

UTILIZING YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Building the Power Of Da'as

Adapted from the hebrew shiurim
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Editor's Preface

Utilizing Your Daas (an English adaptation of “*Da Es Daatcha*”) is a cerebral journey into our minds, where we can learn how to develop the power of our mind and increase the strength of our intellect, as part of developing the powers of our soul. It is a sequel to its predecessor, *Getting To Know Your Thoughts* (“*Da Es Machshavosecha*”).

In *Getting To Know Your Thoughts*, the Rav explains an in-depth understanding of the three mental abilities, known as *chochmah*, *binah*, and *daas*. The Rav had mentioned in the introduction to *Getting To Know Your Thoughts* that the ability of *daas* really requires its own separate work, as it is in a class of its own. That separate work became the next installment in the “*Da Es*” series, *Utilizing Your Daas* (available exclusively for download at www.bilvavi.net).

In *Utilizing Your Daas*, we take an in-depth look at what lays in our power of *daas*, how we can have more access to it, beginning from the more basic abilities and then exploring its deeper uses. By understanding the inner workings of *daas*, we can greater abilities of sensible decision-making, greater self-control of mind over emotion, strengthened mental abilities, and greater control over the imagination (which links this series with another series of the Rav, *Getting To Know Your Imagination*). Ultimately, the goal is to strengthen our mental abilities when it comes to Torah learning, and on a deeper level, to connect our Torah learning with Hashem.

This particular work is heavy reading which requires a lot of contemplation, and it is perhaps the most difficult to understand from all of the installments in the *Da Es* series. It should only be read by those who are more intellectually-inclined and who have advanced their way through *Getting To Know Your Thoughts*.

01 | *Differentiating*

Introduction and Summary of ‘Getting To Know Your Thoughts’

Here we will discuss *mochin* (the mind), which we have begun to explain previously [in *Da Es Machshavosecha*, “Getting To Know Your Thoughts”]. In the previous series, we mainly discussed the mental abilities called *chochmah* (wisdom) and *binah* (contemplation). Now we will focus on how we to use the ability of our *da’as* (connecting knowledge). The discussion here is built upon the previous series and is a continuation of it.

We mentioned [in *Getting To Know Your Thoughts*] that there are two kinds of *chochmah*, *binah* and *da’as* – a higher function and a lower function. The higher function of our mind is called “*mochin d’gadlus*”, while the lower function is called “*mochin d’katnus*”.¹ There is a higher and lower *chochmah*, and there is a higher and lower *Binah*. This is a brief summary.

Binah, as was explained, really makes use of our power of “*medameh*” (imagination/comparing). Higher *binah* is to compare information with what one has learned from his teachers. Lower *binah* is to compare the actions that one has seen from his teachers. Both of these kinds of *Binah* involve comparing information, so *binah* works in tandem with *medameh*/imagination.

Within *daas* itself, we mentioned that there are three kinds: “*da’as d’havdalah*” (differentiating), “*da’as d’hachraah*” (deciding), and “*da’as d’chibbur*” (connecting the knowledge together). We will begin to explain the lower functions of *daas* and then progress to discuss its higher, deeper uses.

The Three Kinds of Da’as: Differentiating, Deciding, and Connecting

¹ Editor’s Note: These concepts, *mochin d’gadlus* and *mochin d’katnus*, are stated in *sefer Tanya*. as well as in many other earlier and classical sources of our *sefarim hakedoshim*. Refer to *Getting To Know Your Thoughts*, Chapter 06

Da'as d'havdalah is when a person differentiates between a *chochmah*-thought and a *binah*-thought. Here, the *da'as* in our mind comes to differentiate between the knowledge that I see in front of me which I have acquired from what I have learned (*chochmah*), with what I am about to do (*binah*). If one is able to make this differentiation, he has reached the power of *daas d'havdalah*.

Da'as d'hachraah is when I weigh out the information and decide if I will act upon it or not. Here, the *da'as* decides if my comparison which I made is correct or not. What I hear from my teacher doesn't mean I have decided to act upon it. *Binah* is when I compare the information and thus I come to understand the information better, and *daas d'hachraah* is that after I have used my power of *binah/medameh* to compare, now I decide if I will act upon that understanding.

So *chochmah* is to “see” the information, *binah* is to compare different kinds of information, and the role of *daas* comes to combine all the information together (first it differentiates and decides, though, before it can combine the information). It combines the general view of the *chochmah* and the detailed view of *binah*, and fuses them together to form the bigger picture.

