as we can.

It is simple to anyone with a head, though, that it is impossible to arrive at the “word of clarity” just from various, scattered facts that we know of about the soul. If a person knows a little here and a little there about himself, we cannot say this is totally useless to do, but he is still very far from a world of clarity. If a person just amasses various details about his soul and he doesn't have the general rules about the soul, he's missing the main part. In order to know about the soul, a person needs a lot of knowledge – and in this, there are rules, details, roots, and their branches.

¹¹ *Pesachim 50a*

The truth is that even this is not enough. A person might have all the knowledge he needs to have about the soul, but this doesn't necessarily mean that he has *connected* all of it together. He might still have a very scattered soul even if he knows so much; he is still not clear about his soul. His whole life will still be very mixed up and confused.

By contrast, if someone lives in an inner world, and he is always seeking to clarify his soul in a way that he connects all his knowledge, all he sees is clarity. The difference between such a person and the above kind of person is miles apart.¹²

It is clear, then, that the more a person knows himself, the clearer his world will become, and he will act in a more guided way. His soul and his *middos* will be more fixed, and above all, his recognition of the Creator will be even clearer.

Future Clarity Is Based On This World's Clarity

In the future, all *tzaddikim* (righteous ones) will point to Hashem with their finger, saying, "Behold, this is our G-d that we hoped for His salvation; this is our G-d that we hoped for, we will rejoice and be gladdened in His salvation."¹³ A person can only point to Hashem if he is clear about this fact.

In the future, it will be totally clear who Hashem is, and all *tzaddikim* will be able to point to Hashem and say, "This is our G-d that we hoped for." If anyone is to be at this level, he must acquire this recognition first in this world, before he gets to the next world.

Our whole aspiration in life should be to live a clearer kind of life, as much as possible. We don't mean to acquire many random facts, but to gain a clear world – in a way that we can point to Hashem and say, "This is our G-d."

1) The Knowledge About the Soul.

In order to clarify our soul, there are several factors involved.

If a person encounters any certain subject, the first thing he must do is learn the information relevant to the subject. Everyone knows that any *sugya* of *Gemara* has in it much information, both in its general rules and in its details. The way to learn any *sugya* is only through intense in-depth study (*iyun*), each at his level. There is almost no one who honestly believes that you can get by understanding a *sugya* with just reading it and not trying to think into it.

Trying to clarify what our soul is just as exacting. In order to know about our soul, we first have to learn its field. There is a lot of information to know – there are general rules, and there are details. The study of the human soul consists of many factors. The more we enter this field of study, the more we will see how vast it is.

¹² See the introduction to *Derech Hashem*

¹³ *Taanis* 31a

If a person wants to become a *shochet* (kosher butcher), he needs to learn the laws of *shechitah* (kosher slaughter). If a person wants to put up an *Eruv*, he needs to learn the laws of the *eruv*. If a person wants to be involved with his soul, he needs to learn about what the soul is, just like any *sugya* of *Gemara*.

Thus, the first part of clarifying the soul is to learn about the structure of the soul.¹⁴

2) Combining The Information.

The second part we need in clarifying the soul is to be able to combine all the information together.

Knowledge about our inner world is called “*Maaseh Markavah*,”¹⁵ by our Sages.¹⁶ This is because the inner world of the soul is very complicated, and it is difficult to put it all together. Besides for this, the knowledge about the soul isn’t just random information. It is about how people are. Knowing how to combine all this information must come along with our pursuit to learn about the actual knowledge about the soul.

If a person only has a superficial outlook, life seems simple and does not look complicated. But nothing in Creation is simple. The brilliant leader and sage, the Chazon Ish, said that he doesn’t know of anything that is simple. When Hashem created the universe, He “looked into the Torah and created the world.”¹⁷ Just as the Torah is vast and complicated, so is the world complicated.

The more we enter the knowledge about our soul, the more complicated we see it is. We will notice how each fact connects to another, and that even the two facts together also involve other factors. It’s endless.

The innermost point of a person’s soul, our very essence, is actually not complicated once we reach it. Our innermost point of the soul is called “*Yechidah*”, which means “*individual*”, because it is in an “individual” class of its own. But the other parts of our soul are very complicated and consist of many factors.

If so, besides for the necessity to learn about the soul, we also need to know how to combine all this information. This takes great wisdom and art.

3) The Power of Recognition.

The third part of clarifying our soul is by using the power of “*hakarah*” (recognition) in the soul.

Most people, even those involved in learning Torah with diligence, only make use of their power of *seichel* (intellect). Learning the Torah is indeed based upon the power of intellect.

¹⁴ As mentioned in the beginning, the main sefarim that teach us about the soul are *Sefer Yetzirah* and *Tikkunei HaZohar*

¹⁵ The story of the “Holy Chariot” (*Ezekiel 1:1*), in which the prophet Ezekiel was shown a vision of the heavens and the inner secrets of the design of Creation.

¹⁶ *Chagigah 13a*

¹⁷ *Zohar, Terumah 161a*

But there is a different ability we have that is called *hakarah* – the power to “recognize.” The *sefer Chovos HaLevovos* uses this term many times. This is a power in the soul to recognize matters – it is not necessarily involving the intellect.

We find this power sometimes in the superficial use, such as the ability of a father to recognize who his first-born child is, which is called “*yakir*.”¹⁸ We also find that one can recognize his lost object.¹⁹

But there is a more inner kind of recognition a person has, and this is when a person recognizes a matter from within himself. It resembles what Tamar told Yehudah, “*Recognize, now, your Creator.*”²⁰ Recognizing the Creator can only come from an ability to recognize deep matters. This is called the power of *hakarah* in the soul.

The power of *hakarah* is not so well-known to most people. There are those who know about it, but only intellectually. Usually, people only know of something using one of their five senses – seeing, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Since this is so, the take of most people on reality is not exact (to put it mildly), because we can see how most people in the world mistakenly run after their senses. But there is an ability in our soul, *hakarah*, which can see reality as it is. This is not a sensual way of understanding something.

The power of *hakarah* is not the same thing as our feelings, nor is it the same thing as the power to become inspired (“*hisorerus*”). Our feelings are separate from our power of *hakarah*. Feelings include love, hatred, happiness, or sadness. There is another ability in our soul, *hisorerus*, which is to become inspired, such as by being awakened by the *shofar* blast.

Feelings and inspiration are two different abilities in our soul. Usually, our feelings are quieter, while our power to be inspired is a louder ability. Sometimes our feelings work regardless of how we inspired we are, and sometimes we become inspired regardless of how much feelings we experience. Sometimes they are both presently active at once.

We can use these two abilities – feelings, and inspiration - to reach our innermost point of the soul, which is *hakarah*. This is because “doing actions causes our heart to be pulled after what we do”, leading us to the goal. The power of *hakarah* is essentially the inside layer of our feelings and inspiration. Yet, our inner work here is not based on either feelings or inspiration alone. It is based on a power of recognition that comes directly from the soul itself; it is the ability to recognize heart matters.

To our chagrin, most people live a superficial kind of life. Even those who have a desire to live a more inner kind of life are trying to do so with a superficial outlook. They don’t have the inner tools to get there. This is because usually, people do not recognize what the inner world is, and they do not understand that you can’t use their superficial understanding of the physical world if you want to understand the inner world.

18 *Kiddushin* 74a

19 *Bava Metzia* 23b

20 *Rashi, Bereishis* 38:25

We can compare this to someone who just converted to Judaism, who hasn't yet learned the laws of keeping kosher. He doesn't know anything about the concepts of meat and milk or of damaged animals that are forbidden to eat. He thinks he can keep using the same kitchen he is used to.

Knowing the inner world is really the power of *hakarah*. The power of *hakarah* is not revealed to someone who lives a superficial kind of life, nor is it revealed to someone who only lives in his feelings and inspiration. The world of *hakarah* is found in the innermost depths of a person's heart, and it is revealed only to someone who lives it.

If someone doesn't understand this fundamental, he tries to enter the inner world using his superficial abilities. This is like *shaatnez* – a forbidden mixture. You can't mix the inner world with the outer world.

The more a person enters his inner mission, the more he refines his inner tools. This inner tool is *hakarah*.

Thus, our job here is to realize that we have a power of *hakarah*, and to live in a way that our whole life will be based on the ability to recognize heart matters.

4) Connecting The Knowledge To Our Heart

Until now we have said three parts we need to recognize our soul: the knowledge about the structure of the soul, the ability to combine and connect all this information, and the ability to recognize realities.

There is a fourth part we need, and that is to combine all our knowledge in our mind with what we recognize from our soul.

Before, we explained that the knowledge about the soul is vast, and that we must also connect all the information. This is still using our intellect to connect all the information. Now we are speaking of a different ability to combine information, and this is the ability to combine two different components of our soul: our mind together with our power of inner recognition.

To illustrate this concept, when a query is sent to a Rov, the Rov has to check out all the details: What is this issue made up of? Sometimes the issue involves only one section of *Shulchan Aruch*, but sometimes the issue involves all four sections of *Shulchan Aruch: Orach Chaim, Yoreh Deah, Even HaEzer, and Choshen Mishpat*.

Sometimes a person has to only make use of his intellect, and sometimes he must only use his heart recognition. But in order to enter our inner mission, we must combine both of these abilities. We need to see our mind's knowledge from our soul's recognition; if we know about something in our mind, we should be able to recognize it through our soul as well.

Of course, we must mention that we are referring to knowledge that is true, not imaginary thoughts, which are from a world of falsehood. (There is a lot of information which does not come from the Torah, but from the hearts and fantasies of people who are not connected to Torah...) After this, we must internalize this information in our heart, and clarify to ourselves if our hearts are

in line with our mind. We must make sure that this knowledge is coming from the Torah and not from other sources, which have no basis.

This is our mission of internalization. We need to get our mind's knowledge into our heart – as it is written, *“My heart has seen much wisdom.”*

This ability is also known as *da'as d'kedushah* (holy knowledge), and the Baal Shem Tov calls it *da'as hamechaberes* (knowledge that connects). Moshe Rabbeinu personified *da'as*; he brought the Torah into the souls of the Jewish people. *Da'as* connects the intellect with the heart.

When a person only uses his intellect, he involves himself with knowledge that is above his level. If what he knows isn't connected to his heart, then he has no “I”, and he isn't living his self. His life will be full of contradictions between what he knows in his mind with what he knows in his heart, and he will not have clarity in his life.

But if someone does connect the intellect with the heart, all the parts of his soul become connected and complete each other. Such a person has the world of clarity, and he actually lives through his true self.

Such a person will be opened up to all wisdom, and he will be able to truly connect to the Torah. If someone doesn't make the connection between his intellect and heart, he has no real understanding of what it says in the Torah. This is because the Torah is called “wisdom of the heart”, and it is also written, *“My heart has seen much wisdom.”*

“Say to wisdom, You are my sister.” If you are clear in the matter as if it is your sister (who is prohibited) to you, you may say it, and if not, do not say it.”²¹ When a person connects his mind's knowledge to his heart, he connects to his root, and the Torah he learns will come from this same root – the root of his soul.

Therefore, a person has to work very hard at this and connect the level of his heart to be on the level of his mind's knowledge, if he is to live in a clear, inner world.

5) Recognizing Layer Within Layer.

Another part we need in this is the ability to recognize “layers” in the soul, and the ability to cross over from one layer to another layer in the soul.

Layer in Hebrew is known as *“rovad”*; we find this in the Torah, in the word *“marvadim”*, which is referring to the garments of the Kohen Gadol²². We also find that it says “The fourth *rovad* of the Courtyard”,²³ and *“rovadim* of stone.”²⁴

All of Creation is a layer upon layer. The soul of a person is also layer within layer.

²¹ *Sanhedrin 7b*

²² *Midrash Tanchuma, Beraishis*

²³ *Yoma 4:3*

²⁴ *Tamid 1:1*

Before we explained that there are feelings and inspiration in the soul, which are two distinct abilities. Now we can understand that they are two different layers in the soul; in these layers, there is layer within layer, and anyone can relate to this.

Sometimes our feelings and our inspiration is strong, and sometimes it is weak. This is not simply because our feelings or inspiration become weakened, but because our soul is only revealed superficially. When we have only revealed the outer, superficial layers of our soul, then our feelings or inspiration can grow weak. The more inner layers of our soul we uncover, the stronger our feelings and inspiration become.

When a person merits to live with the ability of *hakarah*, first of all, he reveals a whole new layer in the soul – the layer of *hakarah*/recognition. Besides for this, the very fact that he has entered this world of recognition opens up his heart and soul more. There are rooms in the heart, “*chadrei halev*”.²⁵

When a person knows about the layers of his soul through this power of recognition, he reveals an entire world that has in it layer within layer, room within room. Each layer in the soul contains a different kind of recognition. The more inward one enters these layers, the more of an inner recognition the person develops, and he reveals a totally new world.

There are also layers within our feelings and our inspiration. But there is a fundamental difference between one who just lives with feeling and inspiration alone, to one who lives with the deeper power, inner recognition. A person who only knows of feelings or inspiration only sees soul layers as “layers”, and he doesn’t see how they are all unified. He sees a layer in the soul, but he doesn’t see what it has to do with a different layer in the soul.

But someone who lives with inner recognition sees all the layers in the soul as unified. His world of inner recognition is all one reality; it’s all one piece. The more of an inner recognition he acquires, the more he unifies the layers. Instead of seeing contradictions in his soul, he sees how they all connect and complete each other.

Not only that, but he will even be able to see how the layers of feelings and inspiration connect. For example, if a person only lives with his feelings, then he thinks that he loves many things, and he doesn’t see how all the things he loves connects. When he has a strong love for something, he doesn’t identify it as the same love as his normal ability to love; he just thinks that it’s perhaps a different kind of love than anything else he loves. But if someone has the ability of inner recognition, he sees that he only has one power to love, and that this same ability to love just has many layers to it.²⁶

When a person dies, he leaves this physical world and goes to the World To Come. In this world as well we can leave the world and enter into a different world! This is when we leave one room in our soul and enter more inward to a deeper room in our soul.

²⁵ *Mishlei 24: 4*

²⁶ *What the author might mean is that feelings and inspiration are deemed to be “separate”, while inner recognition is something that “unifies”.*

For one to cross from one room of his heart to another room, he has to have revealed his ability to recognize the “layers” of the soul. The more inward one enters into the layers of the soul, the more of a recognition one has from his soul for these matters.

Our task is thus to reveal these layers, using our power of inner recognition. We must realize that each layer has a different recognition than the one before it, and we need to be able to leave one layer and enter into another layer. We then have to let that recognition carry over into our actual life.

We must always strive to enter even more inward, until we finally reach the innermost point – the essence of our soul itself, which is really connected to the Creator.

The Problem

We have explained what we need to do in order to work on clarifying what our soul is, but there is something that greatly holds us back from doing so: the very fact that we are living on this physical world.

Ever since the sin of Adam, this world has never been a place to be at peace. Yaakov Avinu wanted to be at peace, but this hope was shattered right away with the sale of his beloved son Yosef. When we received the Torah at Har Sinai, we touched the level of Adam before the sin, and we saw the “world of clarity” described before. But then our lofty level once again fell after the sin with the Golden Calf.

As the generations pass, we are further away from our state of perfection, and life only becomes crazier. “Each day is more cursed than the day before it, for it is written, *“In the morning, people will say, “When will it be night already?”, and at night, people will say, “When will it be day already?”*²⁷

Our generation is especially bogged down and confused, and we are all like people drowning in a storm at sea. If a person is immersed in this physical world, he is disoriented from what he sees and hears in his life. Someone who desires to be close to Hashem makes some time every day to make a self-accounting, and this is good and praiseworthy.

But, we must understand something very well. The inner world and the physical world we live in cannot coexist. The inner world is pure and clear; it is a world of clear recognition. But the world which we are found in is a mixture of good and evil, and most of it is evil.

Even our hearts on this world are mixed up. Any second of connection to this world makes a mark that isn’t so easily forgotten. Anyone who thinks about it will find that there at least 2,000 bad marks that get left on a person each day just from being connected to this world.

When a person is very busy in worldly matters, he has no inner peace. When he tries to make a self-accounting, he hits a metal wall and finds that he can’t enter the inner world of the soul. He is

²⁷ *Sotah 49a*

so bogged down and confused. Even when he tries to succeed in freeing himself from this, the marks are still left on him, and this doesn't let him concentrate on working with his soul.

“And Yaakov left Beer Sheva, and he went towards Charan.” When a person is still on this outside world and never enters inward, he is found in the “*charon*” – anger – of this world. It's not possible to live in the physical world and try to enter inward. Even if someone does attain some peace of mind, the soul is still confined to the physical world, for someone who mainly considers his life to be in the physical. Such a person will not be able to understand his soul, because his whole viewpoint is a physical viewpoint that is superficial.

In order to enter our inner mission here, a person has to disconnect from the physical world. The more we disconnect, the more we can enter the inner world.

Thus, there must be some disconnection from physicality if we are to have any hope of entering inward to our soul. Yes, we still need to be involved in this physical world, but only in what is absolutely necessary for us to take care of, and not more than that.

The main part of our disconnection here has to be an inner one; meaning, we should feel like we are just guests on this world that are merely passing through. We must enter deep into our soul, and close the door to all winds of impurity that blow on us from all directions. We need to get used to living a life of clarity.

Only if a person disconnects from this physical world can he receive the inner tools he will need to work with. He will then be able to reveal a new “I” which he never knew of until now, and he will live in an inner world that is full of clarity.

In Conclusion

Anyone who thinks about these words will be able to appreciate the words of Reb Yisrael Salanter, who said that it's harder to break one bad *middah* than to finish all of *Shas*. People look for all kinds of practical advice to be able to fix themselves. *Baruch Hashem*, people are searching for advice. But in order to even reach even one *middah* with our soul, we need a lot of tools and introductions to get there. It is surely much harder to fix a bad *middah*. This doesn't only apply to trying to fix our *middos*, but it applies to all aspects of serving the Creator.

If a person isn't aware of this, he might try many years to enter the inner work of serving the Creator, yet he won't know why he isn't succeeding.

