

**UNEDITED INTERNET VERSION**

**V11**

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# **IT'S A WOMAN'S WORLD**

**Women & Avodah • Women & The HolyDays  
• Women & Prayer • Women & Modesty**

**Collection of Drashas from the  
Author of Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh**

<http://www.bilvavi.net/sugya/eisha>

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## *Editor's Introduction*

How does a Jewish woman serve Hashem? Men learn Torah, and from this they can derive spiritual satisfaction in life. But women, who do not have a mitzvah to learn Torah, often are thirsting for a way how to serve the Creator. What is the role of a Jewish woman, and how can she feel a satisfaction in serving the Creator?

There are many people who want to live a more meaningful kind of life, an inner kind of life. Many people, and women especially, are searching for a way how they can have more *pnimiyus* (innerness) in their life. For this reason, this book for women has been published – to show us the way how we can enter an inner world of serving the Creator.

These *shiurim* were given by the author of *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*, who has studied the full spectrum of the *sefarim hakedoshim* and knows how to make this information very applicable in our life. He uses an eclectic approach that is both engaging and straightforward.

Although the author has many *sefarim* which speak to both men and women alike, many women requested a *sefer* that focuses on topics unique to women, so that the role of the Jewish woman can be more actualized. Indeed, throughout this *sefer*, the author states that there are special abilities unique only to women, such as their strong heart, their unique sensitivity to spiritual matters, the power of Binah, and the power of “*shirah*”.

Part One, ***Women & Avodah*** is a collection of ten *derashos* on various topics given to women by the author over the years; each of them is on a different important topic that is very practical in our life. These are essays which make us think about what's important to us, and they can have a big impact on us if we take them to heart. Some of the topics include “heart time”, marriage, raising children, avoiding the non-Jewish influence and in general surviving spiritually in spite of the materialistic American lifestyle.

They are not printed here in the order that they were given in; it was felt to put them in the order that appears in this book for the sake of simplicity and practicality.

Part Two, ***Women & the Holydays*** is a collection of seven *derashos* the Rav gave pinpointing a woman's *avodah* in the holydays of the year.

Part Three, ***Women and Prayer***, includes a series of four *shiurim* that the author gave to women about *Tefillah*/prayer, with emphasis on the role of the “heart” in prayer; we have also included here some other *derashos* where the Rav spoke about to women about *tefillah*.

Part Four, ***Women And Modesty***, consists of the *derashos* given to women about *tzniyus* (modesty). One chapter is a short clip from the author in a question and answer format, another is a

part of a *derashah* delivered to seminary girls during *Aseres Ymei Teshuvah*, and the last chapter is a deeper and in-depth look at modesty, adapted from a chapter in *sefer Da Es Middosecha*.

It is our hope that through studying and internalizing the lessons in this book, we will come to understand better our role as a Jewish woman and through that, to come to truly serve our Creator.



**PART 1**  
**WOMEN & AVODAH**

## 1.1 | Feeding Your Soul

### *Our Body and our Soul*

*Baruch Hashem* we have passed Rosh HaShanah, and we are about to enter Yom Kippur. Let us think about this in practical terms. The following is not mere ideas.

*Elul* has the same numerical value as the word *chaim* (life). Why? This is because in *Elul*, we can receive a new kind of life. We are asking for life – “*Zochreinu lechaim*”. What is the kind of life we are asking for?

Hashem breathed into a man a “*nishmas chaim*” – a breath of life. All of us have in us a *nishmas chaim*.

Hashem gave us a body and a soul. The body itself, and the soul itself, cannot survive. We need both. We all know this, but let us think: does our body need to eat? This we all know. Does our soul need to eat as well? It sure does. Just like our body needs to eat, drink and go to sleep in order to stay alive, so must our soul eat. Our soul is fed through Torah and *mitzvos*.

There is an obligation to eat on Rosh HaShanah, but not on Yom Kippur. Yet, on *Erev Yom Kippur* if someone eats a meal, the Sages say that it is considered as if he fasted on Yom Kippur, so we see that even Yom Kippur has to do with eating. This is how we feed our body – and it is also a *mitzvah*. But we also have a soul. Our soul needs to be fed as well. How do we feed our soul?

We can learn from our body how we can feed our soul – it is written, “*From my flesh I see G-d.*” If a person isn't hungry he doesn't eat. This tells us how to feed our soul as well. If a person doesn't feel a hunger in his soul, he won't feed his soul. In order for a person to feed his soul, he needs to feel a spiritual hunger.

### *The Root Of All Our Problems – When We Don't Feel Our Soul's Hunger*

We usually don't feel how hungry our soul is. Although we do a lot of *chesed* and *mitzvos*, we don't feel how hungry our soul is. If we would feel its hunger and feed it, we wouldn't even have to go to a *shiur*.

Before we go into Yom Kippur, we have to first identify: who are we? In order to fix our problems, we must get to the root of the problem, just like when we go to a doctor. It seems as if we are just full of many problems, but what we need to work with is the root of our problems. There are all kinds of problems we have – problems with our *middos*, problems with how we honor our

parents, problems with how modest we are. But those are just the branches of our real problem. We need to get to the root of our problem.

With our bodies, we are hungry, so we feed it. But we don't feel our soul's hunger for spirituality, and that is why we don't feed it. How hungry is a person to want to daven? Of course we all daven, but do we feel a hunger for it?

Our weaknesses all stem from that we don't feel a hunger. If we don't feel this hunger, we won't know how to fix our problems. For example, if a person feels hungry for the *mitzvah* of honoring parents, he will be able to carry out this *mitzvah*, and if a person doesn't feel a hunger for this, he doesn't do it.

### *A Superficial Kind of Life*

What are people thinking as Yom Tov sets in? Some people are talking about the *ruchniyus* of the coming Yom Tov, but most people are busy with mundane matters.

What are we thinking about on *Erev* Yom Kippur? Most people are busy with how to eat and drink enough before the fast so that their fast will go easy.

And what about Sukkos? As Sukkos is about to enter, people are busy with how the Sukkah looks.... Before Chanukah, people talk about doughnuts... Before Purim, people are busy with how their *Mishloach Manos* will look... Pesach preparations are all about how to clean the house, the *seder* and when it will start and how it will look... On Shavuos, people talk about their jobs (*Baruch Hashem*, people have *parnassah*...!) During the Nine Days, people talk about what the best dairy recipes are, because we can't eat meat...

Is this the way a Jew should live??

Where is our *ruchniyus* is something?! Is Sukkos our *zman simchaseinu* to us? What is our *simcha* on Sukkos – about how nice the Sukkah is?! What about being happy with the Yom Tov itself?

On *Erev* Rosh Hashanah, what are people discussing? People are busy with the best honey buy to dip their apple in!

We know that there are *mitzvos* every Yom Tov, and we have all heard a lot of *hashkafah* and *shiurim*. But we don't have a hunger for *ruchniyus*! In order to live properly as a Jew, we have to have this hunger, or else our whole life is superficial.

We must change our whole attitude toward Yom Tov. Yom Tov to many people is like just another day in our life, and at best it is a day to catch up with our social circle. But Hashem gave us a power for *ruchniyus* – our soul.

A person can do *chessed* a whole day, but his emphasis is on his body the whole day; his soul isn't in it. Life – and Yom Tov especially – is supposed to be, “*No hunger for bread and no thirst for water,*

*except to hear the word of Hashem.*” This is not just a prophecy for the End of Days – it is referring to us, even now. Even a woman who dresses modestly might not feel a hunger for the spirituality found in being modest.

Rosh Hashanah has passed. What do we feel when it's over – do we want Yom Kippur now? Do we feel a hunger for it?

We are living in a superficial world. Our social life, our clothing and all our behavior is superficial. Life just passes by; each day we spend is usually about gratifying our body, and not our soul. What do we talk about as Yom Tov is upon us? Do we talk about *ruchniyus*...or do we think that only people who learned *mussar* in Europe spoke about *ruchniyus*!?

When people ask each other, “How are you?”, and the person answers, “*Baruch Hashem*”, what is the conversation about? Is the asker referring to *ruchniyus*, and is the other referring to *ruchniyus*? Usually not. When people ask each other “How are you?”, it is unfortunately just like when two non-Jews meet each other and ask how they are. There is no *ruchniyus* to be found in our daily conversations.

Our main focus should be on our souls. When we talk, when we meet people and we get into a conversation, we need to speak about what's important – we need to talk about soul matters.

This is not a high level to be on – we can all be on a simple, basic level of spending at least a little of our day focused on our souls. We can be able to feel at least a little of the hunger to feed our soul. I am not saying that people need to spend the whole day or even half the day immersed in soul matters, but at least for a small part of the day we should think about how hungry our soul is.

### *Putting Our Heart Into Life*

“*Rachmana liba bae*” -- Hashem wants our heart. He doesn't want our actions – He wants our heart. We ask Hashem for life – *zochreinu lechaim*. We are asking for a life in which we live for Hashem – not for ourselves.

All of us, before anything, must at least be on the minimum of *Yiddishkeit*: to put our hearts into *Yiddishkeit*, into Shabbos and Yom Tov.

We have become so used to going through life without thinking about what we do. We have lost what the goal of life is – what's important and what isn't. A person needs to feel a hunger for *ruchniyus*, and to be connected to this hunger.

Our *chessed* isn't the main thing – even wicked people do *chessed*. Avraham *Avinu* is epitomized by his *chessed*, but that is only because he did it from his heart. He felt a hunger for *chessed*. We are not Avraham *Avinu* or any of the *Avos*, but what we can do is do things from our heart.

What are we missing, and what do we need? In order for us to have a good year, we need to think about what life is about. I am not saying to sit a whole day and think about this a whole day, but just

for two minutes a day, think: Who created you? What are you – a body or a soul? Realize that we only feel physical hunger, but we don't feel spiritual hunger. Realize this problem.

### *Your Tefillah for Ruchniyus Is Always Answered*

Once you conclude that it is indeed a problem, begin to daven to Hashem. Beseech Hashem that He should remove your *lev even*, heart of stone, and give you instead a *lev basar*, a soft heart of flesh.

Hashem is always next to us. He is close to anyone who calls out to Him truthfully. But first, we need to call out to Him! Once we call out to Him, He is next to us. We must daven to Hashem from the depths of our heart and say, "Hashem, please open my heart!"

Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt"l* said that if a person davens for physical matters, sometimes he is answered and sometimes he isn't. But when it comes to davening for spirituality, we will always be answered!

### *Think About Your Life*

The problem is that we never think. We go through life and we just don't think about what we do. But, as Chazal say, "If not now, when?"

First, realize that we have a problem: we aren't hungry for spirituality, we don't feel how our souls are hungry. Then, upon realizing the truth of our situation, we must daven to Hashem to help us open up our heart and feel our hunger for spirituality.

When a person wants a *shidduch*, he cries. There is no parent who doesn't cry when he davens that his child should get a good *shidduch*. Just like we cry to Hashem when we need a *shidduch*, because we really want it, so must we cry to Hashem to feel a hunger for spirituality.

Is there any hope for us to have a good year? Yes – there is. It is our choice! It's our choice if we will have a good year or not. If we realize how empty our souls are, we have hope for this year. We must remember Hashem, who created us. Then we must daven to Him to feel a hunger for spirituality.

The words here are a simple guidance for life, to live life through our soul in very simple terms.

### *My Main Message To You*

I usually don't speak in front of women. It's not my type to do this, and I'm not used to it. But I made a *cheshbon hanefesh* (soul-accounting) with myself and I realized that it is necessary to do so. The situation today in the world is so far from the true way a Jew lives. I am not saying we have to

do major things, but just to live our simple, daily life the way it should be. What will be with us? What will be our end...?

Unless a person feels a hunger for spirituality and to feel that we are missing something spiritual in our life (and to daven to Hashem for help), he has no hope on this world. Even if a person does a lot of *chessed* and davens with a lot of concentration, it won't do anything for him unless he feels hungry for spirituality.

I came here to speak for one reason alone: that all of you should know that Hashem gave us the choice to talk to Hashem and beseech Him. In this way, we really live through our davening and *mitzvos*. Without realizing this, a person can daven his whole life and even concentrate on the words, but he won't feel a thing. We need to realize that we are able to talk to Hashem, just like we can talk to a parent. Daven to Hashem that you should feel like you are deriving a vitality from spirituality.

I hope that these words have pierced your heart; the words here are really very simple. We must daven to Hashem for all of this, and may we merit a good year – to truly feel alive from spirituality.

## 1.2 | *Spirituality vs. Materialism*

### *Esav and Yaakov*

When Rivkah was pregnant with Yaakov and Esav, she was told that there were two nations inside her. Yaakov would inherit the World To Come, while Esav inherits this physical world. In other words, Esav's share is superficiality – *chitzoniyus* -- while Yaakov's share is *pnimiyus*, spirituality.

The Sages say that “If there is no flour, there cannot be Torah.” We have to eat in order to survive, so what does it mean that only Esav has this world? Doesn't Yaakov also need this physical world in order to learn Torah and survive?

The simple answer to this is because Esav only has this world and no spirituality, while Yaakov only makes use of this world in order to survive.

But the deeper meaning of this is because Esav only wants this world and its materialism, while Yaakov only desired the World to Come – he had no desire for this mundane world.

The fight between Yaakov and Esav didn't only take place in Rivka's womb. It takes place in our soul as well: Do we want spirituality, or do we want this world with its materialism?

### *Our Inner Fight*

This is a fight that takes place in our soul: it is our power of free will. It is a fight about what we really want.

The Sages tell us that Esav seemed very *frum* on the outside, but on the inside, he had no desire whatsoever for the next world. All he wanted was this mundane world and its physicality.

It is only Esav who acted like this. Any person might act like he wants the next world, but if his inside doesn't want it, he is living a life of superficiality. He doesn't live for the next world and for spirituality. It could even be that he learns Torah and does *mitzvos*, but if in his heart all he truly desires is this materialistic world, then he is living his life like Esav.

The Sages say that “There is no day that is not more cursed than the day before it.” The depth of this curse is that as each day goes on, the world becomes more and more superficial. People are becoming more and more focused on what's external and not important – concerned only about *chitzoniyus* (superficiality).

### *The Depth Of This Problem*

What is the depth behind this problem?

There are two kinds of fights a person has: an external kind of fight and an internal kind of fight. People want to know what to do and what not to do, what we are allowed to do and what we are not allowed to do, what is considered pious behavior and what isn't. That is one kind of inner fight. But this is still *chitzoniyus* – it is still an external kind of problem. The real problem is taking place on our inside – when we have a hard time deciding what we really, truly want.

There was a story with Rav Tzvi Markovitz shlit"א, in which someone asked him all kinds of questions if a certain *halachic* issue was permissible or not on Shabbos. The Rav told him, "On the outside of the issue, it's okay, but the problem is on the inside of your question: Why do you want it to be permissible?"

When we wonder about if a certain kind of clothing is permissible to wear or not, it's only a question that has to do with *chitzoniyus*: permissible or not? There are all kinds of bans and *takkanos* that have been made by the *Rabbonim*, but that is only addressing the outer part of the problem. The real issue is the inside of the problem -- what we really want deep down.

Esav is called a "man of the field" – this means that he is a man of superficiality. This is a person who lives a superficial kind of life, who only worries about his *chitzoniyus*.

But, we have the free will to decide if we will live a life of *pnimiyus* or *chitzoniyus*.

### *What We Talk About*

What does it mean to live a life of *pnimiyus*? There are many levels to this.

In Egypt, our people did not change their language, their clothing, or their names. The fact that they didn't change their clothing or names was only an external accomplishment, but the fact that they didn't change their language was an inner accomplishment. It showed that their *pnimiyus* didn't get affected by Egypt. Why? This is because the way a person talks has a lot to do with his *pnimiyus*. Many times we see people talking to each other, but the words they speak do not come from their *pnimiyus*.

There is talking that comes from our soul, and then there are superficial kinds of talking. What type of language do we have? Do we talk with others from our soul, or from superficiality?

When we talk throughout the day, is it just external or does it come from our *pnimiyus*? When a person only talks in an external manner, he is living a life like Esav.

When a person lives a superficial kind of life, his difficulties in life are only external kinds of difficulties. All his challenges are in *chitzoniyus*. But if a person lives a spiritual kind of life, a life of *pnimiyus*, then his tests are in areas of *pnimiyus* – in what really matters.

If we want to change at least a little, we must fight only with our inner struggles and not with our external struggles. Different things have to bother us.

When people only talk about politics and the latest news in the world, this shows that the person lives a superficial kind of life. When a person wonders if it's okay to wear this kind of clothing or not, it's not really an issue of if it's permissible. It's really an issue that has to do with one's *pnimiyus*. Such a question shows that a person is only concerned with this materialistic world.

What should we speak about all the time? We need to speak about what our purpose on this world is, what we came here for.

It's possible when a person hears this, he will say, "It's impossible," and give up on ever trying to implement such a change. But know that it's possible also not to give up.

Our soul wants to grow. Many people really want to grow and aspire for greatness, but even more than this we have to realize that we have to change our very conversations; we need to focus in our daily life about what's really important.

### *How To Survive Our Struggles On This World*

This is what life is about. If we want to survive this physical world, we need to fight with our own inner struggles. If we change what bothers us – if we are bothered more by our spiritual problems than our materialistic problems – then we can have hope in surviving life on this world.

The world is constantly changing. The problems grow more and more. The world today is different than the world fifteen years ago; the problems of this world keep growing, and the Sages indeed say this – "There is no day that is not more cursed than the day before it."

If we are to have any hope in our life on this world, we need to change what bothers us. I hope that all of us merit to live the true kind of life.

## 1.3 | *What Your Home Should Be Like*

### *Our First Home Was Gan Eden*

When Adam sinned, he was banished from *Gan Eden*. The first home that man had was *Gan Eden*; we were banished from our first house, and ever since then we have had to look for a new house. We must understand that the house which we live in really isn't where we belong. We really belong in *Gan Eden* – that was our desired state, had Adam not sinned.

When people look for a house, which kind of a place should a person look for? People first wonder where they will live before they decide which house to have. Now that we are not in our real home, *Gan Eden*, where should we live?

### *House vs. Inn*

When a person is traveling and he needs a place to sleep over, he finds an inn to stay in. An inn is called a *malon*, from the word *lan* – a place to sleep. But can we call a house by a *malon*, a place to sleep? A house is a house, and an inn is an inn. A house is supposed to be more than just a place to sleep. Sometimes during the year we live outside our home. On Sukkos, we sleep in our Sukkah; it is written, "Settle there as you live." This shows us that our house is a place to live, not just a place to sleep; in the Sukkah we have to live there, not just sleep there. This is because the way we live in our Sukkah resembles how we use our house, which is a place to live – not just a place to sleep.

A wife is called one's *bayis*, his "home". Why? It is because a person lives with his wife. A home is where you live, not where you just sleep. There is one home which doesn't have any sleep in it – the *Beis HaMikdash*. When everyone went there for the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*, the Sages say that no one fell asleep. This is the truest home in the world we ever had; a home in which there was no sleep, but *Shechinah*.

The main function of our home is for nighttime, when we can rest up there and then have energy to get up in the morning. Our homes today aren't really a home – they are just a place to sleep. In our true home, *Gan Eden*, we had a home to live in even during the day. Yet, even in today's times, we are able to have a home that resembles *Gan Eden*. How?

### *Where A Person Runs To When He's Scared*

When a person is scared, what does he do? People run to their house. A scared child runs to his mother when he is scared. Why? It is because he is running to his source. So if a person runs to his

house when he's scared, he's running to what he considers his source of life. If his source of life is a place of sleep – then he is running to a place of death (sleep is a sixtieth of death).

We must realize that our home isn't really our home, but just a place to sleep. If a person considers his home to be his source of life on this world, this is a problem.

A house can either be a *beis malon* – an inn – or it can be a *Beis HaMikdash*. A house which is merely a place to sleep is a house that has no life in it; when we run to it when we're scared, we're saying that it's our source of life. But if our home has more life to it, it can be to us like a *Beis HaMikdash*.

*Really, there is a more inner way to escape our fears.*

Yaakov ran away from Lavan, and this is how our nation came about. Why? Because he ran away to his source of life – to Hashem. We all run away from our fears, but we have to know where the right place to run to.

All of us go through hardships; we all go through fearful experiences. Where do we run to? Wherever we run to shows where we get our life from. If a person derives his vitality in life from spirituality and from *pnimiyus*, he runs to Hashem when he's afraid. But if a person runs away to his house, or to people – that shows that he gets his vitality from his house, or from people. The place where we run to when we're afraid shows where we derive our vitality from.

*How Our House Can Become A House Of Life*

A true house is a house which has life to it. We are no longer in *Gan Eden*, so there is no home which has life in it. But if a person runs to Hashem when he's afraid, his house can become transformed into a house full of life. It is only when a person doesn't derive vitality from Hashem that his house lacks life to it and it's a place of death; when he runs to it when he's afraid and he has problems, his house doesn't solve the problem, because it's a place of death. It has no life to it.

When the *Shechinah* is in one's home, such a house is a house that has life to it. When a person has a problem, he can then run to his house, because the *Shechinah* is there. But that is only when one has the *Shechinah* in his home – when he doesn't have his house for himself, but for Hashem, like a mini *Beis HaMikdash*.

Our problems and fears can actually bring us closer to Hashem. When we feel scared, we can run to Hashem – and that would solve our problems. When a person was scared in the times of the *Beis HaMikdash*, where did he run to? He ran to the *Beis HaMikdash* to go daven, which was a place of *Tefillah*. He didn't just run there because it was a place of *Tefillah*, but because that's where he derived his life from. When we're scared, we shouldn't just run to daven; the point is that we are running to where we feel we derive our vitality from.

Every person, no matter what kind of problem he has, should get used to running away to Hashem from his fears. If a person always runs to Hashem when he's afraid, his fears serve as a catalyst to become close to Hashem.

May we be *zoche* to have the *Shechinah* in our homes.

## 1.4 | *Hearing The Voice Of Hashem*

### *Knowing What Hashem Wants from Us*

When Hashem gave us the Torah at Har Sinai, we all heard Hashem talking to us. Is it possible to hear the voice of Hashem, in this current day? Can we hear Hashem talking to us on a personal level? All our souls were there at Har Sinai; we all heard Hashem talking to us. Many years have passed since then, but is there any way we can connect to that time when Hashem spoke to us?

There are two ways how a person can know what Hashem wants from us. One way is by learning Torah, or to ask a Rav and find out what the *Halacha* is when one is in doubt about what to do.

Another way is to discern with your heart what is true and what isn't; these are the gray areas in life that aren't clear-cut, and a person is able to use his heart to know what the right thing is.

Every person has the ability to know in his heart that "this is just not the right thing."

Rav Yoel Klufit, a Rav in *Eretz Yisrael* for many years, said that even if all the Rabbis in the world would tell you that something is permissible according to the *Halacha*, if you feel in your heart that it's just not the right thing to do, don't do it.

We cannot hear Hashem's actual voice that we heard at Har Sinai. But today it is possible to hear Hashem talking to us – when we feel that something isn't the right thing to do. We can hear Hashem talking to us sometimes that "this is just wrong".

### *How We Can Know What's Right*

There are things we do which take away our peace of mind. This is something which isn't the right thing to do. If we do something and it doesn't disturb our peace of mind, it is a sign that we have done the right thing; but anytime we do something and it makes us uneasy about it, it is a sign that what we are doing is not the right thing.

Every time we do something, we must ask ourselves: Did our *Avos* and *Imahos* do this? Would the *Avos* and *Imahos* live in the lifestyle we live in? Imagine if the *Avos* and *Imahos* lived in our community. How would they feel about everything we do? If we feel that something in our life is something that our *Avos* and *Imahos* wouldn't do, then it can't be the right thing.

Most people do not have peace of mind and aren't calm. This is because people are doing things that they know are really not the right thing.

A person only has *menuchas hanefesh* (peace of mind) when his heart is in line with the things he does. Anyone who does things which he knows in his heart aren't right cannot have *Menuchas hanefesh*.

Nobody is perfect, but if a person lives his life according to what he feels is true, he will be calm and live a true kind of life. When a person's actions match what is on his heart, he is a truly happy person.

Ask yourself if the way you are living is right or not, if there are any parts of your life that you know is not the right way.

### *Listen To What Your Heart Is Saying*

We all want to be happy and calm. If we want to be truly happy, we can listen to Hashem – what He wants from us – from within our own hearts. The truth speaks to everyone from within each person's heart.

We must aside time every day to listen to Hashem's voice, who speaks to us from within our own heart. We have to set aside time for this; if we don't, it's like a beautiful disc which we never get around to listening to because we don't have the time. Every day the voice of Hashem is playing in our heart, and it tells us what is right, but we don't set aside time every day to listen to our heart.

If we listen to our heart every day and what it is telling us, we will find true happiness.

The Rambam says that all happiness does not come from anything outside of a person, but from the person himself. All happiness is contained in ourselves, in our heart.

### *Analyzing The American Lifestyle We Are Living*

We must choose the correct path in our life, the truth which our heart is telling us.

The lifestyle here in America is very materialistic. A Jew is able to feel his heart telling him that the American lifestyle is not a true kind of life. We know that there are many things that people do here which are really inappropriate.

Is there anyone who believes that the way a Jew lives in America is the true way to live? Did previous generations live their live like this??

What, indeed, is the true kind of life? It is to live constantly with the truth. Of course, people always had to make a living, even in the olden days. But they lived with the knowledge that they are a *neshamah* inside a body, and they knew that there is a clear difference between a Jew and a non-Jew. But today, a Jew's lifestyle is very similar to a non-Jewish lifestyle, except for the fact that Jews have Shabbos off (and non-Jews have Sundays off), and that Jews only eat kosher....

A Jew's *neshamah* doesn't want any of the non-Jewish lifestyles. We know we all have a *neshamah*; have we given it up because we are saying, "We don't have a choice – We live in America, and there's nothing we can do about it"?

We must believe that we can live a life of a *neshamah*, even in America. We all have the choice to decide if we will live a life of just a body -- or a soul. Even though we are not in *Gan Eden*, we can still live on this physical world a life of a *neshamah*.

Chazal say, "Every person must say, "When will I reach the actions of my forefathers?" Picture in your mind how Sarah Imeinu would speak and act if she would live in our community, and connect to that and emulate that.

We are not speaking of something that is out of our reach; anyone can do this. May we all be *zoche* to live a life of our *neshamah*, and if we live such a life, we will have a life of calmness and happiness.

## 1.5 | *Avoiding The Non-Jewish Influence*

### *At Har Sinai, We Became Separate from the World*

We are approaching Shavuot. The Torah was given on Har Sinai; why was it called *Sinai*? Chazal say it is because “*sinah*” – hatred – came down onto the world because we received the Torah. When we received the Torah, it became apparent that our nation is different from the other nations. This began the hatred that non-Jews have for us. On one hand, we must love everyone; we must love all of Hashem's Creation, even a rock. But on the other hand, we must be aware that we are totally separate from the other nations and everything else. We must love all people, even non-Jews, but we must also at the same time realize that we are different. We are elevated than the other nations.

### *The Non-Jewish Influence Today*

A person must examine and see if he realizes about himself that he is elevated and different than the other nations. This is especially true for nowadays, when we live amongst the non-Jews, and it has become even more essential now that in the last few years, the non-Jewish influences have crept into our nation greatly.

When we were in the desert, we were isolated from the rest of the world, but once we came into *Eretz Yisrael*, which was then the land of Canaan, we have been living amongst the non-Jews. Ever since then, we have had to bear in mind the words of the Rambam, that a person is always influenced by his surroundings. The fact that we live amongst the other nations has its effect on us. It has influenced us in two ways: first of all, it causes us to act like them, and also, it has caused us to live a superficial kind of life; our very *pnimiyus* has become affected.

But we received something at Har Sinai: we received the ability to be separated from the rest of the world. This applies to both men and women. It applies to all our actions, thoughts and feelings. We have the ability to feel separate from the other nations.

One has to always examine himself – his actions, his feelings and his thoughts – and see which parts of him are affected. Does he act like a non-Jew in any way? Does he feel the same way a non-Jew feels about something? Does a person think like a non-Jew? We need to check ourselves.

### *How our Whole Life is Influenced by Non-Jews*

It's not so easy to do this. We think that many of our attitudes come from our soul, but really they come from the non-Jewish attitude.

For example, we hang pictures in our home. What is the reason we do this? Does this come from our soul, or from a non-Jewish behavior we acquired?

Another example: when we make a wedding, are we making a true Jewish kind of wedding, or are there parts of it which we copy the non-Jewish weddings?

A third example: When we speak, do we speak from our soul, or are we using some words that are a non-Jewish kind of speech?

A fourth example: Our clothing we wear. Are we perhaps choosing our clothing to fit a non-Jewish style? When a man chooses clothing, does he choose it because of anything that has to do with a non-Jewish taste or style? With women's clothing, are there any differences we want in our clothing to resemble a non-Jewish style?

### *How Our Emotions Are Affected*

What is the difference between a Jew and a non-Jew? Besides for the fact that a Jew wears a yarmulke and a non-Jew doesn't, what is essentially the difference?

Let's say a Jew is happy, and a non-Jew is happy. What is the difference between Jewish happiness and non-Jewish happiness? Is it just the causes for happiness that are different – a Jew has his causes to be happy, and a non-Jew has different causes that make him happy – or is the happiness itself that we have an entirely different kind of emotion that a non-Jew doesn't experience?

Does a Jew have the same feelings as a non-Jew? Many people think there is no difference. The result of this is that people go to learn in universities and study under non-Jewish teachers, because they think that there is no difference between how a Jew feels and how a non-Jew feels, so what's wrong with learning from them...

### *Reading Non-Jewish Literature*

In the literature that many people read, the non-Jewish authors are teaching us how to feel and think. The result of this is that people learn psychology from a non-Jew, and you can have a Jewish psychologist who uses non-Jewish methods to "help" people. He thinks he's doing a great *chessed* for the community by making all this information available to his clients.

Because we are mixed amongst the non-Jews, we don't know how to differentiate between what is a Jewish feeling and what is a non-Jewish feeling. Now it has become normal to find non-Jewish self-help books in a Jewish home, books that tell us how we to think and feel. Because we live among them, it has become very hard for us to differentiate what is in the Jewish way and what isn't.

This all happens because we started out early in life by reading non-Jewish literature and subjects which would help us get by the practical parts of life. Then we innocently thought that if we used

their books to help us get by some part of our life, then we should use their books throughout our whole life as well, learning how to feel and think from a non-Jewish author. People are so used to reading non-Jewish literature that now it seems like a wonder to us when we hear that a Jew is supposed to think differently!

### *Who Can Learn Psychology?*

A person has to be very, very wise to know which information in non-Jewish literature is kosher, and which isn't. But a regular person does not have this great wisdom.

Should a Jew learn non-Jewish psychology? Certainly not. Just like a person who wants to learn *Halacha* will not find *Halacha* in a university, so is it impossible to learn about our soul from a university. We cannot learn about our *pnimiyus* from universities. People are desperate to know about their souls, but going to the non-Jewish institutions is not the solution. What we do need is *Rabbonim* who can help us answer all our questions about how we should think and feel.

Just like we would never send our child to a non-Jewish school, so should we never learn about our own souls from them. In three words, to learn non-Jewish psychology is *treif, treif, treif* (non-kosher). When non-Jewish literature is taught to our children, what is essentially happening? The non-Jewish *hashkafos* (outlook on life) enters them.

Which non-Jewish literature can we read? A regular person should not look at anything they write. A person who is a very big *Talmid Chochom*, who learned the entire Torah – who finished *Shas* (*Talmud Bavli*, as well as *Talmud Yerushalmi*) and has learned the works of the *Gra* and the *Maharal* – he already has his outlook from the Torah, so he can sift through the information and see which non-Jewish literature is kosher and which isn't. He is able to obtain permission to learn it, because he can know how to sift out what isn't true.

But anyone who hasn't learned the entire Torah yet – and certainly not women, who do not learn Torah in-depth – have any basis whatsoever to read non-Jewish psychology.

What we should do is have a “*Beis Midrash*” for Jewish psychology, in which people can come and learn the *sefarim* that will teach us about our soul<sup>1</sup>.

Just because people have become so used to reading non-Jewish literature doesn't make it kosher. A Jew lives from his soul; it is our soul which produces our thoughts and feelings. It is our soul which should be guiding our life – our *neshamah*.

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<sup>1</sup> In a different shiur, the author mentioned a list of *sefarim* that women can learn which teach us about our soul. The main sefer which the author suggested for women to learn is *Michtav M'Elياهو* (available in English as *Strive For Truth!*). For those who can read Hebrew *sefarim*, the author also suggested *Sifsei Chaim-Middos V'Avodas Hashem* (2 Volumes), and *Alei Shur* (2 volumes), but he stressed that *Michtav M'Elياهو* is the best sefer to learn.

### *What To Do*

People ask, “What should I do? I have to make a living, so this is what I need to do.” But would you make a living if you know that it would harm people? Certainly not. So why would you enter a course to learn a living if it’s going to harm your own soul?

We can learn psychology from the *mussar sefarim*; these teach us how we can live our life.

At Har Sinai, we were separated from the non-Jews, which caused them to hate us. But today, we are so mixed among them that it has become so hard for us to differentiate what the difference is between a Jew and a non-Jew. We need to examine the entire spectrum of how we think and feel: does such an attitude come from our soul or not? Is our home influenced by the non-Jewish influence in any way? Is all our literature okay? If there are any non-Jewish books in our home, it doesn’t belong there.