At its total level, this is *ruach hakodesh* (the “holy spirit”), which sees the general view, as well as the details, and then to see how they both connect - which is to see the grand total of the picture. This is known as *da'as d'chibbur*. when one uses his *daas* to connect the information together, after having used *havdalah* (differentiation) and *hachraah* (deciding).

That is a brief outline of what it is to come. We will begin with the lowest function of *daas*, which is called *daas d'havdalah* – to differentiate between information.

Da'as HaMavdeles: Differentiating Between Chochmah and Binah

Da'as d'havdalah [or *daas hamavdeles*, or simply “*Havdalah*”] comes to separate between what is *chochmah* and what is *binah*. When the thoughts of a person become mixed up, there is *bilbul*, confusion, and the thoughts need to be separated and arranged.

To illustrate this concept, at the beginning of Creation, light and darkness were mixed together into one, and Hashem came and separated them from each other. *Havdalah* is about sorting out a previous mixture. If there is no mixture, there is no need for *havdalah*. So *havdalah* is only when there is a mixture of information in the head that needs to be sorted out. A mixture manifests in our soul as the power of *medameh* (imagination).

Da'as comes to analyze what the *binah* has done and takes it apart, in order to decide if the *binah* has made an accurate comparison. The *binah* has made a comparison between two *chochmah*-thoughts, and now a *bilbul* in the mind is created, because there is now *chochmah* and *binah*. The *da'as* comes to sort out this mixture of information that has been created in the mind.

More specifically, *daas d'havdalah* essentially comes to separate the *medameh*/imagination – the mixture of information that has now entered the mind after *binah* has been activated. *Chochmah* sees the original scrap version of the information, *binah* compares that with other information, and *daas* separates between the *chochmah* and *binah* - it essentially comes to separate the *bilbul* (confusion) that gets created from the jumbled together thoughts of the *chochmah* and *binah*.

***“Dilug”*: Mental Jumpiness**

What causes a person to have *bilbul*, to become confused and mixed up? Generally speaking, there are two causes for *bilbul*.

One cause is called “*dilug*” – “jumping”. This is when the mind quickly jumps from one piece of information to another piece of information. (There is also a holy way to use this power², but now we are dealing with the lower use of *dilug*, which causes a person to become confused in his mind when he jumps around between information). When a person is “jumpy” in his mind, he loses the *chochmah* that was contained in

² To learn more about how to use the power of “*dilug*” (jumpiness) for holiness, refer to *Reaching Your Essence_05 (Taking The Jump)* and also *Fixing Your Fire_05_Knowing Your Capabilities*

his *binah*, and as a result, his *binah* then becomes a total imagination. He will then come to make an inaccurate comparison of information, using *binah* alone.

Creation is built on *seder* (order); all of Creation is orderly, and everything in Creation functions through a certain order. “*All of them You created with chochmah* (wisdom)”. When there is *medameh*, however, there is a *dilug* (jumpiness), and then there is no *seder*. A *dilug* is the antithesis to *chochmah*, which represents *seder*/order.

What brings *dilug*? One cause is *medameh* (the imagination), which is what we will be mainly dealing with in this discussion. Another cause for *dilug* is “*mehirus*”, quickness. An example of this when people skip words as they read and then they make mistakes.³ We will not deal with this now; now we will focus on the problem of *dilug* causes by *medameh*.

How does *medameh* bring *dilug*? By nature, it is hard for a person to pass so quickly between one thing to another, unless he feels very pulled after it. Children, who do not have *da'as*, jump very quickly from one action to another, because they constantly feel pulled after things. Unless a person gets dragged after something, he doesn't jump away from what he's doing. Children are jumpy because they have no *daas*; their *medameh* is dominant.

Man was created to follow *seder* – “*Asher yatzar es haadam b'chochmah*”, “Who created man with wisdom.” We are naturally orderly, because we were created with orderly wisdom. But when a *medameh* enters the mind, it takes us away from our normal *seder*, by causing a *dilug* to our *seder*.

Medameh even causes a person to think that he's not jumping, and that he's just getting from one point to another. He doesn't even make the differentiation between the two different points; in his mind right now, all points are connected together, and that is why he jumps around in his mind from one point to another so quickly.

Most people suffering from a problem of *dilug* are really suffering from their *medameh*. There are few people who suffer from *mehirus* and they are simply

³ See *Getting To Know Your Imagination_08_How Orderliness Stops Imagination*

impulsive; or, it is because their minds think very quickly, so they have rapid movements as a result. But most people suffering from *dilug* are suffering from *medameh*.

When *medameh* isn't sorted out, it causes *dilug* in the mind.