It is definitely possible for one to be directed toward the right path with the help of Hashem, when one acts very earnestly and is dedicated to acting for the sake of Heaven. But besides for this path (which is only possible for rare individuals), the way to enter the “inner world” is normally very obscure. That is why it is called the “inner” world – it is internal, and it is found only in the innermost depths of a person's soul.

To quickly review the fundamentals we will need: knowledge about the soul, combining the facts together, the power of inner recognition, fusing our intellect with our heart, recognizing layers of the soul, disconnecting from the physical world and being able to enter an inner, clear world; these are the basics and roots which are absolutely necessary for our inner work here.

Obviously, it is impossible to describe all that we have to do in just these few short lines. In the coming chapters, these concepts will hopefully gain greater clarity, with the help of Hashem.

May the Creator to merit us to reflect upon these matters and continue further.

02 | *The Layers of the Soul*

The Structure of the Soul

In the previous chapter it was explained that one has to know and recognize his soul, both for self-knowledge as well as for recognition of the Creator. In previous volumes²⁸, we explained the general structure of the soul, beginning from the highest point in our soul all the way down to the lowest part of the soul.

We first described the innermost point of the soul, which is the recognition of one's existence (*havayah*). Then we described the faculties in the soul below one's essence; there are higher faculties and lower faculties. The higher faculties of the soul are: *Emunah* ("faith"), *Ta'anug* (pleasure) and *Ratzon* (will). Lower than these is our *mochin* (the mind), which has in it the faculties of *Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daas*.

The power of speech is lower than those abilities, and lower than this are the emotions, which are: *ahavah* (love), *yirah* (fear), *hispaarus* (pride), *nitzachon* (victory), *hodayah* (gratitude), *hiskashrus* (connection) and *shiflus* (lowliness). The lowest part of the soul is the actions of a person, which is the outermost part of the human makeup.

Each part of the soul is a world to itself, comprised of endless details. We need to learn about each part of the soul and recognize it, as we explained in the previous chapter. We have so far given the general description of the human persona.

The Lowest Level: Imagination

However, there is also an even lower level even than the actions, and this is when a person is living life through the prism of his imagination.

We will explain more about the imagination in the coming chapters, but to give a brief description, imagination puts a person in a sleeplike kind of existence. When a person goes to sleep, he is almost totally taken over by imagination. When a person gets up from his sleep, his body might be awake, but his heart might still be asleep! Imagination can still be controlling him no less than when he's physically asleep, if not more so. Without working to uproot it, imagination can make a person's life into one big, fantasy-like kind of existence.

In our generation especially, which is the generation that immediately precedes Moshiach, many people are kind of asleep in their hearts. People have fallen from what a human being really is

²⁸ This is the basic concept of the *Da Es* series, and it has been especially explained in *Da Es Nafshecha* (*Getting To Know Your Soul*).

supposed to look like – the *tzuras adam hashaleim* (the ideal, perfected way of how a person is supposed to look) and are just live a fantasy-like kind of existence.

On a deeper level, this is the realization of the exile of Edom, which is the current exile; *Edom* is from the word *dimayon*, which means “imagination”. The exile of Edom which we are in is really an exile imposed on us due to the effects of imagination on us!

There are a few people whose hearts are awake to the reality of Hashem and are in touch with Him, and they live their lives with holiness, separated from worldly matters. These people have merited to leave the fantasy kind of life and have entered into the real way that a person is supposed to look like. They are living the true kind of reality.

Action-Oriented People Still Haven't Uncovered Reality

Hashem created man as a soul inside a body. It is a wonder that the soul and body live together, which is what we bless Hashem with in the “*Asher Yatzar*” blessing – “*mafli laasos*”. The natural state of affairs in the world is that a person's soul is hidden from him, and the body has a hold on the person. As a result, a person has a natural pull to deal more with action than to enter into the spiritual dimension in things.

Even a person who has left the imagination and has begun to look how a person is supposed to look like is still only involved in actions; even if a person only does holy actions and does everything in line with Torah and the *Halachah*, he is still only involved in actions, which is the lowest part of the soul.

It is better than just being at the level of imagination, of course, because imagination is the lowest kind of existence there is, while the actions that a person does are at least within the realm of the soul. But it is still not the ideal situation, because when people are only involved in action, they are still only accessing the lowest part of their soul.

The Level of Your Existence

When a person only has the right actions, but he hasn't yet entered deeper into his soul, everything he sees is just a “world of action”. He sees everything in terms of “action”, and while he does *act* correctly, he is only accessing the lowest part of the soul: action.

There is a saying in the name of Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt"l* that every worker sees his job in everything he does: a shoemaker sees shoes in everything, and a tailor sees clothing in everything. In other words, a person perceives reality according to his situation. Such a perception is a limited understanding of life, because the person never sees beyond the actions he's fond about.

Even if a person has reached the higher parts of his soul, he still doesn't see beyond that perspective he's at. A person sees everything from whatever level of his soul he has accessed, and not beyond that.

For example, if a person has reached his power of thought, he sees everything in reality through his thoughts, but not more than that.²⁹ And if a person has accessed his feelings (which are lower than the thoughts), all he sees are the feelings in something.³⁰ If a person is at the level of imagination, which is the lowest level – all he sees is fantasies. He doesn't grasp reality at all.

Let us go back to discussing the situation of most people, who are at the level of the action. If a person only lives in a “world of action”, all he sees is action. His entire attitude toward learning Torah is all about what will come out of it in the practical sense – he learns Torah, but only to “learn in order to do.” He does all the *mitzvos*, but there is no inner meaning to anything he does. When he wants to do *teshuvah*, he'll take on resolutions – things he can “do” to change how he acts. He's only focused on “doing”.

Even when he hears about a concept that involves deeper aspects than actions (such as faith, pleasure, will, speech, feelings, or thoughts), he only perceives the concept in terms of action. To him, the only thing he takes out of anything is “tips” on how to make everything practical in his life; everything by him gets translated into an action, and if he doesn't see how something can be carried out practically, he sees no point in it.

We can give an example of this. Let's say an action-person comes across the well-known statement of *Chazal*³¹, that “Torah is great, for it brings one to actions.” He is also aware of the letter of the Ramban, who wrote that when a person gets up from his sefer, he should think about how to make practical what he has learned. The action-person perceives these matters as proof that the main thing on this world is just to “act”. Since he understands everything in terms of how practical it can be, he is apt to view learning Torah as something you “do”, and besides for that, he sees no other reason to learn. After all, he thinks, the whole point of learning is to “act”; he's thinking, if I'm not going to come out with something practical from this, why should I learn Torah?

Of course, we are not saying that one shouldn't act upon his learning. We must act upon what we learn, and if we don't, we are not in touch with reality.

But a person has to also understand the other side of the coin: action is not everything. Learning Torah is not entirely about action. If a person thinks that learning is only about acting upon what you learn, he is imprisoning himself in a mentally-imposed jail, because such an attitude makes him limited and trapped in the world of actions. He won't be able to see beyond action, and he definitely

²⁹ The power of thought is explained in the author's previous series, *Da Es Machshavosecha*, “Getting To Know Your Thoughts”.

³⁰ The world of emotions/feelings are explained in the author's *Da Es Hargoshosecha*, “Getting To Know Your Feelings”

³¹ *Kiddushin* 40b

will not be able to understand anything about the human soul and be able to enter deep into himself.

If a person has overcome his negative imaginations and fantasies, and he is doing the right kind of actions - actions that are in line with Torah and the *Halacha* - that is of course a great accomplishment. He has left the exile of imagination and is living in reality. But it is not enough. When a person is only living for actions, he is limited to the actions, and he looks at everything in life in terms of action, not more than that.

This is the root deterrent for most people who are seeking to serve the Creator: they are only living for action. Most people only want to see how something can be practically applied (*l'maaseh*); people are learning Torah and involving themselves in *Avodas Hashem* (serving the Creator), but they are only interested in the actions contained in this.

Learning Torah on such a level is not learning to learn, but just to “do” the acts that come from it. *Avodas Hashem* on such a level is not about working hard at serving Hashem, but just about what to do in the practical sense. When people want to do *Avodas Hashem* in this way, they remove themselves from real *Avodas Hashem* – they don't have the true, inner perspective.

As we mentioned before, this does not only apply to those who are only concerned about how to act correctly in life. Even if someone has entered deeper into himself and knows what the deep feelings and *middos* are – and he doesn't know beyond that – then he only sees everything in terms of feelings. His perception of reality is still limited to his emotions; he won't see deeper than the emotional aspect of things.

If a person has penetrated even deeper than this into his soul and he has uncovered his faculty of speech, if this is all he has reached in himself, then to him, learning Torah to him is all about “talking in learning” all the time, but not more than that. It's better than the lower levels (actions and feelings), but he's still limited in his perception.

And if a person has uncovered his power of thought, or if he has reached his will, or he has reached even higher into his faculty of pleasure – or even if he has reached his faculty of *emunah*/faith – if he can't see beyond that, then his perception of reality is still limited to the soul level he's at. The point is that he hasn't yet uncovered his essence, just the outer parts of his existence; his perception is limited to the point he is at.

However, there are definitely advantages to one who has penetrated into his soul beyond the actions. First of all, his perspective has deepened, and he has also gained the ability to leave one faculty of the soul and enter into a whole different part of himself. This, in and of itself, makes it possible for him to enter one's inner mission, because he has the keys to be able to enter deeper into the rest of the self.

But even though the person has gained, he is far from complete. As long as a person hasn't yet gotten to his very essence, his perception will be limited to the level his soul is at.

Chazal say that “A judge only sees what his eyes see.” Even a judge who gives an honest in judgment is criticized in the works of *Mussar* for only seeing in a limited way.

Who “I” Really Am

In the beginning of this chapter, we mentioned the highest part of the soul, which is one’s very essence. This is called “*havayah*.” This is the actual self of a person – who “I” really am. It is the ability in a person to know he exists.

The words here are subtle and deep. The discussion here needs both intellectual acumen as well as heart sensitivity if it is to be really understood properly. If someone doesn’t understand the fundamental point we are describing, he will go through his life and never even touch reality.

“I” am the very essence of my soul. Below my existence is a power called *Emunah*, “faith”. This is the highest power in my soul, secondary only to my own existence. Below that is the third-to-highest power in myself, which is *oneg*, pleasure. Below that is my *Ratzon*, will power. Below that is my mind; there are three powers of thought in it (*Chochmah*, *Binah* and *Daas*). Below that is my power of speech. After that are my *middos*/emotions, and the lowest part of my self are my actions.

The soul is like the layers of an onion one on top of the other. Each faculty of the soul is just like garments that cover over the essence of who I am.

Before, we explained that a person understands everything going on around him based on the level his soul is at. If a person hasn’t recognized his very essence yet – his *havayah* – to be quite sharp and clear, he has no idea who he even is! He definitely does not recognize accurately what’s going on around him. His whole perception on reality is sorely missing something.

Every person has in himself a world of actions, emotions, speech, thought, desire, pleasure and faith. Anyone whose mind is thinking properly can identify these abilities in himself. But in order to begin entering our inner mission of serving the Creator, we need to realize that all the abilities in our soul are just garments that cover over our intrinsic essence.

If a person is only at the level of action, then he experiences only the outermost part of the soul, which is a superficial kind of life. He never lives his actual “I”. The same goes for the rest of one’s soul faculties. Although a person lives a truer kind of life with the deeper levels he uncovers in his soul, if he hasn’t yet reached his actual essence, he never experiences himself! He only experiences life through the garments of his soul. There is no greater imprisonment than this.

A person who hasn’t yet revealed his essence doesn’t realize his poor sense of self-recognition. If he has reached his faculty of *Ratzon*, he identifies himself as someone who is able to “want” things. If he has reached his faculty of *oneg*, he looks at himself as “someone who knows how to have pleasure.” If he has reached his faculty of *Emunah*, he identifies his “I” as a “believer.” Whatever level he is at, he thinks that this is all there is to his existence. He never realizes his true existence, and he doesn’t know how to differentiate between the garments of his soul and the essence of his soul.

There are people who shudder to think what will be if they have to give up their pleasures, or what they want, or what they think about out. This is because they identify their “I” as either pleasure, or willpower, or thoughts, etc. and thus the thought of nullifying any of these abilities is too scary to think about; such a person is not ready to nullify these garments of the soul, because he feels like he is nullifying his very “I”.

There are even people who are sadistic and want to hurt themselves, so they feel that by cutting off their pleasure or their desires (or whichever garment of the soul they identify their “I” with) that they will kill themselves. People might hurt others with the same mentality, thinking, “If I ruin his pleasure or I take away his willpower, I will hurt “him.” The person wants to hurt the other person, so he feels that by hurting the others’ garments, he has hurt “him.” What the person doesn’t understand is that you can’t destroy another person’s essence (or your own).

A person has to understand the structure of his soul and work with it. But the first point of our inner work begins with this – that a person must realize that there is an “I” over here. First, a person has to reveal his essence – the fact that he exists. He must realize that this is his true “I.” Only after working on this should a person become more aware of what he does, what he feels, what he says and what he thinks, and so forth.

The understanding of this point is very fundamental to all of one’s inner work. Your *havayah* is who you actually are. The rest of your soul’s abilities – all the way from your *Emunah*/faith down to your actions – are just garments that cover over your essence.

The End Is Part of the Beginning

But in order to begin our inner work, it is not enough to know this intellectually. The proper attitude to have at the onset of our mission is to have the “end of the actions already planned out in the thoughts” (*sof maaseh b’machshavah techilah*).

Someone who only lives for actions will understand all that we are saying here only in terms of how practical it affects him. Simply speaking, thoughts are supposed to precede what we do in order for us to act properly. This is true, but there is a deeper understanding of what it means that “the end of the actions are already planned in the thoughts.”

Maaseh, action, comes from the word *asiyah*, which is to “do”. This we all know. But it can also mean “completed.” The “end of the actions” means a complete action – a perfected action. The *possuk* states that on Shabbos, Hashem rested from all that He was doing. The *Midrash* says that the world was missing Shabbos, and when Shabbos came into existence, the world came to its serenity. Shabbos was the completion of the universe – it was the completion of all actions.

In other words, “*maaseh*” is the beginning of everything, but it is also the goal and completion of something. The superficial understanding of *maaseh* is that an action is needed to complete something that is missing. But the higher definition of *maaseh* is that even when nothing is lacking, *maaseh* is needed to make it perfect.

We are not saying that the simple understanding of *maaseh* is incorrect; if someone thinks otherwise, he's denying the Torah. We have to keep the Torah in the simple sense and do all the *mitzvos*. Doing the *mitzvos* is the basic and necessary step in serving Hashem. If someone doesn't do the *mitzvos*, he is disconnected from reality.

But, we must understand that doing all the *mitzvos* is not everything. Serving Hashem does not end with just action. There are realms beyond the actions we must do.

There is a kind of “*sof maaseh b'machshavah techilah*,” and that is when a person is involved in thought in order to know how to act and do the *mitzvos* properly. Then there is another way to utilize our thoughts – when we use our thoughts in order to arrive at perfected actions. In other words, there is a way for how the “end” goal can already be worked on at the very beginning of one's inner work.

In the previous chapter it was explained at length that the purpose of our life's mission is to recognize the Creator and connect with Him. We are not speaking about this right now; right now, we are speaking about recognizing our soul just in order to know our soul. The goal of knowing about our soul is to come to recognize and live our innermost point of the soul, which is *havayah* – one's very essence. After that, we can begin to ascend the ladder of growth and come to recognize the Ultimate Essence – the Blessed One; and to connect to Him.

But, it is obvious that we cannot get to the “end of actions” – our *havayah* – unless we first have carefully planned thought beforehand. Although we cannot perfectly reach our *havayah* at our initial stage, we must try to reveal it somewhat now, so that this way, we at least are thinking about it beforehand. We need to at least touch our essence a little. This is so that we can have some idea of where we are heading towards.

The Garden-Maze

The *Mesillas Yescharim* says that life is like an intricate garden-maze, in which there are many winding paths that all lead up to the middle; when a person is inside the maze, it is impossible for him to navigate his way around without getting lost, but if someone is standing on top of the maze and seeing everything from above, he can direct the traveler where to go, because he sees all the paths from above.

There is an even deeper meaning to this. The goal of the maze is to get to the middle of all where all the paths lead to; if this goal isn't clear from the start, then a person might think that the point of the maze is to just stay in the maze and get to know it well, missing the goal.

In addition to that, the *Mesillas Yescharim* is also advising one who is traveling through the garden maze that he should listen to the person standing on top of the maze who is telling him how to get out. The person standing on top of the maze has a clear view of the maze, and he's not stuck inside the confusing maze – he's above it and living in a whole different kind of world.

The point of this lesson with the garden-maze is to show us that a person has to get out of from being stuck in the maze of life, and learn how to view things from above the confusion. Although this cannot be done perfectly at the start, since it is the end goal, a person should still be aware of the end goal already at the beginning. He should try to navigate through the maze of life in a way that he isn't totally confused.

But someone who doesn't listen to the advice of the *Mesillas Yescharim* thinks that the goal is to get to know the garden. Even if he listens to the one standing on top of the maze, he is only listening to him to get out of the confusion, but not because he wants to acquire the higher viewpoint.

The faculties of our soul are like a garden-maze. Entering them is like entering a maze. The view from above the maze is the faculty of *havayah*, which is our essence. When a person reveals his essence at least a little bit from the start, he is clarifying his soul through his essence, and even if he has only at the level of just the garments of the soul and he hasn't yet fully reached his essence, his essence is at least joining him throughout his journey toward growth and development of the rest of his soul. (This is only true if he begins to touch his essence at least a little from the start. Soon, we will see how one can do this).

Furthermore, he gains with this in that his goal is to reveal his essence more and more. As we explained before, the goal here is to reveal one's essence in the most complete way. This can only be done when a person had such an intention to start out with.

If a person hasn't felt his essence at least somewhat from the start, he is navigating his way through endless paths. He will be very confused in *Avodas Hashem*. But if someone has begun to touch his essence a little from the start, he can see the goal – “the end of the actions” – already in the beginning. He realizes that the abilities in his soul are just garments of the soul, and the only way to work with the garments of the soul is to use *havayah*. He knows that the goal is come to reach his perfected *havayah*.