People will definitely think that this speech comes from some narrow-minded person who comes from *Eretz Yisrael* and doesn’t understand what’s going on. But actually, because I grew up in *Eretz Yisrael*, I see the depth of this exile we are in. I see how influenced we have become from them. I know so much damage that has come to us because of non-Jewish literature. We must simply empty out our houses from any non-Jewish literature.

Examine your life: how much of your life comes from the non-Jews? The way you can know this is by asking yourself: If you would live in the desert, would you still want to be attached to the world and its influence? Although people say “Times have changed”, we have a *mitzvah* to remember *Har Sinai* every day. This is not merely a *mitzvah*, but to remember everyday how we felt then by *Har Sinai*: separate from the non-Jews.

A person might say, “But everyone else does it.” To this, the answer is: just like Avraham *Avinu* didn’t give into the rest of the world’s idol worship, so must we separate ourselves from the rest of the world, even if we are alone.

### *The Problem We Face In Trying To Connect to our Soul*

When a person tries to connect to his *pnimiyus* – his inner self -- he faces a certain hardship: our soul is very hidden from us. Why? It is because many non-Jewish influences have covered our soul from being revealed. We need to first cleanse ourselves from all non-Jewish ideas.

Every day we make a *beracha*, “*shelo asani goy*” – We thank Hashem for not making us a non-Jew. But see how much we are taking from them into our life!

We have to first divest ourselves from all non-Jewish ideas and all the impurity we have picked up from them, before we can attempt to find our own *neshamah*. If you think this sounds too radical, remember that Avraham *Avinu* was also considered radical.

We know that in our *Avodas Hashem*, a person has to always take the “middle path” and not do anything extreme. But in our times, the middle path of the world is what is not normal. We need to take a more extreme path if we are to separate ourselves from the non-Jewish influence.

### *Decide What You Want to be Like*

Sit down with yourself and ask yourself: Are you ready to separate yourself from the non-Jewish influence? Are you ready to live like a Jew?

Once a person decides that he does want to live like a Jew, his soul will become greatly purified. Such a decision is a major clarification in one's life, and it will give a person great *Siyata D'Shmaya* to be able to enter into his real self, his *neshamah* – and to reach closeness to Hashem through it.

All of these words are only a **preface** to becoming close to Hashem. It is not **yet** closeness to Hashem; that is a step which comes after this.

Women at *Har Sinai* didn't receive the *mitzvah* to learn the Torah, but they did receive the light of the Torah. When a person cleanses himself or herself from the non-Jewish influence, he/she becomes a container to be able to contain the light of the Torah.

I hope you realize that these words here are not a radical way of thinking, but simply how to live a life of Torah and how to live of our *neshamah*. We must get rid of the “non-Jew” within us and remain with the “Jew” in ourselves, so that we will be able to reach our *neshamah* and connect with Hashem.

## 1.6 | *Yishuv: A Settled Mind*

### *Yishuv Hadaas*

We are soon approaching the time in which we received the Torah; we must prepare ourselves for this. One of the ways we prepare for the Torah is through “*yishuv*” – otherwise known as *yishuv hadaas*, a “settled mind”. It means to have a life of tranquility. This doesn't mean to sit at home and do nothing, of course, but to have a real and *inner* kind of tranquility. A tranquil kind of life – *yishuv hadaas* – can totally change a person's life. How can a person reach *yishuv hadaas*?

### *Getting Back Our Minds*

People are doing all sorts of actions a whole day. How much are we connected in our minds to the many actions that we do? Upon some reflection, we will find that most of our actions throughout the day have nothing to do with our mind. We simply do and do all sorts of things, but our mind isn't necessarily connected to what we do.

In order to live a life with “*yishuv hadaas*” – a calm and tranquil life - we need to have “*daas*” (a mature mind) in the first place. A life without *daas* is a life in which people live in a superficial manner, never thinking about what they do. What is the concept of *yishuv hadaas*? There are two explanations to this. One meaning of it is to act calmly. Another explanation of *yishuv hadaas* [which is what we will focus on here] is when a person's mind is present as he acts.

We will try to think here what a life of *yishuv hadaas* is (and we will go with the second approach, that *yishuv hadaas* is to a life with a mind). Here is a question: Every person has a mind. Do we use our mind just as a tool in order to get to something, or is our mind considered to be an actual part of our life?

In other words: do we only consider this world to be a life of action and “getting things done”, or is there more to life than just getting things done? Do we ever consider the fact that life contains an inner kind of knowledge, an inner dimension, that needs to be explored?

### *A Life of Knowledge*

There are really two ‘worlds’ in front of us. There is a world of physical action that we see with our eyes, and there is also a world of *daas* (‘knowledge’) in front of us, which we cannot see with our physical eyes. We must discover it and connect to it. A life of *daas* (‘knowledge’) takes place within the person himself. A person could either look at this world through his physical senses, feeling

superficially that “I’m happy,” or he can actually *enter a world* of happiness within himself. The first way is a superficial kind of life - and the second way is the deeper, truer kind of life.

### *Awareness*

We will give an example of it. If a person travels to Israel, let’s say, is he aware that he has just moved from place to place? Yes, because he understands that he has undergone physical kind of movement. But let’s say a person has gone from sad to happy. Does he feel this change taking place?

The soul of a person has many rooms to it – and they are called “*chadrei halev*” (rooms in the heart). A person really moves from one place in his heart to another! When a person isn’t aware that he is able to leave one place inside himself and entering another place of himself, he is living is unaware of his internal world, and he lives a life of darkness. We need to become aware of the internal layer of reality that is within us; we need to realize the many rooms that are inside our heart, our *chadrei lev*.

### *Mature Emotions*

Do adults and children share the same happiness? If an adult still experiences a childish kind of happiness, can we call this a real happiness? A child doesn’t have *daas*; his happiness isn’t real. A child’s happiness is a mere emotion that is missing a certain kind of mature understanding. But when a person matures and develops, he has to realize that there is more understanding to our emotions. We have to realize as we mature that happiness, for example, has to be a deeper experience to us than when we were happy as a child.

This idea is very hard to express in words, because it is a feeling that must be experienced. But we are trying to describe a certain kind of picture: that the feelings we have must be *entirely different* than from what we felt as children. Most people, when they become adults, only see how they changed physically. They don’t see how they changed emotionally, because most people are unaware of the internal world.

### *A Whole Different Kind of Life*

I am trying to explain a totally different kind of a life than we know of, a total change in our perspective.

Many times people think that it is only their *middos* (character traits) which they have to change, but they don’t realize that they must change their *entire understanding* towards life altogether.

To explain this concept a bit more (*chadrei halev*), all of us have inside us a kind of 'store', with many compartments and items inside it. But we are used to looking at ourselves as if we're standing *outside* the 'store', peering inside to see what's in there on the front shelf, but remaining outside of it.

### ***"Pnimiyus": The Inner Dimension Inside Us***

If we would only enter inside ourselves, we would realize a whole new world that we never knew existed.

People might have even seen others work hard at uncovering their *pnimiyus* (inner layer) in themselves, and they have therefore heard of this concept of "*pnimiyus*", but they still have no idea what this really entails.

We must realize that there is an entirely different kind of world, inside of us, that we need to enter. First, we must believe in this reality. It's not about coming to a *shiur* once a week; it's about building a new world within ourselves. The question is if we are really willing to invest in it, or to just come once a month to "hear a *shiur*"....

It is hard to express the concept we are describing. Some people have indeed begun to enter the inner world, but even those who haven't at least have heard this now, and they now will have the key to open it.

### ***Restarting Our Lives To Live A Life of Inner Truth***

We must start over our life! Is the world today – in *Eretz Yisrael*, and certainly in America – is this the kind of world that Hashem wants us to live in?? Or does Hashem want something else from us? Is there a much deeper world than this world? Besides for *Gan Eden* and *Olam HaBa*, which are spiritual realities, this current world *as well*, can be a more inner place for us to live in - if we choose to enter inward.

The life we are used to and see on this world is not a life that can bring us to *yishuv hadaas*. Something very troubling in America is that there are Jews – members of a holy nation - who are *davening* on the trains on the way to work. Can this be called a true kind of life, a life of *yishuv hadaas*?? Anyone who wants to live a life of truth can see that the life going on today here that we see is not the kind of life Hashem wants us to live.

### ***In Conclusion***

The words here are to awaken us to think about life, and to decide if we want to continue this life or start a new kind of life.

There are already people who are living in the inner dimension of this world, and they are truly connected to themselves and to Hashem. Each of us can do this as well.

I hope that you accept these words, not because I asked you to, but for the sake of yourselves. I hope that each of you reaches the proper decision and realizes, that there are changes that must be made in our life – but that they will be changes which will help us live in the proper way.

May we all merit to receive Torah in the exact way we received it at Har Sinai.

## 1.7 | *What Every Mother Should Know*

### *The Tool For Chinuch*

It is written, “You shall make known to your children and to your grandchildren the day which you stood by Har Sinai.”

How do we tell our children about the day we stood by Har Sinai? How do we give them a proper *chinuch* and instill good values in them, such as this?

What is the main vehicle in *chinuch* we need to give over to our children? What is the main tool we can use to instill proper values in our children?

Just to tell our children, “Do this,” and “Don’t do that”, isn’t enough. What is the special power we have in *chinuch*? From where does Hashem give us the power to give over a *chinuch* to our children?

The source for how we do *chinuch* is not our mouth or our actions, but our heart.

### *The Key Is Love*

Why did Hashem make it that we automatically love our children? It is because the only way we can do *chinuch* is because we can love them. Just because sometimes we fail and make mistakes doesn’t mean we don’t love them; it is just that from our love for them we are able to do *chinuch*.

All parents love their children – but is every parent the same in this love? Is there a father who loves his child more than the mother does, and is there a mother who loves her child more than his father does? Our love is sometimes strong and sometimes weak; the same is true for a husband and wife. Sometimes they feel a love for each other, and sometimes they don’t. As parents we all know that sometimes our love for our children fluctuates. We don’t love them as much when they make us very angry. So our love for them changes.

*Chinuch* doesn’t start from *chinuch* – but from how much we love them. The father and the mother have to constantly develop their love for their children more and more in order to properly take care of their child. Of course, no parent thinks he doesn’t love his child. A parent who hears our question we are posing might say, “What do you mean that I have to work on loving my child more? I love him already.”

Yes, we all love our children, but first we must feel this love and then we need to express it to them. The final step after this is *chinuch*. But if a person jumps to “*chinuch*” without loving his child enough, it’s like trying to build a third floor in a house before the second floor.

The amount we express our love should always be greater than how much we tell them to do. Although usually we tell them more what to do and what not to do more than telling them how much we love them, really it should be the other way around: We only really need to tell them what to do only once or twice a week, but we must express our love to them all the time, every day.

### *Chinuch – Chein and Menuchah*

*Chinuch* comes from the word *chein* – finding favor. It also comes from the word *menuchah* – a calmness. This shows us what *chinuch* really is.

If our child has *chein* to us, than we can do *chinuch* on him. Only when the child feels our love for him can we train him to do anything. If the parent doesn't feel satisfied, how will our child feel satisfied? If a parent screams at a child and he/she isn't calm, how does the parent hope to instill a *chinuch* of *menuchas hanefesh* in the child? The calmness we want to still in them has to come from us.

### *Bring Out the Good in Your Children*

Usually when we tell a child what to do, it's usually what they shouldn't do! This is because we aren't calm in our demands when we scream at them.

What we really have to do in *chinuch* is to bring out the good in our children. This is a *chinuch* that brings *chein* and *menuchas hanefesh*.

We must find the good in our children and learn how we can bring it out. This is the true *chinuch*.

This comes when we see the good in them, when we love them and are happy with them and see them in a good light. Our *chinuch* has to come from our deepest love for them. The more we reveal our love for them, the more *chinuch* we will be able to do.

### *Develop Your Love for Them*

We need to express our love for them more. There are many ways we can express love to them, but the point is not because we have to say "I love you" more often because we heard in a speech that we need to say this... The point is because we need to reveal from within ourselves our deep love for them.

The Maggid of Dubna says that the only way to influence other people is to "fill up your cup and let it spill over". We need to fill ourselves up with so much love for our children that it overflows out of us onto our children.

The child has to feel that his parents definitely love him. This takes wisdom. It's not enough if a child is given a questionnaire, "Do your parents love you?" and he writes, "Yes, my parents love me." It is something we have to internalize in ourselves: we need to really internalize our love for our children, and then they will feel loved by us.

Just like we can't raise a child without food or clothing, so must a child know that his parents love him. It's not enough to tell them once a year on *Erev Rosh Hashanah*, "I love you"; we have to let them know throughout the year that we love them.

### *Requests To Our Children*

When a child knows that his parents love him, it is then that the parents can start telling him what to do and raise him, because then the requests come from love. If a child doesn't feel his parents love him, he might listen to his parents, but we will miss the goal.

When we say "No" to our child, do they feel that we are refusing them out of our love for them? They must know the message behind the "No." If a child doesn't feel his parents love him, the "No" to him sounds like "I don't love you." When a child knows that his parents love him, he knows that his parents' refusal to his requests come because they care about him.

There are children who listen very dutifully to their parents, but inside they feel like they are slaves. There are indeed parents who have ten children and relate to them as if they are ten slaves! When the child hears his father "Bring me a cup of water," although he might listen and run to get the cup, inside he feels as if he's a slave being ruled by a taskmaster; (or it is because he thinks his father is simply lazy and can't get up from his seat).

If you want to know what the proper attitude you should be having when you make requests from your children, let us bring a story from a great leader which illustrates it. When the Brisker Rav was about to be *niftar*, he told his son that he is requesting something from him for the last time so that his son will be able to fulfill the mitzvah of *kibud av* for the last time.

Does a child feel that his parents' requests, such as "Do this," "Don't do this," "Get me that", come from their parents' love, or does he feel more like he is being commanded by a policeman? We don't mean that you shouldn't ask your children anymore for anything, but we mean that your requests from them should be for their own good, that they should become more respectful – and not because you are focused on yourself.

Many times in our requests we forget the message we want to send them and we instead focus on ourselves. When a mother asks her daughter to please sweep up the room, and her daughter dutifully does it, does she feel that her mother asked her this for her own good, or for her mother's good...

### *Seeing Their Good Points Only*

We must express our love to our children every day. We must try to see their good points and not focus on what they do wrong.

How often should we criticize them when they do something wrong? For every hundred compliments we give them, a parent can drop a criticism. Even when we do criticize them, it should be done very calmly. We are all not perfect, and we will still make mistakes, but this is the general formula we need to have in the home.

When the children feel that their parents love them, it is then that our *chinuch* on them can help them.

*Chinuch* doesn't even begin if we don't develop our love for them. The root of *Chinuch* is our love for our children.

To summarize, we must think every day how much we love our children and express it to them; and we must try to focus only on their good points and bring out the best in them. We need to create a situation in the home in which the children feel very loved, and such a home has a basis for the parents to train them and give over values. It is impossible to be perfect, but this is the basic formula: *Chinuch* must be based on love.



## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH THE RAV

**QUESTION:** *How will we help them if we don't tell them what to do?*

**ANSWER:** It's better for them to conclude on their own what to do rather than be told what to do. For example, on *Erev Shabbos*, if we want to get our children to help around in the house, instead of telling each child what his chores are, ask each child, "What do you think needs to be done in the house today?" The child then thinks about what needs to be done, and instead of grudgingly giving in to your requests, he does so out of concern, because he feels that you value his opinion.

**QUESTION:** *How should criticism be done?*

**ANSWER:** We shouldn't criticize the child while he is doing the wrong action. Instead, wait for a later time and mention it casually, but in a calm and loving way.

**QUESTION:** *How can I get my child to learn? He doesn't like to learn with his father, so how can I push him to learn?*

**ANSWER:** Don't push him to learn – instead, get him to love learning. "Pushing" him to learn will make him want to do the opposite. You can't teach a child anything he doesn't have a love for. We must create a situation in which he loves learning, not just to get him to spend more time learning. It's not about increasing the amount of time he learns, but about increasing his connection to learning, which is only through getting him to loving to learn

## 1.8 | *Revealing Your “Inner Child”*

### *A Prayer for Our Children on Erev Shavuot*

On *Erev Shavuot*, there is a *minhag* that some people have to say a special *Tefillah* from the Shelah *HaKadosh* to succeed in raising children.

Avraham *Avinu* was the first person to start believing in Hashem. Let us try to understand how he was able to come to this, and through that, we will be able to understand how we can raise our own children with *Eemunah*.

### *Eemunah: The Ability of Trust*

What does *Eemunah* mean?

*Eemunah* comes from the word *imun*, which is “trust.” Mordechai was “*oimen*” Hadassah – he knew her. What does it mean that Mordechai “knew” Hadassah? It means that he raised her; Hadassah, who was Esther, was an orphan, and her uncle Mordechai raised her. We place our trust in who raises us, and that is why there was “*imun*” between Mordechai and the niece he raised, Esther.

Who was the first person we ever believed in our life? The first person we believed in was our mother! Indeed, *Eemunah* has the word “*eim*” (mother) in it, because the first person we have *Eemunah* in is our mother. Avraham also believed in his mother first, but this was not enough for him. He eventually had to leave his parents, and he needed something else to believe in. That is what led him to believe in Hashem.

In life, we believe in many things. We are constantly using a power to “believe.” Why did Hashem make it that way? Why is it that we first believe in our parents and place our trust in them? It is so that eventually, we will use this power to believe -- in Hashem.

### *Believe in Yourself First*

As parents, from where can we derive a power to instill *Eemunah* in our children? Our children are picking up what we teach them, but that is only if we ourselves believe in what we are teaching them. A child believes in whatever his parents say. Are the parents remaining truthful to what they themselves teach to their children? A child will only come to believe in Hashem if he first believed in his parents. But if the child was brought up with parents who themselves don't believe in truths,

then the child picks up on it and doesn't believe so much what his parents teach. He will have a very hard time later having belief in Hashem.

Before you instill belief in your child, ask yourself: Do I believe in myself?

Every person has an ability to believe in himself; this is the power of *Emunah* that we use to believe in our own self. When a person believes in himself, he is able to pull himself together. If he commits a sin, he can do Teshuvah, because he believes in himself. But without believing in yourself, then you separate what is true from who you are, and the "truth" and "you" are two separate entities...

If you believe in yourself, you can extend that to others and get others to believe. But if you don't believe in yourself, how will you get someone else to believe?

The *Gemara* says that if you ever see a Torah scholar commit a sin, you can be sure that he repented that very day. A Torah scholar is called a "*chaver*", a friend. This is because a Torah scholar has reached the ability to believe in himself, and because he believes in himself, he is able to do Teshuvah. A *Talmid Chochom* believes in himself, and that is actually what enables others to believe in him.

Why is it that people have a hard time having *Emunah* in Hashem? Is it because we don't believe enough in Hashem? That is not the root cause. The real reason why we don't have *Emunah* is because we don't even believe in ourselves.

### *The Time in Our Life When We Were Pure and Trusting*

*Emunah* is really to go back to the right path which we know is the truth. We all yearn to go back to our roots, just like a child longs to go back to his mother, who is the first person he believes in.

When we started out in life, we were very pure; we had *temimus*, simple belief. We need to return to that state of childlike purity which we were born with – the power of simple trust in another. When we were children, we naturally believed in our mother, and now that we are adults, we need to naturally believe in Hashem.

The reason why we people lack *Emunah* in Hashem is because they only believed in their parents and haven't learned how to place their trust in anything beyond that. We thus need to go back to the point in time when we were children.

When was our life better – now, or when we were children? A child seems to have a very happy, carefree life. He doesn't have problems. A child doesn't have to worry about mortgaging his home, he has no financial stress, and he doesn't have a baby keeping him up at night. Is there any one of us who doesn't wish he could just go back to being a child again? Yes, we want to remain with our accomplishments in life, but can we ever back to our childlike state somehow without sacrificing our adult accomplishments?

### *How You Should Get Into Bed*

When we go to sleep at night, our soul goes up to Heaven. We don't worry when we go to sleep that our soul will go to the wrong place at night. We have many scary dreams at night – what is the reason for this? It is because our soul is entering frightening places, and our soul feels this; this is the source of nightmares. Why aren't we scared, then, that our soul will go to dangerous places at night? The answer is because we naturally trust in Hashem that He will protect our soul.

Imagine yourself going to sleep, and that you are laying in your mother's lap, safe and secure. That is how you should go to sleep at night – feel safe in Hashem's hand that He is taking care of your soul.

If you do this, you will actually sleep better, and you'll feel more refreshed in the morning. But this is only if you do "Teshuvah" before you go to sleep – in other words, if you "return" to your source.

Believe in yourself! Believe that you are doing your best, even though you make mistakes.

### *The "Inner Child" In You*

Children have a quality called *temimus*. They believe everything we tell them.

We need to also connect to this quality. Are we ready to connect to that childlike state? Are we ready to accept simple truths? Do we believe in ourselves that we can be like that? Do we believe that reaching this quality will change our life for the better? You can still gain the pure *temimus* of a child in your life without having to sacrifice your adult, intellectual mind.

If you want to feel like a child again, you don't have to die and become born again in another lifetime. You can do it right now – in your own lifetime. We all have this power of *temimus* in ourselves, but it is just covered up.

Who are we relying on? Are we relying on Hashem, the same way a child relies on his mother? That is the kind of pure trust we need to have in Hashem. But sadly, most people rely on the money in their bank account, or on their cellphones, in order to feel safe and secure.

One day, we will all leave this world. Our souls will separate from our bodies. Where will our soul go? It will fly upwards. What happens if no one comes to collect our soul from where it is? Who will bring our soul to *Gan Eden*? Are we scared about what will happen then – or do we believe we will be okay, because Hashem is taking care of us?

A child who needs his parents to pick him up from school naturally relies that his parents will come pick him up. Do we have the same reliance on Hashem? Do we believe that He will come and pick us up to where we need to go – when the time comes? We have to believe and trust in Him no less than how a child naturally relies on his parents.

If we have this simple trust in Hashem, we can instill it in our children.

A baby does not think so much. A toddler doesn't think about his past day. Adults, though, have feelings and thoughts from the past. Is this a good thing or a bad thing? Thinking about our past is the cause of stress of life in our life, and it makes us so sad. But we have a great ability in us – the power to forget. We can forget all our past mistakes, all our past frustrations and sadness – and return to that state of being a child. A child's state of mind is very pure, because he has no past to haunt him. People have heart attacks only because they think about stressful events of the past. If we learn how to forget the past, we can erase it, and become like a child again.

### *How To Reach Your Calmness*

How can we do this? Sit in a quiet place and calm all your feelings and thoughts. You can reach a calm and quiet place in your soul which is untainted by anything in your life. This is the “child” within you that you can reach – a place in your soul that is totally calm and has no pain.

### *A Power for Life*

This is a power which we can use throughout our entire life – we have an ability to forget the past and erase it, emptying out all our raging thoughts and feelings that we have gone through in our life.

We all feel worn out from life. We are all physically and emotionally drained. How many people do you know feel refreshed? There is a possuk that says that tzaddikim get more refreshed as they get older. How is this possible?

Children are full of energy. Where does all that energy go? Does it just dry up when you get older? No, it stays there. You are able to become young and energetic. How can you do this? You can do it by forgetting your past mistakes and frustration, and erase all the stress up until now from your life that has piled up. This is not too hard to do. We can all relate to such a concept.

There are so many problems in life! People are so worn out from life. There is so much sickness and hardships going on in life. Do we want to stay in them, or do we want to have a place in ourselves where we can escape to? There is a place which we can form in our soul where we can go to and feel refreshed and energized, away from all the stress of life. It is an ability to go back to our childlike state. No matter what age you are, you can go back to the stage of childhood in you – that time in your life when you were so pure, trusting and free from pain.

If we don't build up this power in ourselves, how can we expect our children to lead a stress-free life? The more we connect to our childlike state, the more we will be able to connect to our children in a deeply emotional and highly effective way.

### *Communicating With Our Children Through Our "Inner Child"*

Do parents today have an emotional connection with their children? Do we understand them? Yes, we love them. But do we have an emotional connection with them? Do we understand them? If we think we understand them, then why do many children say their parents don't understand them?

Although many parents talk to their children and encourage them to talk about their experiences, this alone still doesn't get them to think that we understand them. The child can still sense that he and his parents are not on the same page.

The child really wants the parents to "play his game", not the agenda which they have for him. If the child senses that the parents are playing along with him in his "game" – when he sees that the parents relate to his childish antics – then the child will feel that his parents understand him. How indeed can we play our child's game? Simply, when it comes to actions, you can sit down with your child as he's playing a game and play with him. But what about how you talk to your child? When you talk to your child, are you ever doing so with the understanding of the childlike state?

You need to talk to him also with a child's sensitivity. We usually don't communicate with them with sensitivity that a child wants to see. We can understand very well when it comes to actions that we need to "play" with him and be like a child with him, but when it comes to communication with our children, it is hard for us to understand why we also need to be connected to our childlike state with them.

How can we do it? It is when we develop a place in our soul that is totally calm and stress-free. We need to come back to the child within ourselves, and then we will be able to connect to our children, all the time – not just when it comes to actions, but even in how we talk to them.

Children often like to explore and go on adventures, while adults are more stable and don't venture so much. We as parents need to come back to that stage of "exploring" in ourselves – our childlike state within – and from there, we will then be able to have a connection with our children.

### *In Conclusion*

Let us make a summary of what we have said, and make this practical.

If we want to escape the stress of life, we need to know how to empty out all our past feelings and thoughts. We can then go back to our beginning, the time when we were a child. This is the time when we were happy, pure, and fresh.

From this place in ourselves we can truly speak to Hashem in the proper way, and when we learn how talk like that to Hashem – to talk to Him from that pure, believing place in ourselves – from there, we can talk to our children in a pure, childlike way that a child enjoys to relate to.

### *QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH THE RAV*

Q: How can we attain this quiet time?

A: Just have utter quiet. No cellphones.

Q: How often must we access our "child" within?

A: Only at times. We do not mean to live in our childlike state 24/7. We just mean that at times, we need to access our "child" in us.

Q: Can we come to our "child" within through *Tefillah*?

A: You can't really daven properly unless you have calm and quiet in your life. You need to calm yourself down first if you are to daven properly. Before you daven, you should first quiet your thoughts.

Q: What does it mean to calm your mind? Does it mean to block out all your negative thoughts? How do you get rid of all the negative thoughts that bombard you?

A: This is an excellent question. You have to first realize that your thoughts are not you; they are more like a garment that covers over your actual self. A thought is just something external going on in your head. That itself will calm you down.

Q: Let's say a child had a very hard, stressful life. How can he go back to his childlike state, since he never had a calm stage in his life at all?

A: This is a very good question. When did the stress take place – as soon as he was born, or a little later in his life? That is one thing you have to know. If it only came later in the childhood, then you can still go back into that point of time before the stress came, when you had no stress yet. But if a person has been having a chaotic and traumatic life for as long as he can remember, then it's a bigger issue, because the stress has gone very deep into his sub-conscious. Such a person has a deeper job – he has to return to his very soul, which came before his physical life started. He can do this by remembering that he has a pure soul which has in it no pain, and reflecting into this can be his "childlike" state.

Q: What should you do if you are trying to access your childlike state, but there are external factors that are holding you back from doing so?

A: It's a very good question. If you have time every day for trying to access it, it will still be a great help to you, even if you don't get totally helped. It's like how it's better to get a little sleep then to have no sleep at all; it still does something for you, even though it doesn't help you totally.

## 1.9 | A Life of “*Emunah Peshutah*”

### *A Mother: “Aim/Amen/Emunah”*

We will try to explain, with the help of Hashem, a little about what the role of the Jewish woman is, and to explain this as much as we can in a way that it will affect us practically.

The first woman in history was Chavah- she was called the *aim kol chai*, the mother of all living beings. Our Sages teach us that the word *aim* (אם) mother, is from the word *amen* (אמן) which is also related to the word *Emunah* (אמונה) which is also related to the word *neemanus* (נאמנות), loyalty.

What is the special *neemanus/loyalty* that the Jewish woman possesses? Don't all people possess the trait of loyalty? What is the concept of *Emunah*?

The word *aim* (אם) contains the letters *aleph* (א) and *mem* (מ). The *aleph* here stands for the word *adam* (אדם), which means “person.” The letter *mem* stands for the word *mekabel*, a “receiver.” The word *amen* has in it the letter *nun*, which stands for the word *noisen*, giver; the word *amen* thus contains *aleph*, *mem*, and *nun*, which alludes to how we become a complete person – first we are a receiver, and then we become a giver.

Shlomo *HaMelech* says in *Mishlei* (chapter 2), “*Ki im l'binah tikra*”, “For only (*im*) if you call out to understanding.” The Sages read the word *im* as *aim*, mother. In other words, the possuk is saying that a woman is comprised of these two words – *aim*, and *im*.

What is the aspect of “*aim*” in a woman, and what is the aspect of “*im*” in woman? *Im* means “if”, which implies that there are two choices to choose from. This is alluding to our power of *bechira*, free will.

Woman in Hebrew is called “*nekaivah*”, which means *nekev*, hole. A hole receives what is put into it; this represents how a woman receives from her husband. But if a woman eventually becomes a giver, she reflects *amen* – which implies “giver”.

This is the concept, and now let us explain what this will mean for us, in a practical way.

### *Two Stages Of Our Life – Receiving and Giving*

Everyone has *bechirah*, free will. What is our free will? What do we choose? Of course, we choose if we will get up out of bed in the morning, if we will *daven*, and if we will make a *beracha* before we eat. But Rav Dessler *zt”l* explained the depth of free will: that it is the power to choose if we will be receivers, or if we will be givers. In whatever do, either we are right now choosing to take something for ourselves, or we are choosing to give something to others.

A person is born as a receiver, and he must become a giver. It's hard for us to learn how to give. But not only is it hard to give - even our initial stage, receiving, is hard! The fact that we are receivers is a stage we must first go through in life in order to be able to give, and this first stage in our life, receiving, is actually harder than learning how to give. Let us explain what we mean.

### *We Must Be Proper "Receivers" In Order To Then Become "Givers"*

It's hard for us to "receive".

We are not referring to the fact that it's hard for us overcome our pleasure in receiving gifts and compliments from others (although that, too, is hard). The depth of the hardship in receiving from others is that it is for hard us to be able to *accept* things in the proper way! What we really mean is that it is hard for us to **accept what's going on in our life**. Not only is it hard for us to *give*; it's hard for us to *accept* as well, and *this is even harder* than learning how to become givers!

It is hard for us to accept certain facts about our life - because we are missing *Emunah* (faith in G-d).

When everything is going good for us, it's easy to accept what's coming our way. When everyone is being pleasant to you, when your husband speaks to you nicely, when your children are acting good in school and they're getting good grades, when you are receiving warmth and compliments from others - then life is good, and we have an easy time with our life. But what happens when things aren't going on our way? What happens when your husband comes home grumpy? What happens when your kids aren't doing well in school? Can we accept that easily? It's usually very hard for us to accept these situations. And when we can't accept these situations, we will have a very, very hard time living our life.

The only way how we can accept our difficulties in life is if we live with *Emunah*. *Emunah* is a power in our soul in which we can get used to problems, on a regular basis, and accept them.

The first commandment was "*I am Hashem*"; it was about *Emunah*. *Emunah* is not just to remember every day when we say *Shema* about how Hashem took us out of Egypt (although that, too, is also commendable); *Emunah* is that every single day, all the time, we live with our *Emunah*.

When we have *Emunah*, our life will become clearer.

Some people are bothered: "How is it possible for me to have *Emunah* the whole day?!" But the true way that a Jew is supposed to live is to have *Emunah* **the entire day**. Without this, it will be impossible to live our life! We all go through countless difficulties in our life. If we have *Emunah*, we will be able to survive; we will be at peace, and our lives will feel calm, no matter what we go through. The more we have *Emunah*, the happier we will become as well.

Of course, if someone attempts to transform himself overnight and start having *Eemunah* all day, it is an unrealistic change. But you can start by having *Eemunah* for 4-5 hours a day, and then you can eventually turn it into having *Eemunah* all day.

*Eemunah* helps us become “receivers”; it helps us become true receivers, because with *Eemunah*, we can truly accept whatever comes our way. When we become true receivers, we will then be able to enter the second stage in our life, which is to become a giver – we will be able to truly give others. If we don't develop our *Eemunah*, then we never go through the first stage in our life properly, and then our giving to others won't be true giving, because it will only be a superficial and undeveloped kind of giving.

### *Why Are Parents Not Seeing Progress With Their Children?*

Parents are putting so much into their children, and the children still don't always turn out good. The parents are terribly disappointed and upset: “How could this happen?? Didn't we try so hard with our children??” But the painful answer to that while, yes, the parents *gave* endlessly to their children, it wasn't with properly developed feelings of love and happiness. It was often with a frown and with unhappiness. This was all because the parents didn't first work on their *Eemunah*, and because they didn't develop their own *Eemunah*, all that they gave to their children was without true feeling.

*Eemunah* is what develops us. *Eemunah* helps us be able to give to others with our full heart; when we give to our children with our full heart, they will then feel our kindness, and then we will be truly successful with them. But without developing our *Eemunah*, we aren't able to give to our children with a full heart, and then our children don't sense the love in all that we do for them.

In the end of the day, we all need a lot of *siyata d'shmaya* (Heavenly assistance) to have good children. But we will only get help from Heaven with our children if we do our part. Our part is to develop our *Eemunah* – and then we can *daven* to Hashem to help us.

### *Eemunah: The Art of Acceptance*

*Eemunah* encompasses every matter in our life – from childhood until our old age. We have to be able to accept everything in our life, big or small – from the time we are children, until the end of our life.

Avraham *Avinu* was tested ten times; the final test was that he was told that he must sacrifice his son. What was the point of all these tests? Why did he have to be tested ten times? It was to test his *Eemunah*, that *Eemunah* has to span our entire life – every aspect.