A Difference Between Men and Women

This is why most men cannot pass quickly from doing one thing to another thing, while women find this easier. The deep reason behind this is with by most men, their imagination hasn't been properly developed, and their imbalanced imagination thus makes it harder for them to pass from one thing to another thing. Women, who use their imagination more often, due to their "extra *binah*", are usually more developed in their imagination, and thus they find it easier to pass from one thing immediately to another thing.

We see that a woman can easily do many tasks in her house, one after the other; one minute she is cleaning, the next minute she's at the stove cooking, the next minute she's doing the laundry – and she can make the transition between one of these acts to another very easily and quickly. This is because her mind processes all of the things she has to do in her house as all one unit; thus she finds it easier to pass so quickly from one task to another, because from her viewpoint, everything in the house is connected into one point: it's all about taking care of the house.

In contrast, the husband does not have this viewpoint on the house, therefore he sees each of these household tasks as separate from each other, so he has a harder time moving so quickly from one of these tasks to another.

Yetzer Hora/Medameh/Dilug

The *medameh*/imagination is what the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) essentially uses in order to get people to sin. The *yetzer hora* is described as "*nidmeh*" – the imagination (*Sukkah* 52a). This is because when the *yetzer hora* is present, it uses

imagination, which can make a person temporarily lose his *da'as*. Our *da'as* has the ability to differentiate between good and evil, but imagination makes us lose our power to differentiate.

The Serpent is called the *poretz gidrei olam*, the “one who breaks the fences of the world.” Why does it ‘break fences’? It represents the evil inclination, which uses *medameh*. *Medameh* tells a person there are no *gedarim* (fences/rules) to anything. And when it breaks all fences, a person can then feel like he can ‘jump’ over the fence – he is apt to do anything that the evil inclination tells him to do.

Too Focused On the Similarities and Ignoring the Differences

This is the problem behind *dilug*/mental jumpiness: The person compares one thing to another thing that they are the same, due to the unsorted *medameh*, thus, he jumps over to the another thing in his mind. It focuses on a certain comparison and tells you that the two things can be compared, ignoring all the other differences.

This is what happens when *medameh* is not sorted out by the power of *da'as* - specifically, *da'as d'havdalah*.

Daas can show the person what is similar and what is different, within the information. It helps you concentrate on what is different between two facts, which opposes the *medameh* that is showing you how two facts are similar. But when has not yet used his power of *da'as* to sort out his *medameh*, his *medameh* will be dominant and it will lead a person to make erroneous conclusions about something.

A person might even be so immersed in his *medameh*, thinking that something is so similar to what he's thinking, that he overlooks certain details and he comes to makes rash decisions. For example, a person sees an advertisement for an apartment that looks like the one he wants and it's in a great location, so he immediately wants to grab the apartment. He calls the number in the ad and buys it on the spot, without going to check out the apartment. Then he goes to the apartment and finds that it's not what he wanted. He has to walk up a flight of stairs to get to it, and there are other things he didn't bother to find out.

He had imagined that the new apartment would be similar to his apartment, because he was so immersed in imagining that it's similar. After all, it looked exactly like his old apartment, and it was even on the same block. It was similar - but in actuality, it was not the same. He never bothered to check it out and see the differences. He calls the owner the next day to complain that it's not he thought he was getting....

Sometimes a person can be so focused on making comparisons that if you ask him if he is aware of differences, he will agree. But he still can't pull himself away from his imagination, because his imagination is making him so focused on the similarities that he can't get himself to see the differences. Intellectually, he is aware that he's too swayed by his imagination, but he's too emotionally connected with his imagination that he can't get himself to pull away from it, and he continues to fool himself that a comparison can be made, and he ignores the differences.

Using Daas D'Havdalah: Noticing Differences

So our *binah* (or *tevnah*) compares information, which creates *medameh* in our mind – a mixture of information; and we need to use *daas* to sort this out. Basically, we need to see what is different and what is similar in two pieces of information that we compared.

First, try taking apart the comparison in your mind and see what's similar between A and B and what's different between A and B.

Someone with a tendency to imagine will be drawn towards comparing things that are really different, and he will also not be drawn towards comparing things that are really similar. He is the kind of person who will take two things that are completely different and try to find how they're similar. This shows that imagination dominates his mind.

If one has this problem and he wants to uproot this, he should take a pen and paper and **write down how the two things are really not exactly similar**. If he tries this for about 10, 20, 50, or 70 times, he will be able to chip away at his tendency of

imagination/erroneous comparisons. (This improves the lower aspect of *medameh*; we have not yet addressed how to fix the higher parts of *medameh*). In addition, he should **pay attention to differences he never noticed until now** and now examine if there is more reason to compare or differentiate between the two things he compared.