A True Outlook on Reality

We have said that if a person hasn't yet uncovered his essence, everything he sees in his reality is limited to the soul level he is at. If all he knows of is actions, then he sees everything from the perspective of action. If all he knows of is *middos*/emotions, then he sees everything in terms of *middos*. The same goes for the rest of the garments of the soul.

But all these perspectives are not the true outlook on reality. At best, they are ways how to view the garments of the soul, but they are not enough to help one understand what's going on in reality.

There is only one place in the soul which has the proper outlook on things – the view from one's *havayah*. From this viewpoint, a person can see himself entering his own personal confusing garden-maze: the many paths in it, which are the soul faculties, and the goal of all the paths, which is to arrive at his perfected essence. From this viewpoint, he can see his actions, feelings, speech, thoughts,

ratzon, *oneg*, or *Emunah* all from the viewpoint of his “I”. He reveals a new world – a whole different kind of outlook on things. He can see reality as it is.

When a person reveals his real “I”, he uncovers a whole new set of faculties in the soul, which he never saw until now. “*Great is your faith.*”³² The faculty of *Emunah* which he uncovers will have a whole new depth and clarity to it, and will receive a whole new kind of vitality, like a revival of the dead. The same goes for the rest of the soul faculties: when a person begins to uncover his essence, the rest of his soul faculties take on a whole new meaning.

But, as we explained before, beginning to reveal your essence is still not a total connection to your essence. It is more like an aspiration for a lofty goal. “A person has to say, “When will my actions reach the actions of my fathers?” The person isn’t yet at the level of the perfected “I”.

But when a person goes deeper and deeper into his soul and uncovers more and more – from the lowest part of the soul all the way until the highest part of the soul – together with a partial recognition of his essence – he can finally reach his essence. He will have a true self-revelation, and he will be able to see reality from his actual essence.

The “Inner Light” and the “Surrounding Light”

We can give another way of defining the concept.

Generally speaking, there are two ways how to see something. One way is to see it from the inside, and the other way is to see it from the outside. When we see something from the inside of a matter, this is called *ohr penimi* (inner light), and when we see something from the outside, this is called *ohr makif* (surrounding light).

In the *ohr makif* itself, there is a lower view and a higher view. Thus, altogether there are really three kinds of viewpoints.

The view from the lower kind of *ohr makif* can have a gain over the view from the *ohr penimi*, because the *ohr makif* can see beyond the limits of something and thus see more, even something which the *ohr penimi* can’t see.

On the other hand, the view of the *ohr penimi* has an advantage over the view of the *ohr makif*, because the *ohr penimi* can grasp a concept better; compare this to someone inside a house, and he can see everything that’s going on inside his house. The lower *ohr makif* can’t see what’s going on inside; “*From afar Hashem appears to me.*”³³ Someone standing outside a house can’t see what’s going on inside the house.

But there is a third kind of view, and that is the upper kind of *ohr makif*. Its viewpoint has the most advantages. The lower *ohr makif* can’t grasp the inner meaning of a matter, while the *ohr*

³²Eichah 3: 23

³³Yirmiyahu 31: 2

penimi is trapped inside a matter and can't see beyond it. It doesn't see the full scope of a matter, and it definitely cannot see beyond the matter.

But the higher *ohr makif* can see a matter if it had already been there, like a person who enters a house, sees what's inside it, and then stands on the outside and now looks at the house. Now when he's looking at the house, he knows what's inside it, because he's been inside before.

When a person is only in the realm of action, he sees everything in terms of action. He can understand actions; he has the view from the *ohr penimi*. But his vision is still very limited; he can't see beyond action.

But if he has ascended to the level in his soul beyond the actions, which is the feelings, he can then view his actions from the view above the actions, which are the feelings. If he has ascended to the level of speech, he can look down at his feelings and actions from a view above them. This is a view of the lower *ohr makif*. But his view still isn't complete, because if he is looking at his feelings, all he sees are feelings.

But when he has the viewpoint from his essence, he reaches the higher *ohr makif*, which can see everything as it really is. Even when that view hasn't become perfected yet (because the person is still only at the beginning stage, as we said), it is still the best viewpoint available.

“Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world”

The real secret of all *Avodas Hashem* is to realize that all of our *Avodah* is essentially a “viewpoint”: how our essence views something in life.

The *Zohar* states that Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world. This shows that all of Creation is directed by Hashem's viewpoint, which is the Torah. In the previous chapter, we explained how a person was created in a Heavenly image, and this is to remind him that he must learn how to connect to the Creator. In order to have this connection, a person needs to be connected to the “viewpoint” of Hashem.

Without a doubt, a person who hasn't yet perfected the lower levels of his soul (actions, feelings, etc.) doesn't have the true viewpoint on things. The more a person improves himself, the more accurate his viewpoint becomes.

How can a person know if he has improved himself?

He can know this by seeing how clear his viewpoint on things are. When a person doesn't see things with clarity, he can know that it's a sign he hasn't yet fixed the lower parts of his soul, and his *Avodas Hashem* is sorely lacking. When a person notices that his view on things has become much clearer, it must be that he has improved himself.

But even if a person has improved himself and he has a clearer outlook on life, he's still not at the end goal yet. This is because until one has perfected his essence, it's not possible to see reality

perfectly. Until one perfects his essence, his outlook on things is only partial and limited. It is only when a person has the ultimate self-revelation that he can see everything in the way Hashem really created it. He will be able to understand then that all *Avodas Hashem* is essentially a viewpoint on life, and that it is his essence which views things.

If a person wants to get from Jerusalem to Tzefas, he has to keep his eye on the road so he can know where he's heading to. He is only making use of his viewpoint as a tool to get to his goal. But the view from one's essence is not like that. The view from one's essence sees how everything we understand in reality is only a viewpoint.

The prophets were able to see reality as it really is; today, there is no prophecy. But our job is to reveal our essence, and from there we will be able to view the essence of each thing. When we gain the view from our essence, then the rest of our soul faculties (all the way from our actions up to our *Emunah*/faith) will look totally different. We will be able to view everything with a truer outlook – through the lens of our essence.

The changes that this will bring to a person are astounding. It will feel like converting to Judaism – a feeling of being born anew. It resembles the change of this 6,000 year world that will take place in the future, when we will enter *Olam Haba* (the Next World). It is actually the preparation toward *Olam HaBa* – as we know that the “parable” (*moshol*) always brings one to the “lesson” (*nimshal*).

In Conclusion

Usually, when we want to work on our soul, we must begin with the simple understanding of the end goal, which is by realizing that we are trying to improve ourselves. With the simple understanding, the attitude is that we are sorely lacking in our actions, and we need to fix up our actions.

But there is a higher goal we must have in mind as well from the start, and that is that to have the end goal already being put into some practice, even at the start. “*Sof maaseh b'machshava techilah.*” Since the end goal is to uncover our essence, we should begin to touch our essence a little, already when we start. This was explained before (and in the next chapter, we will explain how we can do it).

Know that the words here are not merely intellectual matters; they need heart sensitivity as well. The more a person purifies his heart, the more *siyata d'shmaya* (Heavenly assistance) he receives to understand these matters properly and internalize them, until these words become a part of him.

May the Creator merit us to continue further and learn how to reach our essence – how to view things from that deep place in our self, in a way that all of our *Avodas Hashem* will change drastically.

03 | *Inner Peace: Getting Closer To Your Essence*

Introduction

The *Mesillas Yesharim* states that a person has to be able to be on the top of the maze so that he can see how to navigate through the maze. One of the important fundamentals taught in Kelm was “*menuchas hanefesh*” – inner peace. There is a story with the Alter of Kelm’s daughter that she had to go to the doctor once. The doctor told her that the remedy to her sickness is that she should get *menuchas hanefesh*. She told this over to her father, who remarked, “And did the doctor tell you *how* to get *menuchas hanefesh*?!”

Menuchas Hanefesh – The Way To Reach the Self

We must understand that although *menuchas hanefesh* is the ultimate perfection we can reach in our *Avodas Hashem*, just because it only comes at the end doesn’t mean we can’t have it a little to start out with. *Menuchas Hanefesh* is our end goal here, but “the end of action, is first in the thoughts” – and thus we have to also practice *Menuchas Hanefesh* even in the beginning of our way. *menuchas hanefesh* has to always be part of our *avodah*, and on a deeper note, none of our *avodah* is genuine unless we do it with *Menuchas Hanefesh*.

A person’s true self is his actual essence - his true “I.” On top of that one has many “garments” that cover over his essence; his true self. *Menuchas Hanefesh* is essentially to touch upon one’s very essence. In fact, reaching *menuchas hanefesh* is really to reach the actual self, and in its most perfected form, it is the utterly calm recognition of Hashem’s existence. All the forces of the soul – pleasure, will, wisdom, etc.³⁴ – are all the garments of the soul, but they are not the soul itself. They are all movements of the soul. But *menuchas hanefesh* is the unmoving part of one’s existence. All of our *Avodas Hashem* must be based on *menuchas hanefesh*. *Menuchas hanefesh* is really the last stage one reaches in *Avodas Hashem*, but the end goal has to also be part of the beginning. In order for a person to do any of his *avodah*, he has to reach his essence somewhat, and the way to do this is through *menuchas hanefesh*. Without this, our soul will be left very unsatisfied.

The View From Your Essence

The forces of the soul are movements of the soul, and they do not give a person a view from within himself. They only offer an outer kind of view, like a person who sees something from outside of it.

³⁴ As explained in *Getting To Know Your Soul*

Only one who is on top of the “garden-maze” can have the real view, because he sees from above. This is when one sees from his very essence. Such a person is able to see all his soul’s movements from a calm, unmoving place in the soul.

This inner view on reality is essentially when one is reaching his very essence. When a person sees from the viewpoint of the calm place in his soul, he can have this view. But if a person hasn’t yet reached *menuchah*, he only sees everything through the movements of his soul, and this isn’t the real view. Such a person looks at himself like movements, because he only sees himself from the view of movement. He doesn’t see reality as it is. He doesn’t have *Menuchah*, and his vision is inaccurate.

Menuchas hanefesh is really the secret of all our *Avodas Hashem*. With *menuchas hanefesh*, a person begins to see a whole different world. One of the Sages said, “I see a clear world.” This is the kind of view that comes from *menuchas hanefesh*. If a person is trapped in the “garden-maze”, his view is unclear. But when a person sees from above the maze, he has the clear view.

A person has a better view when he can see things from outside himself, as opposed to when he’s still stuck inside himself. When a person has *menuchas hanefesh*, he has begun to reach his self, and he has this view from above, which sees things from outside himself. But when a person doesn’t have *menuchah*, he only knows of the other forces in his soul, and he views reality through these moving parts of his soul, which is an inaccurate view; he’s still stuck inside himself.

To illustrate the concept, *Chazal* say that Avraham Avinu learned Torah from the kidneys, who advised him what to do. The depth of this matter is that a person has a better view on reality when he can see from outside himself.

When a person has real *menuchas hanefesh*, all wisdom is opened up to him. Without it, a person just has intense desires to serve Hashem, but he isn’t calm and he doesn’t have clarity in how to go about this.

Using Darkness To Reach Your Inner Silence

Now we will try to explain how we can this concept more practical – how we actually get to this place in our soul.

Hashem created light and darkness. Light enables a person to work by daytime, while night makes people come home. In terms of our soul, darkness is a time where we can access ourselves. Darkness was not just created for us to go to sleep, but to be able to silence everything that’s going on around us.

Those who taught about *Avodas Hashem* (and especially *Sefer HaMaspik L’Ovdei Hashem*³⁵) described this as the ability to “silence” everything. A quiet environment, such as forest, can

35 Authored by Rabbi Avraham ben HaRambam

definitely help for this, but that's not the point. It's not about the type of place where you are in. A person can be "alone" in his house – or even when he is amongst people. It is a power to be "alone."

This is essentially called the "detached" part of the soul: "*makom mufshat*", a detached space, in the soul. It is the innermost part of yourself. It is accessed when divests himself from the outer layers of his soul and he gets by all these layers, and then he touches upon his very self.

One of the things that can help a person get there is darkness. Through utilizing darkness, a person can divest the layers of his soul and access the true self, an inner part of the soul that is removed from all the other parts of the soul.

It's possible for a person to run away from "himself". When a person runs after evil desires, honor, or jealousy, these are the three things which *Chazal* say remove him from this world. But even when a person is running to do a *mitzvah*, it's possible that he's really running out of his "self" – when he lacks *menuchas hanefesh*. He isn't calm when he goes about his *Avodas Hashem*.

The purpose of all our *Avodas Hashem* is really to get to this deep place in our self. *Menuchas Hanefesh* is thus our end goal. Yet, we need to also develop it even in the beginning of our *Avodas Hashem*: to have a calm place in our soul.

Having A Spark of the End Goal

Chazal say that "*shelo lishmah* (ulterior motives) leads to *lishmah* (pure motives). Rav Chaim Volozhiner explained that one has to start out with at least a little spark of *shelo lishmah*. This really reflects the concept here. By starting out with some *menuchas hanefesh*, we can get to the goal, which is the perfected *menuchas hanefesh*.

People usually think that the end goal has nothing to do with the beginning – "If I get there, that's wonderful, but right now what use is the end goal to me?"

But really, the end goal has to be incorporated into even the beginning. "The end of actions is first in the thoughts."

The *Mesillas Yescharim* lists a ladder of growth in serving Hashem. The beginning of his words is that a person should realize that the purpose of this world is to have *d'veykus* (attachment) to Hashem. Why does he start out the *sefer* with these words? If *d'veykus* in Hashem is the end goal, why must a person know this and clarify this in the beginning of his way? It is because the end goal has to be incorporated into the beginning stage. Although *d'veykus* is the end goal, it needs to be worked on somewhat even at the beginning of one's way.

We have so far given two examples of how the end has to be included in the beginning. Now let us return to the main point.

Setting Aside Time For Inner Silence

If a person doesn't understand that he needs to have some *Menuchas Hanefesh* even at the beginning stage of *Avodas Hashem*, then he's really involving himself in *Avodas Hashem* that he has no connection to. He will lose his desire to continue on in *Avodas Hashem*.

When a person doesn't understand the importance of *Menuchas Hanefesh*, he will feel that it's *bittul Torah* (waste of learning time) or that in general it's not as important as other matters in *Avodas Hashem*. He might feel that it's more important to learn or to *daven*; this is because he doesn't understand how important it is.

A person must realize that *Menuchas Hanefesh* must be practiced even in the beginning of our way (as lofty of a concept as it is).

This "spark" of reaching the end goal is hard to get (as we will explain soon why it is). But, when people decide to skip *d'veykus* in Hashem at the beginning of their *Avodas Hashem*, they never get to the end of *Avodas Hashem* – which is *d'veykus*. This shows that the end has to be worked on even at the beginning.

In Kelm, they worked particularly on *Menuchas Hanefesh*. They did not only speak about it as an end goal, but as an initial goal to work on.

In order for a person for to reach this inner place in his soul, he needs to silence everything. A person cannot do this when he is involved in "doing" something else, like *davening* or doing *chessed*. There are times a person has to learn Torah, *daven*, and do *chessed*, and so too must there be a time for one to silence everything and reach his essence. This is how a person can have a spark of the end goal already in the beginning stage of *Avodas Hashem*.

Being In The Dark

Practically speaking, a person needs to be in the dark for this. This is hard to do, because a person naturally wants to do something when one is sitting in the dark. This is where the difficulty comes: the very desire to want to do anything shows that the desires haven't been silenced yet.

A person has to learn how to sit in the dark and restrain his anxiousness to immediately "do" something. Don't do anything, and ignore your desire to do something.

Reb Yisrael Salanter wrote that a person is trapped by his *middos*, and that his thoughts are constantly roaming around. The *middos* if a person (pleasure, desire, wisdom, etc.) are garments of the soul. A person needs to learn how to silence his *middos*.

Let's say a person has a desire for something; how can he control the desire? Desire is a *middah*; a person can silence a *middah*. He can learn how to restrain himself from giving in to the desire, as well as silencing the very thought to have the desire. (Uprooting the desire itself is a different subject, and we are not discussing this.)

Menuchas Hanefesh Helps You Approach All Avodas Hashem Properly

The Vilna Gaon says that when a person is learning *Gemara*, he shouldn't think about anything else other than the page of *Gemara* in front of him. By the same token, a person can have *Menuchas Hanefesh* wherever he is by silencing everything that's going on, and reach his essence.

When a person begins to reach his inner silence, he begins to reach his very essence, and he feels what it means to have *Menuchas Hanefesh*. From there on, he can approach any area of *Avodas Hashem* from a truly calm attitude, and he will be successful in *Avodas Hashem* now that he has this quality.

May we merit the help of Hashem to continue this further. It is within our reach to do so.

04 | *Inner Orderliness*

Scattered Inside

We have begun to discuss how we can begin to touch our very essence. A person has to divest himself from the outer layers of his soul and then reach his inner silence, which enables one to reach his essence and thus gain *menuchas hanefesh* (inner peace, or serenity of the soul).

In the previous chapter, we mentioned how we need to gain a “clear view” in *Avodas Hashem*.

Hashem created a deep power in Creation called “*Echad*” – “oneness.” We must learn how to tap into this deep power. When a person begins *Avodas Hashem*, everything seems so scattered and separated. He finds himself in an ‘*alma d’piruda*’, a “world of separation”. The surroundings of a person only make a person even more scattered.

For example, a person has five physical senses. How many times a day do we use our senses? We use them countlessly throughout the day. Every time we use our senses, a mark is left on us from what we experience, and the more a person uses his senses, the harder it is for a person to reach his essence, because he has become so muddled from all of these marks.

We only gave one example, but there are endless examples that prove the idea. Our senses put us into imagination and take us away from our inner state of *echad*.

Your Essence Vs. Your Garments

The inner kind of life we want to achieve is a whole different kind of life than the one we are used to living.

A person has in himself his very essence (*havayah*), and on top of that are his other forces of the soul: *Emunah* (faith), *Ta’anug* (pleasure) and *Ratzon* (will), etc. This is something which we have explained a lot about before.

There are two ways how a person knows this. One way is superficial – to just know about it and absorb it well in your head. But there is another way to know of it – when you let it become the way you actually look at life. We will give many examples of this soon to explain what we mean.