If we want to make this very practical in our life, every day for 2-3 minutes sit and think about *Eemunah peshutah* (simple, non-intellectual faith in G-d). Think simply: “Who created the world?

Who runs the world? Hashem. Is there anything He's not taking care of? No. He is taking care of every little aspect going on in the world..."

After getting used to this, you can progress to another stage. Throughout the day, prepare yourself to accept something that doesn't go your way – and accept it happily, lovingly, from *Emunah peshutah* in Hashem.

Do this every day – ingrain in yourself each day *Emunah peshutah*. You can't do it a whole day, but you can do it for 2-3 minutes a day. During this 2-3 minutes of *Emunah peshutah* each day, don't delve into this intellectually. You don't have to learn any of the words of our Chazal or our *sefarim* for this; just ingrain yourself with *Emunah peshutah*, by accepting something each day, happily and lovingly.

If you keep doing this, you are going in the way of our forefathers – in the way of “*maaminim b'nei maaminim*”, “believers, the sons of believers”. Without *Emunah*, we are missing the main point of all Judaism. It's nice to do *chessed* for others and to have good *middos*, but if we don't have *Emunah*, then we are missing the main thing in our life.

So for a few minutes a day, have *Emunah peshutah*. Think about all the events that happened in your life, from your early childhood until today, and accept every painful event that you went through in your life with *Emunah*. And accept each thing lovingly and happily. This will bring you to the true happiness of your soul, and it will make your lifestyle resemble that of our great ancestors, who lived with *Emunah peshutah*.

Without *Emunah*, our lives are empty. Every Jew is full of *mitzvos* – even the most wicked Jew does many *mitzvos*; Chazal say that “even the empty ones among them [the Jewish people] are full of as many *mitzvos* as the amount of seeds in a pomegranate.” In other words, wicked people do lots of *mitzvos* too, but because they're missing *Emunah*, they are still considered empty. The lesson we learn from this statement [concerning the wicked] is that a Jew's life is empty without *Emunah*.

### *Letting Emunah Become A Basic Part of Our Life*

Throughout the day, we spend so much of our day thinking about our worries: our job, our health, our kids, etc. We spend so much time in our imagination – often about things that we have no idea why we are thinking about them. Even as we sleep at night, we dream about these worries.

How about spending some of that thinking about *Emunah peshutah*? We spend so much time thinking anyway; why not use just 2-3 minutes each day to think about *Emunah peshutah*? The more we think about *Emunah peshutah* throughout the day, even our dreams at night will be about *Emunah peshutah*!

Let *Emunah peshutah* become part of your life. If we go our whole life – 70 or 80 years without even thinking once about *Emunah peshutah* - what kind of life is that? Without *Emunah peshutah*, we never live the true meaning of a Jew's life.

We are describing here the true way how life is supposed to look like, and there is nothing new here. These words are totally practical and applicable to all our lives.

May we merit to be truly be close to Hashem and do His will; may we merit to accept what happens in our life – man or woman – and then we will be able to truly give to others from a pure place in our soul, a place that is happy and full of true love for others – and then our children will get truly nourished from what we put into them.

## 1.10 | *Woman's Spirituality in the Home*<sup>2</sup>

### *The Differing Needs of Men and Women*

To summarize thus far, we have explained that husband and wife need to find a point which unites them and work towards reaching it, so that they will feel their partnership. Previously, it was explained that a Jewish home needs to have *ruchniyus* (spirituality) infused in it. It was explained briefly and generally, and now we will explain this in more detail.

Everyone consists of a *guf* (body) and a *neshamah* (Divine soul); we are each a combination of the physical and the spiritual. In a marriage, the husband has a body and soul, and the wife has her body and soul.

All of these four aspects are coming together in marriage and will encounter one another. Just as we can encounter clashes within our own personality, such as the contradiction we face between our body and our soul, so is it possible for the husband's soul to clash with the needs of his wife's soul, and the same is true vice versa.

When a man's motivations on this world are mainly geared toward the physical, then the conversations he has with his wife are [mainly] physically-oriented. When all he talks about with her are physical needs and desires, such a home resembles a non-Jewish home. If all they do is chat, go on walks together, and speak about work and clothing and purchases with each other – then all they speak about with each other is worldly matters, and such a home will be centered around This World. It will not be a true Jewish home; it resembles exactly a non-Jewish home.

However, the other extreme is bad too: if a husband only seeks to build a spiritual relationship with his wife, this will not be enough to sustain their home. A true Jewish home is built on a solid connection between the spouses which involves **both** their body and soul. Husband and wife must be connected with each other both in the physical and well as in the spiritual.

In the previous chapter, we explained the nature of their **physical** connection [that they must not make the mistake of being totally body-oriented, and they must realize that they are souls too]. In this chapter, we will explain the nature of their **spiritual** connection that they must strive for. But we will first emphasize that a "Jewish" home is to live a spiritual kind of life, as opposed to a body-oriented life; each of them must strive to live a spiritual kind of life, as much as they can do.

A true Jewish home is when spirituality is revealed in it, every day. We will focus here on a certain point about the spiritual connection between husband and wife which is very fundamental.

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<sup>2</sup> *Getting To Know Your Family #08*

Man and woman differ in their physical needs, and that all of us know, more or less. But the spiritual differences between man and woman are even more complicating to understand, because *ruchniyus* (spirituality) is harder to understand. The first difference is that a man usually takes more the rational approach whereas women take the more emotional approach.

If both of them are living spiritually, there will also be differences. A man works mainly through his intellect, so he wants to “build” the home sensibly. A woman, though, takes the more emotional path, which means that she doesn't seek to “build” it rationally. She wants a good home of course, but many times she does not know how to “build” it properly to go in the will of Hashem...

That is the rough outline. We will explain the difference now more in detail.

### *The Void of Spirituality In Today's Homes*

Let's take a look at a Jewish home today in which there is an atmosphere of Torah in the home, which is supposed to represent the ideal “Torah home.” That's what it's called.

What has it become today? What do the husband and wife do? The husband gets up in the morning, goes to daven, then he goes to *Kolel* and learns for at least 6-7 hours. All day, he is immersed in spirituality. The wife is doing whatever she's doing; she's running the home. She is not living the day in spirituality. A man learning Torah all day is living in the *sugyos* (sections of *Gemara*) that he is learning. But a woman all day is involved with worldly matters, as she takes care of the children, dresses them and does their laundry. It is all a *mitzvah* that she is doing, but she is living in the material side of life.

The lives of husband and wife are being experienced very differently. All day he is involved with pursuits of *ruchniyus*, while she is involved all day in the physical responsibilities of life. Let us ask ourselves: Doesn't this create a problem?

Of course, one can simply answer to this that each of them is doing their role: A man has a *mitzvah* to learn Torah, and a woman is not commanded to learn Torah; her task is to run the home and raise the children. If she merits it, she can stay at home with the children and not have to work, and if she doesn't have that luxury, she goes to work. But in the end of the day, a wife lives in the material side of life.

The home might be called a “Torah home”, but it can have no Torah in it! The husband lives a life of Torah, and maybe he even says wonderful *Divrei Torah* at the Shabbos table, but what about the wife? She lives in a world in which there is almost no Torah in her life. Her husband's *Divrei Torah* isn't enough to satisfy her need for Torah.

A man merits to learn Torah in the *beis midrash*, so we [*Kolel* men] all have some *ruchniyus* our life, more or less. The husband comes home and meets up with his wife; how can they feel connected when they are living such different kinds of lives?

Even if she *davens* every day and says *Kerias Shema* every day (we won't discuss here if she is obligated or not in this), how much *ruchniyus* does she actually feel in her life? Usually, very little. The *ruchniyus* she feels in her life is that she is helping her husband live a spiritual life, by taking care of the physical needs of the home and thus enabling him to learn with fewer things on his head. But although she accomplishes this, she does not actually feel *ruchniyus* revealed in her life from just this. She feels only the material side of life.

What results from this? It does not make a Torah home. It is a home with *Kolel* going on in it, and surely the *Kolel* has Torah going on it - but not the home. This does not infuse *ruchniyus* into the home. And as a result, the husband and wife cannot form a complete connection with each other. He is living a spiritual life, learning most of the day, maybe saying *shiurim*, growing in his *ruchniyus*, while she is not. She finds herself in a different world than the world her husband lives in.

### *Idealistic Women*

Until now we only addressed one kind of *frum* woman. But you may have recognized that there is another group of Jewish women who face a whole different problem than this. Girls who didn't learn in the mainstream seminaries, who gained the knowledge of their heritage through seminars that are geared towards *baalei teshuvah*. These girls have acquired an impressive amount of Jewish knowledge, *hashkafah* (ideals), and matters of deep thought.

What happens when these kinds of girls get married? It's hard to understand how this can be a problem, but it is: she is so infused with idealism that she will take upon herself tasks such as finishing the whole *sefer Tehillim*, every day. What about her three children who need to be taken care of? Even if she hears them wailing and crying (and it sounds like *teruah*, *tekiah*, and *shevarim* sounds of a shofar), she waits until they are screaming (when it sounds like a *tekiah gedolah*!) before she gets up from her *Tehillim*. This is because she thinks that it is her obligation to finish the whole *sefer Tehillim* every day!

She has become very spiritual, but her values are misguided, because she cannot pull herself away from spirituality to tend to the home. This is extreme behavior and it is problematic to a home.

We have seen here two different extremes taking place in our times, which are two different ends of the spectrum.

### *Pondering Each Day Why We Live*

In a home where there are many children, the husband and wife are more involved with each other as they raise the children together. It is surely the will of Hashem to raise the children and take care of them, and they should help each other. But they will not form a spiritual connection through this, if this is all that goes on in their marriage.

Even if a wife makes sure to *daven* every day and she says *Kerias Shema* with her fullest concentration twice a day – and even if she says it again at night before going to sleep - it won't be enough for her to satisfy her spiritual void. It won't either be enough for her if she listens to her husband's *divrei Torah* every week by the Shabbos table. Even if she listens once a week to a Torah lecture from a prominent Rebbetzin, she will still not feel like it's enough. Maybe this will be enough for her to raise children in the way of Torah, but as far as her own personal life concerns, she feels totally empty from *ruchniyus*.

We [the husbands] should know clearly that this cannot be enough for a Jewish woman to survive spiritually. Taking care of the kids, from morning until night, and being on the phone and talking to friends – is not giving her any *ruchniyus*. She won't be able to build her *ruchniyus* through *shiurim* on the *parasha* that she hears over the phone. It is a life dead from *ruchniyus*; it is not alive. And a husband cannot expect his wife to raise the children correctly if she is lacking *ruchniyus* in her life. It simply will not happen.

In many situations, it is indeed very difficult for husband and wife to have a spiritual connection. It takes a lot of hard work. What, then, is the key to living a spiritual life together?

Husband and wife need to find a point that connects together in which they feel a partnership, as it was mentioned earlier. In a Torah home, where an *avreich* learns Torah most of the day, it's still very possible that an entire day goes by in which he doesn't ever think why he is living. He *davens* every day, learns every day, even does *chessed*, helps in the house, and does many other good things, but it's still possible that he never pauses for a moment to think, **“What am I living for?”**

The question of **“What am I living for?”** is something that each man and woman need to ask themselves. It is a question that must fill all of our souls, man and woman alike. It is the most fundamental question you can ever ask yourself. Whether one is old or young, he needs to wonder about it.

The issue, of course, is: how exactly we can live with purpose to our life. Each person will have a different answer to the question. But one thing is for: every person needs to ask him/herself this question. But the question applies to all people.

The true answer to the question is: we are all here on this world for one purpose alone: **to recognize the Creator** in life.

How is it that a husband can think that his wife will feel spiritually satisfied when every day she gets up, davens a little, tidies up the house, does the laundry, bathes the children, cleans out the sink and does all the dishes (and the dishes are piled up the next day again)? It is because he hasn't stopped to think of why he and she are living.

He doesn't think that life is about directing ourselves towards recognize the Creator more and more. He thinks that life is about “things getting done”: the children must be raised properly, they must be neatly dressed and clean, the house should be neat - and that there must be *Shalom Bayis* of course; and other needs that he has.

Whether one is a man or woman, the question of “**What do I live for?**” needs to be asked to oneself, every day. A person must ask himself or herself if he/she is actively striving to recognize the Creator. There is a way to get there for a man, and there is a way to get there for a woman. There is also a point between man and woman which can help them get there, and that is the point that can connect and unite them, through which they can build the home together.

The husband might think that because his life is all about Torah, his wife is the *kli*/receptacle, that holds all his Torah; so he thinks that she gets her needs in *ruchniyus* from that.

So life is not about what “needs to get done”. The husband must learn Torah and *daven*, the wife must raise the children and make them happy and cook all the meals. True. But is that what life is all about? Such a life only has body in it with no soul.

These words sound very harsh to us when we hear them, but what should we do? It's the truth, and it hurts.

### *Searching Wives*

Let's try to understand what has been going on the last couple of years, through an inner perspective, and not through a mere superficial understanding.

In the last couple of years, the Jewish newspapers have been writing articles targeted for women readers, which are about deep thoughts concerning various matters of life. These articles are meant to make a person think about life. And the pen is free in the writer's hand to write in the article whatever she feels like writing.

We must understand how this all started. It has come to the point in which women only remember their *ruchniyus* from being in seminary, and later in life they are in need of more *ruchniyus* because they weren't getting it, so they sought to fill it. They want more and more. There are many women today who are searching for life with meaning. They really want to know of what an inner life. They have good intentions. But they are being misled in the wrong directions.

Where is an inner life found in? With Hashem, through learning Torah. But when the wife remains in the home and her husband goes off to learn Torah in *Kolel*, she begins to feel that she is missing *ruchniyus*, and she wants to fill the void. How does she fill it? With all the garbage that she is reading, which is all gleaned by women writers who are getting all their material from non-Jewish sources.

These are women writers who have studied in all kinds of strange places in the world. A new generation is being produced: filling the spiritual void that many Jewish women feel. If the writers were trying to help the readers live a holier life, a life of bonding more with Hashem, that would be wonderful. Instead, all of the articles are pointing in all sorts of directions, to search more.

A man can fill his void mostly with Torah. But a woman does not have Torah, so what can she do for her soul? If she is already connected with Hashem, her soul feels alive and satisfied. If she doesn't, she feels a void, and she begins to search, for something else.

About 20 years ago, the women's articles were about keeping a tidy home and cooking. If it would have remained at that, it would have been fine. But now there are entire articles and papers devoted to fill the void that women are feeling. How it is being filled? With the knowledge of [modern] psychology.

They are searching for life. But what they really need to do is to search for an inner life that is truly alive.

I hope you understand here what I am trying to tell you. The entire world of women has gone through an overhaul in the last 20 years!

There are entire courses today given by "Rabbis" who are "converting" women to secular knowledge. These courses are not teaching *mussar sefarim*. They are not teaching 'Chovos HaLevovos', 'Shaarei Teshuvah' or 'Orchos Tzaddikim'. As a result, the *b'nei Torah* are facing a new generation of wives who have become "scholars" of secular knowledge. This is the reality we face today. (Now they have courses too like this for men...)

Now there are *frum* "Chareidi" publications which are made special for women that are filled with non-Jewish ideas; the writers of these articles are avid readers of secular psychology and wish to educate women with this kind of knowledge, and they do so without any sense of shame. This is the new "*hashkafah*" (outlook) that is sweeping through the world of women: to become educated with secular knowledge about life.

### *The Two Difficulties We Face In Building A Spiritual Home*

To build a spiritual life in the home, the first problem we face with this, as we said, is because a woman is involved with the various responsibilities of life. In recent years, an even deeper problem has surfaced. The wife does have *ruchniyus* in her life – and she's getting it all from non-Jewish sources!

What results from this? The home cannot ever be spiritual in this way.

### *The Solution*

What we have to do is to see the home through the lens of the Torah. In order to build a spiritual home, the husband and wife have to learn about life from the words of Chazal. If not, and they are getting their viewpoints on life from secular sources, how can they ever hope to build a spiritual home??

To work on this practically is already the next step. Here we are just explaining the basis of what we need.

(With regards to the workforce, where a woman often has to work with gentiles in the same office, this is also problematic. We are in exile, and it is a very deeply profound one, being that we so mixed with gentiles who influence us. The husband must see to it that his wife is working in a place that is not destructive to her values. They need to look for the best possible place for her to work in.)

Both husband and wife need to understand that they must stay away from all secular reading material, and that all of their viewpoints must come only from Torah and Chazal.

People argue that our Sages tell us that "*Chochmah B'Goyim Taamin*" - "Wisdom is found among the nations". However, just because there is wisdom found among *goyim* does not require a Jew to read their ideas. A Jewish person reading any of the non-Jewish books is endangering himself to think like a non-Jew, and who knows what will become of him? He might become like a non-Jew in the way he thinks and views life, in the process of learning their wisdoms.

If a woman spends a lot of time reading non-Jewish ideas in the magazines and books, even if her husband learns Torah all day, she will be unable to gain from her husband's Torah wisdom; it's like they're speaking different languages. He'll tell her what he learned in *Mesillas Yescharim* that day, and she tells him back what she read in the paper that day. They will each be in two different worlds that they cannot relate to each other.

The only way for a Jewish woman to have real spirituality in her life is if she takes a few minutes every day to think: "*What Do I Live For?*" Although it is true that a woman needs to take care of the home and children, as well as cook, clean, and go to work to support the home (if necessary), these are things that "must get done", but, she also needs to know how to live! It is not enough for her to feel truly alive if she just takes care of the home and the children and she works to bring in money. She must live also!

And what does a Jew live from? A Jew lives from his/her bond with the Creator and with doing His will. It's not enough to do His will – you have to have a bond with the Creator.

It is not possible in every home to do this, but if they can do so, the husband and wife should ask themselves each day, "Who created me, and for what do I live for?" After that, they should strive to make their lives meet that. The fact that she is busy raising the children, running the home, and goes to work, does not exempt a woman from asking herself this question each day.

So in order to have a spiritual home, a woman's need for knowledge of spirituality must be nursed **only** from the words of our holy Chazal (starting from *Chumash*, all the way down to the later *sefarim*). She must not be reading any non-Jewish books or ideas at all. If she does so, they are able to build a spiritual home. If a woman is reading any non-Jewish material, it is certain that their entire marriage will become shaky from the ideas she's reading about, and they will not be able to enjoy a spiritual relationship with each other.

As we began to mention in these last two chapters, husband and wife are not just married together in the physical sense; they are not merely a union of two bodies. They are souls, two *neshamos* which are meant to become one, and therefore they must connect to their souls. They must form a connection of the soul together with each other.

Husband and wife each have to work to reveal their souls, and in this way, they form a spiritual connection with each other, which is the way that a Jewish home is supposed to look like. Without the spiritual element in their connection, their home does not resemble a true Jewish home.

If it is clear to a woman that she needs to do this and avoid all secular material, she will find that she can now be enabled to have a spiritual connection with her husband and enjoy the spirituality which her husband tries to impart to her.

Of course, they will still not feel connected together in every last detail going on in their marriage, but to a very prominent extent, they will feel more connected with each other on a spiritual level – as long as they find at least one point which they are both aiming for in life.

### *In Conclusion*

The words here were brief about the topic. Hopefully it has served to give you a little thinking of what a true Jewish home should look like,

A Jew lives from feeling connected to Hashem – not just from keeping the Torah and mitzvos. That is where we draw our vitality from in life: our bond with the Creator. To work on this concept, every day, think of why you live. Think Who created you, and that He is providing for you each day.

## 1.11 | *The Nature of Torah Psychology*

### *Knowing Ourselves: Our Lifelong Task*

*Baruch Hashem*, we have merited to keep growing higher together, on a general level in *Avodas Hashem* and on a specific level, in recognizing our soul.

Besides for learning *halachah* each day, the first general fact that a person must know is that in order to truly serve the Creator, we also need to become clearer about our inner world. This is the root of all *Avodas Hashem*.

The clearer a person becomes about his soul, the more precise his *Avodas Hashem* will be. Without proper self-knowledge, even if a person learns Torah and performs the *mitzvos*, he will not get to the purpose of life, which is to recognize Hashem.

Self-knowledge is a lifelong task. It's not an issue if "I recognize myself" or not. It's not a black-on-white answer. There are levels and levels of self-knowledge. Each day of a person's life must be spent trying to get to know oneself better.

### *Men and Women With Regards To Self-Knowledge*

People spend many years trying to learn about matters that are outside of themselves. But the true kind of life that both men and women need to pursue is to pursue the understanding of the human soul. The main *mitzvah* of a man is to learn Torah, and he also needs to devote some of his time to understand the soul. Women, who do not have the *mitzvah* to learn Torah, have a greater obligation to grow in their understanding of the soul and gain clarity of this inner world.

Although it is also necessary sometimes to learn about worldly matters and to know how to make a livelihood, the main body of learning should be spent on learning about the soul. The soul must be learned about more and more.

### *Not A New Way*

This concept [self-knowledge] is rooted in the Torah, and it is not some idea that came from the nations of the world. It is not a new way. It was traversed by our leaders of the past.

We have merited with the help of Heaven to explain these paths, but you should know that it is not only the path of our Rabbis alone. It is the path that every Jewish soul needs to go on, especially in our generation. We don't need to turn to other sources for this that are found in the gentile nations, which are inappropriate sources for us.

The Jewish people have the Torah of Hashem, and all of our life needs to follow the Halachos of the Torah, as well as the path of building the soul that is defined by the Torah. The ways of the Torah to build our soul have been explained to us by the leaders of the past generations.

### *The Neshamah and Nefesh HaBehaimis*

The way of the Torah in building our souls consists of two factors. One part of ourselves is our *neshamah* (the Divine soul), which is the pure part in us that is called *cheilek eloka mimaal*, the “portion of G-d above” that is manifest in us. The other part of ourselves is the *nefesh habehaimis*, the “animal” soul, which is our lower aspect.

The nations of the world do not have the level of pure *neshamah*, therefore, their information about self-knowledge is based upon the knowledge of the *nefesh habehaimis* alone. By contrast, the way of the Torah, which is meant for the Jewish people, incorporates the *neshamah* aspect in our self-knowledge. We also have a *nefesh habehaimis*, though. Therefore, we must learn both about our higher aspect, our *neshamah*, as well as our lower layers of the soul, all the way down until the *nefesh habehaimis* layer of ourselves.

### *Understanding Our ‘Nefesh HaBehaimis’*

Practically speaking, when we begin our journey of self-knowledge, we must start with knowing our *nefesh habehaimis*, and work our way upwards towards the *neshamah*. It is like Jacob's ladder footed on earth, whose head reaches the heavens. We start by working with the lower levels, working our way upwards towards the higher levels. It is a step-by-step process. The lowest step which we begin with is to directly work with our *nefesh habehaimis*, which exists both in the gentile nations of the world as well as in a Jew.

The “*nefesh habehaimis*” is called so from the word “*behaimah*”, animal, for it exists in animals as well.<sup>3</sup> It also exists in a gentile. The *nefesh habehaimis* of a Jew, however, is different than the *nefesh habehaimis* of an animal and a gentile. Although these all have the title ‘*nefesh habehaimis*’, there are three levels to it: 1) Animal; 2) Gentile; 3) Jew.

The *nefesh habehaimis* of a Jew is able to receive the light of the *neshamah* and thereby be improved. Sometimes it remains by itself, and sometimes it joins with the *neshamah*. Even when it remains by itself, though, the light of the *neshamah* can still have somewhat of an effect on it. Thus, even the *nefesh habehaimis* of a Jew is more elevated than the *nefesh habehaimis* of a gentile.

That being the case, it is insensible to learn about our *nefesh habehaimis* from the gentiles, because they do not have all the information we need.

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<sup>3</sup> Vilna Gaon's commentary to Yeshayahu 11:1

### *The Three Steps of Self-Knowledge*

Our task of self-knowledge – with regards to knowing our *nefesh habehaimis* – consists of three parts. The first part is to learn the teachings of our Rabbis about matters of the soul. The second part is to analyze these matters intellectually and understand them, so that we are clear in these matters. The third part is when we are experiencing these matters; to identify these matters within our own awareness.

Those are the three general steps of recognizing our *nefesh habehaimis*. Each step needs to be learned calmly and patiently. If we grab too much knowledge at once, we don't get anywhere. This is true in general when it comes to acquiring Torah, but it is especially true when we try to learn about the subtle matters of learning about our soul; especially when we learn about the *nefesh habehaimis*. We need to slowly acquire this information and slowly become clear about this information.

The point is not just to gather many tidbits of knowledge, but to feel that our inner world is becoming clearer. If someone feels that he is just gathering knowledge but that it's not changing him inside, it's a sign that he's not learning the information correctly. He must slowly learn the information and try to understand it and be clear in it.

Since this study involves the uses of our intellect and emotion, it is a slow process. We need to learn about these matters slowly and clearly with our intellect, and we need to experience these matters in our emotional experience as we go through life. But although it is a long process, it makes us clearer as we go along. The study of it must eventually bring a person to the point of clarity where he feels that he is getting to know himself better and better.

In summary, the first step is to clarify the information and understand it. The second step is to identify these matters in oneself and connect to them experientially. The third step is to feel a calmness that comes from being clearer in these matters; to the point that the study of one's soul is giving him *yishuv hadaas* (a settled mind) and *menuchah* (serenity).

The path we are describing is not a one-year or two-year program where you graduate at the end and you get a degree. It is a lifelong task. It is not like learning other courses, such as trying to become a doctor, where it takes a few years to finish and then you get a doctorate. It is a lifelong study, which changes you internally, as you go along.

As you learn about your soul, you get closer and closer to reaching your essence. It makes us stop being superficial and to become more internal. Slowly but surely as we learn about ourselves, we get closer and closer to finding our essence - which is the path that leads us to the complete recognition of Hashem.

*Amen, V'Amen.*

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH THE RAV

**Q1: *When Adam and Chavah sinned, was it that all of us committed the sin with them and therefore we are responsible to rectify the sin? Or it wasn't our sin and it was just the sin of Adam and Chavah, and it is just that we need to rectify the sin of Adam and Chavah?***

**A:** The first option you guessed is correct. All of us were once part of Adam's soul, so all of us were in the act of the sin. It is like if part of your body does something – you don't look at it as a mere part of your body that did it, rather, it was you that did it, since there was a part of you that did it.

**Q2: *If a person was born secular and became a baal teshuvah, why is he responsible to rectify his past now and correct any mistakes he's still making, when there was no way for him to know until now about the mistakes he was making?***

**A:** There is a lengthy discussion amongst our *Gedolim* about what it means to have the status of a "captured child" (*tinok shenishboh*) growing up in our times and how far this definition goes. If a child is raised secular today, is he totally innocent, because he can't help his ignorance? Or is he not that ignorant, because every person ultimately encounters Jewishness all over the place, and therefore he's not totally innocent (and therefore he still had free will to improve until now)? The truth is that only the *Beis Din* upstairs in Heaven can know how much free will he really had, depending on his unique circumstances; if he's totally innocent, partially innocent, partially guilty, or totally guilty. There is no person on this world who can know for sure how to judge anyone's situation. Only the *Beis Din* in Heaven knows what each person's situation is and how the person is to be judged.

**Q3: *But regarding the changes that a person needs to make now in his life, is he now responsible for his past?***

**A:** One must do whatever he can do right now to change himself from the present onward, and he needs to change his life retroactively – whether he was guilty until now, or whether he was totally ignorant and innocent for his actions until now. As we said before, only the *Beis Din* in Heaven can judge his past, and there is no one on this world who can know if he was responsible until now for his past. But what is in his free will right now is, to change himself from this point onward.

## 1.12 | *The Inner World Today*

With the help of Hashem we will reflect how we relate to the spiritual world today, the way spirituality was in previous generations and the way it is today.

When Hashem first created man, He formed him from the earth and breathed into him a living soul. In the original state of mankind, the body did not conceal the soul. Man perceived himself as a soul inside a body, and not as a body containing a soul. When a person grasped himself in this way, he was naturally spiritual, and he naturally connected to Hashem as a result. When Adam sinned by eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*, it was not a physical desire, but rather a spiritual desire. The sin of Adam changed the entire world, and it changed man in particular, in the way that man perceives himself. Adam was told “*You are earth*”, which implies that ever since the sin, man views himself as mainly being a body, and not a soul.

The change that took place in the world, ever since the sin, affected our entire psyche. Our desires, our thoughts, our speech, our actions, are naturally inclined towards physicality, and we are not initially connected in our psyche to spirituality.

Our earlier Rabbis wrote that our souls were all once part of Adam's soul<sup>4</sup>. Thus, by studying what happened with Adam, we can understand the nature of our soul, and what our life's journey will be like. Also, because our soul was once rooted in Adam's soul, our soul still retains its original perception, when we identified our existence as mainly being with a soul covered by a body, rather than a body with a soul in it. This aspect of the soul is further out of reach because we currently live in a generation that is very far from Adam. However, just because we are very far from it doesn't mean that we can't reach it. It is still there, it is just hidden very deep inside us.

In addition, the Arizal explains that when we stood at *Har Sinai*, we returned to the state of Adam, and we saw ourselves as a soul again. But with the sin of the Golden Calf, once again we were back to the state of after the sin, in which we view ourselves initially as a body. Ever since the sin of the Golden Calf, we have remained in that state.

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<sup>4</sup> In response to a question asked after this class, the Rav brought the words of the Arizal that there are rare exceptions to this rule, for there were a few “new souls” that appear throughout history who did not exist during Adam's sin, thus they were never part of the sin at all. Most people, however, are not from these “new souls.”

To clarify a bit more, the Rav explained in *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*, Volume 8 (Chapter 3) that there were two groups of rare souls which were not part of Adam's soul, and the third group of souls, which is most of us, were all present in Adam's soul at the time of the sin. One group of souls fled from Adam's soul at the time of the sin, and there were also “new souls” which begin to come to the world at the End of Days; both of these souls are rare, and therefore most of us are of the third group of souls, who were part of Adam's soul at the sin.

There have been two points in time we were totally pure – before Adam's sin, and during the 40 days after the giving of the Torah, which end at the 17<sup>th</sup> of *Tamuz* when the *Luchos* were broken. The pre-sin state is deep in the recesses of our soul; it is hidden away very deep underneath many layers.

When a child is born, he perceives himself as a totally physical being. A child constantly expresses physical desires. As a child begins to mature, he begins to access his emotions a little more, and he laughs and has more mature conversations, but he still perceives himself as mainly being a body. When we get a little older and we mature, and we access our intellect, even at the age of 20 or 40, we can still very well perceive our existence as being a bodily existence. This is the situation of most people – the way they come into this world is the way they leave the world.

The Torah is the soul of the world. Just like the soul is the soul of our body, so is the Torah the soul to this world, which is like the body. The Torah shows us the spirituality of the physical universe that we see. It helps us reveal our own soul as our existence.

Here comes the difficulty. It could be that a person learns Torah but only through his body! If he still identifies himself as a body, the words of Torah he learns are being learned through his body, and not through his soul. When a person views Torah through the physical orientation of the body, a person sees Torah as a mere physical object, a body of laws he has to follow, and he never sees the soul of Torah.

This is the problem in our generation. It was always an issue, but now it is especially an issue: **people are viewing Torah as physical, and they are not seeing the soul of Torah, because they perceive everything as physicality.** There were always individuals who were able to see the Torah as a soul and to live life through the soul, while the general masses couldn't do it. For this reason, we always had a problem with identifying our spiritual existence. But now this issue has become much more magnified.

To illustrate, people know about bad *middos*, but they still can't overcome their bad *middos*. A person can know intellectually that it's evil to have a bad desire or to get angry, but he doesn't internalize this knowledge into feeling, and therefore he doesn't actually improve his *middos*, even though he knows good and well that it is evil. He doesn't **feel** his knowledge.

Even when people have heard about the soul and they know about soul concepts, their actual orientation in life is being experienced entirely through their body. People are at least aware intellectually of what bad *middos* are, but when it comes to perceiving ourselves as a soul, there is no conscious awareness of this at all. This is a deeper problem than a lack of control on our *middos*.

The author of *Chovos HaLevovos* wrote that when he discovered that there is an inner world of spirituality, he was surprised how such an essential concept is not being written about and not being taught. The *Chovos HaLevovos* even thought that because people are so unaware of their spiritual existence, maybe it doesn't exist! But he realized that concepts such as love of Hashem, fear of Hashem, joy in serving Hashem, are all written about in the Torah, but they are inner matters. He discovered that our Sages explain much about these inner matters, and that was how he realized that

inner matters exist, in spite of the fact that being immersed in spirituality wasn't being emphasized in people's lives.

The world is called *olam*, from the word *he'elam*. It is because the inner world of spirituality, which is so real and existing, is at the same so hidden from us and so concealed from our conscious awareness. The most basic and essential concepts which we need to know about are often covered over and hidden from our awareness. Man is called *olam katan*, a small world, because we are all a small world; just as the reality of this world is hidden from us, so is man's awareness to himself very hidden.

**The conclusion is clear – the inner world is hidden, and we need to reveal it.**

What is hidden from us? Almost everything is hidden from us! Even the basic belief in Hashem is often hidden from us. In the generation of Avraham *Avinu*, no one believed in Hashem. These days, everyone knows about Hashem, but the big question is if the person's actions are matching up to that belief.

It is not only hidden from people in Africa who haven't discovered their Judaism. Even in *Eretz Yisrael*, there is lack of awareness to the simple reality of spirituality. It is hidden even from *frum* people who keep Torah and *mitzvos*. And often, awareness in Hashem's existence is missing from people who are deeply involved with serving Hashem!