So, write down all the reasons why you think the two things you compared are similar, why they should be different. Now, see if they are really similar or different. The more you do this, the more you can weaken your tendency to imagine.

We do this all the time with learning Gemara – we notice differences, and we see how two things that seemed the same are really not. But what should women and children do, who do not learn Torah? They can use our method, which is really based on the same idea of making comparisons in our Torah learning and differentiating between the information.

See how two things you compared are both similar and different, then decide if they are really similar or not, and then find new differences that you didn't see until now.

How To Stop Mental Jumpiness

Until now we discussed how to use *daas d'havdalah* to weaken *medameh*, imagined information. Now we will see how to use *daas d'havdalah* to also chip away at the problem of *dilug*, mental “jumpiness”.

The truth is that *dilug*/mental jumpiness doesn't really ‘exist’ in our soul. We really cannot ‘jump’ between one point to another - even though it seems that we can. A person can only jump from one thing to another in his head when he has formed for himself a kind of mental [imaginary] “bridge” to cross over with, and that is why he connects so fast to something else in the blink of an eye. If we would somehow take away that “bridge” he has formed in his head, he can't cross over from one topic to another.

How did he build the 'bridge' in his head in the first place? He was thinking of something, and then another unrelated thought suddenly fell into his head. When this happens, a person has to pause his thoughts and ask himself why he suddenly thought of this new thought. In this way, you clarify the imagination which has entered into your head and analyze why it came, and how it caused you to make some mental comparison between information.

This is essentially cleans up his imagination as it's taking place. A person can only jump from one thing to another through *medameh*/imagination, and the solution is for a person to "catch" himself while he is "jumping".

This is because *dilug*/mental jumpiness causes *medameh*/imagination to become awakened, thus, all *dilug* is really fueled through *medameh*. The entire basis for *dilug* is *medameh*/imagination, so *dilug* is basically fed by the imagination! Thus, if we take away the root of the *dilug* - which is *medameh* - the *dilug* ceases.

The way we do this is, as we said: by catching yourself in the act of imagining, you become aware that your mind is jumping, and then you analyze your imagination and see that it led you to make some erroneous calculation.

However, the difficulty is, that as the *dilug* is taking place, a person doesn't think that he's imagining. He might be somewhat mentally aware of the *dilug*, but he is not actually aware that his imagination is essentially overtaking him. *Dilug* can make a person jump around too much in his mind, and he can't concentrate. He might perhaps take pills to help him concentrate....

What a person really needs to do is, to get to the root of why he acts so jumpy in his mind. This is by being aware of *why* you are jumping, *as* you are jumping. The whole problem of *dilug* comes from a lack of awareness to our imagination as it's taking place. Once a person is aware of his imagination as it's happening, the mental jumpiness will lessen. When you become aware, ask yourself why you jumped from one thought to another. A lack of awareness to one's mental jumpiness is the root of a person's problems.

What happens when a person nips the *dilug*? There are two gains. Firstly, he escapes the *dilug*, and the second gain is that he weakens the *medameh*/imagination that was created from the *dilug*.

When a person isn't aware of his imagination as it's happening, though, his imagination will continue to bring him down more and more, and then there will be more *dilug*.

There are all kinds of ways how mental health professionals deal with *dilug*, but those methods only address how to get rid of it, without getting to the root of the problem. The method here gets to the source of the problem of *dilug* and nips it at the source. The source of *dilug* is that it comes from an unsorted *medameh*, and the key of stopping it is to be aware of it as it happens.

Thus, when you're imagining how one thing is similar to another thing, try to catch yourself as you're imagining, and then analyze what made you jump from one thought to another. Try to become clear of why you made the mental comparison. This already solves half of the problem.

The main problem with our imagination is when we are not aware of it. People might know intellectually about their imagination, but the key is to become aware of it as it is happening.

There are people who jump from one subject to another as they talk. If you ask them, "What's the connection to what you were just talking about before?" you will get a response like, "No, there's no connection..." Their thoughts are constantly jumping around.

So the *avodah* is that after you go through a *dilug* in your mind, the first thing you must realize is that *medameh* is overtaking you. That is the first step. Then, ask yourself why you made the mental comparison.

When you live like this, you can see how little thought about something can fool you entirely! In situations where you become aware of your *dilug*, be aware that it is coming from *medameh* and then ask yourself why you made a mental comparison. See how what you compared is really different.