The point of what we are saying here is that if a person only views life from the forces of his soul and the senses of his soul, he just sees his soul as separate forces. He lives in a “world of separation.” But if a person has the viewpoint from his essence, he can unify everything into “one”. He lives in a world of “*Echad*.”

Awareness Of What You Go Through

Let's say a person gets up in the morning and says *Modeh Ani*. When a person says *Modeh Ani*, what is he really doing? He is using the power of speech, which is an ability of the soul. But if a person isn't aware of what he's doing when he says *Modeh Ani*, he is just acting mechanically. When a person acts mechanically throughout the day, everything he does has no connection. He is just doing a scattering of actions with nothing that connects what he does.

But when a person is aware what's behind his actions, he can see how everything is connected, and that he doesn't just do a bunch of random acts throughout the day.

When a person davens, how much feelings does he experience? Usually, a person thinks that every Tefillah he davens consists of an endless amount of feelings. But if a person has reached his essence, he sees the view of "*Echad*" – he can see how it's all one feeling. When a person is unaware of this, he is aware that he has gone through a lot of feelings, but he has also scattered his soul in the process. He only experiences a scattering of many feelings.

How many feelings does a person go through each day? It depends on which way you are experiencing life. If you only have a superficial and undeveloped awareness, then you go through "many" random, scattered feelings.

Another example: When a person learns with a *chavrusa*, how many feelings and thoughts does he go through? It seems that it's so much going on at once. With this superficial way of experiencing life, a person's life is full of scattered emotions and thoughts. When a person just goes through all these "movements" of his soul, he is scattered and mixed up.

The inner way to live is to be able to experience life from a clear viewpoint about what's going on around you. He is aware as he does something: Is what I'm doing now a kind of *ta'anug*, a kind of *Ratzon*, or some other force in my soul? He sees everything he does in terms of his soul. When a person gets used to this, he will begin to feel *menuchas hanefesh*. Of course, there are levels to how much *menuchas hanefesh* a person can have.

The most inner kind of *menuchas hanefesh* one can have is when he reaches his essence, and this we spoke about in the previous chapter. But now we are speaking of a more elementary kind of *menuchas hanefesh* which must come way before that: calming the outer layers of your soul.

This is when you get used to giving orderliness to all the forces of your soul. It is when a person clarifies what he does and realizes what a matter is made up of: which forces of my soul are being utilized right now? A person in this way learns how to identify in his actions how his soul is relating to what he's doing. He connects everything together and gives orderliness to everything he does.

A person who gets used to this will discover that he doesn't have to listen to everything or see everything that goes in the world. He realizes that the more he uses his physical senses, the more of a mark the senses leave on him, and this hampers him by making him a scattering of emotions and thoughts. He realizes that he can't bear all the sensual information that floods into his head all the time, and he'd rather just detach from all that.

Seeing What's Behind An Act

This concept has to be grasped by very well. If the concept is really understood, you will find that your whole view on how you live your life has changed.

To give an example, when a person speaks, he can wonder to himself: “Am I speaking from my *Emunah* (faith) in myself, or am I speaking from my *ta'anug* (pleasure) in talking, or am I speaking out of a *Ratzon* (will) to talk?”

When a person hears someone else talk and the speaker is speaking with this kind of awareness, the listener can often sense that the speaker has purified his soul more and speaks from a calmer place in his soul.

When a person gets used to this, he will find that nothing is simple, and that everything consists of many factors. He will find that when he talks, it's not just a superficial act of talking, and that when he hears someone, he's not just hearing the words. He will find that there are many factors behind the act of the talking or the hearing. He will find how everything is really complex and that nothing is simple.

The Chazon Ish said that he doesn't know of anything simple in the world, because everything is made up of many factors to consider. There is an endless amount of factors that make up every matter.

When a person learns Torah and doesn't see any connection between the information he learns, this is a problem, because everything is just scattered here. A person has there is a connection between the information. The same thing goes for our soul. Our soul experiences many senses throughout the day, and without giving order to everything that's going on, the soul feels scattered from all that it has gone through.

Differentiating Between Your Garments and Your Essence

Let us add another point which sharpens the discussion.

Without giving order to what's going on in our acts, a person doesn't recognize that there is a difference between his essential self and the rest of his soul, which are only the garments of his soul. This makes a person experience everything in his life only through the garments of his soul, and he never experiences life through his real self.

A person has to take all the “garments” of his soul – the forces of his soul, and the senses – and give order to them.

To do this, a person needs to realize that he has an essential self, and that his outer layers of the soul and his senses are not who he actually is. This gives order to all the garments of his soul – each person according to his level. This makes a person aware of the garments of his soul, and that the garments of his soul are not his actual essence, but just garments.

This can help a person then feel his own essence; since he has differentiated between what his garments are to what his essence is, he is able to reach his essence, because now he can detach from his surroundings.

Making The Transition In Your Soul

To give an example, a person is learning, and then he realizes that now it's time to daven with the *minyana* that has just begun to daven. He quickly jumps into the davening. When a person does this, he has scattered his soul around!

Why? It is because there is a time to learn, and a time to daven. The two cannot be mixed together; there has to be a little bit of space that one passes through between them. A person has to actually pass over from his learning into his davening.

When a person is *davening* and suddenly he realizes that he is all muddled and can't concentrate, what does he do? A superficial solution is to look for all kinds of ways how a person can increase his *kavanah* (concentration). But the inner solution is when a person has learned how to detach in the way we have described. He can detach himself from his bothersome thoughts, enter into his feelings, and from there, he can concentrate.

This is a kind of life of someone who lives with order in his soul. It can only be possible when one realizes that the garments of his soul are not his essence. Such a person knows how to pass from his garments of the soul into the essence of the soul.

The more a person gets used to this, the more he increases his *Menuchas hanefesh*.

05 | *Intellect and Heart*

(Summary: We have so far explained that a person has to try to be above the confusing maze of life. Even at the start, we have to be aware of the end goal, which is to reach our essence.

We need to uncover our essence somewhat even in the beginning of our Avodas Hashem, based on the rule of “sof maaseh b’machsavah techilah”. The “end of the actions” has to “first be in the thoughts” – we need to start to actualize our end goal already in the beginning, and already begin to uncover our essence somewhat.

We have gone through the roots of the soul faculties and their branches. Let us continue to the next step with this.)

The Sun/Intellect and The Moon/Heart

There are two functions in a person which are called the two “kings” in a person: the mind and the heart. These are also called the “sun” and the “moon” – the mind is called the “sun”, and the heart is like the moon.

The sun and the moon were originally the “two great luminaries” of the heavens, and they represent the “two great luminaries” that one uses in his *Avodas Hashem* – the mind, and the heart. This was the ideal state of Creation. The moon was later downsized, and the sun and moon were given different roles: the sun would rule by day, while the moon would rule by night.

In terms of how this affected our soul, our “moon”, which represents our heart, has become smaller and only secondary to our “sun”, which is our mind. But the ideal situation which we want to return to is that the sun and moon should become equal again – that they should both become “two great luminaries.” This is essentially when we internalize the knowledge of our mind into our heart – *“And you shall know today, and you shall return the matter to your heart.”*

The Situation of Most People

There is an even sharper way to describe the change that happened to our situation (after the moon got punished): when a person understands something, his understanding of it is initially based on intellect alone. Even when a person understands something on an emotional level (unless he has worked on himself in the way we will describe), this isn’t coming from his heart, but from his mere emotions.

True feelings stem from the heart, but not every emotion that a person feels toward something is coming from his heart. It can just be a “feeling” for something and nothing more; it lacks the understanding of the intellect that is supposed to accompany it.

Most people are only using their intellect, and they lack emotion. Others are only using their feelings. Either kind of life is a person who has never changed one bit his entire life, and he just takes life as it comes, either looking at everything through his natural intellect alone or through his natural emotions. With this superficial way of living, the intellect of a person and the emotions of a person are separated.

Fusing Intellect and Heart Together

But the real, inner way to live is to see something through the intellect, and to awaken the heart’s feelings when the time calls for it.

In the ideal way to live, a person is supposed to analyze every matter by probing it with his intellect, and to use his heart by viewing a matter as if he’s outside the matter.

When someone gains the “view from above” we described earlier – to be on top of the confusing garden-maze – he has essentially reached a level in which both his mind and heart have become equal; they have both become “two great luminaries.”

Two Kinds of Extremes

The sun represents the intellect. This is the ability in a person to comprehend a matter as much as he possibly can – on an intellectual level. This is not just to understand Torah, but to see the wisdom in all of Creation. The moon represents the heart; this is an ability in a person to see from above a matter – to be outside of a matter, which gives a person a better view than when he is stuck inside a matter.

If someone only uses the second view, which is the heart’s view, this is not the way of the Torah. It resembles the non-Jewish lifestyle. But the Torah lifestyle of a Jew is to use both our intellect and heart to understand something. We have to use our intellect to try to understand something as much as we possibly can, to analyze the very depths of everything; and we must also use our heart, which is the ability to see above a matter.

The Heart Is “Surrounding Light”, and the Mind is “Inner Light”

In more inner language, the mind is called the *ohr penimi* (“inner light”), while the heart is called the *ohr makif* (“surrounding light”). The *ohr penimi* is an ability in a person to see inside a matter, while the *ohr makif* is an ability in a person to see above a matter.

The *ohr penimi* is essentially our intellect, which analyzes a matter and goes “into” a matter. The *ohr makif* is essentially our heart, which can see what surrounds a matter – what’s above it.

Why We Need Both

The perfected kind of existence one can have is to live with both abilities.

Let us repeat this again so it should be clear: any one of these abilities alone is not enough. The Jewish people have a natural inclination toward the intellect, which is the power of analytical thought, while the non-Jewish nations have more of a pull toward the heart, which is to attempt to see beyond a matter (without understanding it properly). We need to integrate both views: intellect and heart.

Thus, in anything we encounter - whether it’s a totally physical matter, or a completely spiritual one – we must deal with it using both our intellect and heart. We must be aware that there are two ways how to connect to something – either through the intellect, or through the heart; and then we have to make sure that we are connecting to something using **both** intellect and heart.

Our intellect connects to something using exertion and deep thought about it, while our heart connects to something using the ability to view from above a matter (we will later explain what this is).

If we haven’t begun to work on our souls, then in whatever we encounter, either we are using our intellect alone, or our heart alone. But when we have developed our soul more, we will be able to use anything we encounter as a way to put both our intellect and heart to use.

Which should come first – using our intellect, or using our heart? That is a separate issue. But the point is that we need to fuse them both together in whatever we encounter in life.

Why must we use both intellect and heart in everything? How does this affect us? If a person just uses intellect, then he can think very deeply into a matter, but he has to enter the matter in order to understand it. But if a person just uses his heart’s understanding, then the matter itself speaks to him, and he doesn’t have to enter it to understand it.

The Differing Natures of The Mind/Intellect and the Heart

These are opposite abilities in a person. Thinking about something makes you question something; you’re in the matter, and the matter is not speaking to you. By contrast, your heart can see how the matter is talking to you; it’s hearing the voice behind something.

We can compare this to finding a marriage partner. Most men have to go searching for a wife to find her, because it is a man’s nature to go out, while it is a woman’s nature not to go out. (There are

some men who merited to have their wife come and meet them.) A man (generally speaking) represents the intellect, who has to “go after” a matter to understand it. A woman represents the heart, who instead receives an understanding of the matter without even going after it; man is called a giver, while a woman is called the receiver. The man gives the ring to betroth the woman, while the woman receives it.

The heart doesn't do anything active to understand something; its main function is to listen to what's going on. It just stays where it is and listens.

This point has to be understood very well, because we have to understand well that the way our mind understands something is not the way our heart understands something. You cannot attempt to use our heart in the same way how you understand using you intellect.

Listening With The Heart

The inner layer of our *Avodah* is to use our heart – to be able to “listen” to what's going on in a matter. (If a person has bad *middos*, this can hamper his heart's ability to listen, and he will instead hear something evil). The role of our heart is to listen to everything that's going on around us, while the role of our intellect is to actively think about everything and analyze matters on an intellectual level, as deep as we can.

Without first developing our intellect's ability to think deeply into a matter, we will not be able to use our heart's ability to listen. But if we have worked hard with our minds to try to understand matters, we will be able to disconnect from the physicality of this world, and we will then be able to reach a place of silence in the soul – which will enable us to use our heart's ability to listen.

When we exert our minds more, our mind matures, and this enables our heart to listen better to a matter.

Chazal say that there is a time to learn and a separate time to daven. In terms of our soul, this means that there are two different abilities in us – the ability to be active, and the ability to have quiet. In other words, there is a kind of understanding that comes from when we actively think into something and try to understand it as much as we can, and there is another kind of understanding which comes from having a deep silence.

The heart's understanding is called “*avanta d'liba*”.³⁶ It is not an intellectual understanding – it is something else entirely. It is a concept which needs to be absorbed well. You can't really explain what it is – it has to be experienced. It is a very subtle matter, and it is a whole different kind of life.

A person can go his whole life and even be a gifted thinker, but if he has never accessed his heart's understanding, he has gone his whole life completely unaware that there is an inner kind of life which he could have lived.

³⁶ See Rashi to *Chagigah 12b*

Thus, this concept we are describing – the heart’s understanding – is a point which needs to be absorbed very well. You can’t just know about it intellectually; you need to become aware of it and absorb the concept very well. The way you can absorb it is through exerting your mind to understand it, as well as by *davening* to Hashem that you understand it.

When you finally absorb the concept, now comes the following: realize that there are two completely different ways how to view reality. The way your intellect sees reality is not all the way your heart views reality. A person can use his intellect very well in his life yet still never arrive at inner matters, even if he is using his intellect all the time to exert his thinking in the words of Torah. The heart’s understanding adds a whole different facet of understanding to how you view reality.

Intellect alone cannot help us in *Avodas Hashem*. It can help someone become a psychologist, but it doesn’t help you understand matters in *Avodas Hashem*. Only a fusion of intellect and heart together can help a person understand matters of *Avodas Hashem*; it brings a person to a place in himself of deep listening.

It is simple to understand how our intellect takes information and arranges it, but the way our heart arranges information is totally different. Your heart arranges information the better you have deepened your ability of inner listening. In fact, the more you learn how to use your heart’s listening, your understanding of a matter will just come to you almost automatically, like a sense of intuition. The matter will speak for itself and tell you what’s behind it!

We can compare this to walking into a neat house. When everything is neat and is in place, you can see everything in the house. The heart is able to arrange everything in a neat way, which gives you a clear understanding of matters.

The heart’s ability to listen is essentially to listen to what’s really going on in reality. The more you have deepened your inner silence, the better you absorb reality.

No one can totally perfect his inner silence, but at least by working hard on it, a person can improve his inner listening a lot better and have much greater clarity in a matter. We can compare this to someone who is trying to become a good listener. Even if he never becomes the greatest listener, by working on his listening, he can still at least improve his listening and hear much more things than he used to.

If someone isn’t aware about the concept of the heart’s understanding – the ability of inner listening to matters – then he will not be able to continue to the next step. A person has to work on his ability of inner silence, more and more, until he begins to feel himself getting clarity in a matter even before he begins to think about it intellectually.

This will bring a person to see himself in a way that he has never seen himself before.

Of course, there are levels of clarity. The more a person deepens his inner listening of the heart, the more clarity he will have. What we have described until now is a kind of inner listening that even the lowest part of our soul (*nefesh habehamis*/animal soul) can understand. The end goal can shine upon our understanding even as we begin, in a way that even our *nefesh habehamis* can comprehend.

Two Parts To Your Learning

To give an example, when a person learns a *sugya* of *Gemara*, he thinks into it and analyzes it as much as he possibly can. This gives him one kind of understanding. But there is a whole different kind of understanding he can have. After he has learned the *sugya*, he can review it quietly, and then, he can “listen” to what’s going on. If he has reached his inner silence, he will notice things he has never paid attention to until now! Matters which used to seem so simple will suddenly appear to be very deep.

Obviously, the main thing is always to exert oneself in learning Torah, and not to immediately jump to the “listening” stage. Exertion of the mind must come first. We can compare this to someone looking for a *shidduch*. First, you have to think about all the information pertaining to the *shidduch*, and then you can sit calmly and “listen” to offers.

Only someone who knows how to detach from his surroundings a little will be able to use this “listening.” The heart’s understanding will show a person what reality is.

Don’t Interrupt Your Inner Silence

The difficulty starts when a person finally finds for himself a quiet place to think, and suddenly he realizes that there is a problem which he can’t solve.

For example, he goes to a dark room at night and everything is silent, and he begins to listen with his heart to what’s going on in his heart. He figures out that he has a problem – and he attempts to solve it by thinking into it very deeply and trying to come up with the solution. But this doesn’t work.

The real solution is that when you discover a problem, don’t think at all about it. Instead, continue to your inner silence, and don’t let your silence become interrupted. Don’t attempt to solve the problem by thinking what you can do about it – instead, remain calm with your inner quiet, and if you hold onto your inner quiet, you will see how the answer to the problem will come to you on its own!

In Conclusion

We can give many more examples that explain the concept, but the point is that we need both to think about something deeply as well as to be able to detach from deep thinking and instead just listen quietly to what’s going on.

The matters here are very subtle and it takes a while to absorb, but everyone has these two abilities – the intellect and the heart – and when used together, these abilities give a person a whole new understanding of everything in life.

06 | *Quality Over Quantity*

Two Differing Attitudes About Life

We will continue on our discussion on how to have an inner kind of life, a kind of life that is “*sof maaseh b’machshavah techilah*” – having our end goal already realized somewhat even in our beginning.

We have spoken about how to use *menuchas hanefesh*, and we have spoken about using both our intellect and heart in understanding matters. That is a brief discussion; now we will continue to the next step.

The *Chovos HaLevovos* writes that smaller, purer amounts are better than bigger amounts. This shows us that there are two abilities in our soul – *aichus* (quality) and *kamus* (quantity).

There is a great wisdom contained in knowing the difference between what’s considered “quality” and what’s considered “quantity.” Focusing on “quantity” (*kamus*) is basically a gruff, superficial attitude to have in our *Avodas Hashem*, while focusing on “quality” (*aichus*) in our *Avodas Hashem* is the refined, internal attitude which we should want to achieve. If a person hasn’t worked on himself, then quantity in *Avodas Hashem* will be more important to him than quality in *Avodas Hashem*.