A person might be serving Hashem his whole life, yet he is still not aware of simple realities, such as awareness that Hashem exists. It's a chilling thought, but it is very painfully true.

May Hashem merit each and every one of us to uncover the reality of spirituality, and to merit to palpably feel Hashem and completely do His Will.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH THE RAV

### **Q1: *Can the Rav give advice on how one can begin to reach our inner world?***

**A:** You don't need to begin, you are already there; the question is *where you are exactly* at this point. A child needs to begin something, but all of you are mature adults, who have already begun spirituality. Rather, you need to know how to continue your own personal spiritual path, and this differs with each person, because each person is holding at a different point. There are two things that you need to clarify: Each person needs to make a personal self-assessment of where you are holding and how much you have already reached in your soul until now, and then you need to discover what you personally need in order to progress, attuned to the specific nature of your soul.<sup>5</sup>

### **Q2: *How can we educate our children to know about the inner world?***

**A:** Avraham *Avinu* succeeded in educating Yitzchok – but he didn't succeed with Yishmael. Yitzchok succeed in raising Yaakov – but he didn't succeed in raising Esav. They tried all they could to raise their children right, but when their children grew up, they each went their own way. None of us are greater than Avraham and Yitzchok, so none of us are either able to do a perfect job with *chinuch* on our children. We all have hardships in raising children, as we see that even the *Avos* had a hard time in succeeding with raising good children.

Therefore, practically speaking, it is impossible to tell you exactly what you need to do in *chinuch* and what not do in *chinuch*, because life is so vast. The outer part of *chinuch* is to raise our children to do the *mitzvos* and to do the *mitzvos*, and this is more well-known. But there is another kind of *chinuch* we need to impart which is lesser known: to educate our children **to search for truth**.

If a person doesn't search for truth in this generation, he will fall to the lowest levels! If someone searches for truth, he sees how much falsity is in this world. If a person doesn't search for the truth nowadays, he will use any "*heter*" and "*hechsher*" he comes across from any Rabbi. If we educate our child to search for truth in life, that even when something is "permissible" it still might not be the will of Hashem – this will solve most problems in *chinuch*. We all have kind of *nisyonos* and problems with our *middos*; if we would have the aspiration to search for the truth, we would be able to cut out most of our problems. That is the main part of *chinuch* which we need to impart, which is often not known: that in life, we need to search for truth.

To train our children to seek *ruchniyus*/spiritual greatness is very hard to instill in a child, but one thing we can all instill in our child is: to **search for truth**, and the search for truth will lead us to everything else we need. Without being raised with this priority, a child is like a *tinok shenishboh* ("captured child") growing up in a "*Chareidi*" home.

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<sup>5</sup> See the author's *Getting To Know Your Soul* to learn how you can discover more about your unique personality.

**Q3: Does the chinuch begin by working on ourselves to search for truth, or to first begin teaching about it to our children?**

**A:** If you don't work on searching for the truth but you are teaching about it to your children, there is no greater lie than this, and it's not called searching for the truth. A person has to search for his truth in his own life, and together with *chinuch* on yourself, you also need to give over that awareness to your child, but it begins with you. You have to be someone who serves Hashem and give other that "tone" into the house, that we live to serve Hashem.

**Q4: It seems that there is a third point in time in which we identified ourselves as a soul, because Chazal say that when a child is in the mother's womb and he is taught the entire Torah, is that also the state of pre-sin. Isn't this a third time in which we experienced our existence as a soul?**

**A:** No. Although we are taught the entire Torah in the womb, this is not a time in which we identify ourselves a soul, because the fetus still identifies itself as being part of this world. It is a much clearer state, but the fetus does not consider itself to be a soul clothed by our body. A person can learn a lot of Torah, but that doesn't mean he recognizes that he is a soul. However, there exists another category of those who experience themselves entirely as a soul: the *Arizal* writes that there were "new souls" who were not existent as Adam sinned, and these rare souls sometimes appear on this world. These souls are totally aware that they are soul. But most people are not one of these rare souls, thus most of us were present by the sin of Adam, but we retained the pre-sin state. The Gemara says that only four people in history died due to the curse of death upon mankind. Almost everyone else dies because our souls were all part of the sin of Adam.

**Q5: Are all the souls in this generation from Dor Haflagah and Dor HaMabul and from Sodom, or rather that the influences of the world today are coming from those souls?**

**A:** Very good question. There are always exceptional souls in every generation, even when the generation around them is evil. The *Arizal* writes that Moshe was named so because he was drawn from the water ("*ki min hamayim mishisihu*") because even Moshe's soul is from *Dor HaMabul*, in which there was a decree that involved water, and he was saved from water because he was the exceptional soul of *Dor HaMabul* who merited not to be a part of the decree of the flood. His soul was contained in Noach. Sodom was not a generation of Sodomy, but it was rather an evil city, but Lot was saved from it, because he was the exceptional soul in Sodom that deserved to be saved. Our souls are from those generations and we are sent here to this world to rectify their sin. Therefore, our souls are the holy parts of those previous souls.

Just as in those generations there were very few souls that were holy while most of the generation was evil, so is our generation mostly evil, with a few souls that are holy and pure. Most of the souls in this generation are totally from the "*Erev Rav*", according to the writings of our Rabbis. *Erev Rav* is rooted in the three elements of fire, water, and wind. Sodom was the roots of the *Erev Rav* souls

rooted in **fire**, *Dor HaMabul* was the root of *Erev Rav* souls rooted in **water**, and *Dor Haflagah* was wind-rooted souls of *Erev Rav*. Therefore, in our souls there is evil in our elements of fire, water, and wind. If a person merits to make himself holy, he merits to use his fire, water and wind for holiness.

**Q6:** *I am learning 'Getting To Know Your Feelings', and I am feeling two kinds of feelings – I am feeling something around my heart, and something around the back of my neck.*

**A:** This is a complicated question. To give a general answer, there is *Tikkun Rachel* and *Tikkun Leah*. Rachel represents feelings of the heart, and Leah represents the *daas*, which is present in the back of the neck, because it stems from the brain. Our *avodah* is to internalize - the *daas* of the "neck" has to become internalized into the feelings of our heart. Now, to apply this on a personal level, in a time of quiet, identify where you feel your "I." Have you done that yet? Some people during a time of quiet try to identify where their "I" is and they can't find it, and this kind of person is too connected to his body, thus he can't meditate that well and he can't find where his "I" is.

**Q7:** *I am trying to learn the art of concentration [as described in 'Getting To Know Your Feelings']. Is it detrimental to my concentration if I think about the future?*

**A:** If a person is simply dwelling in his thoughts on past or future, he is not connected to the present moment, and there can be no greater lack of concentration than this. But if a person enters inward into his soul, he can be concentrated on his soul that he is unaware of what is going on in his surroundings. If a person goes even more inward, he will be able to be aware of both his inner world as well as his surroundings at the same time.

## 1.13 | *Knowing Our Soul*

### *Redeem Your Soul From Its Exile*

We will attempt here to clarify who we are, what our soul is.

In these *parshiyos*, we are learning about the exile of Egypt and the redemption from Egypt. The women as well were part of the exile and they played a crucial role in the redemption from Egypt.

There is a concept in the *sefarim hakedoshim* known as “*Olam, Shanah, Nefesh*” (World, Time and Soul), which is that everything which takes place in a place in the world also takes place in the sphere of time, and anything we find it time also takes place in our soul. Therefore, just as there is an exile that takes place in the world with our physical body, so is there an exile in our soul. And just as there is redemption to our physical bodies, so is there redemption that takes place in our soul.

When we were exiled in Egypt, not only was our body in exile, but our soul was in exile as well.

The exile of our soul consists of two aspects. One part of this is that we are distracted by our physical needs and thus unable to attend to our soul's needs; this put our soul into exile. This is represented by the cruel labor which the Jews were enslaved to in Egypt – because they were exiled in the physical sense, there was no time to focus on their soul needs.

But there is a deeper aspect to our soul's exile as well: when we are confused about what our soul is. To illustrate, the Jews in Egypt faced a spiritual struggle with their goals, because they saw the behavior of the Egyptians, and this made them compare themselves with Egyptians and learn be somewhat affected by their behavior. Chazal praised the generation for not adapting the names, style of dress, and manner of speech from the Egyptians, but other than these things, the Jewish people were negatively affected by the impurity of Egypt.

*Galus* is also related to the world *galgal*, circle, because *galus* is a cycle, for we have gone through exile as a reoccurring cycle. The physical aspect of exile represents the concept of *galgal*. *Galus* is also the opposite of the concept called “*giluy*”, revelation. This hints to us that *galus* conceals from us having a *giluy* of our true soul.

The *galus* causes us our soul to become enslaved, because it conceals our soul from us. Most people recognize the exile of their soul in the sense that they are very tied down to the world, but those who have begun to search for Hashem in their life recognize a deeper kind of exile in their soul. They come across confusion about what their soul is, and this is the deeper kind of exile to our soul.

First we will explain this concept on an intellectual level, but after learning about this, we must then seek to internalize it, as it is written, “*And you will know today, and you will return the matter to*

*your heart.*” We will discuss here the difference between secular wisdom about our psyche, with the Torah’s wisdom on the psyche.

### *The Problem With Modern Psychology*

The view of secular psychology – specifically Western psychology - views the body as the main thing, with the soul only being secondary to consider. The soul is definitely considered by secular psychology to be an existing entity, but it is only viewed by them as an additional factor in a person that can contribute to one’s mental health; but the main focus of psychology is always about the physical body. Jews who live among the nations of the world have unfortunately adapted the secular approach, viewing their souls as only secondary in their life, and they consider themselves mainly as a body.

People are drawn after psychology, and it seems like a good thing, because in this way people are detaching from physical pursuit, and often people consider it to be beneficial to teach others about the knowledge of psychology and therapy. There are people who consider it to be an act of *chessed* for their community to become a psychologist and treat others with this field of practice.

But the problem is that Jews who are learning secular psychology are viewing their existence as being mainly a body, with the soul being only secondary. While the study of psychology can help a person leave his attachment to physicality – which helps a person leave his enslavement to this physical world - it puts a person into an even deeper kind of exile of the soul: confusion about what his very soul is.

If we can realize how this is a problem, we have already left one stage of the exile to our soul, and we will be able to begin our soul’s redemption.

### *Knowing Our Soul – Through the Torah’s Perspective*

After realizing that secular psychology isn’t a path for a Jew to take, comes the next stage: to recognize the soul. The more a person understands his soul, the more redemption he will have in his soul; he will have *giluy*, revelation. The less a person understands his soul, the more he is in *galus*, exile.

Why should we want to know our soul? First of all, in order to use our soul, we need to know how it works, and this will enter us into a truly pleasurable and satisfying kind of life. Secondly, by knowing what our soul is, the better we can deal with the difficulties and complexities of life. These are both understandable reasons to anyone, on any level.

But there is a third reason why we must know our soul, and this is harder for people to grasp. The Gemara says that a person’s head was created from Eretz Yisrael, while the rest of the body was created from Bavel. Eretz Yisrael represents wisdom, as we know that “the air of Eretz Yisrael makes

one wise.” A person’s head is either in Eretz Yisrael, or he is living in “Bavel” – from the word *bilbul* (confusion). Most people are living life only through the prism of their body – they are living in “Bavel”, and therefore they have *bilbul*, confusion.

Someone who is living an inner kind of life already identifies with everything we are saying here; he understands that the world we see is a world of superficiality and confusion. Anyone who isn’t living an inner kind of life isn’t aware that there is a whole different world than the one we see in front of us, a world which we can enter that is an entirely spiritual dimension.

To summarize, there are three reasons why we need to understand our soul. First of all, because we need real pleasure in life, and this is only reached through knowing our soul. The second reason is because knowing our soul helps us deal with our problems in life. The third reason is the deeper reason, because we need to attain clarity in our life, to live in a clear world – an “*olam barur*”, a world of clarity.

Finally, there is an even deeper reason why we need to know our soul: because in order to become close to Hashem, we need to first know our soul.

### *The Three Ways Of How We Become Close To Hashem*

How can we come to Hashem and be close to Him? To give a general description, there are two basic parts to this, and then we will discuss the third part, which is deeper.

One part of it is through keeping the *mitzvos* of the Torah; we are “believers, the sons of believers”, and therefore we know and believe in the Torah, which helps us become close to Hashem. This involves the use of our intellectual mind; by connecting to Hashem through the Torah and *mitzvos*, we have an intellectual connection with Hashem.

The second way of how we get close to Hashem does not involve our intellect, but it is rather to involve our emotions and feelings. By getting used to sensing the reality of Hashem, we can feel Him, in an experiential way, as a very real feeling.

Understandably, there are levels to how much we can feel Hashem. When someone is in pain, he can find that he can push deeper into his soul and arrive at a greater sense of Hashem.

The first way to know Hashem – through knowing of Him intellectually, which is accomplished through the study of Torah and observing His *mitzvos* - is called “*emunah yedidah*”, an intellectual faith in Hashem. The second way is that we sense the reality of Hashem as a real, palpable feeling.

There is a third, deeper way of attaining closeness to Hashem: by attaining clarity in life, to live in a “clear world”, the perspective from our soul. So the more we are clearer about our soul, the closer we can become to Hashem, and we are then able to connect to Hashem from *within* ourselves.

The third way is what we are coming here to discuss. It is about living in an inner world of clarity. When a person lives in the inner world of clarity, he gains the other two levels as well – he knows about Hashem intellectually, and he also senses Him as a feeling.

We have described here thus far the general reasons why a person must know his soul.

### *Modern Psychology Is An Incomplete Picture Of A Jew's Soul*

We must distance ourselves from the study of secular psychology. People want to know what is wrong with learning psychology, and what is so terrible if we learn psychology. We have explained before the three reasons why a Jew must know his soul; none of these three reasons can be accomplished through secular psychology. Secular psychology is an incomplete understanding of the soul, because it doesn't grasp the holiness of a Jew's soul.

For example: depression. Secular psychology uses a general approach of explaining to the person how he can get out of his depression. But the picture is still incomplete, because they don't tell you how you can build and develop a plan for happiness. Escaping depression might solve the actual depression at hand, but it won't give the person happiness. Secular psychology doesn't have the complete picture of things; they've only gotten some of the facts.

That is just one example. But the same thing is true with regards to all negative emotions, anxiety, social disorders, etc. - the knowledge of secular psychology merely removes the symptoms of a problem, but it does not get down to the root of the problem. It doesn't help us attain the redemption of our soul, and it instead puts our soul into an even deeper exile than before, when we try to learn about our soul using modern psychology.

How sad is it that a Jew can read a non-Jewish book with a title like "How To Have A Happy Life." Now, if the book would be called "How To Deal With Depression" or "How To Get Rid of Anxiety", that's not so bad if a Jew reads it, because at least he is understanding that the book won't take care of **all** his problems, and he's just looking to get rid of one particular problem. But to read a book on "How To Have A Happy Life" is truly sad for a Jew to read, because then the Jew is thinking that a non-Jew can help him lead a happy life in general – something that is impossible, as a Jew contains a holy soul that a non-Jew does not have.

May Hashem merit each of us to truly know our soul – from working hard to understand it, and together with *davening* to Hashem for this; and through that, we will merit to become close to Hashem. May each of us merit to leave our exile of the soul and the redemption of our soul, and that each of us should reveal our soul's abilities.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH THE RAV

**Q:** *In “Da Es Atzmecha”, the Rav says that it’s for a person to run away from himself and divorce his soul from his body, when he alienates his soul. How does that fit into this current discussion, in which the Rav said that we are a soul and that we cannot ever leave it?*

**A:** As long as the body is in charge, a person is sending away his soul, but the soul always remains intact, even if a person alienates his soul.

**Q:** *I have a strong yearning to connect to my soul and to be close to Hashem, and I cannot read Hebrew sefarim. Unfortunately, I have gotten used to the language of non-Jewish self-help books, and I can’t find anything more helpful than these books. How will I be able to enter my inner world, as there are no sefarim which I can find that are helping me?*

**A:** We cannot create solutions out of nothing, so entering our inner world cannot happen based through reading any book. There are many holy *sefarim* available today that have been translated, which cannot definitely help you get started. There are also many *shiurim* you can listen to, which can simplify all the information of the *sefarim*. But *sefarim* and *shiurim* can only give us the **information** we need to develop our inner world; there is no *sefer* written in history that will bring you directly into your inner world. You can only access your inner world from **within yourself**. About 2 or 3 percent of entering your inner world can be accomplished through a *sefer*, but the other 97% of entering your inner world can only happen from within yourself.

**Q:** *The Rav has said here that there is a whole different reality going on in our life – the spiritual world. How can we live the world of the spiritual, when we are living our life here on this earth and we have to take care of all our worldly needs?*

**A:** Let’s say there’s a blackout and there’s no electricity. Different people have different reactions. Some people will go crazy, while others still maintain their peace. What is the reason for these different reactions? If a person is living his life too caught up in the physical reality of life, then he goes crazy when there’s a blackout. Being in the dark for a long time will feel like *Gehinnom* for him. But if someone is used to living a more spiritual kind of life, he identifies more with his soul, and even darkness isn’t scary to him. When he’s in the dark, he’s already used to it, because he has already learned to disconnect from physicality with more he has experienced his soul. He actually will enjoy it is an opportunity to make a soul-accounting and connect even more with his soul and with Hashem.

The way we can transcend our worldly kind of life, even as we live on this world, is for us to ask ourselves: What is our first *ratzon* (will) we have when we wake up in the day – is it for something physical, or is it for something spiritual? We aren’t talking about what you actually do with your day, but what you want as soon as you wake up in the morning. This is a very simple yet piercing way of how you can know how much you are connected to the spiritual reality.

**Q:** *If we are a neshamah, why do we say “Elokai Neshamah, shenosata bi” – “My soul that You have placed in me” – if my soul is me, then why does it have to be placed in me?*

**A:** This is an old question, and it is a fundamental one. According to the Vilna Gaon, we experience life through the layer in our soul called “*Ruach*” – which is the root of our power of *bechirah*, free will. Since man is a chooser by essence, we start our life through our *Ruach*. Therefore, Hashem is placing our *Neshamah* in “me”, which is our *Ruach*; He places our *Neshamah* in our *Ruach*.

from Inner Silence\_v3\_chapter 11 (Alternative Methods of How To Reach The Soul)

## 1.14 | “A Woman’s Challenge”

A married woman in particular is involved with her husband and children, and she has to somehow find how she can work on her *Avodas Hashem* together with all her roles in life. It takes a lot of wisdom how to balance her household role together with her avodah in reaching the soul.

We generally find two kinds of [*frum*] women in the world. One type of woman takes care of her house very well, exhausting all her efforts in life into taking care of her spouse and children, but, she never has time for developing her inner world; she has no time for any *Avodas Hashem*. By contrast, there are other women who are very spiritually-oriented and are thus very involved with developing their inner world, but they go extreme with their idealism, and they tend to ignore their home situation and neglect their responsibilities. Both of these lifestyles are extreme and they are not truthful ways of living.

What we need is the fine **balance** between our various responsibilities in life together with developing our inner world - and it indeed takes great wisdom to know how to balance out our roles in life.

Every Jewish woman should know, clearly, the following fundamental. We understand that a man’s main *mitzvah* is to learn Torah, yet we also know that this does not exempt him from keeping *halacha*, from *davening* with concentration, from working on his *middos* and from smiling at others, etc. In the same way, women, also have many responsibilities in life – their household, raising the children, maintaining their *tzniyus* (modesty), etc. but this is not all there is to a woman’s life. Although a woman’s main responsibilities are towards her household, this does not exempt her from working on her *Avodas Hashem*.

The *Gemara* tells us that there were 48 men prophets, and there were 7 women prophetesses.<sup>6</sup> We see from this that a woman can reach prophecy, the highest spiritual level possible, in spite of the fact that these seven women obviously had responsibilities in their life.

It is impossible to give exact guidance on how a woman can balance out her responsibilities and *Avodas Hashem*. If a woman is not sure on how she can do it, she can ask her husband or someone who can advise her on how to go about it.

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<sup>6</sup> *Talmud Bavli: Megillah 14a. The seven prophetesses were: Sarah, Miriam, Channah, Devorah, Avigayil, Chuldah, and Esther.*

## 1.15 | *Importance Of Knowing Ourselves*<sup>7</sup> 11-15-2017

*[Ed: The following shiur of the Rav was given to a group of spiritually aspiring women who finished their yearly study of the Rav's sefarim that explain the soul].*

### *Realize The Simple Need To Take Care Of Your Soul*

*Baruch Hashem*, you have merited to study, on a fixed basis, about your personal souls. Through this, you have merited to grow higher, and to come closer to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

There is something very important we must know. Just as a person invests in his body, taking care of his physical health, and just as a person takes care of his children, so is there no less of a need for a person to invest effort in taking care of his soul. Just as a person feels a need to eat, drink, and sleep, so can a person realize that he also needs to work hard at understanding the soul, so that he can take care of the soul. That very simple feeling of realizing the importance of eating and other physical needs is the same simple feeling one can have towards recognition of his soul.

The first thing that each person must bear in mind throughout studying your souls is this fundamental point: There is a simple need we can feel to take care of our souls, and it should not feel to us like a novel concept at all. It is so necessary and fundamental, and this is true about every single person.

### *Clarifying A Misconception*

Let us try to imagine the following example, to help us understand this. Just as we understand that our children have physical needs, to be fed and clothed, so do they need to be nourished in their souls. Imagine a world in which children can grow up understanding that just as they have physical needs, so do they have a natural need to understand themselves.

The goal which we should want to bring ourselves to is: We should understand that if someone doesn't want to invest in trying to understand his\her soul and thinks that this knowledge is not necessary, it's *that person* who's being strange!

We often hear a negative attitude towards those who seek self-knowledge, as if self-knowledge and soul exploration is only for someone who has problems, difficulties and issues; and that it's only people with serious issues who need to understand themselves, who need to see a psychologist, or a

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psychiatrist, etc. There's a misconception that seeking self-knowledge is only meant for people who have issues. But this is a wrong attitude to have, and a terrible mistake.

Here is a parable that can help us understand what we mean. Some people will eat and drink as soon as they get a desire. They never consider their health, and after many years of poor eating habits, they don't feel good. They end up by the doctor and they discover how their health has been impacted by this. The doctor asks the person: "What do you eat and drink throughout the day?" The doctor then points out to the person that he is eating carelessly, and that he needs to rearrange his entire diet and his entire lifestyle, in order to be healthy. He prescribes to the person exactly what to eat and drink, and at which times of the day, and to follow this diet specifically.

Another kind of person is smarter than this. Before he gets into health problems, he asks the experts about what the right foods are, what to drink, etc. Instead of falling into a life of poor diet, he makes sure from the start to have healthy eating habits, and to avoid the foods that are bad. He finds out what the right way of living is, not because he has run into problems, but because he thinks from the start of the right way to live.

It should be the same with the study of the soul, our task of self-knowledge. Each of us, when studying the soul, must have the proper perspective. We must study the soul not because we have various issues in our life, or with our marriage, or with our children, or with our friends, and other problems in life. Rather, we should be interested in studying our souls so that we can have the right way to live from the start. We need to seek self-knowledge with the attitude that it is necessary in order to know how to live life correctly.

### *Making The Most of Your Personal Journey In Self-Knowledge*

Thus, the deep reason for us to study our souls is because that is what gives us meaning, happiness, and a purposeful way of living. It is about how we can create for ourselves a happy and fulfilling life.

Each of us has certain problems and difficulties in our lives, to some extent. But we need to deeply examine if seeking to understand our souls is a merely an outcome of the issues and problems in our lives, or if it's because we are seeking to live a life that is meaningful and with purpose. We should become very aware of this reason, and accordingly, to live life with this attitude, knowing why exactly we should be investing the time and effort in knowing about our souls.

The fact that the study of the soul is a consistent part of your schedule should therefore not be seen by you as a way to deal with issues and problems in life. It should rather be viewed as a means of how you seek to live a truthful kind of life, an internal kind of life, an ultimately happier and more fulfilled kind of life.

Therefore, when you embark on the course of studying your soul, you need to have inner preparation, a true inner desire to get to a more truthful way of living, to true happiness, to an

internal kind of life. The more you are aware of this perspective, the more meaningful this study will be to you and the better you will absorb the material, and then you will be much closer of succeeding in it.

### *In Conclusion*

I give you a personal blessing that each of you should merit to learn and recognize your own personal souls, and to grow, each of you, on your own level; and that you each reach your own true personal share, in your own inner worlds. Then you will have it good, both in this world and in the next world. I wish all of you much success.



*PART 2*  
*WOMEN & THE HOLYDAYS*

## 2.1 | *Pesach – The Avodas Hashem of Cleaning For Pesach*

### *Preparing For Pesach Is Part of Our Avodas Hashem*

In whatever time or situation we are in, we should always be aware that it is an inseparable part of our *Avodas Hashem* upon us. It doesn't matter if it is something that has to do with *ruchniyus* (spirituality) or not or if it something more mundane – wherever we are, whatever the situation, it is somehow part of our *Avodas Hashem*.

We must wonder in every situation we have: how is a Jew supposed to go about this?

In these weeks, the *frum* world, who keeps Torah and *mitzvos*, is very careful to clean the house scrupulously from any trace of *chametz*. We have a commandment in the Torah to make sure that we do not see or find any *chametz* in our house; but this *mitzvah* has much to it which seemingly has nothing to do with Pesach.

Upon reflection, we will be able to see how preparing for Pesach is part of our *Avodas Hashem*, and how through it we can bring ourselves to be closer to Hashem.

### *“Melumadah” --Acting By Rote*

There is a simple point that we must all know and be aware of. This simple point is that we can find Hashem in anything – without exception!

When a person begins to clean his house for Pesach, he first has to get rid of the “*melumadah*” – the tendency to do things by rote. We are not simply cleaning out the house for Pesach “because we have to clean.” Why are you cleaning for Pesach? Because that's what you did last year and the year before it?! That is not the reason.

We all know that to clean the house for Pesach is a *mitzvah* of the Torah, but what are our thoughts as we do this? If a person doesn't stop to think, he is only bothered by questions such as: What is the best way to clean the house? What needs to be cleaned, and how much? The whole relationship with Hashem is lost with all these questions.

So first, we must get rid of our tendency to just do things without thinking. We must realize that preparing for Pesach is purely *Avodas Hashem*. After we know this we can begin to know how it is *Avodas Hashem*, but the first step is this: don't just do it like a robot. Just like we understand that learning and davening is *Avodas Hashem*, so must we be aware that preparing for Pesach is *Avodas Hashem*.

If a person feels that cleaning the house for Pesach is not part of *Avodas Hashem*, we can almost tell him that he is forbidden to do it! The *Chovos HeLevovos* writes that there is no such thing as a gray area; it's either forbidden or permissible. If it's not a *mitzvah*, then it's wrong to do.

We will try to explain how cleaning for Pesach can be *Avodas Hashem*, in a way how everyone will be able to enter the Yom Tov amidst *Avodas Hashem*, not amidst stress.

### *Why Do We Clean The House?*

If we think into it, besides for the mitzvah of the Torah to keep the house clean from *chametz* on Pesach, there are more reasons why we need to clean the house.

One possible reason why a person cleans is because he feels bad to make the rest of his family do everything! He personally doesn't care for the house to be clean. Most of the Pesach preparations have nothing to do with the *mitzvah* of destroying *chametz* – just various household chores. Why does a person do all these things for Pesach? Many times it is simply because he feels bad standing around and watching everyone else do all the work. He's doing it all for the sake of *chessed*.

That is one possible reason why a person spends so much time with Pesach preparations.

Another possibility could be that we don't like it when the house is dirty. Hashem created each person with a natural desire to have a clean house. Some people are cleaner than others, and they can't take even the slightest amount of messiness. But all people want their house clean somewhat, so they clean for the house for Pesach.

Another possibility can also be because people like it when things are orderly. During the rest of the year people are very busy, and they want to have one time in the year where they sit down and just arrange everything in its place (This is not the same thing as a desire for neatness.)

So far we have mentioned five possibilities why a person cleans the house for Pesach: Acting robotic, doing it because it's a *mitzvah* of the Torah, kindness, cleanliness or orderliness.

The first kind of person we mentioned – the one who does it robotically – is obviously not doing it in the right way. That is simple and we don't need to explain why.

The second kind of person, who does it because it's a mitzvah, has to put some more thought into it. It is not enough to know that he must clean the house – there must be some more life involved, some more thinking.

Before he begins to clean the house, he should talk to Hashem and say, "*Ribono shel olam*, For what purpose am I going to clean my house? I have other things to do; I can be learning or relaxing. The reason why I am going to clean my house now is because You, the *Ribono shel Olam*, commanded me that the house be free of *chametz*. Since I want to give You a *nachas ruach*, I will exert myself now to clean my house."

While a person is cleaning the house, this is what he should be saying to himself. If someone knows how to think in learning Torah as he does something, then he should think in learning and he doesn't have to do this.

But if someone usually doesn't think in learning as he cleans the house, and his thoughts are just floating elsewhere, then he should at least for a few minutes here and there remind himself of what he's doing and why he's doing it.

We are speaking about a very simple thing one can do; there are people who are on a very high level and always have *d'veykus* in Hashem wherever they are, but we are not speaking of this. We are speaking about something very basic and simple.

If a person cleans the house because he wants to be nice and doesn't want everyone else to do all the work, he also has to think about this and say, "*Ribono shel olam*, Why am I doing this? I don't personally feel a need to clean my house. The only reason why I am doing it is so that I can do *chessed* with my family."

A person should keep talking to Hashem throughout the entire time: "*Ribono shel olam*, it is my will to do Your will. One of the pillars of the world is *chessed*, and I am thus doing *chessed* in order to give You a *nachas ruach*."

After a day of doing this, besides for the physical exercise you get out of cleaning the house, your entire day is filled with pure *Avodas Hashem*. In this way, a person never leaves *ruchniyus* even while being involved in this mundane world.

### *The Natural Desire for Cleanliness*

Let us elaborate on the last two points, which are more subtle points about our soul.

There is a desire in a person for cleanliness. Everyone loves cleanliness – some more, and some less. The soul of a person naturally recoils a bit from messiness. People often see a mess and start cleaning it, and if you ask them, "What are you doing? Why you are cleaning it up?" the answer is, "It bothers me."

People clean because they can't stand the sight of something dirty or messy, and cleaning it up removes this anxiety. It seems that this has nothing to do with trying to become close to Hashem, and that a person is trying to save his soul from some pain.

But if we think into it just a little, we can connect everything to Hashem. If a person likes to clean, the first thing he should ask himself is: "Why do I like to clean? Did I make myself this way? No. Hashem gave me this nature."

Realize that whatever your nature is, it was Hashem who gave you such a nature. Not only that, but Hashem is constantly renewing Creation; He is constantly renewing your nature, which is that you like to clean and that you hate messiness.

After you realize with certainty that it was Hashem who gave you this nature to desire cleanliness, and that He continues to renew this nature in you, now think: “Why did Hashem give me such a nature? What is the purpose of wanting cleanliness, and how do I use this natural desire in a person? What are the pros and cons of it?”

The desire for cleanliness doesn't happen on its own. (It is absurd to think that it does, but the *yetzer hora* gets a person to succeed not to think.) A person must think to himself, “Hashem gave me this desire for cleanliness. It was Him who placed this desire in me.”

This realization helps you begin your relationship with Hashem.

### *What indeed is the root of why we like cleanliness?*

Cleanliness (*nekiyus*) is one of the ten steps in the ladder of *Avodas Hashem* as described by Rebbi Pinchos ben Yair, the basis of *sefer Mesillas Yesharim*. Cleanliness exists for us to cleanse ourselves from sin, because sin sullies our soul. Every power in the soul is also manifested somehow in our body; the power of cleanliness of our soul manifests itself in our body with the need for physical cleanliness.

The truth is that the more a person grows spiritually, the more he increases his cleanliness. Some people are very clean in their soul and others are very particular also about physical cleanliness (in addition to their spiritual cleanliness), but the point is that the more a person purifies himself, the more of a need for cleanliness he has, and the purer his soul becomes.

The root behind cleanliness comes from an inner desire to be purified. This gives us a whole different attitude to have about our need for physical cleanliness – it is rooted in our soul's need for cleanliness and purity.

### *Knowing Your Motivation For Cleanliness*

There are two reasons why a person wants physical cleanliness; one reason is unnecessary and more of a luxury to a person, while the other reason is coming from our soul's need for purity and closeness.

There are situations in which we clean more than we have to, and it is extra. It is hard to say exactly what is considered overdoing it, and each person needs to decide for himself what is considered already too much. If a person is just taking a shower or brushing his teeth simply because he is very concerned about his body, this is totally unnecessary (except for certain rare individuals who won't get affected by this).

Something even worse than this is when a person is really bothered by uncleanliness and he doesn't clean. Such a person not only has physical messiness, but he damages his soul with this. He is denying his soul's demand for cleanliness.

So before one begins to clean, he must ask himself: What is my motivation in cleaning the house? Am I doing it out of a compulsiveness to clean (just like there are people who indulge in food and drinking), or am I doing it to help my household? If he realizes that he is doing it to help, then he should work on the *Avodah* we mentioned before (which is to say a *Tefillah* to Hashem).

If he discovers that he's doing it because he has a personal need for cleanliness, he must really ask himself if he is overdoing it or not, or if it comes from a sensitivity in his soul for cleanliness (and he therefore needs it). Everyone must uncover what is motivating him to clean.

Most people do not have these issues. We will therefore discuss a more simple kind of issue that people have which is much more common: when people love to clean something that is clearly a mess.

In this, we need to put some thought into the cleaning.