This is the depth of the power of *daas d'havdalah* which we started out this chapter with, but here we have explained a new facet in how to use it.

Getting Back Your Nature To Differentiate

Now we will add another point to the solution. Our power of *daas d'havdalah* counters *medameh*. We use our *daas d'havdalah* after we have made a mental comparison, and there are two parts to this.

At first, we need to become of the differences between two things; we become aware of the *dilug*. Then we need to become aware of what is behind the *dilug*, which the *medameh*, the comparison – and you do this by asking yourself why you made the mental comparison, what led you to think this way, how your mind went from Point A to Point B. This is what we explained so far.

Now we can come to a deeper point: we can now see that when we are conscious, the nature of our soul [our mind within it] is to differentiate, and that it is just in our subconscious that we tend to make mental comparisons and focus on similarities between A and B. You become aware of this contradiction in yourself, and the more you recognize this, the more you weaken the imagination.

Now you can see how *daas d'havdalah* is really your initial perception of your soul. Our nature is really to differentiate – thus, *dilug* is really a developed habitually, and it is the opposite of our soul's nature; even though is true that we can develop a tendency of *dilug*⁴.

Seeing Subtle Differences

Now let us sharpen this discussion more, of how using *daas d'havdalah* can sort out our *medameh*/imagination.

⁴ To learn more about the concept of “*dilug*” (mental jumpiness), refer to *Getting To Know Your Imagination_08_How Orderliness Stops Imagination, and Fixing Your Fire_07_Hyperactivity*

Until now, we have been discussing what happens when a person compares Point A and Point B when they are really not similar, because he gets too caught up in the similarities between them and therefore he mentally equates them as the same thing; that is why he jumps from Point A to Point B.

But sometimes, a person compares two things that really are very similar. When you use *daas d'havdalah*, though, you can see how two things that seem very similar are still different.

For example, if a person sees two great leaders of the generation performing the *mitzvah* of *shiluach hakan* (sending away the mother bird), it seems superficially that they are both doing the same thing. They are both doing the same *mitzvah*. But if you use your *daas d'havdalah*, you will notice that although they are doing the same act, it is still not the same thing. They are each performing the act in their own unique way. Only someone who has developed *daas d'havdalah* will be able to notice this subtle differentiation.

To illustrate, anyone who is used to learning the words of the *Rashba* and the *Ritva* in-depth knows that although they seem very similar to each other, they are not the same exact wording. Sometimes one word can make the whole difference. This is the depth behind learning with *iyun* (in-depth) – to notice differences, even in what seems similar. It is to get used to seeing beyond the surface of things, which only offers a superficial understanding.

Our Sages state, “Just as all faces are not the same, so are all *de'os* [opinions] not the same.”⁵ There are no two things in Creation which are the same exact. There are always differences between one thing and another. The more we use our ability of *da'as d'havdalah*, the more we can see the differences.

In order to sort out our mind, we need to make use of our *da'as d'havdalah*. We need to see how things are different from each other. Anyone who is used to learning Torah in-depth lives this kind of life and is familiar with the concept of *daas d'havdalah*.

⁵ *Berachos 58a*

To work on this concept practically - especially if you regularly learn Torah with *iyun* (in-depth), here is an exercise you can use to work on this. Let's say you are learning about a certain concept, and there are two proofs to the concept. Although they are both proofs to the same concept, try to see how the two proofs contain different points from each other. By learning like this on a regular basis, you will greatly clarify what goes on in your mind and sort out the imagination.

Overcoming Temptation

This helps you in the practical sense, and to take this concept further, using *daas d'havdalah* can help you counter the essence of all evil on this world. As we explained earlier, the *yetzer hora* works using the power of imagination. When you use *daas d'havdalah*, you begin to become aware of things you never noticed, and now you can see how there are more things you need to avoid on this world.

All evil thrives on *medameh*, as we mentioned before.⁶ How can a person deal with *medameh*, which the *yetzer hora* uses?

If someone has never tried to sort out his *medameh* at all, the words we are discussing here will be worthless for him to try to implement, because he hasn't yet worked on the lower stages of this, which is to simply get used to differentiating between information. When the *yetzer hora* comes to tempt him, he will remain with his passions (*taavah*) and his will to commit the sin (*ratzon*). "When the *yetzer hora* comes, there is no mention of the *yetzer tov*"; but if a person has gotten used to sorting out his *medameh* from already beforehand, he can fight the *yetzer hora* even when there is no *yetzer tov*.⁷

Here we will discuss a situation in which the *yetzer hora* isn't present, not the time of the actual struggle.