Quantity Should Precede Quality

Chazal also refer to these two abilities as “*ligmar*” and “*lisbar*”. When a person learns Torah without trying to understand it, this is *ligmar*; it is all about quantity. When a person tries to delve into what he learns, this is *lisbar*, and the focus of his learning is on the quality of how well he understands it.

Chazal say that *ligmar* has to come before *lisbar*; first, a person has to have years and years of exertion in learning, gathering and amassing knowledge in Torah. Only after that should he attempt to acquire the second stage of learning, *lisbar*. In other words, although quality is the goal, quantity has to precede quality.

People are naturally inclined toward superficiality, and thus they are more concerned about quantity over quality. Quantity totally contradicts an inner kind of life; it is all about “more, more, and more”.

Even if a person is seeking always to increase his learning, his *davening* and his *middos* more and more, he might just be more into “quantity” of his *Avodas Hashem*, rather than being into “quality” of his *Avodas Hashem*.

How To Acquire the Attitude of Quality

The *Chovos HaLevevos*, that “smaller, purer amounts are better than bigger amounts”. If a person thinks deeply into this and he absorbs the concept, he is able to acquire the attitude of quality over quantity.

Again, we must mention that first a person needs to have “quantity” in Torah before he seeks to improve the “quality” of his Torah; *ligmar* must precede *lisbar*. But after a person has exerted himself in Torah for a few years, he can begin to reflect on the concept of quality over quantity and then absorb it well.

We cannot advise *what to actually do* in order to get to this attitude; there is nothing to “do” in order to acquire it. One has to first amass a lot of Torah knowledge and exert himself in it, and only after that can he be able to absorb the concept of “quality over quantity” after reflecting deeply about it.

Even if someone has three *sedarim* (learning sessions) a day and he enjoys the logic of Torah, it will still be hard for him to understand the concept of quality over quantity. It is a concept which has to be absorbed very well, and it can only come after a person has learned Torah for a long time on at least a basic level. If the concept isn’t absorbed well, then a person is only doing half his job. He might have quality Torah learning, but his *actual daily life* is missing quality. He’s one way in his learning, but he is another way in how he actually lives his life....

Once a person does absorb the concept, though, what will happen? He will find himself battling an internal kind of war. He will find himself battling his desires – the desire for quantity vs. the desire for quality. He should then listen to himself (using the heart, as described in the last chapter) and hear from inside himself what he wants: quality, or quantity. When a person becomes aware of himself, he can know if his desires in life are more about quantity or quality.

When a person truly listens with his heart to what’s going on inside himself, he will discover how much his desire for *quantity* is overpowering his desire for quality!

The Difference Between Quantity and Quality

“Quality over quantity” is not a simple matter; it spans a wide amount of areas in life. Quantity is about being superficial, while quality is about being internal. When a person is concerned mainly for *quantity* over quality, he is essentially always *outside* a matter, because he is having a superficial understanding based on various externalities.

Even if he’s learning Torah and very involved in it, if he’s concerned mainly for quantity, he is really outside his own learning; his learning is not a part of him. He might learn Torah very in-depth, but he can still be very outside the Torah, since he is mainly concerned about the “quantity” of his in-depth learning than about the actual quality of his in-depth learning.

But when a person is concerned for *quality* rather than quantity, he's not interested in what's going on in the superficial aspects of a matter. All he is interested in is getting to the *root* of a matter.

Quantity is all about getting "more and more" from outer factors, while quality is all about to get to the roots of a matter, to get to the essence of a matter.

Such a drive can only come from after a person gains *menuchas hanefesh* (as described before), as well through listening with the heart (described in the last chapter). This puts a person into a clear way of living, and from there, he is able to focus on the root of a matter and not be concerned about superficiality. It's a whole different kind of life than someone who only cares for quantity.

Why aren't people reaching closeness to Hashem? It is really because they aren't focused on the quality of *Avodas Hashem*. A person can work very hard at trying to become close to Hashem, but if he isn't concerned for refining how much quality his *Avodas Hashem* has to it, he never gets there. When people want "more and more" in their *Avodas Hashem* – quality over quantity – this itself contradicts what it means to have real *Avodas Hashem*.

Now the concept of the *Chovos HaLevovos* becomes clearer. We have to be concerned always about what the root of a matter is; anything else that has to do with it is just tools to get there.

The root of a matter is always one point, and it defines the essence of the matter. When a person is concerned for quality, he will discover that to simply "increase" what he knows actually mars the quality of what he's trying to accomplish. He realizes that "more" isn't necessarily "better."

With quality as the goal, the soul becomes calmer.

Quality Is To "Taste" Matters

Quality is to essentially look for only one root point in a matter.

The word "*me'at*", small amount, has the same letters as the word *taam*, taste. When a person is more concerned about smaller, purer amounts than finding bigger, less pure amounts – he truly "tastes" the matter. That is our goal – we want to find the true "taste" that is in everything. With "tasting" a matter, you can begin to touch a matter.

When a person absorbs the concept well (that smaller, purer amounts are better than bigger amounts), he will realize that he has nothing else he'd rather have than a quality understanding.

When a person lives the inner kind of life we have been describing up until now (*menuchas hanefesh*, listening with the heart, and quality over quantity), he actually begins to "taste" matters in his life. *Taam*, which means taste, can also mean "reason" (*taamei hamitzvos* – the "reasons" for the *mitzvos*, which are a way to "taste" the *mitzvos*). When someone tastes matters through the internal kind of life described here, he is more connected to the reasons behind everything.

In the Torah, there are *osiyos*, which are the letters, and there are *taamim*, which are the way you pronounce the words. The *osiyos* represent the superficial understanding of a matter, while the *taamim* represent the internal understanding of a matter.

Usually, people just live their lives on this world and never hear the inner voice in what's going on in something. People usually don't really "taste" what's going on in their life; even when people learn Torah, they are usually just learning it through their lowest part of the soul (the *nefesh habehamis* lower, animalistic part of the soul).

Examples of "Tasting" Matters

To give an example, *Chazal* say that "Anyone who says *Perek Shirah* will merit *Olam Haba* (the World to Come)." When a person says *Perek Shirah*, is he aware that this is something which brings him to have *Olam Haba*? What is he thinking as he says it? *Perek Shirah* doesn't mean for a person to "sing" the *Shirah*. What is the song of the *Shirah*? The *Shirah* is a deep understanding that comes to a person if he has removed whatever obstacles are holding him back from the *Shirah*.

When a person listens to what's going on inside a matter, it is then that he tastes it.

We are not referring to having enthusiastic feelings about something. When a person has feelings of love or gratitude, which are feelings of enthusiasm, this alone does not help him understand a matter. We are referring to an inner kind of understanding in which a person has a deeper kind of feeling in everything he comes across, and it can only come from listening with your heart to what's going on. Only this will help you really "taste" a matter.

This will connect you to everything in a whole different way than you are used to.

To give another example, we know that one is not allowed to inflict pain on animals (*tzaar baalei chayim*). A person who sees an animal with a heavy load is supposed to unload the animal. Let's say a person is unloading the animal; does he feel the animal's pain, or is he just doing it because the Torah says it's a *mitzvah*? If a person has worked on his ability of listening with his heart, he will be actually be able to feel the pain of the animal, because since the animal's pain is the reality in front of him, he is more in tuned to reality, and thus he will feel the pain of the animal.

Connecting To Creation

When a person listens with his heart, he connects to everything in a whole different way. This is not an "*Avodah*" or any other similar definition. It is a way of life! It is a way that connects you to everything in your life, in a whole different way than you're used to. We have been describing all this time a way that actually connects you to everything that's going on in reality.

If someone never arrives at this kind of connection to reality, it is because he doesn't have *menuchas hanefesh*. As a result of his lack of *menuchas hanefesh*, he lacks clarity in his life, and he

doesn't know how to listen to what's going on. Because he doesn't hear what's going on, he never really connects to anything.

In *Tehillim* it is written, "*Ears they do not have.*" There can be a person who has had ears for seventy or eighty years in his life, but he is spiritually deaf; he doesn't "hear" anything that's really going on behind something.

In order to have this inner understanding of life, a person needs to experience a whole different kind of place than what he is used to.

When a person acquires the ability of deep, internal listening of the heart to what's going on, he is able to know what to draw close to, and what to stay away from.

What a person has to do in order to reach this awareness is to *look for only one point in a matter* – to only be interested in the *one inner meaning* that is behind a matter.

We Also Need Exertion

Practically speaking, a person gets to this by living a life of *menuchas hanefesh*. There are two parts to this – a superficial layer and an outer layer.

The superficial part is to get used to doing things slowly. The inner layer of it is to absorb the concept of "quality over quantity" well and realize that being concerned over quantity contradicts a life of quality.

We do not mean to imply that one should avoid quantity and not exert himself in his Torah learning. Of course a person needs to have exertion in learning! But that is only physical exertion. The body has to be exerted in learning – and that is the first stage we must go through in our life and work on. But then comes another stage in life – exertion of the soul.

The Vilna Gaon says that every person is on this world to break a certain bad *middah*, and if he doesn't reach this goal, there is no point in living. This is how we exert our souls – to break our bad *middos*.

After working on this (of course, we cannot be perfect in this, but after working on our *middos* to a certain extent, we can proceed further) comes a third step, and that is to "break our desires." The way we can break our desires is through a living a life of calmness, in the way have been describing. This is also takes a lot of exertion of the soul; it is a true kind of exertion.

These are three kinds of exertion – we need to exert ourselves physically in the Torah, we need to exert ourselves by working on our *middos*, and we need to exert ourselves in order to arrive at inner calmness. We need all three kinds of exertion.

Anyone who thinks that *menuchas hanefesh* doesn't take hard work is only having imaginary calmness; it takes hard work! But it is a more inner kind of hard work; it is an exertion of our soul.

We will have to exert our souls in order to get *menuchas hanefesh* – we have to work hard at it, with the goal of arriving at *menuchas hanefesh*.

In fact, our main hard task on this world is to exert ourselves at this – to work hard at trying to arrive at inner calmness in life.

Let us review this again so it should be very clear: only with *menuchas hanefesh* can a person be able to listen with his heart to all that's going on in his life. This will enable him to pursue quality over quantity, which is essentially to only look for the one root that's behind every matter he comes across.

When a person reaches that point, he can then attempt to deepen his listening of the heart and hear the “subtle, refined voice” which is contained in everything.

07 | *Detaching through Calmness, Part 1*

Physical Calm and Inner Calm

We have begun to discuss *menuchas hanefesh* (inner calm, or serenity of the soul). There are actually two kinds of *menuchah*: of the body, and of the soul.

Calming the body involves two factors. One part of it is to live a life of orderliness, and another part of it is to act calmly; for example, not to do two things at once. These are the two general factors that are needed to calm the body.

But we aren't discussing this kind of *menuchah* here. We are discussing *menuchas hanefesh*: to have a calm soul.

Without having a calm soul – *menuchas hanefesh* – we cannot have any real calmness. Without *menuchas hanefesh*, a person doesn't live with an awareness to his soul faculties, and as a result, all the forces in his soul are in turmoil, similar to how Yaakov and Esav were fighting in their mother Rivkah's womb.

It's possible for a person to reach physical *menuchah* even without thinking too much how to get it; you can figure out on your own how to live a calm lifestyle and act calmly. But *menuchas hanefesh* is something internal, which a person can go by his whole life never even knowing about it. He never recognized his soul and never attempted to give some order to his soul's faculties, and thus he never came to have *menuchas hanefesh*.

Using Our Soul's Faculties To Give Us Menuchah

The faculties in our soul have two roles. One role they have is to be utilized separately; each soul faculty needs to be accessed for the sake of just learning how to make use of our abilities. That serves as the way to have *menuchas hanefesh*.

Another role they have is that they are needed to give us even physical *menuchah*. They can serve to put calmness into how we act; without being aware of our soul's abilities, the physical actions we do are lacking calmness.

The soul faculties are connected to each other; if a person isn't aware of his soul faculties as he does any physical action, his soul faculties gets scattered around as he does something.

Most actions that people do on this world are lacking this awareness. The more a person is aware of his soul, however, the calmer he will act.

The ideal way for a person to do things is to be *aware* to what he's doing in the simple *physical* sense, as well as to be aware of how his *soul* is being used when he does something.

Our awareness has to include these two factors: when you do something, concentrate on *what* you're doing – simply put – and in addition, know *why* you are doing it. This will give you *menuchas hanefesh* as you do something; by getting used to this, you will find that the habit to do two things at once will lessen more and more with time, since you have become aware of what you're doing.

This will help you come to do things more patiently, for two reasons – first of all, because your actions will have become bettered and calmer, and secondly, because you will know why you're doing something.

Hopefully we will get to finish this discussion – incorporating *menuchas hanefesh* with physical *menuchah*. For now, we will continue the discussion we spoke of earlier, which is to use *menuchas hanefesh* as a way to give order to our own soul.

The Difference Between Your Essence and the Rest of the Soul's Faculties

Before, we mentioned the roots of this discussion: a person has an essence, which is called *havayah*, and every other ability we have is a garment that covers over our essence.

The garments are (beginning from the highest garment to the lowest garment): *Emunah*/faith, *Ta'anug*/pleasure, *Ratzon*/will, the thoughts (*Chochmah*/wisdom, *Binah*/Contemplation, *Daas*/"Knowledge"), speech, the seven main emotions, and the actions. These are the roots of our soul's abilities.

When we speak of *menuchas hanefesh*, we are essentially describing how to achieve an inner peace in all our soul's abilities.

Our *havayah*, which is our essence, stays put where it is. It needs to be brought out to its potential. The soul faculties are what actively bring out our essence. The purpose of all our soul's faculties – from *Emunah* all the way down to our actions – is to utilize our essence and bring out our true potential. Without the soul's faculties, we would not be able to fulfill the potential of our *havayah*/essence.

When our soul faculties are working properly and bearing results, this shows that they are working together with our essence. But even when they are working properly, they are still not the same thing as our actual essence. The soul faculties are totally the opposite of our essence! This is because our essence is inactive, while our soul faculties are always in action.

Each person works differently, but the common denominator between all people is that the essence of the soul doesn't act, while the faculties of the soul are always in action. Anyone who is in touch with his soul can recognize this idea, that the soul faculties by very definition contradict the actual essence of the soul.

The essence of our soul (*havayah*) resembles Shabbos, in which we have *menuchah* and don't do any work. On Yom Tov, certain labors are permitted, such as *oichel nefesh* (common needs); Yom

Tov thus represents the rest of the soul faculties [from the faculties of *emunah* all the way down to *shiflus*], which are active and do work.

Thus, our soul faculties alone cannot give us *menuchah*, because they are always moving and active. Only our essence can give us *menuchah*, because our essence stays put and doesn't move.

The Cycle of our Soul

There are two totally different worlds going on in us! On one hand, there is a deep part in us which is unmoving and totally calm, and on the other hand, there is a part in us that is always in action.

What we are supposed to do is to go from actions to rest, and then from our rest to acting. This is like the six days of the week, which are days of action that lead up to Shabbos, when we rest. The rest of Shabbos enables us to continue on into the weekday, and it is actually what enables us to act.

That is the way we are supposed to lead our lives – acting, then resting, and then going back to act again. This is the ideal cycle in which our soul is built upon, which we want to achieve here. It is the cycle which we must go through our entire life – acting, resting, acting, etc.

In terms of our soul, we must use our soul faculties to get to our essence, and reaching our essence we can return to using our soul faculties with renewed vigor. The cycle should keep being repeated throughout our whole life.

The Basic Menuchah: Acting Calmly

When a person is acting upon *menuchas hanefesh*, it has to be a kind of action which is a total detachment from the previous stage. He has to “leave” his previous situation totally. If he's doing something and he wants to start doing something else, he has to leave the previous action. That is the basic kind of *menuchas hanefesh* – doing actions calmly, which can only be achieved with this frame of mind.

To illustrate this concept, the Rambam writes that although a person must interrupt his learning in order to do a *mitzvah* that will not be fulfilled unless he does it, he must immediately return to his learning. The point behind this is because a person has to be totally focused on what he's doing right now.

A person can't learn all at once *Chumash*, *Neviim* and *Kesuvim* if he wants to learn properly; this is not the way to do things. He has to be totally focused on the subject at hand. You have to finish something before you proceed to the something else, or else you're disconnected from what you're doing.

When a person gets used to living in this way, he begins to learn how to concentrate. He has a basic kind of *menuchas hanefesh*; it is only attained when one is able to detach totally from what he was doing before.

The Inner Kind of Menuchas Hanefesh

This ability to “detach” totally will not be enough, though, to help a person arrive at the inner kind of *menuchas hanefesh*. The inner kind of *menuchas hanefesh* is the actually the opposite of basic *menuchas hanefesh*.

If a person wants the inner kind of *menuchas hanefesh*, he has to be able to hold onto a little of the previous point even as he starts a new thing. He has to protect the inner point and take it with him in whatever he does.

We will need to make use of both kinds of *menuchas hanefesh* when we deal with our soul.

We are able to detach from each of our soul abilities and come to reach our essence. That is one ability we have – the ability to totally leave something and start something else. If we don’t develop this ability, then we won’t be able to reach our essence. We will be trapped in our own souls – we will be imprisoned inside of ourselves.

But after we reach our essence, we need to be able to detach from that state and enter back into our soul faculties, which are the garments that cover our essence. In this kind of detachment, we must hold onto a little of our essence even when we go back into our “garments”.

Avoiding Sins Is Obvious

We are not discussing how one can remove himself from sinning. That is a clear concept which is obvious – we must be far removed from sin. We are speaking of a different kind of removal: when we remove ourselves from our garments of the soul and come to our essence (and then put our “garments” back on after that).

The fact that we must avoid sins is something else; that is about avoiding something negative. This is an elementary stage which must come before all this.

What we are speaking about here is to remove ourselves sometimes from parts in our soul, which are good, but sometimes they need to be left alone. This will enable us to put more holiness in our actions.

Therefore, detaching from our soul layers is necessary so that we can come to improve our actions. We won’t be able to come to the proper actions unless we learn how to do this.

“Wearing” and “Removing” Your Abilities

Why must we do this? Why is it necessary for us to remove our garments of the soul?