Before a person cleans, he should say: "*Ribono shel olam*, this mess really bothers me. Who gave me this feeling? You – Hashem. Where does this nature in me come from? It comes from a power in my soul to demand purity. *Ribono shel olam*, is it Your will that I break this nature of mine and endure the messiness? Or is it Your will that I live with purity and cleanliness? Since it is clear to me that You want my soul to desire this cleanliness, I will go clean the house in order to get close to You and give You pleasure."

Even though you're doing it *shelo lishmah* – not for the sake of Heaven (because you're doing it out of your need for cleanliness) – you can still add this element of *lishmah* into your action.

But always remember that cleaning the house for Pesach is purely *Avodas* Hashem. It must be done properly with thought and concentration.

### *The Importance of Orderliness*

Another point to be addressed is the fifth reason why a person wants to clean the house: to have orderliness.

Just like a person has a natural need for cleanliness, and this comes from the soul's desire for purity which Hashem put in us, so did Hashem put in us a natural desire for orderliness.

Some people have a more of a need to be organized than others, but all people have a need to get things organized. This is not by itself – it is a nature which Hashem gave each person.

Without our natural desire for orderliness, no one would get anywhere. In order to build up anything, there is a certain order involved. Since every person on this world must build himself,

Hashem endowed each person with an ability to have orderliness. Without orderliness, we wouldn't be able to build up our *Avodas* Hashem.

The more orderly a person is, the more he is able to build himself up in *Avodas* Hashem. The less orderly a person is, the more confusion he has, and he feels like he is an exile. A person has to get out of this exile of confusion and become more orderly. This is the beginning of an inner freedom.

Orderliness is thus a need of our soul, but we often use it just for our body's physical needs, such as the need to look very put together and organized.

Just like a dirty house makes our soul suffer, so can living in a messy house bother us so much that it is an impediment to our *Avodas* Hashem. If we don't care about how our house looks inside, we will definitely be affected spiritually as well.

It is well-known that when a tzaddik would look for a prospective match for his daughter, he would inspect the boy's room and see if he's neat. When a person has no sense of orderliness when it comes to the physical, it is a sign that he has is spiritually messy as well.

In order for our soul to get orderliness in spiritual matters, a person needs to first make sure he's neat when it comes to his physical matters. But we must always remember that it is Hashem who gives us such a nature. We must recognize that our need for orderliness comes from Hashem, and that this need that people have doesn't come by itself.

Realize that this need for orderliness can be used as a way to connect to the Creator. Like this, a person can take the physical world and use it to develop a relationship with Hashem. It is an inner kind of life, a life spent with Hashem even in ordinary, mundane actions.

When a person realizes that the need for organization is necessary in his *Avodas* Hashem, he is able to realize that organizing the house is not just an act of kindness with his family, but it is a necessary part in one's personal *Avodas* Hashem.

In this, there are two parts. Some people were born with a need for orderliness, and it really bothers them when things aren't in place. The *Avodah* of such a person is to realize that this need comes from Hashem, and it is a way to serve Hashem.

But others don't feel such a need for cleanliness. They know with their minds that a person should be orderly, but they don't feel that this is a need for their soul. Such people feel that it makes sense to clean the house once a year, or else the house becomes unlivable...but not more than once a year.

This person's *Avodah* is the opposite of the first kind of person. Besides for the fact that he must organize his house, he also needs to awaken in his soul a desire to have orderliness.

### *Days Which We Can Grow From*

A person wonders: Why did Hashem make it that people have to work so hard on *Erev Pesach*? Doesn't this sacrifice our opportunities to grow spiritually by making preparations for Yom Tov? If we have to work so hard cleaning up, how do we prepare for the Yom Tov??

But if you think about it, these days before Pesach contain tremendous areas which we can use to attain growth in. If Hashem made it this way that we have to clean and organize the house, then that is the way for us to acquire all the precious areas of growth which we need.

Really, cleaning up and organizing the house are there to remind us of our soul's need for purity. This is a precious gain in our *Avodas Hashem*. But the *yetzer hora* comes and takes away the message of it and turns it into mundane actions, drying it up from all the *Avodas Hashem* contained in it.

If a person understands the depth of *Avodas Hashem*, he doesn't clean the house simply because he wants it to be clean. He cleans the house because through that, he connects to an inner point in his soul – the need for spiritual cleanliness. He understands that now is precisely the time to work on this.

The truth is that all of life is like this: the *yetzer hora* comes and takes what's very important and turns it into something that's not important. In whatever we encounter, we should always see the greatness we can achieve in this situation. The more confusing and seemingly pointless a situation appears, the more greatness lies in it if we uncover it.

If a person before Pesach is caught up in this and that and he comes into the Yom Tov exhausted and stressed out, what is all our hard work worth? We don't gain from this kind of a life.

If we don't see how everything we do can be a form of *Avodas Hashem* and how much being involved with the world takes away from our soul, then these days go to waste. Our preparation for Pesach should not be a physical preparation; although we do exert our body to prepare for Pesach, really, there is an inner depth taking place in what we are doing. It is really a preparation of our soul for the coming days. Through preparing for it in the right way, a person comes into Yom Tov the way he should.

Each person can take these words and open them up more to himself, each to his own. The common denominator between all people is that the days preceding Pesach are days of *ruchniyus*, not days of materialistic pursuits. They are days of closeness to Hashem.

Hashem should help us that we prepare properly for Pesach during these days, from a sincere desire to give pleasure to our Creator. In these days preceding Pesach, each of us should merit to increase our true closeness and love of Hashem.

## 2.2 | *Shavuot - Heart of the Jewish Woman*

### *A Woman's Torah is with Her Heart*

*Baruch Hashem*, *Shavuot* is upon us – the time when the Torah was given. At the giving of the Torah, we all were there. The women were also there. Men, women, and children all received Torah.

We know that men received the mitzvah to learn the Torah; but what did the women receive at Har Sinai?

Women are exempt from learning Torah (they only have to learn what is relevant to them), so what did they receive at *Har Sinai*? What inner gift did the women receive at the giving of the Torah, if they didn't receive the mitzvah to learn the Torah?

Every person has a brain (which has in it *seichel*) and a heart. The men received the mitzvah to learn Torah with their minds – but the women received the mitzvah to learn Torah through their hearts. Women do not learn Torah with their minds – they learn it with their hearts. The heart of a woman is the tool to receive the light of the Torah.

### *The Role of a Woman's Heart – Spiritual Yearning*

In a marriage, husband and wife can receive the *Shechinah* – if they are worthy. The husband must bring Torah into the house for this to happen – and so must a woman. But the woman's Torah is different than a man's. She brings the Torah into the house through her heart. If only one of them has Torah, the home cannot survive. Both husband and wife need Torah – the husband with his mind, and the woman with her heart.

What does this mean? The Sages say that there is something called *libo lashamayim* – a heart directed toward the heavens. Some people's hearts are directed toward materialism, but others' hearts are directed toward the heavens – toward spirituality. This is when one uses his heart to search for an inner kind of life – a life that contains spirituality, not a life that is a materialistic kind. This is a yearning for spiritual matters. A “heart toward the heavens” is the true heart. Women received Torah with their hearts, a heart directed toward heaven – a heart that longs for spirituality.

### *Women Have An Easier Time Connecting To Their Inner World Of Spirituality*

The Sages say that a woman's power lies in her heart – her ability to have feelings and to recognize spiritual matters. A clear example of this is that the Sages say that a wife can recognize the spiritual level of her guests more than her husband can.

A woman can connect much more easily to the inner world than a man can. A man has to strain his mind and work hard to enter this inner world of spirituality, but a woman enters it easily, because her heart is open. Women understand spiritual matters much easier than men can, for this reason.

If a woman's heart isn't open and doesn't feel this inner world, and she is instead attached only to materialism – to have a nice house, nice clothing and more money – she is giving up her gift that she received at *Har Sinai*. She is giving up her inner kind of life. She has a gift of reaching a spiritual kind of life just with her heart alone, and she doesn't need to arrive at this using her mind; and she is giving up this gift, if she doesn't want to be open to this spiritual world.

### *Accessing the Heart*

If a woman wants to improve, her heart should first be used in order for her to reach her own self.

After a person reaches her own essence, she can then use her heart to deepen her relationship with her husband, and then toward her children -- and after this, she can use it to deepen all of her friendships.

This doesn't mean that a person needs to use her heart to cry more and become more sensitive to pain. It means to use her heart to be more attached to spirituality.

Our eyes, nose and ears only hear physical sounds. But our heart can sense an inner world going on. This is the world of our *neshamah* (soul) – and it can be heard and felt through one's heart. It is the heart of a person which hears the depth of everything – it feels an internal world going on.

A woman has the choice to either use her heart to be attached to materialism – or to spirituality.

### *Making Time Every Day for "Heart Time"*

The heart feels sensitive matters – but most people don't have the time to listen to their heart. When we don't listen to our heart, it shrivels up. Just like a person who stops using his CD player will find that it doesn't work anymore, so does a person's heart fail to hear spirituality if we don't make time to listen to it and use it.

We are very busy from life's challenges, but we must find time to listen to our heart and try to listen to what is going on inside of it. This is the root of uncovering our very essence.

Making time to listen to our heart is not just an "idea". It is very necessary for us – it is reality. We are all busy – there is no person who is not busy from life. We are all bogged down. But we must

find time to recognize ourselves – to set aside time every day to listen to our heart. If we really want to know Hashem, we must do this. This is not an idea – it is reality.

What should a person do during this time when she listens to her heart? Firstly, one needs calm and quiet. Most of the time we don't have any peace and quiet, but we need to calm our body first. We don't have to do anything to our body for this to happen; all we have to do for this is to simply concentrate – don't do anything at all, and just concentrate on this one thing. Also, don't do two things at once. When you are in the right calm place, now you can silence your thoughts (listening to light, calming music can help for this).

Once we have this silence, we must think about what this silence is. This is a soul experience! Silence is not just a thought – nor is it “meditation.” It is something our soul experiences. It is a silence which our very soul enjoys. Only after we have this inner silence can we begin to really think about what's going in our heart. If we try to think into ourselves before we have this silence, it will not work. Why? It's like a person who is tired and tries to do more than he can do than when he is energetic. A person can't think straight when he is distracted.

This kind of silence is not another part of our heart – it is something new we realize about our own heart. It is when we realize that our life is full of connections, that there is more depth to our life.

### *Thinking into Our Heart Helps Us Improve Our Relationships*

It is when we realize that our relationships – our marriage, our children, our parents, and our friends – are really very deep. It is to think about our relationships: are we connecting to others out of a deep place in our soul? Do we realize the depths of our relationships? Or are we only connecting to others in a superficial way? This is what we begin to think about as we enter our heart.

This is how a person can connect to herself and feel her own essence. Once a person connects to herself and feels her actual existence, she will be able to truly connect with others. This is only once a person succeeds in knowing how to have real silence and to silence her thoughts.<sup>8</sup>

If a person doesn't reach her actual self, her relationships with others are only superficial. Even her relationships with her children will be external, because she isn't extending her true self to them. She hasn't yet reached her own self.

In many marriages, there are problems. The husband blames it on his wife, and the wife blames it on him. But really, the problems in their marriage are because they aren't really connected to each other – only superficially. It is because they aren't even connected to themselves. If a husband is

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<sup>8</sup> See *Getting To Know Your Self* by this author for more detailed guidance on how to silence your thoughts.

connected to himself, he can connect to his wife, and if a wife is connected to herself, she can connect to her husband.

I really hope that you don't think that the words here are just nice "ideas". I hope that the words here will really strengthen your relationships. It is so hard and painful to watch the lack of relationships going on in families in our times.

Reach your inner silence, and from there, you can come to reach yourself and become connected to yourself. After this, you will be able to connect to others in a truer and deeper way. Make time every day to find "Heart time" – times of quiet in which you can sit and think deeply into your heart and access yourself, so that you will be able to greatly strengthen your own relationships with your family and others.<sup>9</sup>



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*<sup>9</sup> For a more on the topic of how to reach your "inner silence", visit [www.bilvavi.net](http://www.bilvavi.net) for a transcript of the most recent monthly phone chabura for women given by the author, entitled *Reaching Your Inner Silence**

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH THE RAV

**QUESTION:** *How much quiet for this is necessary?*

**ANSWER:** It might not be possible to find total quiet, but there should be as much quiet as possible.

**QUESTION:** *How can a person daven from her heart?*

**ANSWER:** This quiet can give us the proper frame of mind as well to daven. We cannot just pull ourselves away from this world and start davening – we need to first obtain a certain quietness, and from this quietness we can daven to Hashem properly.

**QUESTION:** *Do men need “heart time” as well?*

**ANSWER:** Yes, but men and women are different in this. Men need to learn Torah properly and in-depth in addition to this heart time, in order to become connected to themselves. But women are able to become connected to themselves just by having heart time, and they don't need to learn Torah for this.

## 2.3 | *Shavuos - The Jewish Woman's Song*

### *What Are Women Doing All Day in Gan Eden?*

We all received the Torah at Har Sinai. What remained with us after Har Sinai? Men learn the Torah. What remains for the women? After Shavuos ends, what do the women take from it? It's a question that is rooted in something else.

When a person dies, he/she goes to *Gan Eden*. What do women do in *Gan Eden*? What are they doing all day there? Is it possible that we are living our whole lives so we can go to *Gan Eden* after we die, yet we don't know what *Gan Eden* is? Chazal told us what will be there, and from this, we can understand what women remain with after Shavuos is over. We will see what this is.

### *The Song of Miriam*

In the Torah, there are many stories. Much of the Torah's stories are very applicable to women. Why does the Torah tell us all these stories? So we should learn *mussar* and good ethics from them? That is true, but there is more to it.

There is a story in the Torah that is all about women. Besides for the story of the daughters of Tzelaqhad, there is a great story entirely about women -- this is the story of Miriam, when she sang *shirah* (great song) with all the women by the sea.

It is brought in the *sefarim hakedoshim* that in *Gan Eden*, there is a special chamber in which the song of Miriam continues, and it is headed by Miriam. It is not headed by Sarah, Rivkah, Rochel or Leah -- it is headed by Miriam.

The great miracles that happened to the Jewish people didn't end with the redemption from Egypt and the splitting of the sea. The miracles continue, because the song of Miriam is still continuing on in Heaven. If so, all the miracles together throughout history are a continuous chain, and that chain is *shirah* -- a great song.

The Torah is called "*shirah*." This is one of the names of the Torah. The Torah that is called *shirah* -- this is the Torah that is for women. This is what women remained with after Har Sinai. Men learn Torah -- but women "sing" the Torah. Let us explain what this is.

Today, many people compose songs. Either they take a *possuk* and give a song to it, or they first have the song and then they apply a *possuk* to it. *Shirah* comes from the word *sharsheres*, which means "chain" (Maybe that's why women like to wear chains!). A *shirah* is sung at when a "chain" is complete. For example, when Yosef was sold to Egypt, it seemed like the worst thing possible. But when we take a look at the later events, we see how this led to all the great miracles of the Jewish

people. This was what brought *shirah* – when a person sees how the events of history are really links in a chain, he sings.

### *Reflecting About Your Life*

If a person never thinks into his life, he doesn't see how all the events in his life connect. He doesn't see the chain. But when a person connects all his life experiences together, he sees how it all formed a certain chain, and he is able to sing *shirah* about his life.

“Do not forsake the Torah of your mother.” What does this mean? What Torah did your mother learn? She didn't learn *Gemara* or *Zohar*. It is the *shirah* of your mother that continues on.

A girl becomes *bas mitzvah*, and then she grows up and gets married. When she was a baby, she cried, but what happens when she gets married? She sings out of joy. That is *shirah* – it is to think about how much you have come in your life. *Shirah* is mainly exercised by women, for men learn Torah, while women are exempt from learning Torah – women instead think about the Torah in a different way: they have time to think thoughts of *Emunah*, and from that, a woman is able to come to sing *shirah*.

A man is not allowed to hear a woman singing. The deep reason behind this is because a woman's special *Avodah* is *shirah*, which is not a man's *Avodah*, and thus, a man is not allowed to “hear” a woman's song.

### *The Greatness of Women*

Miriam was the one who began the *shirah*. She was also the one who helped Moshe survive. She waited to see what would happen to her baby brother and continued to see what would happen with him. She was older than Aharon and Moshe; this was not by chance. It is really because if not for her actions, there would be no Redemption! Moshe Rabbeinu only survived due to his older sister Miriam's involvement. This is the depth behind why “in the merit of the righteous women, the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt.” If not for Miriam, there would be no Moshe!

Miriam's name comes from the word *merirus*, bitterness. When she sang the *shirah*, she was alluding to the fact that although the Jewish people first went through bitterness in Egypt, now they were singing. In a certain way, the song of Miriam is great than the Torah which Moshe gave! This is because it is written, “*Az yashir Moshe*” – “Then, Moshe sang.” The men only sing after the miracles are complete. The *Gemara* also states that *Az Yashir* is a song of the future, in which Moshe will lead all the men to sing. But Miriam was singing with the women even before; “*Vatashar Miriam*”, “And Miriam sang.” The women, headed by Miriam, were already singing from before.

This shows us what a woman's role in the Torah is. With men, there is a chain of tradition, starting from Moshe, continuing to Yehoshua, and so forth. Moshe revealed the Torah to the men, but Miriam revealed *shirah* to the women. The *shirah* which the women sang by the sea was their preparation to receive the Torah. They prepared themselves for the Torah by singing the *shirah*.

Now that we have seen the root concept – that a woman's Torah is *shirah* – we can proceed to explain this in a more practical way in our life.

### *Having Time To Reflect*

Every woman should take time every day and think a little: “What has happened to me since the time I was born? What were the major events and stages I went through in my life?” Then, see how Hashem was there with you throughout each time.

If we would all do this, we would discover much happiness in our life. This would show us the “chain” of events in our life, and when we have the “chain”, we have a cause for *shirah*.

The Chofetz Chaim one day sat down and went through his entire life in his head, thanking Hashem for all that he had in his life. He spoke to Hashem, saying, “Hashem, thank you for letting me learn Torah my entire life. Thank you for meriting me that I write sefer *Mishnah Berurah*. Thank you for my wife, and for the children which You gave me.”

Chazal state that Moshiach will reveal a “new Torah.” What is the Torah that Moshiach will reveal? He will reveal the entire story of the Jewish people throughout history, and this will show us the great chain of events that will lead us to *shirah*.

When a person takes time to think about his life and to see the chain of events in his life, he can find how Hashem was always there in his life, and he can come to thank Hashem for his whole life. It shouldn't be just a lip service – it should be a deep reflection into your life. When you have this deep reflection into your life, you can come to *shirah*. Your heart will become so full of gratitude that it will burst out with song to Hashem.

This is the “Torah of your mother”. This is the Torah which a mother must give to her children – she teaches them how to sing *shirah* about everything in life, to see how it all connects into one chain. Without this, a woman only sings empty songs to her children...and often it is a non-Jewish song....

### *A Woman's Torah Comes From Herself*

The Torah which men learn is usually from a teacher, or from another source, such as from a sefer, or from the Beis Midrash. Men need some source to learn Torah from. But a woman's Torah doesn't need a teacher. She doesn't need a sefer, and she doesn't need a Beis Midrash. It is a Torah

that comes from within herself. It resembles Avraham *Avinu*, of whom Chazal say, "Avraham learned Torah from himself." Avraham figured out what the Torah wanted without ever receiving it. This is the kind of Torah that women have – they can get the Torah just from their heart.

It is written, "*Write the words of Torah on your heart.*" This is referring to the Torah of women, who learn Torah from their hearts.

In order to reach this, one must set aside time to reflect about all that has happened to her until now, and to see how they were all links in a chain.

To do this in a practical way, it is recommended to learn *Chovos HaLevovos: Sha'ar HaBechinah* (Gate of Reflection), with the commentary of the *Lev Tov*. This can awaken your thoughts on how to think about Hashem's goodness in your life. It can help you see the chain of events in your life, and it can help you reveal a chain which is unlike no other in the world.

When a person wants to buy a new chain, she goes to the jewelry store. She asks them to show her a chain of which there is no other like it in the world. The "chain" which you can uncover from your life is actually the chain which is unlike any other in the world! It is each person's personal *shirah*. Every person's life is different, and thus each person has her own *shirah*.

The average lifespan on this world is seventy years. How will we leave this world? Will we leave it with crying? If we do, then we were born with crying, and we will leave this world crying. But if we think deeply into our life and see how Hashem was always in our life, we can come to sing *shirah*, and we will end our life with song.

Let's say a woman wants to write a biography about her life. It's possible that she will write about her whole life and all the struggles and pain she went through, yet this doesn't necessarily cause her to sing *shirah* about her life. Instead she is just sad about her whole life. But if she would see how all the events in her life are part of a chain, she would break out in song, and that would be a true biography.

When a woman goes to *Gan Eden* and she sang *shirah* in her life, she enters that special chamber in Heaven where Miriam sings with all women. She doesn't continue to sing the same old song they were singing – she adds in her own song. Each woman has her own unique song she can reveal about her life.

"*Shirah chadasha*" – there is a "new song" which we can reveal. The higher level a woman reaches in her life, the greater her song can become. She can turn her whole life into a chain of events that brings her to have *shirah*.

Practically speaking, a woman should set aside time, take a piece of paper and write down all the major events she went through in her life, and think about the kindness that Hashem has showed her throughout her whole life.

### *The Difficulty*

However, you might encounter a difficulty with this – you might have a hard time seeing how certain events connect. But we can compare this to a puzzle that is missing pieces. When you make a puzzle, it takes time until you figure out where all the pieces go. You aren't sure where a certain piece goes, so you put it on the side and come back to it later. Slowly as you add on more pieces, you see the picture, even though you don't have the whole picture; and you are then able to figure out where those pieces go, because the picture has become a little clearer.

Therefore, take all the parts of your life that you know are really part of the puzzle, and look at them as puzzle pieces which you don't know what to do with right now. Eventually, you will see that these hard to understand events in your life are also part of the puzzle that makes up your life. As long as you are aware that everything you went through is somehow part of the puzzle, you will be able to put it all together one day.

### *Tehillim – The Ultimate Song*

*Sefer Tehillim* is all a *shirah*. It is the song of Dovid *HaMelech's* life, which are all a chain of events that he connected. If someone says *Tehillim* with her heart, she connects to *shirah*, and this is a very clear example of a woman's Torah.

Although this is a great goal in our life, it shouldn't just be an aspiration in our life. We should realize some of our aspirations even now, even at the beginning of our way – *sof maaseh b'machshavah techilah*, “the end of action is first in the thoughts.”

*Tehillim* is the ultimate *Shirah*, because it is the all-inclusive song of the Jewish people. After we discover our own personal song in our life, we can connect ourselves to the songs we see in *Tehillim*. That is our ultimate goal, but even before we get to that level, we can at least discover our own personal song in our private lives.

### *Preparing for Shavuot*

If a woman wants to prepare for Shavuot, it should be very clear: what is a man's Torah, and what is a woman's Torah? What is the Torah which women have in *Gan Eden*? It is the *shirah*.

If a woman goes her whole life and never reveals a *shirah* about her life, what will she do when she gets to *Gan Eden*? Imagine a person who comes to a wedding and he doesn't understand the language of anybody there. He will not enjoy the wedding. To be able to enjoy the spiritual pleasure of *Gan Eden*, which is *shirah*, we need to already be used to the “language” of *shirah* already on this world.

To give an example, Hashem decided to destroy the world in the generation of Noach. He was very distraught about the generations from Adam to Noach, and the Torah writes that “*Hashem was said in His heart.*” No one cries when they read this – people only cry when they read about the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. But if you think about it, the ten generations in between Adam and Noach were also a very sad time; they were also a cause for destruction. This is just an example of how we need to think into events and see how it all connects.

### *In Conclusion*

The words here are not ideas, but they are a way of life for someone who wants to live an inner kind of life. It is the nature of a woman to turn everything into “ideas”, as opposed to turning them into actuality, but we have to make sure that we actually do them. These are not ideas! These are instructions for an inner way to live. They might sound very strange at first, but it only sounds strange to us because we are so affected by the materialism of this world's lifestyle.

May we each merit to reveal our own personal, deep *shirah* – and may all of our songs come together and reveal the complete *shirah*, which is the song of Creation.



## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH THE RAV

**Q: Is *shirah* only for women, and not for men?**

**A:** It is a stronger point by women than it is by men.

**Q: Is this the same thing as “*Hakaras HaTov*” (gratitude)?**

**A:** Gratitude is only for one specific event, but the *Avodah* of “*Shirah*” which we have described here is about connecting many events. *Emunah* has to come before anything, though. The *Chovos HaLevovos* first discusses *Emunah* before he discusses how to have gratitude to Hashem. Again, let us repeat that *shirah* is not an idea. It is a very deep, internal self-expression. This is not an “idea” – it should actually be practiced in your life.

**Q: How can we include our children in this?**

**A:** Slowly begin to include your children in your *shirah* as you express it, and eventually over time, they will open up and learn themselves how to have *shirah* in their own life.

I am basically trying to tell you that women here in America are very far from the true kind of life, and that we must return to the true kind of life. There are a lot of lies going on in life. Many people know that the American lifestyle is full of lies, but they simply don't have the strength to deal with it. People who want to work on themselves learn *Shemiras HaLashon* and say *Perek Shirah*, but is this enough to help us live a true kind of life?!

I will tell you a story. Rav Shimshon Pincus *zt"l* was born in America and he moved to *Eretz Yisrael*. Once on a visit to America, he got a ride with someone, and his driver picked up a young girl who needed a ride. The girl got into the car. The driver turned to Rav Pincus and said to him, “Why don't you say hello to her?”

Rav Pincus responded that it is forbidden according to *Halacha* for a man to greet a woman he doesn't know. The driver responded, “Here in America, you are supposed to greet everyone.”

This story shows how wrong the way of life in America is. Of course, there are problems in *Eretz Yisrael* too. But the problems here in America are much worse, because the very way of life here is totally upside down from the truth. It is very far from the way in which our *Avos* lived; that men should greet women they don't know?!

Life here in America is full of falsity, but if we are really dedicated to living a true kind of life, we can do so.



## 2.4 | *Shavuos - A Woman's Connection to the Torah*

### *A Woman's Avodah on Shavuos*

We are approaching Shavuos. We know that even women received the Torah. If men learn Torah, what do women do with the Torah, since they do not learn the Torah? Men stay up a whole night and learn Torah; what should the women and girls do? Is a girl's whole job on Shavuos just not disturb her father from his rest when he comes back from the *beis midrash*? What is the *Avodah* of a woman on Shavuos?

When it comes Pesach, women have *mitzvos*: eat *matzah* and join the *seder*. On Sukkos, women also shake *lulav* and *esrog*. But what is the *mitzvah* for a woman on Shavuos? What connection do women have to the Torah – the most precious thing in the world?

### *The Torah is our Light*

Torah is called *Torah Ohr* – the “Torah of light”. Light shows a person which way to go; it illuminates the path. It doesn't just show us a path – it shows us our soul, and it shows us how to live a life of happiness. If a person would do *mitzvos* and not have Torah, it's like trying to arrange your things in a dark room. Torah is the light that helps a person see things. What is this light of the Torah?

The Torah shows us everything to do on this world. But how do we connect to it? Men connect to the Torah by learning the Torah, but how can a woman connect to it?

### *How a Woman Can Connect to the Torah's Light*

One way is by being connecting to her family who learn Torah, like if she has a connection to her father or husband who learns Torah. But there is a more inner way. The soul that we have can connect us to the Torah. We need to become connected to our soul. If a person goes her whole life only thinking about what her body wants, she will not get this light. But when a person lives a life of the soul, she can receive the light of the Torah.

### *Feeling Connected to the Mitzvos*

We do a lot of *mitzvos* every day. Do we do them happily? Do we do them because we have to – or because we enjoy them and want to do them? When a person eats, he enjoys his food, and when

he goes on vacations he enjoys it. Do we enjoy our *mitzvos* too? Do we enjoy our davening? Do we feel some connection to Hashem when we daven, or do we just say the words?

How does the davening of a Jew look like when he davens from his soul? When a person thanks Hashem for something, she davens from her soul. When a person asks Hashem for something when she davens, if she does so because she wants to connect to Hashem – such a person davens from her heart, and this is how a person davens from her very soul.

A person might daven a whole day, but it's like he is outside of shul, because his heart isn't in it. He doesn't feel connected to what he does. What must we be connected to when we daven? To our siddur? People are davening for many years yet their hearts aren't in it.

When a person honors his parents, does he do it because he has to, or does he do it from his heart? Do we feel connected to this *mitzvah* when we do it...?

When a person just lives a superficial kind of life, he does everything he is supposed to, but he doesn't do it with his heart. He isn't connected to what he does. But when a person lives a life with his *neshamah*, he feels connected to what he does. He does everything from his heart.

We must see if our hearts are in what we do. We need to get used to putting our hearts into what we are doing! At least when we daven, let us utter one paragraph from our heart. And when we do *chesed*, we should do at least one *chesed* a day from an inner love for others – because we really want to. When a person does things from his heart, he will enjoy life. A person can only be happy when he is connected to what he does. How can we enjoy life? Every day, do three things a day from your heart.

### **Women Connect to the Torah with their Heart**

This is actually how a woman can connect to the Torah.

What is the last letter in the Torah? The letter *lamed*. The first letter of the Torah is the letter *beis*. This forms the word *lev* – heart. The entire Torah from beginning until end is about our heart! Men connect to the Torah by learning to the Torah, with their intellect. But women connect to the Torah through their heart.

If we do things without our heart, our whole *Yiddishkeit* is missing. But if we put our heart into the *mitzvos* – such as when we daven, or when we do *chesed*, or when we honor our parents – we will enjoy a happy, Torah kind of life.

This is practical advice – every day, for three times a day, do a *mitzvah* out of your heart.

May we be *zoche* to connect to the Torah – through our hearts.

## 2.5 | *Elul: Thinking What Life Is About*

### *Do You Want To Be Jewish?*

When we all stood at *Har Sinai*, Hashem forced us to accept the Torah. The *Midrash* says that Hashem lifted up the mountain above us and said, "If you will not accept the Torah, I will bury you under this mountain." All of us were forced into the Jewish religion and to accept the Torah.

So, we keep the Torah and do everything a Jew is supposed to do. We were forced into this. But do we also want to be Jewish? That is the question.

The *Yeshiva Bochur* Who Found Out He's not a Jew

Rav Ezriel Tauber *shlit"á* tells of a story that one time a *yeshiva bochur*, who was also a big *masmid*, in a top yeshiva -- found out that his grandparents had not converted properly according to Jewish law. That meant that he had just found out that he isn't Jewish.

His friends told him, "Quick – go convert!" He could have converted and become a *ger*. But shockingly, he decided not to convert. He was ecstatic that he had found out that he wasn't Jewish. He said, "Why should I remain Jewish?"

Now, imagine if any of us would find out that we are not Jewish. What would we do? Would we go run to convert? Imagine you find out that you are not Jewish. What would you do? Would you quickly take the next plane to Florida to relax at a non-Jewish beach? Would you go run to convert – or would you engage in some non-Jewish activities?

If Hashem would give us the choice not to be Jewish, what would we decide?

### *Do We Want the Mitzvos?*

Another question: If Hashem would let us decide which *mitzvos* to keep and which *mitzvos* we don't want to keep, what would we decide? If we had the ability to cut back some *mitzvos* and keep the ones that aren't hard, would we do it?

Do we want to be Jewish? That is the *ultimate* question.

### *Elul -- Days of Will*

Do we really want *Yiddishkeit*? Elul is called *Y'mei Ratzon*, Days of Will. Do we have the will to be Jewish? Non-Jews are also judged on Rosh Hashanah. What is the difference between our Rosh

Hashanah and their Rosh Hashanah? There are non-Jews who also prepare for Rosh Hashanah. What is the difference between us and them when it comes to Rosh Hashanah?

Do we really want Rosh Hashanah, or would we rather be spared the pain of being judged? Do we feel forced into this day and rather do without it?

Yes, life is so hard – we don't like our job, or what we have to do in the house, and in general, our whole life doesn't go the way we want. But what do we really want in life anyway?

Another question (this is for men): When we learn Torah – are we learning because someone put pressure on us to learn, or because we really want this?

We need to do some thinking.

### *What Rosh HaShanah means to a Jew*

There is an essential difference between a Jew and a non-Jew. A non-Jew might be very religious and take Rosh Hashanah seriously, but he'd rather do without it. We, the Jewish people – when we act in the true way we are supposed to be – we look forward to Rosh Hashanah. We want this.

Is Rosh Hashanah just falling upon us – like someone who falls into the ocean and is struggling to save himself? Or do we want it?

Rosh Hashanah is a day to declare Hashem's kingship over us. That means that we are declaring that Hashem rules our lives – every last detail. Do we want that?

Rosh Hashanah is essentially a day of happiness. It can be a day where we happily accept Hashem into our life if we choose and want to. You don't need me to tell you this.

I did not come here to say a *drasha* for Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah will come upon us whether I speak or not. Even if we would not accept Hashem's kingship over us, He is still the king who rules over us. I am just asking you a question: Do we want that Hashem should rule over us, over all our life – every aspect of our life? This is the ultimate question before Rosh Hashanah.

Have you ever thought one day in your life what the purpose of life is? A person can learn Chumash and even the whole Tanach, and that is a wonderful thing, but it can be just "history" to a person, because he has never thought about what the purpose of life is. The question we must ask ourselves is: Why are we living?