⁶ Based upon *Sukkah 52a*; see also *Getting To Know Your Thoughts #017*.

⁷ This was explained in *Getting To Know Your Thoughts, #017*.

A person should know that whenever there is a struggle with *yetzer hora*, it's all being fueled by *medameh*. Therefore, one has to clarify what brought him to this difficulty: what erroneous comparison he made that led him to the difficulty. If a person can summon forth his *daas d'havdalah* and take apart the comparison he made, the difficulty with the *yetzer hora* will weaken when it comes.

This is the subtle way to deal with the *yetzer hora*, who is called "*nidmeh*"⁸, from the word "*medameh*". When a person sees something and now he has a desire for it, how can he deal with it and rid it from his thoughts? He has made some erroneous mental comparison, and that is what it is feeding his desire. If a person wants to take it apart, he should see that *medameh* has taken over. That is how he uses *daas d'havdalah*.

This is practical advice on how to overcome the *yetzer hora*, which tries to connect one to improper things: develop the power of *daas d'havdalah*, which enables you to realize it when *medameh* begins to control you.

If a person would always use *daas d'havdalah*, he would never succumb to a sin. When a person sins, it's all because his *medameh* has overcome his power of *havdalah*. Had he used his power of *havdalah* (by developing it before the *yetzer hora* comes), he would have been able to separate himself from the evil that the *yetzer hora* is trying to connect him to. He could have used *havdalah* to take apart the imagination in his head.

When you make a *havdalah*, you distance something from yourself. Thus, when the *yetzer hora* is trying to convince you to sin, he is trying to draw you closer to it, so what you have to do is distance yourself from it.

Restraining The Imagination

However, the point of this is not to destroy your power of *medameh*. We do not want to destroy it, *chas v'shalom*; it has its uses, since Hashem created it as part of the design in Creation. Rather, what we have to do is restrain our *medameh*.

⁸ *Sukkah 52a*

Medameh is actually good and holy when it is kept within its limits. When we keep it restrained, there is no possibility to commit evil. So the depth of our *avodah* is to learn how to restrain our *medameh*, not to destroy it. We want to give it proper limits and keep it restrained.

When it is kept within its limits, it is like the *yetzer hora* before the *cheit* (sin) of Adam HaRishon. After the *cheit*, the *yetzer hora* entered man, as the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes; the depth of this is that it entered where it doesn't belong, and that is when the *yetzer hora*/ the *medameh* became evil. So the entire evil of *medameh* is when it enters where it shouldn't; when it is unrestrained. It is not evil in essence.

To summarize, we need to get used to using our power of *havdalah* more often, both in matters that do not involve a temptation of evil, as well as using it in matters that tempt us with evil.

02 | *Deciding*

(Summary of Previous Chapter: We have begun, with Hashem's help, to explain the power of our da'as. We have briefly explained the three uses of our da'as – for havdalah (differentiating), for hachraah (deciding), and for chibbur (connecting knowledge). Previously we explained how to use daas for havdalah, differentiating. Now we will explain how to use daas for hachraah, deciding.

We have three mental abilities – Chochmah, Binah and Daas. Chochmah is to see the information we learn from our teachers. Binah is to compare that information, and Daas, as we explained thus far, is to differentiate between the Chochmah and the Binah.)

Daas D'Hachraah – Deciding Between Chochmah and Binah

Now we will address the second aspect of *da'as*, which is *daas d'hachraah*, deciding.

One's ***chochmah*** sees the information he has received from his teachers, and his ***binah*** analyzes the *chochmah* for further understanding. The ***da'as*** can decide between the information. This is called *daas d'hachraah* – using our *da'as* to “decide.”

We will explain here how to use *daas d'hachraah* to decide between the information of your *chochmah* and the information of your *binah*.

Da'as In Relation To Higher Binah and Lower Binah

When a person is only at the stage of *mochin d'katnus* (his mind is still at the immature level), he compares things that are really not similar. To counter this problem, we need *daas d'havdalah* to see differences.

Binah, when used through the lower level of the mind, compares two facts that bear no similarity, yet the person compares them through his imagination. We can use our *daas d'havdalah* to take apart the imagination [as explained in the previous chapter].

Comparing information through the higher use of our *binah* is done through mental reflection, as opposed to visualization or imagination. When our *binah* is analyzing the information through mental reflection, this requires more subtle work to refine it; this is when we compare things which indeed are similar, and it is harder to notice differences in such scenarios. This is the higher kind of *binah* – when we compare things that are similar. It needs a higher kind of *daas* to refine it.