It is because really, you can't "wear" something unless you know how to "remove" it. In other words, if you don't know how to detach from your soul faculties, you will not know how to use them.

There is a story told about Rav Chaim Volozhiner *zt"l* that he wanted to open up a yeshiva, and he asked his teacher, the Vilna Gaon, if he should do it. The Vilna Gaon told him, "No." A few months later he came to him again and asked him if he should open up a yeshiva, and this time, the Vilna Gaon agreed that he should open it. Rav Chaim Volozhiner asked him what changed since a few months ago.

The Vilna Gaon responded, "When you first came to me that you wanted to open a yeshiva, you were enthusiastic about it. If so, your desire to open the yeshiva was based on excitement. Now, you have had some time to think about it."

The depth behind this story is that the Vilna Gaon was teaching Rav Chaim Volozhiner how to detach from his will, which is one of the soul faculties. He wanted to give Rav Chaim Volozhiner time to think it over, so that he could decide again without such willpower and excitement; he was trying to show him how to not be trapped from his soul. Of course, Rav Chaim Volozhiner knew how to detach, but in this particular situation, the Vilna Gaon knew that it wouldn't happen so fast and that his student needed some time to learn how to detach from his will.

If a person can't detach from an ability in his soul, then he doesn't really know how to utilize the ability in the first place. This physical world is really like one big prison, and in our own soul, we are imprisoned as well when we don't know how to detach from a part in our soul.

For example, Rav Zeira had to forget the entire Toras Bavel in order to learn Toras Yerushalayim, because a person has to be able to detach from information; we are not speaking about a regular person – we see this even from Rav Zeira! Every person needs to know how to detach from everything. One has to be careful not to take this ability to an extreme. If someone never exerts himself in his learning because he is constantly prepared to forget it all - because he is trying to learn how to detach - this is evil. Such a person misuses the ability to detach and destroys all his learning with it. One needs a lot of subtle wisdom to be able to know how to utilize his ability to detach.

Detaching From Your Emunah

Let us proceed with this discussion.

There is a faculty in our soul called *Emunah*/faith. This is a garment of our essence, and it also needs to be removed sometimes – just like all the other garments of the soul, which we must learn how to remove sometimes.

Why should we remove our *Eemunah*? Isn't *Eemunah* the most important garment we use in our soul? It is, but it is still a garment; it is not our actual essence. Therefore, it needs to be removed, at times, so that we don't confuse it with our essence.

As we said before, we have an intrinsic essence, which is our actual self, and on top of that we have many garments in our soul that cover it over. *Eemunah* is the highest from all the garments and it is closest to our essence, but it is not yet our actual essence.

If someone doesn't know how to detach from *Eemunah* sometimes, he is trapped by his *Eemunah*! He will never reach his essence, and his *Eemunah* actually traps him from reaching his essence, since he has never learned to remove it and get past it. On one hand, *Eemunah* is a sublime power which we can use to know what's right. Without *Eemunah*, a person only accesses his power of *bechirah* (free will) to choose between good and evil, and then evil is considered to him as an option.

But when a person uncovers his ability of *Eemunah*, he can go above his free will and see that there's really only one option – to do what the right thing is, to do what Hashem wants.

On the other hand, *Eemunah* can be detrimental. How can it be detrimental? It is detrimental when it traps a person inside himself, so to speak. This is when a person identifies his *Eemunah* as his "I." If a person thinks that his "I" is his *Eemunah*, then he takes *Eemunah*, which is a garment of the soul, and identifies this ability as his very essence.

What happens from this? He doesn't differentiate between his "I" and his *Eemunah* – he thinks that he *is* *Eemunah*. What will happen from this is that you can have people who do wrong things, and when asked why they acted improperly, they will amazingly justify themselves with: "Hashem did it...Everything is all from Hashem..."

A person has to have *Eemunah*, but he also has to learn how to "not" have *Eemunah*; in other words, he must know when to use this ability. It is a garment of the soul, and each garment of the soul has the proper time and place. When a person thinks that he is any one of the garments of the soul, the effects are always detrimental. You have to learn when to use each ability, and when not to.

So there are sometimes when you have to detach from *Eemunah*. You have to "believe" yet "not believe", depending on the situation.

Detaching from Your Ta'anug

Let us continue to the next step.

The next garment in our soul is *ta'anug*/pleasure. "A person was created in order to have pleasure and delight in the spiritual pleasure." That is the way Hashem designed the world; people want pleasure. People only doing things if they enjoy it; if someone doesn't get pleasure out of something, he naturally doesn't do it.

Chazal say that one should not say he likes one part of Torah and not another part of Torah; although we were created to have enjoyment, we can't only do things for pleasure.

There is an opposite force in Creation which we also make use of, and that is the ability of *ameilus* (exertion). When a person is exerting himself in learning Torah, he's not just exerting himself; he is actually removing himself from *ta'anug* during this time. A person has to be aware of this as he is having *ameilus* – he must know that he is right now detaching himself from *ta'anug*.

Let's say a person learned Torah for a nice amount of time in the day, and then he comes across a physical desire that he loses control over. Why did this happen? What is the root of the problem here?

It is because while he was learning Torah and exerting himself, he wasn't aware that he is detaching from *ta'anug*. If he would have been aware that he is detaching from *ta'anug* as he learns Torah, he would have been used to this ability to restrain himself from going after what's pleasurable, and upon encountering the temptation, he would be able to control his desires, because he has already learned to detach from pleasure.

But if a person wasn't aware while he exerted himself in learning that he is essentially detaching from pleasure, then as soon as he encounters a physical pleasure when he's done learning, he hasn't changed one bit, and he will find himself in a full-fledged war with his physical passions.

Of course, learning Torah even without this awareness always purifies a person somewhat, because Torah always has some effect on a person. But without the kind of awareness we are describing, a person is only exerting himself in learning simply because he knows in his mind that *Chazal* say one has to have exertion in learning.

Such a person will not have the ability to withstand evil temptations, because he hasn't learned how to detach from pleasure. He wasn't aware as he learned Torah that he was detached from pleasure, and thus he hasn't yet developed his ability to restrain himself from pleasure.

It is not enough to know that the main part of our life is to have exertion in learning. A person has to be aware as he learns Torah that having exertion in learning is essentially a detachment from pleasure.

When a person gains this clarity, he identifies with his *ta'anug* in his soul, and he is aware if he's accessing his *ta'anug* or not. He develops an awareness to *ta'anug*, and to what the opposite of *ta'anug* is – *ameilus*.

With this awareness to himself, he will be able to control himself when he encounters an evil temptation. He will be able to even come to understand that there is a place in himself which doesn't need any *ta'anug* – his very *havayah*, which is the innermost point of the soul. He won't even need the *ta'anug* of having *emunah* in Hashem, because he will reach a place in himself that doesn't need *ta'anug* – it is a deep awareness of the Ultimate Essence, Hashem, and it is an awareness which is independent of any pleasure in it.

We gave the first two examples of how to “wear” as well as “detach” from our garments of the soul – *emunah* and *ta’anug*. With the help of Hashem we shall continue to explain how to wear and detach the rest of our garments of the soul. But we need to first understand that we have to know and recognize all these garments of the soul³⁷, and that they all have to be “worn” (which is when we use them) as well as to sometimes be “removed”.

³⁷ *These are the thirteen faculties of the soul: emunah/faith, taanug/pleasure, ratzon/will, Chochmah/wisdom, binah/contemplation, daas/knowledge, and the seven main emotions (these are explained in Getting To Know Your Soul and Getting To Know Your Feelings). Besides for these thirteen faculties, there are also our actions, our power of speech, and our five senses, which are also part of the soul’s makeup. We will also learn how to detach from these parts of our soul, in the coming chapters.*

08 | *Detaching From Ta'anug and Ratzon, Part 2*

(To summarize our avodah thus far, we are attempting here to realize some of our end goal already in the beginning of our way, so we can navigate the confusing “garden maze” of life. For this we need some degree of menuchah (serenity), which we explained about before. This helps us get in touch with our actual essence (our very havayah).

We have described that the way to reach menuchah is through halbashah (wearing) and hafshatah (removing) the soul's various abilities, which helps us learn how to detach from our soul's layers and thereby get deeper and deeper into our soul.)

The Torah Approach To “Detachment”

We must have “detachment” (*hafshatah*) in two ways. We need to divest ourselves from evil, which are sins and bad *middos*. We have to wage war with evil and take on different kinds of resolutions that will help us overpower evil; but that is not our discussion here. We also need to learn how to divest ourselves from even the faculties of our soul; this is the focus of our discussion here.

If someone just wants to detach from his soul faculties simply to feel what it's like to detach, this is the way of the non-Jewish nations, and it is not the Torah way. The Torah way is to learn how to detach because you are trying to gain something positive from it – because you are trying to reach your very essence.

We need to learn how to both “wear” and “remove” our soul faculties; we wear them by learning how to use them, and we remove them by detaching from them when we have to. If you know how to detach from your soul faculties, you will become free from your inner imprisonment, and you will become truly free. If someone can't detach from his faculties, he's imprisoned to them; even though the soul faculties are all good and holy, if someone can't get past them, he's still imprisoned by them.

Learning how to detach (“*hafshatah*”) is really a very complex discussion; we are just giving a few examples of the concept. It is a great wisdom to know when to ‘wear’ your soul faculties and when to ‘remove’ them. Just like there is no end to how many ways the letters of the *Aleph Beis* can be combined, so are there endless scenarios of how to wear and remove your soul faculties.

Using Ratzon To Remove Emunah

The highest soul faculty (after your very essence, which is your *havayah*) is the faculty of *emunah* (faith): the ability to believe. Sometimes, it is necessary to detach from *emunah*! We do not mean,

chas v'shalom, to deny Hashem. There is no such thing. We are referring to a different kind of “denial” which you can make use of. This is when you need to detach from *emunah*, like when a person is having too much *emunah* and acting improperly, blaming everything on Hashem. The person is having misguided *emunah*.

In order to remove yourself from *emunah*, you need to make use of its opposite ability, which is the ability to deny. Usually denial is evil, but sometimes it can be good; how?

Such a situation needs to be dealt with by opposing the extreme *emunah*: by “denying” the faculty of *emunah*. How? Denial (*kefirah*) is really the power of free will (*bechirah*) in a person, which stems from the faculty of *ratzon* (will). If so, *ratzon* is the opposing force to *emunah*. So when you need to detach from having too much *emunah*, you need to make use of your *ratzon* and instead choose to deny your misguided *emunah*.

Detaching From Taanug/Pleasure

In the previous chapter, we spoke about how to detach from *ta'anug*/pleasure. Although we know that a person was created in order to have pleasure, if the power of pleasure is too extreme in a person and being used in the wrong place, it needs to be opposed.

This can be done by accepting non-pleasurable activities, such as taking on responsibilities. That is how you “detach” from pleasure. The temptation comes your way, so what do you do? You awaken from within yourself the ability to restrain from pleasure, which is by accepting upon yourself the responsibility of not going after evil pleasures.

(We also find two titles for how one serves Hashem: *ben*, a son, and *eved*, a slave. What is the difference? A son serves his Father only out of pleasure, but a slave serves his Master because he has responsibilities toward Him, whether he likes it or not.)

The power to detach from *ta'anug* is essentially the faculty of *shiflus* (lowliness) in the soul, which is the thirteenth soul faculty. A person fights forbidden pleasures by being subservient to Hashem, awakening his feeling of *shiflus* and obedience to his Master.

Exertion and Enjoyment in Learning Torah

In learning Torah, there are two kinds of learning: *ameilus*/exertion and *ta'anug*/pleasure.

On one hand, a person has to exert himself in learning as much as he can. On the other hand, learning Torah has to be enjoyable; “A person does not learn except for what his heart desires (*libo chofeitz*)”.

These are two abilities in our soul which we use to learn Torah – exertion, and enjoyment. We need to “wear” and “remove” both of these abilities when it comes to learning Torah.

If a person only learns Torah when he enjoys it, then he will only learn when he likes the particular subject in Torah at hand, but if he doesn't like it, he won't learn it. *Chazal* say that "one is not allowed to say, "That statement of Torah is nice, and another statement of Torah isn't nice." Such a person needs to remove his *ta'anug* and instead have *ameilus* in Torah, which is essentially by using *shiflus*. He has to give up his desire for pleasure and instead accept upon himself the *kabalas ol Torah*, the "yoke of Torah."

On the other hand, if a person is only exerting himself in Torah but he never has enjoyment in it, he should remove his *shiflus* and instead focus on how to get *ta'anug* out of learning; he shouldn't exert himself so much, and instead he should only learn what his "heart desires" – *libo chofeitz*.

It is not our aim here to tell a person what to do and how to behave in his life. We are describing how we build up our soul. You can only know what to "do" in your life as a result from building up your soul.

If you are faced with an evil temptation, it is very clear that you must learn how to detach from pleasure. But even with spiritual pleasures you need to know how to detach from sometimes, like when you're having too much *ta'anug*. The point is that we cannot be imprisoned by the faculty of *ta'anug*.

It takes a lot of wisdom to know when a person should use *ta'anug* or when he should use *ameilus/shiflus*.

If a person only knows of *ta'anug* in learning Torah but he doesn't have *ameilus* in learning, on a subtle understanding, he is throwing off the yoke of Torah (*perikas ol*).

But when *ameilus* is balanced with *ta'anug*, and *ta'anug* is balanced with *ameilus*, such a person has the *kaballas ol Torah*, and in addition to this, he truly gains from the kind of *ta'anug* he has in it, because it is a pleasure that is well-balanced.

That is a summary of what we explained in the last chapter.

Detaching from Ratzon

The next soul faculty, after *emunah* and *taanug*, is *ratzon*/will. It is also a broad discussion, and we will describe it briefly.

There are two kinds of *ratzon* in a person: wanting to do what you want, and wanting to do what Hashem wants. It is really our will to do the will of Hashem ("It is our will to do Your will") but the "yeast in the sourdough" (a reference to the *yetzer hora*/evil inclination holds us back); on a subtle note, the will of Hashem is realized when we do His will.

The *yetzer hora* doesn't just hold back our *ratzon* to do what Hashem wants – it sways us to come up with a new *ratzon*, a *ratzon* to do something bad.

That is regarding where our *ratzon* leads to – we are not describing how to remove it yet. We are just describing the roots; if this is not understood properly, we cannot understand what is to follow.

If a person doesn't first understand what *ratzon* is and he attempts to remove his *retzonos*, what will he be left with? He will be left with no *ratzon* at all, and this is not good. Thus, first we need to learn about the roots of the faculty of *ratzon*, and only after that can we attempt to remove ourselves from it.³⁸

The opposite of *ratzon* is *emunah*. When a person wants something, he really thinks that it's all up to him. Rebbi Eliezer ben Durdaya said, "The matter is dependent only on me." *Ratzon* is when a person thinks that everything is up to him. (*Ratzon* can be used for good or evil).

How can a person nullify a negative desire for something?

The Torah commands, "*You shall not covet*" (*lo sachmod*). How is it possible for a person not to desire something he wants? The *Ibn Ezra* has a famous explanation. Just like a pauper who sees the princess passing by has no desire to marry her, because he knows that this is impossible, so can a person tell himself that his desire is impossible to be realized, because Hashem doesn't want him to have it. This is essentially the power of *emunah* in the soul.

If so, one can use *emunah* to oppose an evil *ratzon*. A person can remind himself that Hashem "was, is, and always will be", which is *emunah*, and this will remove himself from *ratzon*. This will not make a person freeze from whatever he's doing; it will instead eliminate his *ratzon* to do something.³⁹

If a person overdoes this, he will use too much *emunah* and eliminate his ability to act. This will breed laziness and sadness. But if a person uses *emunah* in the proper amount, he can eliminate an evil *ratzon*. When our desire for something is eliminated based on a proper usage of *emunah*, we will be able to give up what we want, but this will not cause us to be sad.

If I want something, then I must always be prepared to give it up, using *emunah*. If I want something and I'm not prepared to give it up everything, such a *ratzon* will make me imprisoned to my *ratzon*. Even if it's a *ratzon* for something holy, if I'm not prepared to somehow give it up when I'm supposed to, then it's also a *ratzon* that traps me.

How can a person know if his *ratzon* for something holy has him trapped or not? The way he can know this is what he feels like when he wasn't able to fulfill it due to a circumstance which he could not have prevented. If he is sad that he couldn't fulfill the *ratzon* and it was totally not his fault – for example, he wanted to do a certain *mitzvah*, but he got held back from fulfilling it, and he's sad - that shows that he isn't prepared to nullify his *ratzon* for Hashem's *Ratzon*. If he would really be able to nullify his *ratzon*, he wouldn't be sad, because since it is not his fault, it is Hashem's will that his *mitzvah* shouldn't happen.

³⁸ The soul faculties are explained in detail in *Getting To Know Your Soul*.

³⁹ See also *Bilvavi IV: Chapter 20 (Revealing The True Ratzon)* which explains this *avodah* in more detail.

As we mentioned before, a person has to go through a recurring cycle in his soul faculties. *Ratzon* needs to be sometimes removed by *emunah*, as we just explained, but then *emunah* can also become too extreme, and it can be removed through *ratzon*.

The cycle has to keep taking place: a person goes from *emunah* to *ratzon* (he can detach from his misguided *emunah* using *ratzon*, as we explained previously) and then from *ratzon* to *emunah* (he can detach from an evil *ratzon* by using *emunah*).

Two Kinds of Ta'anug/Pleasure

When a person detaches from *ratzon* using *emunah*, and he detaches from *emunah* using *ratzon* in this way, he is able to “wear” *ratzon* or “remove” it, just like garments need to be put on or taken off. A person can also wear his “*emunah*” or take it off, when the situation calls for it; and vice versa.

In between the faculties of *emunah* and *ratzon* is the faculty of *ta'anug*, though, so a person will often encounter his power of *ta'anug* when he is trying to detach from either his *emunah* and *ratzon*.

There are two kinds of *ta'anug* – a person can enjoy what he has and believes that he has everything already, which is *ta'anug* in his *emunah*; or a person enjoys his very will to do something, which is *taanug* in his *ratzon*, because the fact that he has possibilities in front of him also gives him a certain pleasure.