I didn't come here to give a *drasha*. I think that eventually all of you will forget that I ever came here to speak, and you will forget me. Maybe you are a little inspired right now, but eventually you will forget this whole *drasha*. The year will come and go, and next year will be Rosh Hashanah again, and this year's *drasha* will be forgotten. I didn't just come here to speak and say a *drasha*. So what will remain of this *drasha*? Am I just wasting your time?

*What you can take out of these words*

For two minutes a day, just two minutes, think: Why am I living? What is my life about? If that is what results from this whole *drasha*, then that is enough.

I hope that what I have said are not merely nice “ideas”, but that it will be practical for life.

Every day, think for a few moments: Who am I? Why did I come onto this world? What is the purpose of my life? (Before I know what Hashem wants from me – what do I want from myself...?)

## 2.6 | *Elul: Five Minutes A Day For Introspection*

### *Caught Up in Pre-Yom Tov Stress*

We learned Navi. In Navi we learned about Jerusalem and the great people that lived here. We are now in between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. What is our current day situation? We are in the center of Jerusalem. How is Jerusalem supposed to look? What should the streets look like?

Everyone is buying *s'chach* and walls for their Sukkah. We are looking to beautify our Sukkah...

What about our souls? Are we looking to beautify our souls? Are we running to put together our Sukkah because it is a mitzvah or because that's what everyone else is doing?

When we walk in the streets, do we feel that it is almost Yom Kippur? We are caught up in life. Our souls and our Yiddishkeit is missing. Non-Jews also fill their streets with holiday shopping when it comes to their holidays. What is the difference then between us and them?? We are just being caught up in the upcoming Yom Tov – our Yiddishkeit is missing.

The entire way we live our life is lacking any direction. We are just going through motions. Yom Tov to us is just a hectic time full of running around and shopping. We do not feel in the streets that Yom Kippur is any day now. The streets are full of pre-Yom Tov stress.

### *Stop and Think*

We have to be connected to the purpose that we came down onto this world for. Everyone – without exception – should stop once a day and think for a few minutes: Who am I? Why did I come onto this world?

You can't do this when you are on the bus or while you're talking to your friends. You need to be alone and think: What is my life about? And why did we come onto this world? For our friends?? Of course we need friends, but that is not why we came onto this world.

### *Our Purpose on this World*

We have one purpose on the world – only one: To be close to Hashem. Whatever we do in our life are the tools we need to get close to Him. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkos, Yom Tov and our friends are all tools that help us get there, but they are not the ultimate goal. Our ultimate goal is to get close to Hashem.

Someone came to me once with a problem that he cannot control his eating habits. He loves food and eats too much. He asked me what he can do about this. I told him, "Before you eat something, think: "Will this bring me closer to Hashem – or further?"

Every day for a few minutes, think: "I came onto this world for a purpose." We all know this, but because we are so caught up in life we forget it.

When you get up in the morning, think: "Why am I getting out of bed in the morning?" Your soul returned to you after a night's sleep; others do not wake up sometimes. Why did Hashem return your soul to you? For what purpose?

Ask a teenager: What do you want? A boy will say, "To learn good." A girl might say, "To be popular and have lots of friends." When they get older they say, "To get a good *shidduch*." But none of them are thinking what they really want out of life. No one is thinking why they even came onto this world!

We learned Navi; we learned about great people like Yechezkel HaNavi, Dovid *HaMelech* and Shaul *HaMelech*. Is there anyone here who thinks that any of these *tzaddikim* would want to walk down modern day Jerusalem, even in the most *chareidi* neighborhoods? The streets are full of restaurants and shopping centers. There is nothing wrong with eating food or buying clothes, but the streets of Jerusalem do not look the way they are supposed to! We are missing the truth.

Just think for a few minutes a day what your purpose is on this world. This advice is not from me – it is from the Ramchal in *sefer Derech Etz Chaim*.

### *We Ask for "Life"*

Hashem gave us life. On Rosh Hashanah we ask, "Remember us for life." But what is the life we want...?

It is impossible to change our life in one day. But this we can do – once a day, let us stop for a few minutes and think why we are living, what our purpose is.

I hope you listened to these words. These are not ideas – these words are practical guidance for life. If we do this, everything will change, because this is the root of all that we need to do. If we do this every day, we will see improvement in all areas!

## 2.7 | *Elul: How A Jewish Mother Prepares For Rosh Hashanah*

### *Men serve Hashem through their Thoughts,*

Women serve Hashem through Actions

A man uses his faculty of thought to serve Hashem, such as by learning Torah. What is the *Avodah* of a woman?

A woman doesn't use the power of thought to serve Hashem – she mainly uses her actions. A woman mainly is involved in her home, with her husband and children. She nourishes them and provides them with their physical needs. In addition to this, a woman also is involved in *chessed*; we will soon explain what this means.

These are the two main aspects of a woman's *Avodas* Hashem: her home, and her *chessed*.

The home comes first; it is more important than any *chessed*. But, although running the home is her first priority, it is not good either if a woman is only focused on nourishing her family with their physical needs. A woman who wants to improve herself needs to do *chessed* as well with her family; we will explain what we mean.

### *Part One: Why we must do chessed*

Rav Chaim Volozhiner *zt"l* wrote in his introduction to *sefer Nefesh HaChaim*, "A person was only created in order to help others." There are people who do a lot of *chessed*, but only because "it's a *mitzvah*." But this is not the purpose of why we do *chessed*. We need to do *chessed* because we were created to help people!

There are many ways to do *chessed*, but the main thing is that we must have a general attitude of always doing *chessed* in our life. When we do *chessed*, are we realizing that we are fulfilling our purpose on this world? It's not mainly about how much *chessed* we do; that is one thing. It is more about what our attitude toward *chessed* is.

### *A Mother's Role*

A Jewish mother is doing *chessed* all day; all day, all she is concerned about is her family's needs. This indeed is her main *Avodas* Hashem. But she must realize that she is doing all this because of

*chessed*, not because she was thrown into these responsibilities. She didn't "happen" to fall into this role.

A woman doesn't learn Torah; her whole life is *chessed*. So *chessed* has to be her whole attitude on life! She does *chessed*, and in this she doesn't need to improve, because it is all she does all day. But she must do it with awareness. A woman doesn't do *chessed* because she "happens" to fall into this role of being a housewife; it is part of the way Hashem designed creation, and this has to be her attitude on life: My whole *Avodas Hashem* on this world is to do *chessed*.

That is one part of her *Avodah*: knowing why she takes care of her family. She must realize that this is her whole life's mission, not something she "happens" to do due to life circumstances.

### ***Part Two: Giving Over Proper Values***

The second part of a woman's *Avodas Hashem* is the actual *chessed* she does. This is not the same thing as before; we will explain what this is.

It is written, "Do not forsake the Torah of your mother." What Torah do we learn from our mothers, if our mothers did not learn Torah? A woman is exempt from learning Torah; what Torah does she give over to her children? Does she learn *Mishnayos* and *Gemara* with her children?

The "Torah of a mother" is that she gives over to her children the values of life. She doesn't teach her children what to do and what not to do; that is the father's job in *chinuch*. Her job in *chinuch* is to give her how the Torah "smells" – the beautiful fragrance of a Torah lifestyle. She gives over the attitude we must have toward life.

The husband learns Torah, and his role as a father is to teach them right from wrong. But his learning doesn't necessarily give over the proper values to the children; it is the mother who accomplishes this. Why?

When the father goes back to the *Beis Midrash* to learn, it is the mother who remains in the house with the children. They are around her much more than they are around their father. It is she who is giving over the proper values to her children when their father isn't around. She shows her children how to live the Torah lifestyle.

### ***How The Mother Teaches Her Children***

In order for a mother to accomplish this, she must practice what she preaches. If she tells her children to live a Torah kind of lifestyle but she herself doesn't keep to her own words, her words will be ineffective on her children. Her words can only penetrate the hearts of her children when

they are truthful and come from her heart, when she is an example to them. This is only when she herself lives by the words she says.

This is a woman's role in the home: she brings up her children. This is the real *chessed* that she does in the home. It is not simply that she provides them with their physical needs and nourishes them; her role is to bring them up with the proper values in life, to show them the how fragrant and sweet a Torah lifestyle is.

She teaches them the proper aspirations to have in life. She teaches them to be happy with life, happiness when doing the *mitzvos*, and what to want in life.

In this way, she does *chessed* her whole life, not just by rote, but as something which personifies her very life.

### *In Conclusion*

If Avraham *Avinu* would have done *chessed* his whole life because simply "it's a *mitzvah*" to do *chessed*, he wouldn't have gotten anywhere. It was only because he viewed *chessed* as his whole purpose in life. *Chessed* personified him; it was his whole attitude about life.

This is the kind of *Chessed* we need to have: not that we should do *Chessed* because we have to, but because it should be how we live our life.

## 2.8 | *The Five Steps of Te-sh-u-v-ab*<sup>10</sup> 10-24-2017

### *“Te-sh-u-v-ab”: An Acronym for Five Different Spiritual Tasks*

There is a teaching from our Rabbis<sup>11</sup> that the word *teshuvah* (תשובה) stands for the following five fundamentals in our *avodah* (spiritual task):

1. תמים תהי' עם ה' אלוקיך – “Be simple with Hashem, your G-d.”
2. שוייתי ה' לנגדי תמיד – “I place Hashem opposite me, always.”
3. ואהבת לרעך כמוך – “And you shall love your friend like yourself.”
4. בכל דרכיך דעהו – “In all your ways, know Him.”
5. הצנע לכת עם אלוקיך – “Walk modestly with Hashem your G-d.”

We will try here, with the help of Hashem, to reflect into these five aspects involved in doing *teshuvah*. These five concepts are not randomly placed together. Rather, they all bear a connection to *teshuvah*, which means to “return”, to one’s root, to his source, to his beginning. Thus, the five verses quoted above are essentially five ways of how one can return to his source.

We will try to explain here how one can practically work on each of these concepts. To work on all of these five steps, practically speaking, is obviously too difficult. Instead, each of us should pick of one these concepts to work on, which is certainly within our power of *bechirah* (free will) to do, in these days of *teshuvah*.

### *1. “Be Simple With Hashem Your G-d” - Returning To Our Childlike Purity*

The first concept of *teshuvah* is: תמים תהי' עם ה' אלוקיך, “Be simple with Hashem your G-d”.

Each of us, when we are born, is born with a quality called *temimus* (earnestness). As we grow older, naturally, this *temimus* gets covered over. We can see clearly that young children are pure and trusting, and as they grow older, they begin to know the world around them, and they see that they cannot trust the world that much as they used to. They get used to seeing a world that is far from *temimus*, and as a result, they learn to stifle their own *temimus*, so that they can fit into their surroundings.

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<sup>11</sup> This is said in the name of the Baal HaTanya (Reb Shneur Zalman of Liadi) and Reb Zusha of Anipoli

A child will naturally do anything that others do, believing that everyone around them is pure and acting correctly. There is a deep place in the soul as well, our *temimus*, which is pure and trusting. But this *temimus* becomes hidden from use with the more we grow older and we want to mimic our surroundings. But the *temimus* that remains inside us, deep down, remains dormant in us, as a holy power, a power to be completely trusting of Hashem.

If we wouldn't be born with this power of *temimus*, it would be too difficult for us to acquire this power, because it wouldn't be in our resources. But Hashem, in His great mercy, imbued us with this natural ability, from birth, so that we can regain this nature whenever we need it. We don't need to acquire this quality of *temimus* from scratch. Rather, all we need to do is return to our original purity which we are born with. It has merely become covered over and hidden from our conscious awareness. But it is there, deep in our soul.

In this time of the year, when our *avodah* is to do seek atonement and do *teshuvah*, anyone with a Jewish soul that is a bit opened, will cry tears to Hashem.

Who usually cries, a child or an adult? Generally speaking, a child cries more than an adult. During this time of the year of *teshuvah*, each and every one of us can naturally return, on some degree, to a state of mind that resembles our pure, childlike state. That is why we can easily cry during these days, epitomizing the verse, "*And purify our hearts, to serve You in truth.*"

These days are the time of which it says, "*Before Hashem, be purified*", where we return to a place of simplicity in ourselves, the inner child in ourselves, of trusting in Hashem. This *temimus* is still in us and it is especially apparent during these days of *teshuvah*, and it enables us to cry to Hashem, simply, and earnestly. Once a year, we have this opportunity to return to our childlike state. As Dovid HaMelech said, "*Like an infant on his mother's lap.*" We can return to this simple, earnest place in ourselves.

During the rest of the year, it is hard to be in this state of mind. But when we are in front of Hashem during these days, we can let this part of ourselves out from hiding, setting our inner childlike state free, and to let it run to Hashem and cry.

To access this power in ourselves, we may employ the use of our imagination, such as by imagining a child crying in his or her mother's lap, and to further imagine how the parent lovingly fulfills the child's request.

The blow of the *shofar* of Rosh HaShanah is considered to be a form of crying, the Gemara says. When a child is born, he cannot say a thing, and all he can do is cry to his parents. The sound of the *shofar* is like the child's cry, and it is a hint that one should be like a child, who can easily cry to his parents; to be able to naturally cry to Hashem.

This concludes with Yom Kippur. On Yom Kippur, there is also crying, but it is not a crying of sadness and mourning, which is the crying we have in the month of *Av*. Rather, it is a crying of longing for Hashem, like a child who cries for his parents when he sees his parents leaving the house and leaving him alone.

That is the first part of *teshuvah*: “Be simple, with Hashem your G-d.” It is our *temimus*. Sit quietly with yourself, and return to a place in yourself which is childlike, pure and trusting, the purest place that exists deep inside you, which is always there. From there, from that place in yourself, turn to Hashem, and let your crying come forth, letting it flow from your innermost depths. Let us feel that this is the depth of the *avodah* during these days – “*Be wholesome with Hashem your G-d*” – and to live with this *temimus*.

## 2 – “I Place Hashem Opposite Me, Always” – Becoming Cognizant of Hashem’s Presence

The second concept contained in *teshuvah* is: שׁוֹיִתִּי ה' לנגדי תמיד, “I place Hashem opposite me, always.”

As is well-known, the *Rema* in the very beginning of *Shulchan Aruch* begins with these words: “*Shivisi Hashem L’negdi tamid*” – “I place Hashem opposite me, always” – “This is the great rule in the praiseworthiness of the righteous, who walk before G-d. For the way a person sits and moves in his house does not compare to the way he sits and moves in the house of the king and when he is in front of the king.”

The *Rema*’s words here are speaking about the way a Jew should conduct himself during the entire year, but the especially auspicious time of the year to practically work on this concept is during these days of repentance. The Gemara says of the ten days of repentance that one should “Seek Hashem where He is found, call out to Him where he is close”. Now is the time where a person should especially seek out closeness to Hashem, because Hashem is closer to us during this time of the year.

Therefore, even it is too high of a level to try to live with the state of “*Shivisi Hashem L’negdi Tamid*” – and indeed, it is a high level to always live in it – at least during the ten days of repentance, and certainly at least on Yom Kippur, we should try to attain the state of *Shivisi Hashem L’negdi Tamid*.

So on Yom Kippur, before we are about to recite *Kol Nidrei*, and before we are about to *daven* any of the five *tefillos* of Yom Kippur, we should first stop and think that we are about to stand before Hashem and speak with Him. Before beginning each *Shemoneh Esrei* on Yom Kippur, stop for a minute, or half a minute, and think about:

1. Whom you are about to stand in front of, and
2. Whom you are about to speak with, and
3. When you are speaking with Hashem, where are you actually found? Remember that “The entire land is filled with His glory.”

When you speak with Him, it must be “as a man talks to his friend”, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* explains. Hashem is found in front of us, here, and with Him we are speaking. Hashem has no corporeal body, but His existence is constantly in front of us, and with Him we are conversing.

If one can extend this awareness into the rest of the year as well, that is praiseworthy. But let us at least do it once a day, before we are about to *daven*. For once a day, before you are about to *daven*, think for just a few seconds about Whom you are about to speak with.

Even if you cannot be on this level during the rest of the year, at least on Yom Kippur, before each of the five *tefillos*, stand for a few moments and think that you are about to stand before Hashem and that you will be speaking with Him. You can also try to pause in middle of *Shemoneh Esrei* every so often and remind yourself that you are standing before Hashem.

Many times while people are *davening*, their thoughts are floating all over the place and they forget they are *davening*. Sometimes people are even so immersed in what they are *davening* for, that they forget that they are standing before Hashem, and with Whom they are speaking! They forget where they are.

Part of doing *teshuvah* is working upon this concept of “*Shivisi Hashem L’Negdi Tamid*”. The *Rema* says that this is the entire praise of the *tzaddikim*, but even if we cannot be on this level, at least we can aspire for it. After all, “One is obligated to say: “When will my actions reach that of my forefathers?” Although we cannot reach the level of the *Avos*, we must aspire to reach their level, and indeed, we can certainly touch upon their level, even if we cannot reach it fully.

If someone merits the level that is “complete *teshuvah*”, he can be in a state of *Shivisi* during the rest of the year as well. But at least during these days of *teshuvah*, any person can strive to touch upon this level, and to bring himself to the level of *Shivisi Hashem L’negdi Tamid*, for just a few moments, and throughout the day.

Even more so, when it is the time to *daven Ne’ilah*, at the end of Yom Kippur, what kind of thought do we end the day with? How do we spend the last moments of Yom Kippur? When we are saying those words, “*L’shanah Habaah B’Yerushalayim!*” (“Next year in Jerusalem”), we can take a few seconds to think about the ultimate purpose of this day. Think that you are standing in front of Hashem, with nothing dividing between you and Hashem – there are no barriers of sin during these moments. For one moment, bring your soul to a state of being “near” Hashem, and be aware that you are speaking with Him.

How much will this awareness extend into the rest of the year as well? That is relative, and it will depend on the level of each person. But the final thought on Yom Kippur, for each person to think, when we are taking leave of the entire year, is a simple thought: We are standing in front of Hashem, and it is with Him that we speak with. If you merit, you will also have moments throughout the year when you can feel this.

If you go into Yom Kippur with this awareness, starting with the *tefillah* of *Maariv* on Yom Kippur and leaving the final moments of Yom Kippur with this simple thought, you will certainly

have a more elevated year, with *siyata d'shmaya*. How elevated will it be? That is up to how you choose to spend the rest of the year. But if you go into Yom Kippur with this awareness and you also leave Yom Kippur like this, your soul will receive a deeper perspective, a more purified level of truth. Each person will certainly be positively affected, on varying levels, through this purification.

### 3. “And You Shall Love Your Friend Like Yourself”: The Mutual Unity In The Jewish People

The third way to *teshuvah* is: **וואהבת לרעך כמוך**, “And you shall like your friend like yourself.”

In the beginning of *Kol Nidrei*, we say that we are permitting ourselves to pray together with [intentional, rebellious] sinners. During the rest of the year, we may not pray together with [intentional] sinners. But on Yom Kippur, there is one day of the year where even those who have gone the most astray in the Jewish people come to *daven*, and it is permitted for us on this day to pray together with these who have intentionally sinned. This is not simply a day in which more people come to shul to daven. Rather, Yom Kippur contains a power that unifies everyone together. It is “And you shall love your friend like yourself” which connects every Jew together, which is especially apparent on Yom Kippur.

The day of Yom Kippur is the one day of the year which causes Jews from all walks of life to come and gather together. On Yom Kippur, even those who have gone astray and who are very far, will come to *shul*, with *siyata d'shmaya* (heavenly assistance). This is not merely an action they are doing. Rather, their hearts are active on this day, seeking atonement from Hashem. Not only are they coming to speak with Hashem, but they become united again with their brethren, the collective whole of the Jewish people. They are not gathered together in *shul* by coincidence. Rather, there is a light of truth that comes down onto the world on Yom Kippur. The unifying love between all of the Jewish people is this light.

Rabbi Akiva said that Hashem purifies the Jewish people on Yom Kippur, and the same Rabbi Akiva said, “This is the great rule of the Torah: “And you shall love your friend like yourself.” These are not two separate statements of Rabbi Akiva – they are one and the same. The inner essence of Yom Kippur is a Jew's bond with HaKadosh Baruch Hu, to be purified before Hashem, to be cognizant of Hashem's presence, and it is also a day of connection with all of the Jewish people.

That is why Yom Kippur does not atone for sins unless one has sought forgiveness from others. Yom Kippur is atonement from sins against Hashem, and it is also a time to seek atonement for sins committed between man and his friend. There is a great light on Yom Kippur of love for all creations, of “And you shall love your friend like yourself”, and therefore there must be seeking of forgiveness from others before Yom Kippur.

Everyone asks each other forgiveness, because, deep down, everyone feels the light of this love. A person may not be consciously aware of this, but “his *mazal* sees” – his inner soul can feel this truth, that Yom Kippur is a time of mutual connection between the entire Jewish people.

Here is an example of how one can improve on the aspect of *ahavas Yisrael* on Yom Kippur. In many *shuls* on Yom Kippur, there are people who are concerned that they should find the best possible place to sit in, worrying solely for themselves, without thinking of how to benefit others. On the holiest day of the year, while standing in front of Hashem, a person may just be entirely self-absorbed, concerned only for himself. But a person on Yom Kippur must think of a possible way to be concerned for others, and make sure that another person is comfortable.

One should look for ways to help someone around him. Another needs help finding seats for his children. Another person will need something else. We should want to *daven* of course, but we also need to be concerned for others, and fulfill "*And you shall love your friend like yourself.*"

Practically speaking, you should do something for someone else on Yom Kippur that will come at the expense of some physical comfort, and even if it deters your spiritual focus. I don't mean that you should give up your entire spirituality on Yom Kippur in order to help someone. But at least in one area, be prepared to give up from yourself for another, whether it deters you physically or spiritually. Do so from a love for others. This should not be done with the agenda of gaining forgiveness from others, which is a self-serving motivation. Rather, do an act of concern for another simply out of a love for another Jew.

An additional point, related to this, is that when we recite *Tefillah Zakah* (which one should try to say, as stated in *Mishnah Berurah*), we state that we forgive anyone who has harmed us, whether in this lifetime or in a previous lifetime, except for certain injustices committed against us, which we are not allowed to forgive for, as the *Poskim* discuss. Besides for those isolated occurrences, we must strive to forgive any Jew who has wronged us, and to do so from the depths of the heart.

This should not be done with the agenda that if I forgive others, then Hashem will forgive me, even though that is true. Rather, the intention should be to forgive every Jew out of a love for all Jews, to desire that they should have it good. It is not about you. Before we go into Yom Kippur, we should awaken our *ahavas Yisrael* for all Jews, and we should ask ourselves: Do we really want that every Jew this year should have it good, to be sealed for a good year? Or are we each worried only for our own private lives, that only "I" should have it good and that only "I" should be sealed for a good year?

If we truly want that others should have it good, we should then realize that it is insensible to bear any resentment against anyone, even if another has truly insulted you and wronged you. If you really want others to have it good and not only yourself, you should try to forgive, with your whole heart, truthfully, any person in the Jewish people who has wronged you. (To actually reach a "complete heart" is a high level, but even if you are not at that level, you can still be able to forgive someone completely).

You need to reach a point where you truly want every Jew to have a good year this year; you should want even someone who has wronged to merit a good judgment. If you want to take this further, you can even *daven* for others that they should have a good year. An even higher level than

this is to pray for the betterment of those who have wronged you – in spite of the fact that he did not treat you fairly.

One should inspect his heart well before doing this, to see if his heart is at peace with what he is doing. This part of *teshuvah* - “*And you shall love your friend like yourself*” - is of the fundamentals of this day of Yom Kippur. Not only should there be practical concern for others on this day, but mainly in your heart, you should feel a greater love for all Jews, on this day.

If you can do the following, try to take upon yourself not to go to sleep at night unless you have done a kindness for a Jew that day. Just do one nice thing a day for another Jew. A day that goes by without doing a kindness for another Jew is a pointless kind of life. The *Nefesh HaChaim* writes that a person was only created to help others. Only rare individuals can be like Avraham Avinu and do chessed all day, but as for the rest of us, we should at least do one kindness every day for another Jew.

If you can help someone in the active sense, by all means, do so. If you can't, at least *daven* for another, or think of how you can help him tomorrow. But don't go to sleep unless you have done one kindness a day for another Jew. That is how you can extend the light of Yom Kippur into the rest of the year. Yom Kippur is not the only day of the year to love all Jews – we can try during the rest of the year as well to resemble the higher level of *ahavas Yisrael* that is more natural on Yom Kippur, by doing at least one kindness a day for another Jew.

#### 4) “*In All Your Ways, Know Him*” – *Sanctifying The Physical*

The fourth way to *teshuvah* is: **בכל דרכיך דעהו**, “In all your ways, know Him.”

There is an entire siman in *Shulchan Aruch: Orach Chaim* (231) which explains the laws of this *mitzvah*. In simpler terms, there is so much we do each day. We each do hundreds of tasks each day – physical, and spiritual. We do spiritual acts each day, such as prayer, and there are much physical tasks we do each day. “In all your ways, know Him” means that even our physical acts should be with a spiritual intention.

It would be a very high level to turn all of our physical acts into spiritual acts. That would be the complete level of “In all your ways know Him”, and we cannot try to grab high levels too fast. Instead, we should work on this gradually. Pick one physical act during the day and add a spiritual intention to it.

Here is a simple example, which is applicable to Yom Kippur. On Erev Yom Kippur, there is a *mitzvah* to eat. There are many different intentions explained in our holy sefarim of how a person should go about eating on Erev Yom Kippur. We all fulfill the *mitzvah* to eat on Erev Yom Kippur, regardless of our intention in it. But what are we thinking as we eat? By the *seudah mafsekes*, what are we thinking? Are we just thinking that we are eating, or are we thinking that it is a *mitzvah*? There

are many things we can think about to elevate this act of eating, but here is one inner intention to have.

Each of us, almost without exception, is able to fast on Yom Kippur. In order to fast on Yom Kippur, it is possible to eat little on Erev Yom Kippur, but we would be very weak when fasting on Yom Kippur. If we really want to have concentration when we *daven* on Yom Kippur, we need energy. On Erev Yom Kippur, we should have the intention that we are eating in order to have the energy to fast on Yom Kippur.

Why do we need the energy to fast? So that we will be more comfortable? People before a fast have the habit to say to each other, "Have an easy fast." What does an 'easy' fast mean? Does it mean that they shouldn't suffer? Now there are pills people can take before a fast which makes the fast easier. For what reason should we make the fast easier...? If our intentions in wishing others well before a fast are true, it is not about having an easy fast. It is so that we can have the energy on Yom Kippur to *daven* properly.

So when eating the *seudah mafsekes*, what are we thinking? What our thoughts then? Let us think for a moment, before we begin to eat, why we are eating. We cannot eat entirely for the sake of Heaven – that is a high level. Rather, let us try to think that we are eating in order to have energy on Yom Kippur and to be able to *daven* properly.

If you can have this thought before you eat the *seudah*, and during the *seudah* as well, this is reaching a degree of "In all your ways, know Him". Even more so, you can try to eat one food with the intention that you should have energy on Yom Kippur to *daven* better.

### 5) "Walk Modestly With Your G-d": External and Internal Modesty

The final part of *teshuvah* is: **הצנוע לכת עם אלוֹקֵיךְ**, "Walk modestly with your G-d."

The task of *tzniyus* (modesty) is unique to women, but let's understand the following fundamental point, which is subtle and deep.

Before a person is born, he\she is a fetus inside the mother, hidden from the rest of the world. Nobody sees him; he is covered completely and he is *tzanua* (hidden, modest). Thus, the very root of our birth begins in a state of *tzniyus*.

The Maharal says that nothing in Creation is coincidental, even the small things; surely, then, it is not a coincidence that the beginning of our birth is in a state of modesty. Why did Hashem make it this way, that before we emerge into the world, we are hidden for nine months? Before a baby is born, he lives an existence for nine months in which he is hidden from the rest of the world. Why did Hashem make it this way? It is to show us that our very beginning is *tzniyus*.

### *Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur: A Time For Modesty*

The beginning of the year, Rosh HaShanah, is certainly a time to strengthen our *tzniyus*. Rosh HaShanah is called “*HaYom Haras Olam*”, the “day of the conception of the world”. Our Sages said that the word “*haras*” is from the word “*herayon*”, conception. Rosh HaShanah is the day in which we are conceived, which serves as a root of *tzniyus* for the rest of the year.

Rosh HaShanah is also where we blow *shofar*, which “covers” over sin; as it is written, **תקעו בשופר בכסה ליום חגינו**, thus *shofar* is associated with **כסה**, with “covering.” The Sages expound this verse that said that Rosh HaShanah is a time where the moon is “covered”. The moon becomes more hidden and modest during Rosh HaShanah.<sup>12</sup>

The ten days from Rosh HaShanah until Yom Kippur, where the moon is more covered over, is thus a time for more modesty. On Yom Kippur, the modesty becomes even more apparent: Either we are praying in shul all day on Yom Kippur, or we are praying in the home, away from the rest of the world.

Of the rest of the year, when it is not Yom Kippur, we can apply the verse, **כל כבודה בת מלך פנימה** – “*All of the honor of a princess, is inside*” – but only in the partial sense. The glory of a Jewish woman takes place on the “inside” - in the home, and not outside the home; but although the home is the main place for the Jewish woman who is a wife and mother, we know that in the end of the day, women are not found all day in their house; they go out of the home, and certainly in the times we live, this is the case.

But there is one day of the year where a large part of the Jewish people is not outside, and they are found inside, in the home. It is the one time of the year where we can truly apply this verse of **כל כבודה בת מלך פנימה**. It is not a coincidence we have a day of the year in which we are not found in the outside world and that this day happens to be Yom Kippur. It is because the underlying essence of Yom Kippur is **הצנוע לכת עם אלוקיך**, “*Walk secretly with your G-d*” - to be in a place that is *tzniyus*.

But we must clearly know the following: *Tzniyus* is not just about covering the body. Being physically covered is certainly the main part of *tzniyus* in the *external* sense, but the *inner essence* (the *pnimiyus*) of *tzniyus* takes place inside us, in the depths of our heart. That is where our *tzniyus* is accessed.

There is a deep place in our heart which is covered and hidden from the rest of the world – and from ourselves. What is hidden from? It is hidden from our own selves, because it is so hidden. But when Yom Kippur comes, our hearts are opened, our *pnimiyus* is opened, and this inner place of *tzniyus* in our hearts becomes revealed to us.

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<sup>12</sup> Editor's Note: It is well-known that the Jewish woman is compared to the moon, which experiences cycles of renewal. It seems that the Rav is drawing a correlation, that just as the moon is more modest on Rosh HaShanah by being covered over, so is the avodah of a Jewish woman to become more modest, with the beginning of Rosh HaShanah.

During the rest of the year, we are experiencing the outer layers of our souls, and that is where we are seeing our life from. The inner place in our heart is hidden from us. But on Yom Kippur, the inner place in the heart can be revealed to us. Yom Kippur is a time where we are purified, where our hearts are purified to serve Hashem, and this purity of the heart means that the inner place in our heart is revealed to us. This means that on Yom Kippur, each person, on his\her own individual level, can reach the innermost place in himself\herself.

### *Teshuvah – Entering Deeper Into Ourselves*

This is also the depth of doing *teshuvah*. When doing *teshuvah*, one needs to enter into deeper places in himself, in his\her heart. The normal feelings and emotions which we experience during the rest of the year are not our innermost feelings we reach when doing *teshuvah*.

*Teshuvah* is supposed to make us think and reflect, and to feel deeper places in ourselves, and from there, we come to feel true regret for any wrongdoings we have done and to make earnest resolutions to improve in the coming year and be better. The normal emotions which we have during the rest of the year are not the same emotions which enter us into *teshuvah* on Yom Kippur. The day of Yom Kippur reveals to us a more inner and hidden place in ourselves.

### *Preparing Ourselves On Erev Yom Kippur*

It is recommended that on Erev Yom Kippur, one should sit with herself and prepare herself to enter into a deeper place of herself. If one makes this preparation, she will find it easier on Yom Kippur to reach this deeper place in herself; to reach deeper and truer feelings in herself. This is the deep place in ourselves where we can experience **הצנע לכת עם אלוקיך**.

Thus, **הצנע לכת עם אלוקיך**, the concept of *tzniyus*\modesty, includes both external and internal modesty. The external aspect of modesty is to be dressed appropriately, but even more so, it includes being modest about ourselves: not to praise ourselves to others, so that we keep a low profile. Yet even this is still within the *external* aspect of *tzniyus*; it is not yet the *inner essence* of *tzniyus*.

### *Tzniyus In The 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

In our generation, we can see that the main emphasis of *tzniyus* today is being placed on the external aspects of *tzniyus*, such as how to dress appropriately, etc. Something is greatly missing from the *tzniyus* in today's times, and it is because the essence behind *tzniyus* is usually missing.

We are often grappling with the external issues of *tzniyus* [appropriate dress and etc.], but these are just the *results* of a deeper issue. Sometimes we succeed in strengthening the external aspects of

*tzniyus* and sometimes we are less successful. But what we really need is to build our power of *tzniyus* from its inner root that it is based on: “Walk secretly with your G-d.”

### *Finding The Essence of Tzniyus In Ourselves – On Yom Kippur*

It is written, “And I will dwell amongst them,” and Chazal teach that this verse means that Hashem dwells in each person's heart. That means that each and every Jew contains in the depths of his\her a hidden place which he can enter, where the *Shechinah* resides and he can feel a deep closeness with Hashem. That place in our heart is where we are meant to enter on Yom Kippur.

Practically speaking, as we *daven* to Hashem on Yom Kippur, we need to try to enter into a deeper place in ourselves. We should do so calmly and slowly, and not try to strain ourselves to get there. But we should try to get there and concentrate on this, slowly and calmly: to reach a deeper place in ourselves, to feel a clearer perception of truths, to reach truer and purer feelings there.