So our lower *binah* [or *medameh*, or *tevunah*] makes comparisons that are not really similar, either through the means of visualization or imagination, and not through mental reflection. But our higher *binah* compares things which indeed are similar, through mental reflection. It's a more subtle kind of *medameh*, and using *daas d'havdalah* alone won't be able to take it apart and show us the differences.

Lower *binah* works in tandem with *medameh*/imagination, while higher *binah* is more of a logical presumption. Our lower *binah* leads us to compare things that are not similar at all, while our higher *binah* leads us to compares thing that indeed look similar.

We know that no two things are exactly the same, because Chazal say that all faces and all *de'os* (opinions) are different⁹. Therefore, just because two things appear to the same doesn't mean that they are the same. So even when A and B are very similar, we need to see how they are different.

When we analyze one kind of logic and compare it to another kind of logic, we can find how they are very similar at first glance, but upon deeper reflection, we can see how the two points we have compared are really different.

Previously, we dealt with how to use *daas d'havdalah* to counter *medameh*/lower *binah*, which is how to see differences in things that are indeed very different from each other; too see both the similarities and the differences between A and B. Our lower *medameh*/lower *binah* (or *tevunah*) tells us that A and B are similar, whereas our higher *binah*/higher *medameh* is aware that A and B are different, and here we don't

⁹ *Berachos 58a*

need *daas* to show us the differences. Here the *binah* itself is aware of the differences between A and B.

In the morning blessings, we thank Hashem for giving the rooster the ability of *binah* to differentiate between night and day. Where do we ever find that *binah* can differentiate? The *Talmud Yerushalmi* says that “if there is no *daas*, there is no *Havdalah*”, so it seems that only *daas* can separate. But we also find that the rooster has *binah* to differentiate between night and day. So what differentiates – our *daas*, or our *binah*?

The answer is, it depends on if we are dealing with the lower or higher mode of thought. In the lower mode of thought, our *binah* cannot differentiate, and only our *daas* here can differentiate. In the higher mode of thought, even the *binah* can differentiate (and this is the kind of *binah* that the rooster has).

Thus, *havdalah* (differentiation) can happen either through our *daas* or our *binah*. So there is “*daas d’havdalah*” as well as “*binah d’havdalah*”.

The Difference Between Daas D’Havdalah and Binah D’Havdalah

What is the difference between these two kinds of *havdalah*?

Daas d’havdalah comes to differentiate between something that was originally a total *medameh*, something that was completely false. *Binah d’havdalah* – which is really higher *binah* – already sees the differences between A and B and is aware of them; so here the *medameh* did not begin as a complete falsity. Rather, the *binah* comes to notice between the very subtle differences that are contained in the *medameh*.

This is essentially the difference as well between the lower state of the mind (*mochin d’katnus*) and higher state of mind (*mochin d’gadlus*). A child is entirely in *mochin d’katnus*; he only has lower *binah*, so he is found in total *medameh*, and as he matures, he develops some *daas*. His original perception is total *medameh*, and then he gains *daas* which he can use to take apart his *medameh*. An adult can access his higher state

of mind, in which his initial perception of *medameh* is not a total *medameh* and his *binah* is aware that there is *medameh* which it needs to sort out.

Initial Perspective and Second Perspective

In simpler terms, this can be explained in terms of your “initial perspective” (“*mabat rishon*”) and your “second perspective” (“*mabat sheini*”).

When it comes to *mochin d’katnus*, the lower state of mind, the “initial perspective” of the mind is a “total” level of imagination, and the “second perspective” that then comes to the mind can take apart the imagination.

When it comes to *mochin d’gadlus*, the “initial outlook” is only a “partial” kind of *medameh*; part of the information in the *medameh* has made an erroneous comparison between A and B, and the other part of the information in the *medameh* has made a correct comparison. A “second perspective” in the mind can then take the comparison apart, separating between what is “*medameh*” (imagined) and what isn’t *medameh*.

Daas D’Hachraah: The Power of Bechirah/Choosing

What is *daas d’hachraah*, when we use our *daas* to “decide”?

The simple understanding of it is that it is essentially our power of *bechirah*, choosing.

A child doesn’t access his *bechirah*, even though he can have some *daas*. He can have *daas d’havdalah*, but he has no *daas d’hachraah* yet. *Chochmah*, *binah* and *daas* are not fully accessed by someone unless he is over 13, where he becomes a “*bar daas*”, to be capable of sensible thinking; in other words, one who has *bechirah*. Before 13 years of age, a child is not a “*bar daas*”. The Sages state that a child can still have “*daas purta*” – a “little bit” of *daas* – because he can have *daas d’havdalah*, but he can’t have *daas d’hachraah*.