(How do we know this is true? This we can see because a person has a feeling of despair when he gives up on what he wants; despair is a form of sadness. This shows us that when a person has an aspiration for something, he derives certain pleasure from the fact that he even has the possibility to fulfill his aspirations.)

Since there are two kinds of *ta'anug*, a person has to learn how to make use of one kind of *ta'anug* and know how to remove it as well. There are times where we should use *ta'anug* in our *emunah*, and times where we instead need to use *ta'anug* in our *ratzon*.

For example, if a person isn't happy with his accomplishments in life, he lacks *ta'anug* in his *emunah*, so he can give himself *ta'anug* from his *ratzon*, which is by being happy with the fact that he has aspirations in his life to go higher. There are times in which a person isn't deriving pleasure in his life, and he remembers how there was a time in his life in which he had aspirations, and he longs for that situation ago. This is how we can see that a person can get pleasure just from his very aspirations.

Another reason for this is because *ratzon* comes from the word *ratz*, to “run”. A person enjoys running; he feels “light like an eagle.” This is how a person can have *ta'anug* just from his *ratzon*. When a person loses *ta'anug* in his *emunah*, he can give himself *taanug* by summoning his *taanug* in his *ratzon*.

The opposite situation is if a person has high aspirations and then he falls from his level, he loses pleasure from those aspirations, and he needs to derive pleasure now from what he has at least

accomplished so far; he can focus on what he has already. In this way, he removes his *ta'anug* from his *ratzon* and instead awakens in himself a *ta'anug* in *emunah*.

Before, we mentioned a different way to remove *ta'anug*, and that is when one makes use of *shiflus*. That is a total detachment from *ta'anug*. Now we have described a different kind of detachment from *ta'anug*, which is to remove *ta'anug* in your *emunah* and give yourself *ta'anug* from *ratzon*, as well as vice versa.

Although this is not a total detachment from the faculty of *ta'anug* as in the case of using *shiflus*, it is still somewhat of a detachment, because it is detaching from one kind of *ta'anug* and awakening a different kind of *ta'anug*, which can still be helpful.

Again, let us mention that this is a vast subject. It's like an endless ocean.

Detaching from Chochmah

The next faculty in the soul is *chochmah* (wisdom).

Hashem created the world – and people – with *chochmah*. We say in the *Asher Yotzar* blessing, “*He Who fashioned man with wisdom.*” Hashem looked into Torah and created the world from it; the whole Creation is a reality of *chochmah*. Hashem first had a *Ratzon* to create the world, but He created it with *Chochmah*. This is what is written, “*Say to wisdom, you are my sister.*”

When should a person detach from *chochmah*, and how?

Chochmah is rooted in the element of water, which is calm and unmoving (unless wind come and moves it). This shows us many ways how a person can detach from *chochmah* when he has to. The Torah is called *mayim shekaitim*, “calm waters.” This shows us that by using a calm kind of *chochmah*/wisdom, we can detach from our wisdom when the situation calls for us not to use *chochmah*.

The Ramchal writes that it is the way of scholars to always think about Torah, wherever they are; if he cannot stop thinking when he is in a place where it is forbidden to think about Torah (such as a foul-smelling place), what should he do?

The advice brought is that he should think about math or some other calculations. Since he can't stop thinking, he has to give his thoughts some outlet, so he can think about math in such a place. (On a subtle note, such thinking isn't really called *chochmah*, but *hirhur*). But this is a solution for one who doesn't know how to detach from *chochmah*. If he would know how to detach from *chochmah*, he wouldn't have to resort to any thinking at all.

How can you detach from *chochmah*? A person can do this through using *emunah*. *Emunah* is the ability to believe even when something is not understandable; if I can't understand why something is good, I can believe that somehow it is good, just I don't understand it. If so, *emunah* can overpower *chochmah*. I am removing myself from my *chochmah* and returning to my *emunah*.

(On a more subtle note, I am removing myself from *chochmah* and returning to my *ratzon*, which is called *ayin*, the power of “nothingness” in the soul. It is written, “*Wisdom is found in ayin (nothingness).*” This shows us that *chochmah* is rooted in a *ayin*, “nothingness”, the deep place in the soul that is above the thoughts; it needs to be accessed sometimes. *Ayin* is also identified with *ratzon*; it is the hidden kind of *ratzon*. If so, I can remove my *chochmah* by instead awakening my *ayin/ratzon*.)

The first method, which is to return to *emunah*, can only be possible if one has already developed his *emunah* before the difficult situation comes. A person has to build up a place for *emunah* in his soul way **before** he finds himself in a situation where he’s not allowed to think; it can’t be developed when he’s at the time of the difficulty. You have to work on your *emunah* long before a difficulty comes, and to live in that clear perception on reality; if you have already developed your *emunah*, you will be able to detach from *chochmah* by returning to the *emunah* you have already built up in yourself.

Otherwise, you will have no “place” in yourself to return to when you remove your *chochmah*, and working on your *emunah* now won’t be enough. The *emunah* has to be in you from beforehand. Detaching can only work when you already have the “clear world” from before; if you are already living in a clear world of *emunah*, then you are able to detach from *chochmah*.

There are more kinds of *chochmah* which we need to also detach from sometimes, and that is when one has too much *ta’anug* or *ratzon* in his *chochmah*.

A person can have *ta’anug* in *chochmah*, which is when he feels pleasure from wisdom, or he can have *chochmah* even without *ta’anug*. When a person is having the wrong kind of *ta’anug* in *chochmah*, he needs to detach from the pleasure he finds in the *chochmah*, and instead learn how to connect to *chochmah* even when it doesn’t involve pleasure. This will be explained more in the next chapter, if we merit it.

09 | *Detaching from Chochma, Bina & Da'as, Part 3*

Why Do We Want to “Remove” Our Soul’s Garments?

We will now elaborate in more detail about what we began to discuss. We are learning about how to “wear” as well as how to “remove” the garments of our soul (*halbashah* and *hafshatah* – “wearing and removing”) so that we can attain more inner serenity (*menuchah*) and thereby come closer to revealing our actual essence, *havayah*.

The non-Jewish methods of learning how to detach is simply for the sake of experiencing what it’s like to feel a detachment from the soul’s abilities, but this is not the Torah way. The Torah way is to remove our soul faculties *because that it is what enables us to truly use them*, and by repeating the cycle of wearing and removing our soul faculties, we keep going in and out of them, and then we are able to penetrate further and further into our soul, where we will be able to reach our actual self.

Just like the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) put on the *bigdei kehunah* (priestly garments) and removed them many times, so must we go through a cycle of putting on our “garments” as well as remove them.

At this point, we are not learning how to remove our soul’s garments to directly reach our essence (*havayah*). We are learning a more basic level, which is, how to remove one garment of our soul and instead wear a different garment of the soul.

Summary of Detaching from Emunah, Taanug and Ratzon

The first soul faculty we discussed was *emunah*. *Emunah* is generally removed through using *ratzon*.

The second faculty, *ta’anug* (pleasure) is removed through *shiflus/ameilus* (exertion). This also connects a person somewhat to his *havayah*. How? With *ameilus*, a person is using an ability in himself that is above pleasure, which in turn is above comprehension; it thereby draws the person closer to the point of *havayah*, which is above human comprehension. So when we use *ameilus*, it gives us somewhat of a connection to *havayah*.

The third faculty, *ratzon*, can be removed through *emunah*, or it can be removed through *ta’anug*. If a person loses his *ta’anug* in his *ratzon* (like if he loses his aspirations), he can give himself *ta’anug* by having *ta’anug* in his *emunah*, like by being happy with what he has so far accomplished. If he loses *ta’anug* in *emunah*, he can gain *ta’anug* through *ratzon*, which is by deriving pleasure from his aspirations.

Detaching from Chochmah using Emunah

Regarding the next faculty, *chochmah*, we have so far only been brief in explaining it. Now we will elaborate on it more.

There are three kinds of thoughts in us. *Chochmah* is simple thought. *Binah* is a more detailed thought. Both *Chochmah* and *Binah* need to be removed sometimes.

Chochmah is a simple thought. Sometimes we need to remove our *chochmah*; how can we remove it?

Emunah is the opposite of thinking, and thinking is the opposite of *Emunah*. *Emunah* says that everything is good, while the power of thought says, I need to think about it and conclude that this is true. *Chochmah* and *emunah* really contradict each other. If so, *emunah* can remove *chochmah*.

If someone just has *emunah* on an intellectual level, but he doesn't have a palpable sense of *emunah*, then he doesn't see how *chochmah* contradicts *emunah*. This is the situation of most people, who do not have a palpable kind of *emunah* that they can feel. But if someone feels *emunah* in a palpable sense, he understands that *chochmah* and *emunah* are total opposites.

Chochmah is thus removed through *emunah*. Intellectual *Emunah*, or even palpable *emunah*, isn't enough to remove *chochmah*. The only thing that can remove *chochmah*, which are simple thoughts, is through "simple" *emunah*.

Detaching from Chochmah Using Ta'anug

Another way to remove *chochmah* is through *ta'anug*.

When a person is feeling certain pleasure, he can't think straight. When a person is having great joy at a happy occasion, he finds it too difficult to think. This is how *ta'anug* can remove *chochmah*.

Detaching from Chochmah Using Ratzon

Ratzon can also remove *chochmah*. There are two kinds of *ratzon* – there is a calm *ratzon* and a "loud" kind of *ratzon*.

A calm kind of will is rooted in the element of water; water is by nature calm (*mayim shekeitim*). Another kind of *ratzon* is when a person is enthusiastic about something; such a *ratzon* is rooted in the element of fire. Enthusiasm is resounding; it is anything but quiet. If so, a "loud" kind of *ratzon* can come and get rid of the "calm waters" of the *chochmah*.

Ratzon opposes *chochmah*, and thus it can serve as a way to remove it when we need to. A person's *ratzon* is actually hidden in his *chochmah* – in other words, our thoughts conceal from us what we

truly want. When we are thinking hard, that itself hides from us what we truly want! If so, we need to “remove” the thoughts so we can reveal our *ratzon* hidden in it.

The more we reveal our *ratzon*, the less we have to think. When a person’s *ratzon* is strong, he can’t think straight. This shows us that by awakening our enthusiasm for something, we can stop ourselves from thinking about something.

Detaching from Binah by using Chochmah

The second kind of thought we have is *Binah*, which is to reflect deeply. Detaching from *Binah* (when we have to) is different from how we detach from *Chochmah*.

Chochmah is about general thought, while *Binah* is about details. *Chochmah* is a thought which takes everything and generalizes it, while *Binah* is a kind of thought which combines details of something.

For example, when it comes to the faculty of *taanug*, there are two kinds of *taanug*. There is a general kind of *taanug*, and there is a detailed kind of *taanug*. A person can be happy about his general situation, or he is happy about a particular detail in his life that makes him very happy.

Therefore, if a person is enjoying his *chochmah* too much, he can remove it through *binah*, and vice versa – if he is enjoying *binah* too much, he can remove it through *chochmah*. The pleasure one has from his *chochmah* can remove his pleasure from *binah*, and pleasure in *binah* can remove pleasure in *chochmah*.

Detaching from Binah using Taanug and Ratzon

Binah can also be removed through *ratzon*. A person either has a general *ratzon* or a detailed *ratzon*. A general *ratzon* is when one wants to fulfill his general purpose on this world, while a detailed *ratzon* is when a person seeks how to actually go about it.

The general *ratzon* is revealed through *chochmah*, and the detailed *ratzon* is revealed through *binah*.

If so, a *ratzon* for *chochmah* can be removed through a *ratzon* for *binah*, and a *ratzon* for *binah* can be removed through a *ratzon* for *chochmah*. When a person wants to think about something general, he can stop this thought by thinking about a particular detail. When a person is too engrossed in a detail, he can stop this thought by wanting to think about something that is more general.

Most people are satisfied in their lives with *ta’anug* in *binah* – people have acquired certain details here and there in spirituality, but they don’t yet have *ta’anug* in *chochmah*, which is to be aware of the general purpose of life.

In order to detach from the *ta'anug* in *chochmah*, one should use his *ratzon* and instead he should want to have *ta'anug* in *chochmah*.

An Example of Detaching from Binah using Chochmah

When you want to detach from *binah* using *chochmah*, there are a few facets to this.

One way is to return from your *binah* to your *chochmah*. For example, a person is learning *Gemara*, and he comes across a question that seems to have no answer. What happens? He will become very focused on that question and he won't be able to continue. This will make him become too engrossed in the detail and he won't get further than clarifying that detail; he is engrossed in *binah*, so he needs to return to *chochmah*.

How can he return to *chochmah*? He can return to the beginning of the *Gemara*, which gives him the general description of the *Gemara*. This is how one detaches from *binah*, by using *chochmah*. We only gave one example of this, but the point is always the same: get yourself out of a detail and return to the general picture.

Chochmah Connects You To Havayah

We mentioned before that *chochmah* is a simple thought, while *binah* is a complicated thought. These are two abilities in a person – the ability to think simply, and the ability to think deeply. The fact that our thinking process is made up of these two kinds of thoughts is actually the most complicated part of the structure of our soul.

The essence of the soul, *havayah*, is actually simple and is not complicated; *chochmah*, which is simple thought, is thus a connection to your *havayah*; your essence is somewhat revealed through your *chochmah*.

Your essence is really simple, and when a person reaches the Ultimate Essence, Hashem, he can realize with utter simplicity the reality of Hashem's existence. In fact, Hashem's existence is so simple that it eludes people how simple His existence is; this is the meaning of what is written, "*Those who grasp onto the Torah do not know Me.*"

In order to reach the simplicity of our essence (and eventually we should all strive to reach the simplicity of Hashem's existence as well), we need to remove ourselves from what's "complicated" and instead focus on simplicity.

Chochmah is what can reveal your simplicity. The rest of the soul faculties (*emunah*, *taanug*, and *ratzon*) are complicated, and they are not simple. They cannot be used to reveal something "simple." But *chochmah*, which is a simple thought, can bring a person very close to revealing his *havayah*, which is one's simple existence.

For example, if a person calmly reviews the same words of Torah again and again, or he repeats a *possuk* again and again and just focuses on the simplicity of the meaning, he is able to reveal his *chochmah*, which gives you somewhat of a connection to your havayah.

Chochmah and *binah* are called “two friends that cannot leave each other.” However, as we explained, when a person is too attached to *binah*, he needs to remove it using *chochmah*, which is to reveal his ability of simplicity.

Detaching from Da'as

Besides for *chochmah* and *binah*, we also have a thinking ability called “*daas*.”

Daas is the power to connect to either your knowledge or to your emotions. Most people only experience connection to their emotions, and not to their knowledge. If someone hasn't yet revealed his abilities of thought in the first place, he doesn't know what the concept of “connecting” to your knowledge is.

Daas has an obvious gain, because a person through it can connect himself to his learning all the time. But it can actually happen that a person is so connected all the time to his learning that his *emunah* gets weakened! This is a very subtle point about our soul. For this reason, a person has to also learn how detach even from *daas*.

Daas is a constant connection to Hashem, so how can you detach from *daas*? How do you detach from something that is constant? If you can detach, then it's not constant, so how is it *daas* in the first place? The Chazon Ish said that “the secret of holiness is consistency.” If so, how do you disconnect from something that is constant?

(To many people, this will not make a difference. People that don't experience connection to Hashem all the time will not be bothered by this question.)

The detachment from *daas* should not ever be a total detachment. It is more like putting *daas* on hold. This is different from the other kinds of detachment we discussed until now.

For example, when a person has to get undressed to go the mikvah, he's only removing his clothes temporarily. But the *Kohen Gadol* had to keep getting dressed and undressed, and this wasn't just temporary; it was for the very purpose of removing the clothes.

Although all detachment is only temporary, there is a big difference between detaching from the other soul faculties than from *daas*. When one detaches from the other soul faculties, he is also planning to return to using them later, but during the actual time that he is detached from that faculty, he is totally removed from it at the moment. But when one has to detach from his *daas*, it is not even a temporary detachment – it is simply to put *daas* on hold. This is because you really can't ever disconnect from Hashem and His Torah (and this point can only be understood by someone who is connected all the time).

An example of this is when one is using the lavatory, which is a place where one is not allowed to think Torah thoughts. This is when we have to detach from our connection to Torah. One of the Sages, though, came up with many original Torah thoughts even when he had to relieve himself. This was because he was so connected with his *daas* to the Torah that he couldn't take leave of it at all.

Someone who doesn't know what *daas* is will not understand why it is so difficult to disconnect from Torah when you have to (such as in the lavatory). As we said before, it depends on the soul root of each person; if someone's soul root is rooted in *daas*, he can understand why this is difficult to do, because he is "there" all the time. But even though it is difficult to do, there are times which we must detach from *daas*, such as in the examples we gave.

10 | *Detaching from the Senses, Part 4*

The Senses Stem from Thought

Previously, we spoke about the mental abilities of the soul, which are *chochmah*, *binah* and *daas*. Below the thinking abilities of the soul are the *middos*, the character traits and emotions. However, before we progress to discuss the *middos* and emotions (and how to detach from them), there is another part of the mind which we need to discuss.

Besides for the mental abilities of *chochmah*, *binah*, and *daas*, there are more details that are part of our mind: the five senses [sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste]. This is a vast subject, and we will only cover it a little bit of it.

The Vilna Gaon⁴⁰ explains about the senses at length when he lists the seventy forces in the soul. These include the senses of seeing, hearing, smell, and speech. These four senses stem from the mind, and two more senses branch out of the original four: touch and taste.

Therefore, when we learn about how to detach from the mind, besides for knowing how to detach from our thinking abilities, we also need to learn how to detach from the senses.

Detaching from the Sense of Sight

The sense of sight consists of two kinds of sight. In sight, a person can use his intellect to see information through his mind. There is also a lower kind of sight, in which a person sees something through his physical eyes, and this information gets sent to the eyes.

The *Ramban* writes that one's eyes should be pointed downward, but that the heart should be pointed toward the heavens. We also find this in the case of Rebbi, who didn't look out of his four cubits. When a person looks at the ground and he doesn't look upward, what he sees is experienced through his eyes.

To give a general description of this, the Vilna Gaon lists two kinds of sight. One kind of sight is a kind of sight which can be felt. Another kind of sight is a lower, physical kind of sense, which is part of twelve general senses.