Through the *teshuvah* of Yom Kippur that enables us to be purified by Hashem, we can feel deeper feelings on Yom Kippur than the rest of the year, where we enter into the hidden place in ourselves of “Walk secretly with your G-d.” This hidden place in ourselves is where we can truly feel that we are “with” Hashem.

### *In Conclusion*

So let us remember, that the external aspect of *tzniyus*, of how we must appear and dress, is but one part of our *avodah* in *tzniyus*. Along with it we must awaken in ourselves, for just a few moments, a truer and purer feeling for *tzniyus*. The time to work on this is especially Yom Kippur, where we have a special opportunity to awaken in ourselves to attain a slightly deeper and truer feeling, towards *tzniyus*.

We have seen, with *siyata d'shmaya*, briefly, the five parts of *teshuvah*.

As mentioned in the beginning, one cannot try to work on all of these ideas at once. That will be too difficult. One should instead choose to focus on one of these paths to *teshuvah*, and those who merit it can work on two of the paths. Choose one of these five paths, the one that you feel speaks to you, the one that is closest to your heart.

With some people, a certain path will feel close to home, and other paths will not. With others, a different path is the one that feels closer, and not the others. Each person is different when it comes to this, because not all souls are equal. Therefore, sometimes a person will hear a certain path and it will speak to him very much, whereas another person will connect with it less.

So, sit down after this and reflect: Which one of these five paths mentioned is the one that speaks to you the most? Which is the closest one for you to work on?

All of these paths are based on the words of our Sages. I emphasize that they are the words of the Sages, and they are not my own. This idea that the word “*teshuvah*” stands for these five verses is a concept mentioned in many of the words of our Sages. Choose at least one of these five paths to *teshuvah* to work on, at least during these last few days of *teshuvah* leading up to Yom Kippur. And surely on Yom Kippur itself, you should try to touch upon one of these paths of *teshuvah*.

These days of *teshuvah* are not just days to *daven* more. We need to aim to make some kind of small change for the better, to be able to live a bit more spiritually. This change, when worked upon, will have a positive effect on you for the rest of the year as well.

May Hashem let us merit together, with *siyata d'shmaya*, to become elevated, to grow, each person on his own level, according to his or her own soul. May we merit to grow more and more, to merit to improve, even a little bit more improved, in the coming year.

If one merits to become even more improved, that is wonderful, but even for those who don't, the least we can each aim for is to grow just a little bit more. This little bit of improvement can enable us to ask Hashem for another year of life, that it should at least be more elevated and more spiritual than the year before.

May we all merit, together, to be sealed in the *sefer* of the *tzaddikim*, all of *Klal Yisrael*, for a *gmar chasimah tovah*.



*PART 3*  
*WOMEN & PRAYER*

### 3.1 | Talking To Hashem

#### *Always In Front of the King*

The Sages say that every time it says the word “*melech*” (king) in the *Megillah*, it is referring to Hashem.

There is a great lesson here; every time Esther stood in front of Achashveirosh and said the word “king”, she realized that she was still standing in front of the King of all kings – Hashem.

When a person davens, there is a Halacha that he must feel like he is standing in front of the King of all Kings, Hashem. During the rest of *davening*, and during the rest of the day as well, we do not find that a person has to feel like he is standing in front of Hashem.

Yet, there is still an inner kind of life we can have and always feel Hashem's presence. We see this from the words of the Rema in the beginning of *Shulchan Aruch*, where he writes that one has to always be aware wherever he is that Hashem is watching him.

The *Gemara* (*Berachos* 30a) says, “If only a person would daven a whole day.” How could a person daven the whole day?! And when is he supposed to learn?! The answer to this is because a person can always talk to Hashem and always feel like he is facing Hashem.

It's possible that a person talks to Hashem, yet he doesn't feel that he is in front of Hashem. On the other hand, it is also possible that a person feels Hashem's presence, but he doesn't talk to Him. Both are only half the equation.

#### *Talking “With” Hashem, not “To” Hashem*

When a person talks to Hashem, he has to make sure that he is talking with Hashem – and not just simply to praise Hashem and give *shevach* to Him.

How much time a day does a person spend talking to Hashem?

In *Shemoneh Esrei*, a person davens *Attah Chonen*, and it seems that he is addressing Hashem. But this doesn't show that he is talking to Hashem – he might only be talking about Hashem.

There is an inner kind of life a person can live: to always talk to Hashem. Our generation isn't so used to this; most of the time people only talk to other people, but not with Hashem.

It is not enough for a person to talk in Torah. A person needs to talk with Hashem.

Today's generation doesn't utilize our power to talk properly. People talk and talk all the time, but they aren't talking enough to Hashem. Today's kind of talking is like what Chazal say that the

women took ninety percent of speech, while the men only have ten percent; speech isn't being used enough for the right reasons.

### *How to Talk to Hashem*

A person has to talk all the time with Hashem. There are two parts to this.

First, a person needs to verbally talk to Hashem, with his mouth. Secondly, a person needs to talk to Hashem through his heart – non-verbally. It is written, “I spoke with my heart.” There is a kind of speech which comes from our heart.

Sometimes we don't feel like talking with our mouths; when this happens, we need to make use of the speech of our heart, and instead talk to Hashem through our heart.

Davening *Shemoneh Esrei* is not the only time to talk to Hashem. *Shemoneh Esrei* serves as an example on how to live life – to talk to Hashem. But the way to actually live life is to always talk to Hashem.

There is no one who doesn't like to include others in his life. Everyone likes to talk to others and share what's on their mind. Why should we be any different toward Hashem? Why don't we include Hashem in our conversations?

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt"l* was a very quiet person. One time he told someone, “Don't think that I don't like to talk. Of course I like to talk to other people! Every person is born with a natural desire to talk to others and include them in his life. It is just that I save my conversations for talking only with Hashem.”

### *Only Hashem Truly Loves You*

If a person doesn't talk to Hashem on a regular basis, then when he does talk to Hashem all he does is talk about his problems. But we need to talk more to Hashem simply for the sake of talking to Him, not because we want something from him. In order to talk more to Hashem, we need to feel more that Hashem loves us. When we know and feel that Hashem loves us, it will be pleasant for us to talk to Him.

There are people who very much want others to love them. Sometimes they imagine that another person loves them, only to be disappointed that it isn't true.

The Vilna *Gaon* says that this world is like salty water; the more a person runs after worldly desires, the thirstier he becomes, because this world's pleasures are like salt water.

The same can be said of someone who searches for love. It's like drinking salty water – the more a person searches for others who will love him, the thirstier he becomes for others' love; it is a never-

ending search. But the truth is that there is no true love to be found from people! Only Hashem truly loves us.

When we realize that only Hashem loves us, we will find it much more pleasant to talk to Him – about anything on our mind. If a person doesn't feel that Hashem loves him, he will find it very hard to talk to Him.

### *It is Our Essence to Talk to Hashem*

The *Mesillas Yesharim* says that a person must feel that Hashem is actually in front of him.

A person is called a *medaber* – a social creature. The depth of this is because the essence of a person is really to talk a lot; with whom? With Hashem.

This can make a big change in a person's life – but it is an easy change.

A person needs to get more used to talking to Hashem. It's hard to talk to Hashem when other people are around, so he should find a private place where no one is around, and he will find it much easier to talk there with Hashem.

Of course, it is a gradual process. If a person tries to grab too much high levels at once, it won't work.

### *What To Talk about*

What should a person talk about to Hashem? Talk to Him about everything you normally talk about with people.

It is written, "It is not good for man to be alone." Let's say a person gets married, *Baruch Hashem*, and now he isn't so lonely anymore; now he has who to talk with. But it is still a lonely kind of existence. The inner way for a person to remove his loneliness is by talking to Hashem. If a person only talks to his wife, his children and his friends – he is actually very lonely. Hashem is the only true companion a person can have in his life.

At first, it will feel hard to talk to Hashem. It's hard to feel it at first, but slowly as a person gets used to this, it becomes easy.

The point of talking to Hashem is not to ask Him for what you need; nor is the point to say *Viduy* for one's sins. The point is to build a connection with Hashem; it's not so much about what to talk about – that's something else. It is to talk to Hashem for the sake of having a relationship with Him. Our relationship with Hashem is built on the ability to talk and have a conversation.

## 3.2 | *Women and Prayer*

### *Tefillah Is Based On Our Emunah*

In these shiurim, we will try to explain what *tefillah* (prayer) is, in a way that applies especially to women. What is *Tefillah* (prayer)? When a person is missing something, he davens for it. A person believes in Hashem and that He can give us what we are missing, and thus a person davens to Him. So our *Tefillah* is really based on our *Emunah*.

*Emunah* is that I believe that there is a Creator, and that He hears me and that He can give to me what I need, and that He wants to give it to me.

If a person doesn't have total *Emunah* when he davens, his *Tefillah* is lacking as well. Although we all believe, it is not enough. We also have to live what we believe. Our whole davening is based on how much we believe in Hashem; we have to live a life of palpable faith in the Creator, and on that, our *tefillah* is based. So without the base – *Emunah* – our *tefillah* will stand on nothing.

### *Service of the Heart*

There is an even more inner depth to our *Tefillah*: it is what is on our heart.

It is written, “*L'adam maarchei lev.*” Chazal say that *Tefillah* is “service of the heart”. We daven with our heart; our mouth is what brings out what is in our heart, but it is our heart which davens.

Chazal also call *Tefillah* with the title “*kolmos halev*”, ink of the heart. We daven from what is on our heart. Davening doesn't begin from our mouth – it begins from our heart. Our mouth reveals what is in our heart, but our actual *Tefillah* comes from our heart.

The main part of *Tefillah* has to do with our heart. The role of our mouth is only secondary to the primary role of our *tefillah*, which is our heart.

We must also verbalize to Hashem what is on our hearts, and if we don't, we are missing a major part in our *tefillah*. But still, the main part of *Tefillah* is our heart.

If a person has many things he needs to daven for, and he makes a list of these things and then pulls out the list at the end of *Shemoneh Esrei* – but he's waiting the whole time to get to the end so he can pull out the list already – he misses the whole point. His mouth is there, but his heart is missing. He's only focused on his requests.

*Tefillah* is mainly about our hearts. Our mouth also serves an important function in *Tefillah*, but the main thing we must know is that *Tefillah* is about the heart.

We will try to understand what the role of our heart is in *Tefillah*.

#### *Tefillah* Puts Our Wants In Order

*Tefillah* is *maarechi lev* – it is to “lengthen” what is on our heart, to give an order of what’s going on in our heart, both to ourselves and to Hashem. It is about bringing out what we want.

We need to first know what is on our heart before we request anything from Hashem. If we don’t know what we really want, how are we supposed to ask for it?

There is a structure to *Tefillah*; our davening is not just a bunch of random requests. There is a certain order to it, and we must know what it is. It is an order that is in our heart – *maarchei lev*. If our heart isn’t organized, we cannot properly daven from our heart.

Our *Tefillah* comes and straightens out the things we want in our heart. Without an organized heart, a person can’t talk or think in an organized way. This is really why most people can’t concentrate properly during davening – because their hearts are full of scattered desires which have no order to them.

*Tefillah* is really to build up yourself and what’s going on in your heart – and from that, to come to talk to Hashem. *Tefillah* is not all about turning to Hashem in prayer; it is to build your soul, and from building your soul, you can properly come to really talk to Hashem. The way you build your soul is as we are saying: to arrange your desires and clarify what you really want.

The root of all problems in *Tefillah* is because people don’t build themselves up properly, and therefore they don’t give an order to their wants and desires.

So we have to know what we want. Make an order of what you want, in order of what you want most, all the way down to what you want least. Then ask yourself: This order that I’ve written down – am I davening to Hashem in order of what I’ve written down?

Let us repeat again: *Tefillah* is not just about turning to Hashem. It is about building up your true self, (which is at first hidden from us, and we need to get to know ourselves in order to find it), and from that self-recognition to turn to Hashem in prayer.

All of this is simple to anyone who thinks about it, and difficult for anyone to understand who doesn’t think about it.

#### *Two Kinds Of Desires We Have*

There are things which we want and things which we really want. We must know which of our desires are coming from our innermost desires and which aren’t. The things we really want are coming from our deepest desires.

There are desires which we really want but they change with time, and then there are desires which are deeper than that. For example, a person who is davening to find a wife really wants this, and he davens for it on Yom Kippur, but what happens after he gets married? This great desire is no longer, and now he has another great desire: to have children. What happens after he has children? He davens for *parnassah*. These are all desires which change – they are not our deepest desires.

There are desires which are deeper than this. These are desires which come from our actual essence – and they never change. They are our deepest desires.

Our deepest desires are not necessarily what I think I need, but what I really need. A person thinks he needs a *shidduch* (a spouse), *parnassah* (livelihood) or health, and he might consider these things to be what he truly wants, but these things are not our deepest desires. They are all superficial desires. Our deep desires are desires that come from our very essence, from our actual soul.

### *It can take years until we build up our self!*

The point of *Tefillah* is not our requests from Hashem. The point of *Tefillah* is to form a connection to Hashem through our heart; the way we get in touch with our heart is through our requests to Hashem and knowing what we really want, but the point is to get to our heart.

Most people are in fact not in touch with their hearts. This is why there are some days that people have *kavanah* (concentration) and other days which they don't – it is because they haven't gotten in touch with their hearts yet. Why aren't people in touch with their own heart?

It is because of all our desires. Desire, *ratzon*, is from the word *ratz*, to run. When a person has desires, he “runs” out of himself! All our desires and wants hold us back from reaching our own heart. It is written, “*My son, give your heart to me.*” Not only should we give up our desires for Hashem, but we should give our very heart to Hashem.

*Tefillah* is not lip service. Nor is it even about our heart alone! It is about purifying our heart. It is to connect to our heart.

### *Improving Concentration*

Let's say a person has a hard time concentrating on davening. How can he come to improve in his concentration? If he works on his heart, he concentrates on his heart – and he can concentrate on his davening. When a person has this concentration – to be in touch with what's on his heart – he enjoys davening much more, and the enjoyment he will have in his davening will affect his concentration. You don't lose concentration from something you're enjoying; when you enjoy *Tefillah* – when you know what your heart wants – you will be able to properly have *kavanah*.

### 3.3 | *Praying With Feeling*

#### *Tefillah Is Built On Feelings, Not Intellect*

The world stands on three things: Torah, *Avodah* (prayer), and *Gemillas Chassadim* (kindness). These three pillars represent action, speech, and thought. Actions – *gemillas chassadim* -- are the lowest rung in the ladder of our service to Hashem; after that comes speech – *tefillah*, and after that comes thought (Torah learning).

*Tefillah* is “service of the heart”. What does this mean? *Tefillah* has to do with our feelings. We are not talking about how the body feels – we are talking about how the soul feels.

What is the root of the body's feelings and what is the root of the soul's feelings? The brain is the root of the body's feelings, and the heart is the root of the soul's feelings.

If a person wants to improve his davening, the first thing we must work on is not our intellectual knowledge about *Tefillah*. *Tefillah* is about our feelings, which come from our heart. Knowing what the words mean is not the main part of davening; that is just a preparation for *Tefillah*. The essence of *Tefillah* itself is our heart's feelings, not the facts which we know with our intellect.

This is why most people have a hard time with davening: it is because most people are more in touch with their intellect than with their feelings. When people aren't in touch with their feelings in general, they come to davening without any idea how to use their feelings.

*Tefillah* is built upon our feelings. If our feelings aren't in use throughout the day, our davening will look like a broken machine. Our heart needs to become used to feelings, and only then can it perform in *Tefillah*.

#### *Two Kinds Of Feelings*

Our heart experiences two kinds of feelings. One kind of feeling is an emotional reaction, such as sudden bursts of emotion – like sudden happiness, or sudden anger. Another kind of feeling is a feeling which is built and developed.

If a person only knows of emotional reactions but he hasn't built up his world of feelings, his heart will not be able to use its feelings for *Tefillah*. What we need are feelings that have been built up and are more developed – with these feelings we can use our heart to daven with.

If we are only davening from the basic emotions we know of, then our *Tefillah* doesn't come from our essence; but if our *Tefillah* is coming from what we have worked on to build up our self, it comes from a deep place within us that is unchanging.

Is our *Tefillah* coming from our essence – or from our requests? There is a big difference.

Our requests change with time. If we are davening solely because there are things we want, then our *Tefillah* comes from factors which are here one day and gone the next day. Such *Tefillos* come from emotions that change with time – and our connection to *Tefillah* goes away when those factors are no longer present.

But if our *Tefillah* comes from our essence, this is a *Tefillah* which doesn't change. It has to do with who we are, not with how we feel at the moment or what we want now in our life.

That is the difference between the first kind of feeling, which is are our emotional reactions we know of and recognize, to the second kind of feeling our heart is capable of – a kind of feeling which builds up our self.

### *The Natural Emotions We Are Born With Are Extreme*

Every person is born with natural emotions, such as the ability to smile since being a baby. These emotions we are born with are not enough to build our heart with for *Tefillah*. We need to build upon those feelings and develop new kinds of feelings in order to come to *Tefillah*. Why?

The emotions we are born with are extreme. For example, if a person doesn't work on building up and developing his emotions, he can know of happiness – but only when it's extreme. Many people need extreme reasons in order to become happy, because they haven't properly built up their emotional world. *Tefillah*, which is through our heart, does not come from extreme emotions. It can only come from emotions and feelings which we have worked on to build up our self.

What indeed are these deep feelings we are speaking of that we must develop? These are emotions which come from our intellect being integrated with our heart. The true, deep feelings we need to develop are feelings which come from a fusion of intellect and emotion together.

Most people experience their feelings only through their emotions and not through their intellect, and thus their emotions are only extreme. They only have emotions in extreme situations.

Feelings without any intellect involved are actually very painful to a person and cause a lot of inner anxiety.

The emotions which we all recognize and know of are really extreme. They lack a certain balance. Any sudden burst of emotion – negative or positive – is kind of unstable, and we cannot work with such emotions to build up our heart. The true feelings we need to have are feelings which are more calm and not so extreme or sudden. They are not bursts of emotion, but just a kind of feeling that is calm and balanced.

If a person tries to balance his natural emotions more, he will be able to reach the deeper feelings.

A superficial attitude toward the feelings is that they are how we “feel”. The inner attitude to have toward feelings is that they can be used to build our self.

This is the source of why most people have a hard time with davening and can't concentrate so well – it is because people are only using their natural emotions, which are based on extremities and thus fluctuate depending on the day, and they haven't uncovered their deeper feelings.

### *Feeling Reality*

In addition to these two kinds of feelings, there are also another two kinds of feelings in the heart: there are feelings which are mere feelings, and then there are feelings which feel reality.

When a person is able to feel reality, he knows what's really going on. To illustrate what we mean, a person can be in hot weather but he doesn't feel hot. Since he doesn't feel reality – which is that it's hot – he doesn't feel what is really going on.

To feel reality is to feel what's really going on. Most people only have the lower kinds of feelings, which are just “to feel”, but they don't know how to feel a reality.

To feel reality is really making using of our intellect. The emotions themselves come from the heart, but they aren't able to feel reality. Only our intellect is able to feel reality.

The only way to really have the deeper feelings of our heart is to be able to feel reality. Our bursts of emotion which we experience from time to time are not the kinds of emotions of feeling reality. If someone only knows of his feelings in terms of sudden bursts of emotion, his emotional world is based on extremities and he will not be able to build up the true feelings of the heart.

When a person feels reality, he doesn't just become emotional – he feels the true reality of the situation.

### *Feeling Another's Pain Can Only Come From Developing Higher Feelings*

To illustrate what we mean, there are two ways how one can feel the pain of a widow. With the basic emotions that a person is born with, she can feel the widow's pain – but she can only feel the emotion of pain that the widow is going through. But with the more highly developed emotions, a person is able to actually feel her friend's state of widowhood – to really feel what it's like to be a widow. This is to feel reality – it is above feeling another's pain: it is to feel the actual reality of the situation.

In our heart, there are superficial feelings and inner feelings. The superficial feelings are emotional reactions, sudden bursts of emotion. But the inner feelings are the ability to feel **realities**.

This is why most people do not end up really feeling another person's feelings. It is because most people don't even experience their own emotions properly! They don't feel the reality of their own situations, so how are they supposed to feel others'??

In fact, most people feel like others never really experience what they are going through, and it is for this reason: most people haven't developed their own emotional world and thus are not emotionally capable of feeling what others go through.

### *The Real Way To Daven*

When a person davens, the real way to daven is not just to become emotional as he davens. The real way to daven is to enter the davening – to be inside it. It is not just to “daven” – it is to be inside the davening.

We must develop from within us a place in our soul in which we enter into the davening, not just to know what to ask for and to become emotional about it. Bursts of emotion is not the basis of *Tefillah*; the point is not to ask our requests to Hashem, but to enter into the actual *Tefillah*.

### 3.4 | *Awareness of What We Lack and Have*

#### *Missing And Gaining Something – Two Parts To Tefillah*

We have learned so far that *Tefillah* is mainly about our heart, not about what we say with our lips. We are trying to understand what it means that *Tefillah* is called “service of the heart.”

The “service of the heart” is made up of what we are missing and what we are fulfilling. Our soul is made up of things which we are missing and things which we have gained.

What we are missing are the things we ask for. The things we have gained are what we thank Hashem for when we get them.

What we lack is what stirs us and motivates us to daven, and what we gain from this is the goal – to realize what we have and to thank Hashem for it. We need both parts in order to have *Tefillah*.

Chazal say that a person should beseech Hashem for everything, even for a small thing. Why? It is because our davening is not just about what we are missing, but also about what we gain because of our davening.

*Tefillah* reveals our heart – it reveals what we are missing. Without *Tefillah*, a person lives all by himself. With *Tefillah*, a person lives with Hashem.

When a person deepens his feelings, he will be able to daven to Hashem for even the smallest thing that he feels lacking in.

Every moment, we are full of things we are missing and things which we are gaining. The only question is how aware we are to this. One who deepens his feelings and lives a more inner kind of life is able to recognize more and more in his life that he always has things which he is missing – and he is always has things which he has gained.

Deepening our feelings reveals our soul more and more, which makes us more sensitive both to feeling what we are missing and what we are having constantly in our life.

#### *What We Have Every Moment Of Our Life*

A Jew does not live alone. A Jew lives with Hashem – in a very real sense, both in this world and in the next. Our existence is constantly with Hashem – we are **never** alone. It is a 24/7 connection – and it is built upon the awareness of what we are saying here.

The more sensitive a person is to this, the more he builds up his *Tefillah*. Without this awareness, a person's life doesn't feel like a life.

There are people who are living and appear to look alive, but they are living a deathlike kind of existence, because they live without Hashem in their life. They don't have the awareness of the connection they could be having.

A person can daven a thousand *Tefillos*, yet he never experienced a real *Tefillah*. If a person thinks that *Tefillah* is all about davening to Hashem for what you need alone without having to thank Hashem – or the other way around – this is not *Tefillah*.

Imagine two people who live together and never talk to each other unless they have a request; they never thank each other. Can we call this a relationship? And if they only thank each other and never request anything of each other, such a relationship is also lacking. A true relationship is two-fold – requests, and gratitude.

If a person just davens and davens to Hashem but he never really talks to him, he has never really entered *Tefillah*.

To illustrate, an emotionally healthy father is able to express his emotions every day to his child and say, "I love you." If a person only davens to Hashem but he can't tell Hashem, "Hashem, I love You," then he never talks to Hashem! He never expresses himself to Hashem – he talks to Hashem, but he never expresses himself to Him. We cannot call this a real relationship with Hashem, because there is a lot missing from the talking.

*Tefillah* is really to reveal our soul in relation to Hashem. This is the way to have an inner kind of life – to live with Hashem. It should become a regular part of our life and be very normal to us, just like we need to breathe in order to stay alive.

### *Becoming Aware Of What's Going On*

Usually people aren't even aware of their own physical abilities that they do on a constant basis, such as breathing in and out. We need to become more aware of even our physical senses, before we begin to learn how to become aware of our spiritual aspect of life.

This is our whole source of vitality – it is not just a way to add onto our vitality. Our whole life is that we live with Hashem in our life, and it the most normal thing in the world, every bit as necessary as breathing. We aren't always aware that we breathe, but that doesn't mean that we don't need to breathe to live. The same goes for living with Hashem in our life – just because we aren't aware that we need Him in our life doesn't mean that we don't need this to survive.

Living with Hashem is our life – it is not another aspect in our life, but it is our whole vitality.

To become more aware of this, we have to at least become aware of the fact that every second, we are alive. We need to feel our existence much more in our life. This will slowly get us used to feeling that we are always being sustained by some source of vitality, and after getting used to this awareness we can begin to understand that Hashem is constantly in our life.

As you breathe in and out, pay attention to this and feel yourself being kept alive through inhaling and exhaling. Every day for a few minutes, concentrate on your breathing and realize that you are being kept alive constantly through these actions.

Of course, the more you pay attention to what's going on constantly in your life, and you will begin to notice other things which bother you. But that's the way life is – the more you know, the more you are able to feel pain. *"Increase of knowledge increases pain."*

When you begin to experience your life more, you will experience more both positive feelings and negative feelings. But you will be experiencing life – constantly. Without this awareness, you don't experience life – just a deathlike kind of existence.

The true way a Jew lives is to always feel alive. This brings some pain with it, but any other kind of life is like death, and it is not the way a Jew is supposed to live like.

Of course, it's wonderful and commendable that a person learns Torah and does *mitzvos*. We aren't trying to take away from that. But without an awareness of being alive and how one is always being kept alive, a person doesn't feel himself getting vitality from it.

This is how we bring Hashem into our feelings.

### *3.5 | Self-Recognition as a Prerequisite to Prayer*

#### *The Feelings*

Until now we spoke about applying our feelings to *Tefillah* – our inner feelings, which are to really feel the reality of a matter. A person has to build up his self in order to truly feel another person's reality.

To illustrate, imagine if a person is homeless. If such a person visits other people's houses, he still feels homeless.

In order to feel what others are feeling, we need to build up our own feelings – to develop our own self, in order for us to feel others properly.

Let us now go to the next step, which is beyond the feelings.

#### *The Self*

All of us know that we have a self to us, an "I" that exists in us. But we must know how to identify our "I." We are not our body. We have a soul in us that we must recognize and identify ourselves with.

There are three steps to self-recognition.

First of all, we must realize we exist. The second thing we must know is to know what exactly our "self" is. Finally, we must actually feel that way.

We must realize who we are and where we are. We must be very clear about how to identify ourselves – who we are and where we are.

The first part, our existence, needs to become more revealed in our life. It is not enough to just know in general that we exist – we have to actually take our existence and reveal it more in our life. We have to reach our existence; without this, we never reach ourselves and we will never be able to really connect to Hashem.

When we connect to Hashem, we are essentially connecting our self to Him. But if we don't know what our self is, we having nothing to connect with. We must become aware of our true existence and then with that, to connect our "I" to Hashem.

In *Tefillah*, a person davens from his innermost depths. It comes from the “I” in a person, the true self of a person. If there is no revelation of one’s “I”, our *Tefillah* doesn’t emanate from our true self and we cannot connect to Hashem.

Without knowing about our self, we live just with our feelings, and we will only derive vitality from external factors that are superficial. But if we are aware of our existence – our essential self – we will be able to derive a real source of vitality in our life, and we won’t have to look elsewhere to get vitality. We will be able to get it all from within ourselves.

### *“I Am Prayer”*

Dovid *HaMelech* said, “*And I am prayer.*” What does this mean that “I” am prayer?

It means that one’s prayer is supposed to come from his “I”, his true self – not from his mouth and not from his feelings, but from his plain existence.

### *Your “I” Is Your Existence*

“I” am my existence, not “who I am.” I am not my personality type – I am my existence.

We all know that we exist in our intellect, but we need to extend that knowledge to our feelings and to be able to feel it.

The purpose of Creation is to come to recognize Hashem’s existence. If a person doesn’t know of his own existence, he won’t be able to come to realize Hashem’s existence.

### *The Way To Reach Your “I”*

The way to reach your true self is to attain a deep inner silence. Every day for at least a minute, a person should be in a quiet place, silence everything around him, and focus on the fact that he exists. Don’t focus on the other parts to yourself such as your personality or your feelings, but just focus on the fact that you exist. This act of focusing will lead you to reach your true self.

from *Inner Silence\_v3\_chapter 18\_Speaking Continuously With Hashem*

### ***3.6 | A Woman's Power to Talk to Hashem***

#### ***The Spiritual Reason of Why Women Have More Speech***

Hashem gave us a power of speech. The Sages explained that ten measurements of speech were created, and nine were taken by women. Today in particular, there is a lot of speech, especially in the recent years with the advent of cell-phones. Nowadays, people talk wherever they are, on the go, wherever, and whenever. For what reason did Hashem intend us to use our power of speech for?

The power of speech was given to men to use to learn Torah with. *Chazal* expound on the words of “*And you shall speak in it* [the words of Torah]” that a man must speak the words of Torah, and the Sages exhorted men as well not to speak idle words of empty chatter, which wastes time from Torah study. This is true for men, who have a *mitzvah* to learn Torah; but what about women, who are not commanded to learn Torah?

For what reason do women possess the power of speech, if they do not use it to learn Torah with? Must they only learn how to be silent from empty talk...? Or is there more meaning to the nine measurements of speech that women have? Surely a woman needs to use her speech to speak with her husband, children, and friends and those whom she needs to speak with, and we are not implying otherwise. But that cannot be the main reason that a woman possesses much of the power of speech.

A woman was given more speech because she can use it for the most part to speak with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu!*

If we would think about how many words we say each day and how much of it we use to speak with Hashem, we would discover that most of our speech is used towards people, and not with Hashem. Of course, we need to speak with people, but Hashem gave us the power of speech to mainly use it to speak with Hashem.

That is the way a Jew lives, man and woman alike! A man must mainly use his speech to speak words of Torah and to speak to Hashem, and a little bit to speak with people. And women, who do not learn Torah, must therefore use their speech to mainly speak with Hashem, and only a little bit with people.

This is the way our holy matriarchs acted. It would be unthinkable for our matriarchs Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, and Leah to sit on a bench in the park and talk on cellphones, for hours on end. It would be unthinkable for them to speak on cellphones all the time wherever they go and in their houses. Most of their speech was spent with Hashem, and this is the way a Jewish mother looks like. This is the way it always has been throughout the generations.

### *The True Jewish Woman*

A woman who lives an inner Jewish life is one who is modest, and she performs acts of kindness modestly, and even more importantly, she speaks with Hashem throughout the day. Let's try to imagine vividly how a Jewish woman is supposed to look like.

We hope to merit soon the redemption, in which the dead will be resurrected, when we will then see our holy Matriarchs, and then we will see how a Jewish woman looks like. In the meantime, let's try to conceptualize: What did our holy matriarchs, look like? After that we need to think how we can put that into practice. But first, we need to at least conceptualize it.

#### *Step One: Asking Hashem For Help*

Besides for the times of the day when we daven and do *hisbodedus*, we need to make sure that we are talking to Hashem throughout the day-to-day stuff. When you do something, *daven* to Hashem for help before you do it. When you're sitting in your house, ask Hashem for help in something. Get used to asking Hashem for success in general and in specific areas you need help in.

#### *Step Two: Including Hashem In All Aspects of Your Life*

After we have gotten used to this first step – talking to Hashem throughout the day and asking Him for help – we proceed to the next step. Don't just ask Hashem for help – speak to Hashem about what you're doing. Here the focus is not on the request, but simply to include Him in what you are doing. We will soon explain how to do this.

Here is an example. You get up in the morning and wash your hands, etc. A woman sends her children to school, etc. If one just goes about this without any thoughts about Hashem, he gets up by himself and thinks he's in charge of his life. One can turn this into a spiritual experience by instead including Hashem in it. He can talk to Hashem throughout all of it and thereby include Hashem in the picture.

Here are more examples: When you're washing the dishes, or sweeping the floor, or cleaning up the house, you can talk to Hashem at the same time. You can say, "Hashem is with me and sustaining me, and from Him alone do I receive the strength to do all these things."

This should not just be done mentally in your thoughts; you should **verbalize** it with your mouth. When you get up in the morning, say: "Do I get up alone? No. Hashem woke me up. Am I alive because of my own energy? No. Hashem is keeping me alive. How can I get the kids ready and get them to school? Because I have the energy to do so? No. It's because Hashem helps me do it."

### *Becoming A “Partner With Hashem”*

There are many statements of our Sages in which we are taught that man is a partner with Hashem, so to speak. *Chazal* state that if one says “*Vayechulu*” on Friday night, he becomes a partner with Hashem. *Chazal* also said that a judge who gives a truthful judgment is a partner with Hashem. There are other such statements of *Chazal* that describe this concept of being “a partner with Hashem”.

What does it mean to be “a partner with Hashem”? Does it mean to just ask Hashem for things, or does it mean to include Him in our matters? Husband and wife are terms “partners”<sup>[1]</sup>. Does that limit them to asking them for things, or do they also include each other in their lives? If the entire relationship between spouses is the fact that they ask each other for things, and they don't include each other in each of their lives, such a marriage is unlivable.

Of course, spouses need to ask each other for things, but an essential ingredient in marriage is to simply include each other in their lives. They must share their lives with each other. Most of the conversations in a healthy marriage are not about requests; they are about including each other in their lives. If most of the conversations are requests from each other, this is an example of a dysfunctional marriage. So too, we must share our life with Hashem.

Most of the time when people speak with Hashem, it is about things that we want from Him. Others are more mature and they also thank Hashem for things. But we must acquire a new kind of connection with Hashem, which is not only about the give-and-take relationship we have with Him.