We can 'wear' and 'remove' our sight at times. We 'wear' our sight through simply seeing, and we can 'remove' it when we detach from looking at things. This can be done by closing the eyes.

⁴⁰ *Yeshayahu 11:1*

Closing the eyes is actually a kind of sense. *Chazal* refer to this as “sleep”. There are two abilities in our eyes – our ability to see, and our ability to sleep. When we see, we are detaching from our sleep, and when we sleep, we are detaching from our vision.

Closing the eyes has two uses. One use of it is when we close our eyes to avoid seeing something forbidden to look at. There is a higher kind of closing the eyes, and that is when a person closes his eyes simply for the sake of not seeing something.

Thus, we detach from sight by closing the eyes, and we detach from closing the eyes by seeing regularly. It is not simply that we are detaching from either kind of sight. It is that when one does this, he is really returning his sense of sight to its root, which is the thinking mind.

When a person gets used to closing his eyes, he will find that his power of thought has become sharper. Why? Simply speaking, it is because he has learned how to concentrate. Before he learned how to concentrate, his soul was scattered (he had “*pizur hanefesh*”), and now that he’s not scatterbrained anymore, he can think better.

But there is a deeper reason to why his thinking improves. It is because by detaching from vision, he has returned the sense of vision to its root, which is the mind.

When a person sees something and focuses on it, he narrows his vision toward it and he can see it better. This is because by taking away some of his vision, his thinking gets sharpened, and now he can see even clearer.

Detaching from the Sense of Hearing

The sense of hearing is also rooted in the mind. There is also a second sense of hearing that is more physical, as the Vilna Gaon said regarding sight.

When a person detaches from his hearing, his thinking improves as well, in the same way that detaching from sight helps one’s thinking improve. The simple understanding of this is that by closing your ears from what you are hearing, you can concentrate better. But the deeper understanding of it is that by closing your ears from hearing, your sense of hearing returns to its root, which is the mind, and that is why you are able to think better now.

Detaching from the Sense of Smell

The sense of smell is also rooted in the mind. Our nose can smell, and it also can have *charon af* (“anger of the nose”). There is a kind of anger in which a person is seething through his nostrils; this kind of anger is called *charon af*, anger of the nose; it is also known as *roigez* (wrath).

There is a discussion for itself how to remove anger, and now is not the time we will discuss it; hopefully we will return to discussing it (generally speaking, there are two solutions to anger. One solution is by revealing *emunah*, and the other solution is by revealing our true *ratzon*).

To detach from our sense of smell, we can close our nostrils and instead breathe through the mouth.

This connects us to our thinking, in the same idea as we mentioned regarding the senses of sight and hearing: by disconnecting from smell, we return to the root of smell, which is the mind. Detaching from the other kind of “smell” – anger – is another discussion, and it is different. We will hopefully get to it later.

Detaching from Speech

Our mouth has two abilities: speech and taste.

The sense of speech also stems from the mind. The *Gemara*⁴¹ says that the *chashmalim* (angels) have times in which they function and times which they don't function. From here we see that there are times in which a person uses his speech, and times in which a person detaches from speech. How can a person detach from speech? This is by closing your mouth from talking, which returns you to your thoughts.

When a person talks too much, his mind gets muddled and he can't think straight. Sometimes this happens the other way around – when a person isn't thinking enough, he just talks and talks, because he's not even thinking! By being silent, not only does he concentrate better, but his thinking has sharpened, because he has returned his speech to its root – his thoughts.

If someone is more in touch with his thoughts, he will find that it's difficult to talk so much. He will find talking to be a contradiction to thinking. At a deeper level, he will even find that when he talks, he has fallen from his level.

Thus, there is a need for us to detach sometimes from our speech. Speech needs to be “worn”, which is when we talk, and it also needs to be “removed”, which is when we are silent. When you get used to silence, you will find yourself thinking better. Silence returns your “speech” to its roots, which is the mind, and that is why silence helps you think better.

There is a deeper understanding of this, and that is that by silencing your talking, you gain speech within yourself. There is a kind of talking that a person can reach in which he talks within himself – it is written, “*I spoke with my heart.*” This ability can be reached when you silence your talking, which reveals the “talking of your heart”.

⁴¹ *Chagigah 13a*

Detaching from the Sense of Taste

Our mouth has another ability: taste. Our mouth can be used in an outward way, which is when we speak. It can also be used in an inward way, which is when we swallow. Swallowing is essentially the ability to taste something.

Taste is rooted in *ta'anug*. This is also a deep discussion. *Ta'anug* is a deep force in the soul that is revealed through taste. When it comes to learning Torah, the *taanug* of learning Torah is revealed when a person has the *Taamei HaTorah* – when he “tastes” the “reasons” in the Torah. When you know the “reason” (*taam*) of Torah, you are essentially “tasting” it.

One way to detach from taste is in the way we described earlier, which is to remove *ta'anug* by having *ameilus*. Now we are speaking of another way to detach from taste, which is by holding back from eating something.

These are the roots of this discussion, but it is really a much bigger discussion.

The Middos/Character Traits and Emotions

Below the senses of the soul are the seven root *middos*/emotions, which are: *ahavah*/love, *yirah*/fear, *hispaarus*/pride, *netzach*/victory, *hodayah*/gratitude, *hiskashrus*/connection, and *shiflus*/lowliness.

There are three abilities in our soul which are the root motivations in a person: *emunah* (belief), *taanug* (pleasure), and *ratzon* (will). These three abilities make up the first, highest “garment” of our soul which wraps around the essence of the soul, *havayah*.

The second “garment” of the soul, which wrapped around the above grouping, consists of the three abilities of the mind: *chochmah*, *binah* and *daas*.

The third garment of the soul, which wraps around the above grouping, is the *middos*/emotions. Below the point of our *middos* and emotions are the actions we do.

Feelings and Imagination

The *middos* have two roots to them, and this is a fundamental point. If this point is not understood well, then one's *middos* will not be properly developed.

The first root of the *middos* is: the *middos* themselves, which are otherwise known as the emotions/feelings (“*hergeshim*”). There is also a more inner root of all the *middos*: the faculty of *binah*, and to be even more specific, the power of *tevunah* (imagination). Imagination and emotions thus have the same root.

Fixing the Middos and Uprooting Imagination

Reb Yisrael Salanter wrote that unless a person works on himself, he is roaming around in his imagination. The imagination is the very root of all our *middos*/emotions. If someone just works on his *middos* without working on uprooting his imagination, he will have a bunch of “branches” without a “root.”

The *middos* themselves are just the branches of the *middos*; imagination is the root behind all our *middos*. We therefore have to work on the root problem of our *middos*, which is: our imagination.

Yet, if we just work on uprooting your imagination without trying to work on the *middos* separately, then although we will have the root, we will still be missing the branches.

Therefore, the real way to work on yourself is to work on both: to work on uprooting the negative imagination, as well as to work on your individual negative *middos*. This will give you both the root and the branches at the same time.

Examples

For example, a person has the *middah* of *ahavah*/love. When it comes to actions, love manifests itself as acts of *chessed* (kindness). When it comes to our *middos*, love manifests itself as the feeling of love. If a person hasn't uprooted his imagination yet, then he is only “imagining” that he loves – he doesn't really have the *middah* of *ahavah*.

The same goes for the *middah* of *yirah* (fear). When a person is afraid of something, this either comes from a true fear, or it is just coming from an imaginary fear. If he hasn't yet uprooted his imagination, his emotion of fear is just coming from imagination, so it's not a real fear.

Imagination – The Root of Evil Character

A *middah* means “measure.” Imagination, though, comes and stretches the measurements of each *middah* and shows a person that there is “more” over here than the proper measure.

This is the root of all negative *middos*: the imagination.

When Adam wanted to sin by eating from the *etz hadaas*, what did he do? He was essentially trying to compare himself to Hashem; comparing is “*dimayon*” in Hebrew, which is the same Hebrew term for “imagination”. Here we can see the root of all evil – *dimayon*, which is imagination/comparing.

If this fundamental point isn't understood, we won't be able to work on our *middos*.

Detaching From The Middos/Emotions

In order to work on our *middos*, we need to see how each *middah* is a “*middah*” – “measured.” If we don’t see the limits of each *middah*, then our imagination is at work, and we won’t be able to work on our *middos*.

For example, let’s say a person is trying to break his habit of overeating. He accepts upon himself a certain diet so that he won’t come to indulge in eating. Simply speaking, he has begun to work on his *middah* of *taavah* (desire), but it is more than that. What he has essentially done for himself is that he has placed a limit on himself: he has recognized how a *middah* must be measured.

He becomes aware of the limits of each *middah*, and he sets up rules for himself when it comes to a *middah*. He sees how the “*middah*” is a “*middah*” – it is measured, and it has limits.

Perfected Imagination

There is a deep ability in a person to reveal how everything is really unlimited, and this is to reveal the *Ein Sof* (“Endlessness”) of Hashem in everything. This is actually done through *dimayon*. Chazal say “*hevay domeh lo*”, that you should “resemble” Hashem. When you live your life in a way that you are trying to resemble Hashem, this is the perfected kind of *dimayon*, and it is our ultimate goal. We need to use this as well in order to work on our *middos*.

Working On Our Middos: A Double Task

Imagination, though, comes and breaks the rules of the *middos* – it doesn’t reveal Hashem through them, and instead just seeks to break rules.

Working on our *middos* thus includes realizing the limits of each *middah*, as well as the goal of trying to reveal Hashem through each *middah*.

To give a general description, the first part of our *avodah* of fixing out *middos* is to fight our imagination, which seeks to break rules. The second part of our task is to learn how to use *dimayon* for good – to use our *middos* in a way that will make us “resemble” Hashem.

This is how we “detach” from negative *middos/emotions*. We “remove” our *middos/emotions* by realizing the limits of each *middah*, and we “wear” our *middos/emotions* by expanding them to become *middos* that resemble Hashem. We can also “wear” and “remove” them in the other way.

This needs more understanding, and soon we will explain it better. We have just established the roots of this discussion.

11 | *Detaching via Awareness of Your Limits, Part 5*

Imagination – Evil “Endlessness”

We have explained previously that our *middos*/emotions have two parts to them – the *middos* themselves, and *medameh*/imagination.

The imagination expands the *middos* for evil uses. *Middos* are really measured and limited, but imagination comes and exaggerates them.

For example, a person has the ability of *ratzon*/will. *Ratzon* itself consists of two layers: it can be a desire to be connected to the endlessness of Hashem, which is its “unlimited” aspect, but it can also be a limited kind of desire, which is its “limited” aspect. The inner layer of *ratzon* is to want connection to the Unlimited, but the outer layer of *ratzon* is to have limited *retzonos*. Both can be good kinds of desires.

A person’s power of imagination, though, comes and expands a *middah* – and it breaks rules in doing so. A good kind of *middah* is limited, and it is rooted in the limited *ratzon*. But when a person wants to be unlimited, such *middos* are stemming from the imagination. This is not the same kind of desire for the unlimited which is rooted in *ratzon*. It is an evil kind of wanting to be unlimited.

The root of being unlimited is not evil; it is a desire to connect to the *Ein Sof* of Hashem. But imagination (after the sin of Adam) is a force in a person that uses the desire for endlessness in an evil way.

This is the root of the discussion.

Ratzon – The Root of Middos/Emotions

Usually, these two forces are going on at the same time. Whenever a person feels an emotion, he has a *ratzon* for it. A general kind of willpower is called *ratzon*, while a will for a certain emotion is called a *middah*. Thus, the reality of all *middos* is really a revelation of our *ratzon*.

However, after Adam sinned, reality changed, and now there are two things contained in our *middos* – our *ratzon*, and our *medameh*/imagination. The imagination comes and expands the *ratzon* of the *middah*, and this makes the person want the *middah* as well as the *medameh* – and this is the root of evil. It is essentially the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination). Usually, most of a person’s *middos* are following his imagination, and the *middos* have become subservient to the imagination.

Thus, the general rule when it comes to working on our *middos* is that when we don’t uncover the limits of a *middah*, the *middos* are being led by imagination, which is the evil kind of

“endlessness”. We need to thus detach from the unlimited part of our *middos* and instead place limits on each *middah*.

A person who wants to work on his *middos* thus needs to realize how his imagination is leading him, and thus he has to make limits for his *middos*. The imagination is like the “*ruach shtus* that enters a person”⁴² and gets him to sin.

When we work on our *middos*, there are two parts to it. There are the *middos* themselves – and the imagination in it. If so, there is a limited aspect and an unlimited aspect in our *middos*. Thus, we need to “wear” and “remove” our limited aspect and our unlimited aspects, and this is also part of the cycle of wearing and removing our soul garments.

Since all of our *middos* have both limited and unlimited aspects in them, let us go through how each *middah* can be limited and unlimited.

How Emunah Can Be Limited and Unlimited

The first soul faculty, *emunah*, can be unlimited in that a person has *emunah* in Hashem, who is endless. But there is also *emunah* in something limited, like when a person believes that his income is limited.

When a person wants to wear and remove *emunah*, he has to believe in both its limited and unlimited aspect. When a person has *emunah* in the endlessness of Hashem, he connects himself to the unlimited, and this removes him from being limited. When a person believes in his limits, like when he realizes that his income is limited, he removes himself from the unlimited and connects to the limited. Both of these abilities are necessary to use and then remove, remove and then use, and so forth.

How Taanug Can Be Limited and Unlimited

The next soul faculty is *taanug*. There is *taanug* in something unlimited and something limited, and we need to make use of both abilities.

A person was created for unlimited *taanug*, which is to “have pleasure in Hashem.”

Usually, all *middos*/emotions stem from our *ratzon*/willpower, but there are some emotions we go through which are rooted in *taanug*. For example, when a person gets angry, this is rooted in his *ratzon*; he has a *ratzon* to get angry. But when a person feels a desire (*taavah*) for something, this emotion is rooted in *taanug*. A person is either experiencing an emotion due to his *ratzon*/will for it (and this is the usual case) or because he has an enjoyment (*taanug*) in it.

⁴² *Sotah 2a*

There is unlimited *ta'anug* and limited *ta'anug*, and both of them need to be “worn” and “removed” when necessary.

A person has to first recognize within himself his *ta'anug* in something endless, which is the *ta'anug* that the soul wants to have in Hashem. Without first recognizing this kind of *ta'anug*, a person won't be able to divest himself from endless *ta'anug* to limited *ta'anug*.

The real *ta'anug* is rooted in our *ratzon*, but there are other kinds of *ta'anug* which come from the imagination; these are our imaginary pleasures.

If a person learns how to divest himself from imaginary pleasure, he can connect to the real *ta'anug*, which is *ta'anug* in the reality. For example, when a person connects to *ta'anug* in his *emunah*, he is connected to real *ta'anug*, because this is pleasure in reality – the reality of Hashem.

Limited Ratzon and Unlimited Ratzon

We have already spoken in the beginning of this chapter about how to detach from limited *ratzon* and unlimited *ratzon*. When a person has an unlimited kind of desire for something, he awakens his imagination; when a person has a limit to what he wants, he is using the actual *middah* of *ratzon*.

Limited Chochmah and Unlimited Chochmah

There is also limited and “unlimited” *chochmah*. When a person thinks that his *chochmah* is unlimited, his *chochmah* is stemming from his imagination. A person has to detach from this by connecting to the *chochmah* of Torah, which disconnects him from imagination and shows him the limits of his *chochmah*.

When a person delves into learning Torah – even when he is learning a *possuk* in Chumash – he disconnects from imagination, connecting him to the real *middah* of *chochmah*, which is limited.

Limited and Unlimited Binah

Binah can also be limited and “unlimited”. *Binah* is to produce information, while imagination makes up new information upon seeing something. Imagination is not a logical kind of comparison a person makes – it “sees” something and upon that, it comes up with something new. Only *Binah* is an accurate kind of comparison that is based on logic.

In learning Torah, a person can detach from imagination by seeing if what he has come up with something based on his logic, or only because he “saw” something. Real *hisbonenus* (reflection) is based on logic, while information that one's imagination has come up with comes from something that the person has seen.

Detaching from the Middos/Emotions and Connecting to Thought

A person has a heart and a mind, which are called the “two kings” in a person. Our life needs to incorporate both, as we said before. Sometimes we need to detach even from our heart! Our *middos/emotions* are rooted in our heart. There are times in which we need to detach from our heart and instead connect to our thinking mind.

If a person never learns how to detach from his heart, he will never have *yishuv hadaas* (a settled mind), unless his heart is so purified that he is on the level in which he never has to detach from it.

Many people have a lot of feelings, and they have a problem because of their great amount of feelings; they don't know how to detach from their feelings. The *Gemara* says that people who are overly caring have a life that isn't considered a life.⁴³ Some people have the opposite problem: their emotions are so closed up that they are only intellectual, devoid of any feeling. Their feelings are all closed up. That is also a problem, but right now we are discussing the problem of people who are too emotional.

Chazal say that “the Torah wants the heart.” People who are “heart people”, who know about this statement of *Chazal*, will understand it to mean that everything is always about the heart. Such an attitude is off balance. Although the feelings of our heart are essential, we cannot always be involved with our heart. We need to be detached from it sometimes and instead connect to our intellect.

Detaching from the Middos: An Introduction

There are seven primary *middos/emotions*.

We need to learn how to detach from the *middos* themselves – not just to detach from the *middos* and connect to the higher faculties of speech and thought, but to detach from the *middos* within the *middos* themselves. Meaning, we can detach from each of the *middos* separately.

The Three Abilities of the Heart

To be general, there are three abilities in our heart: (1) *Hergashah* (feelings), (2) *Hispaalus* (Emotional reactions, otherwise known as *hisorerus/inspiration*), and (3) *Hakarah* (recognition).

The first two abilities (feeling and reaction/inspiration) are more or less known to us, while the third ability, *hakarah*, is usually more hidden from us,

We must understand that these are all separate abilities in our heart. If we do not see the difference between these abilities, we will be very mixed up and we cannot proceed further. With the

⁴³ *Pesachim 113a*

help of Hashem, we hope to continue how to wear and detach our *middos*, after we are clearly recognize these three abilities of our heart.

(To Be Continued In “Fixing Your Earth”)