### *Our Relationship With Hashem: Like A Marriage*

The inner dimension of our relationship with Hashem is as it is written [in *Shir HaShirim*]: “*Open up to me, my sister, my dove, my friend.*” The Jewish people's relationship with Hashem is compared to that of husband and wife.

In a marriage, the main aspect of their relationship is not about requests; it is about including each other in their lives. So too, Hashem is our Beloved to us, and we must relate to Him only minimally with requests; the main aspect of our relationship with Him should be about including Him in all aspects of our life.

### *Summary*

Let this be clear: first, we must absorb this perspective, that the way a Jew looks (man or woman) is to speak to Hashem all the time, on a natural and regular basis. Secondly, most of our speech with Hashem should not be about requests or thanking Him, rather, most of our speech with Hashem should be for the sake of including Him in our life.

After a person has gotten used to acquiring the art of talking to Hashem in tefillah and *hisbodedus* [as it was explained in the previous chapters], one needs to open a new dimension in the soul: to include Hashem in what we are doing, throughout the day.

### *Getting Started*

One should first start to include Hashem in the “small stuff” and then he should slowly increase this, both in quantity and in quantity.

Sometimes a person ends up asking Hashem for things as a result of including Him in his life, and this is fine. But most of the talking with Hashem should be for the sake of including Him in your life and not for the purpose of asking Him for things. The majority of your speech with Hashem should be for the purpose of including Him in your life, and a minority of your speech with Hashem should be about requests from Hashem.

### *Two Forms of Talking To Hashem: Verbal and Mental*

We will now proceed to the next step, with Heavenly assistance. Including Hashem in our life is expressed in two ways: verbally, and mentally. Either one can talk to Hashem verbally, or he can speak to Hashem mentally. One can speak with Hashem as well in his thoughts. Just like you can speak to Hashem with your mouth, so can you speak in your thoughts to Hashem. This is called *hirhur* (thought). Each way has its pros and cons.

**Verbally** talking to Hashem has the advantage of making an impact on your soul, because when you speak from the depths of your heart, the speech moves you and can connect you closer to Hashem.

**Mental** communication with Hashem is a more internal kind of power. It changes your thinking process, because until now you were used to thinking only with yourself, and now you realize that you can think with Hashem present. It removes feelings of loneliness and shows you how you are never alone, because you are always with Hashem. There are people who must always be around people and they don't like to be alone. An internal kind of person is also never alone, not because he is with people, but because he is with Hashem in his words and thoughts. Such words and thoughts are alive. This is actually the depth behind *hisbodedus*.

### *Hisbodedus: All Day Long*

True *hisbodedus* is not for an hour a day. As we explained in the past, *hisbodedus* is a way of life. The *Chovos HaLevovos* describes an inner kind of life as one who is alone with Hashem and never feels alone, because he knows he is with Hashem. Reb Nachman of Breslov wrote that although he

told people to do *hisbodedus* for a set amount of time a day, such as an hour, he himself would do *hisbodedus* the entire day.

How can one do *hisbodedus* the entire day? It means that he was verbally and mentally connected to Hashem the entire day. His being was wrapped up with Hashem the entire day, in his words and thoughts. *Hisbodedus* for an hour a day is wonderful, of course, but it's still only the partial level.

The words here are far from the lifestyle of most people, but they are not too hard to keep either. It's a matter of habit and as well as a change of perspective. One merely needs to get used to a change of perspective: life is about including Hashem in all aspects of your life, every day and throughout the day.

### *A Third Method: Writing Letters To Hashem*

If one feels that it's too hard, there is another method which can work for some people: to **write to Hashem**. When you write your words to Hashem, write from the depths of your heart. Dovid HaMelech wrote *Sefer Tehillim*, and so can each person write his words to Hashem, to a certain extent and on his respective level. Of course, none of us are like Dovid HaMelech. But all of us have inherited gifts from our forefathers, and therefore, we can each write our words to Hashem, on our own level.

So we can write letters to Hashem. Don't just write a small note. Write Him a long letter, just as a friend writes a long letters to his friend who lives on the other end of the world.

### *In Conclusion*

It is my hope that you have opened your ears and heart to listen to these words and thereby absorb the concept of this inner kind of life we are describing here. It seems far away from you at first, but "*the matter is very close to you, it is in your mouth and in your heart to do it.*"

Absorb this kind of life, this true kind of life, which is how a Jew lives: to converse with Hashem, regularly, to include Him in your life. Include Him in the external aspects of your life as well as in your feelings and experiences. Include Him in all aspects of your life!

May we merit to live the inner kind of life, a life of connection with Hashem, to be truly, truly connected with Him.

from Inner Silence v3\_chapter 22\_Conclusion – The Calmer Life

### 3.7 | “Women and Hisbodedus”

*Question: In previous generations, did women do hisbodedus (meditation)?*

**Answer:** You ask a proper question. All of our prophets did *hisbodedus*<sup>13</sup>; *Chazal* say there were seven women prophetesses<sup>14</sup>, and there were others who came after them too. So there were definitely women who did *hisbodedus*. Is it for all women to practice? The answer, clearly, is no. It was not for all women; it was only a way for the women who were prophetesses. This was the case in previous generations.

In recent times, however, women are much more involved with the materialistic side to life, in addition to being bombarded by running the home and raising the children; therefore, in our times, if a woman wants to truly serve Hashem, it is necessary for her to know how to disconnect from the world and connect to an inner place in herself.

Again, to emphasize, the way of *hisbodedus* that was presented here<sup>15</sup> is not for all women. I have only given these *shiurim* because it has been requested of me to give *shiurim* on this topic. But this does not imply at all that *hisbodedus* is meant for all women to practice. I have said many times in the past that there is never any one way to serve *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*; there are many ways to serve Him.

The main purpose in giving this series was because there are many people who are in any case doing *hisbodedus*, so there is a need for those people to hear what the inner way of *hisbodedus* is. And I will say this again: is **not** the only way that exists to serve Hashem.

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<sup>13</sup> The source for this is *Sefer HaMaspik L'Ovdei Hashem*

<sup>14</sup> *Megillah 14a*

<sup>15</sup> This refers to the Rav's series on *hisbodedus* given to women, “*Inner Silence*”



*PART 4*  
*WOMEN & MODESTY*

## 4.1 || *The Purpose of Modesty*

### *Question*

Why is it so important to be modest? What is the external part of our modesty, and what is our inner modesty?

The external kind of modesty is well-known – to dress modestly. But what is the inner meaning of modesty?

### *Answer*

The answer to this is that modesty is part of the purpose of Creation, which is to reveal Hashem in the world. Hashem is modest, because He is hidden from the human eye. So must we be modest, because when we act modest we resemble Hashem, who is modest and hidden.

This reveals Hashem in the world. When we are modest, we keep ourselves hidden, which shows people that there is a Hashem in the world – and when we do this, we fulfill the purpose of Creation, because we are revealing Hashem onto the world.

## 4.2 | Modesty – External & Internal<sup>16</sup>

### *Tzniyus (Modesty of the Jewish Woman) – Our Beginning*

It is written, **הצנוע לכת עם אלוֹקֵיךְ** – “Walk secretly with your G-d.” The task of *tzniyus* (modesty) is unique to women, but let’s understand the following fundamental point, which is subtle and deep.

Before a person is born, he\she is a fetus inside the mother, hidden from the rest of the world. Nobody sees him; he is covered completely and he is *tzanua* (hidden, modest). Thus, the very root of our birth begins in a state of *tzniyus*.

The Maharal says that nothing in Creation is coincidental, even the small things; surely, then, it is not a coincidence that the beginning of our birth is in a state of modesty. Why did Hashem make it this way, that before we emerge into the world, we are hidden for nine months? Before a baby is born, he lives an existence for nine months in which he is hidden from the rest of the world. Why did Hashem make it this way? It is to show us that our very beginning is *tzniyus*.

### *Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur: A Time For Modesty*

The beginning of the year, Rosh HaShanah, is certainly a time to strengthen our *tzniyus*. Rosh HaShanah is called “*HaYom Haras Olam*”, the “day of the conception of the world”. Our Sages said that the word “*haras*” is from the word “*herayon*”, conception. Rosh HaShanah is the day in which we are conceived, which serves as a root of *tzniyus* for the rest of the year.

Rosh HaShanah is also where we blow *shofar*, which “covers” over sin; as it is written, **תקעו בשופר**, **בכסה ליום חגיגו**, thus shofar is associated with **כסה**, with “covering.” The Sages expound this verse that said that Rosh HaShanah is a time where the moon is “covered”. The moon becomes more hidden and modest during Rosh HaShanah.<sup>17</sup>

The ten days from Rosh HaShanah until Yom Kippur, where the moon is more covered over, is thus a time for more modesty. On Yom Kippur, the modesty becomes even more apparent: Either we are praying in shul all day on Yom Kippur, or we are praying in the home, away from the rest of the world.

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<sup>16</sup> [יום כיפור 028 ת-ש-ו-ב-ה תשעז](#)

<sup>17</sup> Editor's Note: It is well-known that the Jewish woman is compared to the moon, which experiences cycles of renewal. It seems that the Rav is drawing a correlation, that just as the moon is more modest on Rosh HaShanah by being covered over, so is the avodah of a Jewish woman to become more modest, with the beginning of Rosh HaShanah.

Of the rest of the year, when it is not Yom Kippur, we can apply the verse, **כל כבודה בת מלך פנימה**, – “*All of the honor of a princess, is inside*” – but only in the partial sense. The glory of a Jewish woman takes place on the “inside” - in the home, and not outside the home; but although the home is the main place for the Jewish woman who is a wife and mother, we know that in the end of the day, women are not found all day in their house; they go out of the home, and certainly in the times we live, this is the case.

But there is one day of the year where a large part of the Jewish people is not outside, and they are found inside, in the home. It is the one time of the year where we can truly apply this verse of **כל כבודה בת מלך פנימה**. It is not a coincidence we have a day of the year in which we are not found in the outside world and that this day happens to be Yom Kippur. It is because the underlying essence of Yom Kippur is **הצנוע לכת עם אלוהים**, “*Walk secretly with your G-d*” - to be in a place that is *tzniyus*.

But we must clearly know the following. *Tzniyus* is not just about covering the body. Being physically covered is certainly the main part of *tzniyus* in the *external* sense, but the *inner essence* (the *pnimiyus*) of *tzniyus* takes place inside us, in the depths of our heart. That is where our *tzniyus* is accessed.

There is a deep place in our heart which is covered and hidden from the rest of the world – and from ourselves. What is hidden from? It is hidden from our own selves, because it is so hidden. But when Yom Kippur comes, our hearts are opened, our *pnimiyus* is opened, and this inner place of *tzniyus* in our hearts becomes revealed to us.

During the rest of the year, we are experiencing the outer layers of our souls, and that is where we are seeing our life from. The inner place in our heart is hidden from us. But on Yom Kippur, the inner place in the heart can be revealed to us. Yom Kippur is a time where we are purified, where our hearts are purified to serve Hashem, and this purity of the heart means that the inner place in our heart is revealed to us. This means that on Yom Kippur, each person, on his\her own individual level, can reach the innermost place in himself\herself.

### *Teshuvah – Entering Deeper Into Ourselves*

This is also the depth of doing *teshuvah*. When doing *teshuvah*, one needs to enter into deeper places in himself, in his\her heart. The normal feelings and emotions which we experience during the rest of the year are not our innermost feelings we reach when doing *teshuvah*.

*Teshuvah* is supposed to make us think and reflect, and to feel deeper places in ourselves, and from there, we come to feel true regret for any wrongdoings we have done and to make earnest resolutions to improve in the coming year and be better. The normal emotions which we have during the rest of the year are not the same emotions which enter us into *teshuvah* on Yom Kippur. The day of Yom Kippur reveals to us a more inner and hidden place in ourselves.

### *Preparing Ourselves On Erev Yom Kippur*

It is recommended that on Erev Yom Kippur, one should sit with herself and prepare herself to enter into a deeper place of herself. If one makes this preparation, she will find it easier on Yom Kippur to reach this deeper place in herself; to reach deeper and truer feelings in herself. This is the deep place in ourselves where we can experience **הצנע לכת עם אלוֹקִיךָ**.

Thus, **הצנע לכת עם אלוֹקִיךָ**, the concept of *tzniyus*\modesty, includes both external and internal modesty. The external aspect of modesty is to be dressed appropriately, but even more so, it includes being modest about ourselves: not to praise ourselves to others, so that we keep a low profile. Yet even this is still within the *external* aspect of *tzniyus*; it is not yet the *inner essence* of *tzniyus*.

### *Tzniyus In The 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

In our generation, we can see that the main emphasis of *tzniyus* today is being placed on the external aspects of *tzniyus*, such as how to dress appropriately, etc. Something is greatly missing from the *tzniyus* in today's times, and it is because the essence behind *tzniyus* is usually missing.

We are often grappling with the external issues of *tzniyus* [appropriate dress and etc.], but these are just the *results* of a deeper issue. Sometimes we succeed in strengthening the external aspects of *tzniyus* and sometimes we are less successful. But what we really need is to build our power of *tzniyus* from its inner root that it is based on: “Walk secretly with your G-d.”

### *Finding The Essence of Tzniyus In Ourselves – On Yom Kippur*

It is written, “And I will dwell amongst them,” and Chazal teach that this verse means that Hashem dwells in each person's heart. That means that each and every Jew contains in the depths of his\her a hidden place which he can enter, where the *Shechinah* resides and he can feel a deep closeness with Hashem. That place in our heart is where we are meant to enter on Yom Kippur.

Practically speaking, as we *daven* to Hashem on Yom Kippur, we need to try to enter into a deeper place in ourselves. We should do so calmly and slowly, and not try to strain ourselves to get there. But we should try to get there and concentrate on this, slowly and calmly: to reach a deeper place in ourselves, to feel a clearer perception of truths, to reach truer and purer feelings there.

Through the *teshuvah* of Yom Kippur that enables us to be purified by Hashem, we can feel deeper feelings on Yom Kippur than the rest of the year, where we enter into the hidden place in ourselves of “Walk secretly with your G-d.” This hidden place in ourselves is where we can truly feel that we are “with” Hashem.

*In Summary*

So let us remember, that the external aspects of *tzniyus*, of how we must appear and dress, is but one part of our *avodah* in *tzniyus*. Along with it we must awaken in ourselves, for just a few moments, a truer and purer feeling for *tzniyus*. The time to work on this is especially Yom Kippur, where we have a special opportunity to awaken in ourselves to attain a slightly deeper and truer feeling, towards *tzniyus*.

## 4.4 | Modesty In-Depth

### *Modesty Comes From The Element Of Earth In Us*

There are four elements in Creation: earth, water, wind and fire. These elements also make up the human soul, and they are the source for each of our *middos* (traits).

Earth has in it certain qualities that produce certain *middos* in us, which can each be used for good or bad.

For example, earth is hard. A person can harden himself in an evil way, such as when he hardens himself to be stubborn for evil purposes; or it can be used in a good way, like when a person overcomes challenges and learns how to strengthen and fortify himself more in life.

Another aspect in earth is that it used as a covering. Earth can come and cover something and conceal it. The other elements of fire, wind and water are not able to do this.

The trait of modesty in a person is thus rooted in his element of earth. Modesty serves as a covering; it comes to hide and conceal something, just like the earth which acts as a covering.

### *The Roots Of Modesty In The Torah*

Where can we find the roots of modesty?

There is a well-known *Midrash*<sup>18</sup> that as Hashem was creating Chavah, He created her from a rib, which is a place on the body that is more to the side and more out of sight. "For every part of her body that He created her with He said to her: *Be a modest woman, be a modest woman.*" We know that it didn't end up this way, as Chazal conclude, but the point of Chazal is that the structure of a woman is modesty. "*The entire glory of a daughter of the king is inside.*"

We find modesty epitomized by Rochel Imeinu, who was praised by Chazal for her modesty: "Rochel was supposed to merit giving birth to the first-born...but because Leah prayed fervently and Hashem had mercy on her, she merited this instead; but because of her modesty, Hashem returned this to her<sup>19</sup>." This was fulfilled when the rights to the first-born were taken away from Reuven, Leah's son, and instead given to Yosef, Rochel's son.

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<sup>18</sup> *Beraishis Rabbah* 18:2

<sup>19</sup> *Bava Basra* 123a

Shaul *HaMelech*, who descended from Rochel (through her other son Binyamin) also epitomized modesty; when Dovid *HaMelech* was able to kill him when he found him sleeping in a cave, he chose not to kill him because he saw how righteous Shaul was. What did he see in him? He saw that when Shaul had to relieve himself, he did so very discreetly and modestly. Because of his modesty, he merited to be saved from getting killed<sup>20</sup>.

Chazal also say that because of Shaul's great modesty, he merited that Queen Esther came from him.

Throughout Chazal we can see that the *middah* of modesty is attributed mainly to women. The *Gemara* also says that a woman does not consent to be married to any man unless she first makes herself into a "receptacle" for him<sup>21</sup>; a receptacle is something which contains something and hides it. This again reflects the ability of a Jewish woman to be a "container" – an epitome of something that is hidden inside.

This is the introduction to our words here – the roots of modesty in the Jewish people.

### *One Purpose of Covering: Shame*

Earth, the element which serves to cover and conceal, has many ways of how it does this. One purpose a covering serves is that it comes to cover something either bad or something one is ashamed of.

There is a *halacha* that if one relieves himself in an open field, he has to cover the waste<sup>22</sup>. Chazal also say that the modesty is mainly exercised when a person relieves himself with modesty in the lavatory<sup>23</sup>.

From all this we can see that we cover something which is embarrassing or something bad that we are ashamed of. The fact that something has to be covered shows that there is something embarrassing here which deserves to get covered. This is why modesty mainly manifests itself in the lavatory, because it is then that we want to conceal something that's either bad or embarrassing.

That is one reason why we want to cover something – when it is something we are ashamed of.

Another *halacha* that has to do with "covering" is that a dead person must be covered in dirt when he is buried.

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20 *Berachos 62b*

21 *Sanhedrin 22b*

22 *Devarim 23:14*

23 *Berachos 62a*

There is a depth to this. Really, death itself is a very great shame to a person. Whenever there is shame, we want to cover it up. There are many *halachos* that apply to honoring the dead, and it is specifically because since a dead person lies before us in shame, we must honor him. The shame gets taken away when we finish burying him – the burial covers him over and hides the shame of his situation.

This is another way how we cover over something which is bad. When a person is alive, he must cover the wastes which come from his body, and when he dies, his whole body has to get covered (because the very fact that he is dead is a situation of shame which needs to get covered).

In addition to this, a person has to cover his body in general. Before Adam and Chavah sinned, there was no shame in the world at being uncovered. The second they sinned, shame began. The sin produced the need to be covered – the need for modesty.

Most of a person's body has to be covered, but the main part of the body which must be covered are the private parts. The first time we see such a concept in the Torah is by Noach's children, who ran to go cover their father's nakedness when he was exposed.

All of these coverings we mentioned until now have to do with covering something bad or shameful. Clothing serves this purpose – it covers our shame, and mainly the private parts, which are the epitome of shame if they are to be exposed.

### *Covering to Give Honor*

Sometimes we find how clothing can be for an altogether different purpose – to give honor. These were the *bigdei kehunah* (the priest's garments), of which it is written, “*For glory and for beauty.*”

From *bigdei kehunah* we can begin to see that not only does clothing come to hide a person's disgrace, but it also comes to give honor.

### *The Higher Kind Of Modesty*

Before, we brought the words of Chazal regarding Shaul's great modesty. The *Gemara* there states that when he had to relieve himself, he went behind a fence within a fence, and a cave with another cave, and that he was covered over by all directions, like a *sukkah*.

What's the difference between how a fence covers something and how a cave covers something? A fence can cover, but not totally; it's still open on the other side of the fence. It's only enough to protect what you want to hide from an onlooker. But a cave is a total enclosure; it covers all the angles. His modesty in the cave was a whole different kind of modesty than in the fence.

These are two different kinds of modesty: one kind of modesty serves to cover something shameful, while another kind of modesty serves an altogether different purpose – it is for a person to become connected to modesty.

The modesty that one must have in the lavatory is the epitome of the first kind of modesty, which is to hide something shameful. But there is another kind of modesty which is a more inner kind of modesty than this. It is the modesty which we find by Rochel Imeinu and Shaul Hamelech. This higher kind of modesty was precisely the kind of modesty that saved Shaul from death.

The lower kind of modesty, to cover over something shameful, is how we rectify the first sin, which produced shame – and death. The higher kind of modesty doesn't come to cover over shame, but it comes instead to reveal the reason for *chiyus* (life) in something.

We have thus seen that there are two different levels of modesty. One kind of modesty is to conceal something bad; if the bad wouldn't be in the equation, there would be no need for the modesty, because the modesty is only a means to a certain end. This is the modesty one has to have in the lavatory; had Adam not sinned, there would be no need for such modesty.

The second kind of modesty, which is the higher kind of modesty, comes to reveal the life behind something. It is written, "*And the modest ones have wisdom.*" This is a kind of modesty that existed even before Adam's sin – it is the root of the life-sustaining energy in something.

We will try to understand what this deep modesty is.

### *How Modesty Relates To Our Connection To Hashem*

This higher kind of modesty is rooted in a source that is the epitome of being hidden and concealed.

In words that are quite simple: What Hashem does can be seen by all. But His actual existence is not revealed to us – even though we can know with certainty that He does exist. No one is more modest than Hashem, who has never revealed Himself yet -- and never will reveal Himself. He is somewhat revealed to us through the actions He does, but His actual existence is still very concealed from us. "*For no man can see me and live.*"

The *sefer Leshem* writes that Hashem is the "hidden truth." Hashem is the ultimate reality which there is, but this reality is very hidden from us; this is not by chance – it is on purpose.

In our soul, modesty is exemplified mainly through our connection to the reality of Hashem's existence. When we are connected to Him, we are connected to what is called modesty.

Modesty is the way to connect to the Creator. If someone doesn't have it, he does not have the means to be able to connect to Him. Hashem is very hidden from us, and the only tool we can have to reach Him is through modesty. When a person is modest, he/she is connected to a power that

exists called modesty, and from that a person can connect himself to the Creator, who is epitome of modesty.

### *Modesty Is Found On The Inside Of Something*

The *possuk* says, “Walk modestly with Your G-d.” Chazal say that this is referring to a wedding and a funeral, that these events should be conducted with modesty. Chazal also say that if these things which are normally done openly need to be done modestly, surely things which are modest matters to begin with need to be done with modesty<sup>24</sup>.

The depth of this statement is a deep point. Usually, the beginning and end of something is very revealed for all to see. A wedding, which is the beginning of a home, is watched by everybody. The end of a person's life, which is a funeral, is also attended by everybody. The beginning and the end of a person's life is always revealed – everyone knows when a baby is born, and people all hear about someone's death. Which part of a person's life remains hidden? The middle of his life – in other words, his entire lifetime, which is in between birth and death. This shows us that the “middle point” is always hidden. Soon, we will learn the implication of what this means.

The middle is always the hidden part. When you look at something, you only see the edges – where it begins and where it ends. But you don't see the middle.

For example, when you look at a new book in the store, you flip through the pages quickly from beginning until end – but you don't read the middle. A person attempts to understand the content of something based on seeing its beginning and end, but the middle is always hidden.

Modesty is associated throughout Chazal with women. A woman was created from the rib, which is a part on the body that is on the side. This was specifically to show that just like Hashem commanded a woman to be modest with a part of her body that is more easily seen, like a rib which is at an end, surely she should be modest with the other parts of her body that are more hidden than her rib.

Corners and ends can be seen, while the middle is not. In terms of our soul, the question is: are we holding onto the corners of something, or are we holding onto what's inside it? What we are really getting at is that usually, people live their lives superficially and only see the “edges” of something, but they never get to the content inside it.

Modesty comes from our element of earth, as we said before. Another thing you can notice about earth in relation to the other three elements is that earth is the only thing you can hold with your hands. Fire and wind definitely cannot be held in your hand, and water usually slips out between your fingers.

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<sup>24</sup> *Sukkah 49b*

Earth, which we can hold, is the only element which you can hold, and it is only able to be held by its edges. When you hold a clump of dirt in your hand, you're not holding the inside of it; you're grasping it by its edges.

We are not trying to have a scientific discussion here. What we are interested in knowing is that everything we know about the elements can apply to our soul. In terms of our soul, we usually only understand the "edges" of something, and not the "content" inside.

What's the difference if you hold something from its edges or if you're holding it from its middle? When you're holding the edges, you're holding its boundaries – its limits. But when you hold something from the middle, you're holding onto a place from which spreads out the rest of what you're holding.

The Torah is "longer than the earth and wider than the sea." When a person learns Torah, he's only holding onto its words and letters; he's not holding onto what's underneath that, which is its real vastness. This is because we are in the world which is after the sin, and our perception is limited.

The point of what we are saying here is that we are trying to describe an inner world that exists, in which we can hold onto the content inside something. The world which we see and recognize today is the world that came after the sin of Adam, in which our grasp and perception is limited; all we can know of are the "edges" of something; that is, if we only remain in this state of post-sin. But we can access the kind of state which existed before the sin, in which we are able to really grasp the content of something. This state exists in the deepest part of our soul.<sup>25</sup>

### *Modesty In Time, In The World, and In Our Soul*

Before we said that there is a lower kind of modesty, which serves a purpose to cover up something bad, and that we fix whatever's bad through covering it; and that there is a higher kind of modesty, in which we are covering something that is supposed to remain hidden. This inner, hidden point is so modest that we have a hard time understanding what it is, precisely because it is so modest.

Shabbos is called "a gift which I have in My treasury." This point is very hidden deep within our soul. It exists, but it is hidden. It is hidden from even the person himself; but if a person has reached true modesty, he can know of it – *"And the wise ones have wisdom."*

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<sup>25</sup> Many times, the author sefarim states that we know that we are after the sin of Adam and living in the altered state of Creation, and that the future Redemption will return us to the perfected state of before the sin. Nevertheless, there is still a deep part in our soul which was unaffected by the sin, and if we access our deepest point of our soul, we are able to access (somewhat, and to a certain degree) the perfected state that existed before the sin of Adam, in which everything is the way it should be. Grasping the "content" of a matter is just one example of this concept, but there are many other applications, beyond the scope of this work. The concept of being able to return somewhat to the state before the sin of Adam, even in our lifetime, is found in sefer Adir B'Marom of the Ramchal (an esoteric work by the author of Mesillas Yesharim).

Modesty is associated with wisdom. What does this *possuk* mean? Do only modest people have wisdom?! Many people aren't modest yet they are wise; what then does it mean?

But really, only with modesty can a person really have wisdom. This is because someone who isn't modest only knows of something based on seeing its superficial layer – its edges. One who is modest grasps information from its center and thus truly knows what it is.

There is a concept in Chazal called “*Olam* (world), *Shanah* (year/time), *Nefesh* (soul)”. This concept says that everything as we know it takes place on three planes – in a place somewhere in the world, in a certain time, and in our own soul.

In time, modesty is found in Shabbos. On Shabbos we mainly stay indoors, and we cannot carry from one private domain to another private domain. We can carry inside our own house, but to carry outside is prohibited. This reflects privacy and modesty; Shabbos is a time of modesty.

The *Kodesh Hakodashim*, the holiest room in the *Beis HaMikdash*, was a place in the world where there is modesty. There, only the *Kohen Gadol* was allowed to enter -- alone, and only once a year. It was ultimately private and modest.

In our soul, the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes that there is also a personal *Kodesh Kodashim* within ourselves. This is in our heart, which knows of things that aren't always verbalized by our mouth. Our heart serves as the source of modesty in our soul.

### *Modesty and Being Alone*

Many times we find modesty associated with being alone. We find this both by the lower and higher kinds of modesty – it is all about being alone.

The lower kind of modesty, like when a person acts modestly in the lavatory, epitomizes modesty, because the person is all alone.

In the higher modesty, the *Kohen Gadol* in the *Kodshei Kodashim* was all alone. Being “alone” is associated with holiness; Yaakov fought “alone”, and Hashem is also called “alone.” The inner core of everything is really to be “alone”, and being “alone”<sup>26</sup> is really the depth of modesty.

But there seems to be a contradiction. On one hand, being “alone” is the root of modesty, yet in a marriage, a man and a woman come together and they are not alone. “*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*” Doesn't this contradict the idea of modesty, which is to be “alone”?

But actually, nothing could be more modest. Modesty is mainly reached during the holy act of marital intimacy between a husband and a wife, which is supposed to be done with modesty. “*They*

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<sup>26</sup> In *Getting To Know Your Self*, the author explained how to use the power of “Alone” (*levad*) in the soul.

*shall become one flesh.*” If they don’t act modestly, then they aren’t “one” – they are two separate people. But if they do conduct themselves with modesty, they are “one flesh” – in other words, they reveal the “alone” of Hashem there.

It is precisely the marital union which the Torah says that it’s possible to become one, and it is precisely the marital union in which we find a requirement of modesty. This is not by chance; it is during this act that an inner reality can be revealed, a reality of “alone” that brings out the depth of modesty. However, if they just remain two separate people and aren’t intending to become more unified through the act, then there is no modesty in the act, because they aren’t trying to reveal any oneness here.

### *The Depth Behind Covering The Head*

Getting back to how this all relates to our soul, so far we have brought many scenarios in which we find modesty: covering waste, covering the dead, and wearing clothing in general.

There is an even higher modesty which we find, and this is the *halacha* to cover one’s head: “You must cover your head so that you will have fear of Heaven<sup>27</sup>.”

With this covering, we aren’t covering something because of something bad or shameful. Here, we are covering what is above our head – in other words, there is a point that is above our comprehension, and there we can reveal the oneness of Hashem, through covering the head.

Covering the head reflects what is written, “*And the modest ones have wisdom.*” A person’s wisdom is nursed from his/her modesty. “*Wisdom is found in ayin (nothingness)*”. When one makes himself into *ayin*, nothing – he nullifies his self, and he reveals the hidden reality within him.

Someone who doesn’t nullify himself only looks to give himself honor and reveal himself more to others. By contrast, one who nullifies himself keeps himself more hidden from others. This is really the depth behind why we cover our head.

### *Modesty In Our Soul*

We learned that there are two kinds of modesty: being modest from other people, which is the lower kind of modesty (which we find by the first level of Shaul Hamelech’s modesty, who relieved himself behind a fence within a fence), and the higher kind of modesty that is hidden deep inside a person (which is the second level in Shaul’s modesty, that he also went behind a cave within a cave).

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<sup>27</sup> *Shabbos 155b*

The point of modesty is not just to be hidden from others. It is to be a paradigm of modesty – “*In the shadow of His wings, take shelter.*” A *sukkah*, which means “a covering”, is covered by all directions; this is more than just being covered from the sight of people. It is to be covered for a deeper purpose.

The depth behind being covered is not just so that one is hidden from others; that is only the lower kind of modesty, which came as a result of the first sin. For this it would be enough to be covered enough so that others can't see what should be hidden. The depth of modesty comes from a point within us that is entirely void and nullified of our self.

What, exactly, are we describing?

It is brought from the Baal Shem Tov that a person should picture himself always being surrounded by Hashem's light. In this way, a person is always modest and hidden within something; he is constantly enveloped. It is like a *sukkah*, which completely covers a person for the entire time.

This is also the deep reason why a person is taught the entire Torah inside his mother before he is born. There, a person is in total modesty. It is there that a person draws forth to himself the learning of the holy Torah.

This is a deep place in a person's soul in which he is constantly covered and hidden. It is precisely there where the holy Torah is revealed to a person. For this reason, one of the Sages did not want to teach Torah to his student out in the open, and only in the *Beis Midrash*, because the Torah thrives only where it can be hidden<sup>28</sup>.

When a person lives the inner part of his soul, his modesty is complete. He is covered by all directions and he stands in the middle point, and it is there that he can really understand things, because the real way to perceive something is when you grasp it from the inside of it. The middle point, the content behind something, is really endless, unlike the edges which come to an end.

This is the depth behind why one of the Sages said that the world was created from the middle, and not from its edges<sup>29</sup>, because the middle spreads out endlessly, while the edges have an end point somewhere.

This is the depth behind modesty in our soul, and it is from this power in our soul that a person is able to connect totally to the Creator -- who is endless.

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<sup>28</sup> *Midrash Tanchuma, Bechukosai 4*

<sup>29</sup> *Yuma 55b*

## EDITOR'S EPILOGUE

In this *sefer*, you have been opened up to a whole new world – a world of *pnimiyus* and *ruchniyus* that is within your reach.

You might have discovered how until now, there was this great longing and emptiness that you couldn't describe where it came from, and now you have realized why. The emptiness you felt in your life until now was because there was this great void that had to be filled – a certain void of *ruchniyus*.

It's amazing. We can go our whole life being *frum*, doing all the *mitzvos* and in general always doing the right thing. Yet, we don't feel connected to all of it, and in general we feel a great emptiness that has no rhyme or reason. Once in a while for *chizuk* we listen to a *shiur* that awakens our search for *ruchniyus*, but somehow it just doesn't last, and we never end up building up our inner world.

This *sefer* has come to fill that void. It has given us a structure of *Avodas Hashem* for us, a formula which we can always come back to when we feel that something is wrong in our life, and then ask ourselves if we're doing these things here. Don't be discouraged that you've only discovered your inner world now – instead, build upon what you have now and be happy that you will now lead a life of meaning.

Other series that the Rav gave to women that have been translated in PDF files:

- [Inner Silence Series \(Gateways to Developing Hisbodedus \(retreat\) as an ideal path to intimacy with God\)](#));
- see also the newly updated ["Rosh Chodesh Avodah" pdf](#).