As a person gets older, he gains *daas d'havdalah*, by default; but he doesn't always gain *daas d'hachraah*, which is the power of *bechirah*.

Deciding, *hachraah*, is really the power to choose, *bechirah*. Whenever you decide something, this is enabled because you have the ability to choose.

Two Sources of Decisions: The Mind and The Will

There are two kinds of *hachraah* (decisions). The elementary kind of *hachraah* is deciding how to act in the practical sense, but here we are dealing with our *soul's* power to decide; this has two sources to it.

One kind of deciding is coming from our *ratzon* (will), and this equates with using our *bechirah* (power of free choice).

The second kind of deciding comes from our *mochin* (mind), which means to mentally weigh out information (*shikul hadaas*) and then decide. This is when you see two options in front of you and you have to decide; this does not test your *bechirah* [or *ratzon*]; rather, it tests your mind (*mochin*). You can use your *daas* to be *machria* (decide) if you will stick with A or B. This is called *shikul hadaas* - weighing out information with your *daas*.

So there are two kinds of *hachraah* (deciding): a decision coming from either your will/*ratzon*, which is really your *bechirah*; or a decision that comes from your mind/*mochin*, which is really your ability of *shikul hadaas*.

Deciding Through The Mind: Mental Decisions

We will begin to explain *hachraah* of our *mochin*. Mental deciding is for a person to decide between two options: "There are two options. Which one is the one that makes more sense? A, or B?"

For example, we bring a question in front of two people, and we ask them both if A makes more sense or if B makes more sense. One person decides A, and another person decides B.

Every argument that ever takes place (when we argue about Torah) is like this. The first argument in our history was about if *semichah* (leaning the hands on an animal to sanctify it) on Yom Tov is permissible or not. Ever since then, all arguments about Torah discussions began. These are matters in which we use our *mochin*/mind to decide upon. Each Sage has a different *hachraah*.

If someone lacks *daas*, he has a superficial viewpoint on how to approach two different options. He thinks: “What I decide is right, and what the other decides is false.” Such a person might have *daas d’havdalah*, but he has not yet developed his *daas d’hachraah*. In his mind, what he decides is the truth, therefore, what the other one says is false. When he differentiates and decides, he thinks he is differentiating between “true” or “false”.

But if someone develops the ability *daas d’hachraah*, his thinking is more mature. When he decides A and his friend decides B, he doesn’t view his friend as having the “wrong” opinion. Rather, he feels his mind drawn towards deciding A, and that this is the opinion he will decide on; but he does not have the attitude someone who decides B is wrong. He is aware that both points are valid, and it is just that he has to decide between A and B, but not because deciding on A will “invalidate” B.

“Their words and their words are the words of the living G-d.”¹⁰ This was said about Beis Hillel and Beis Shamai, who always argued, but it applies to all arguments of our Sages (as the Maharal has written). This statement is really describing the power of *daas d’hachraah* – that even when a person decides between A and B, it’s not because he’s invalidating the other option.

When a person uses his *daas d’havdalah*, his decision means that he’s deciding with A and invalidating B. But when a person uses *daas d’hachraah*, although he’s deciding upon A, he is not invalidating B. It’s a huge difference. Only of those who use *daas*

¹⁰ Gittin 7b

d'hachraah can it be applied “Their words, and their words, are the words of the living G-d.”

When people argue, and they invalidate the other one’s opinion because they decide on a certain way, this means that they have not yet developed their *daas d'hachraah*.

Of course, even when one has *daas d'havdalah*, sometimes he will also have to invalidate others’ views, and this is true when it is indeed apparent that the other view is false. There are indeed false views out there.

But if someone always feels that his decisions are right and that all who argue on him are always wrong, you can know that he is only the level of *daas d'havdalah*, and he has never reached his *daas d'hachraah*. When he decides, he only makes use of *havdalah*, not *hachraah*. (There is some small degree of *hachraah* involved in every decision, of course, even when it’s only the level of *havdalah* and not *hachraah*; but this is not enough to be considered using the power of *daas d'hachraah*).

This is the major difference between *daas d'havdalah* and *daas d'hachraah*. When someone has only developed his lower level of thought (*mochin d'katnus*), all his decisions are only coming from *daas d'havdalah*. When someone works his way up to the higher level of thought, his decisions come from *daas d'hachraah*. Sometimes the decisions will still be coming from his *daas d'havdalah*, but mostly, from his *daas d'hachraah*. He decides between A and B, but he still realizes that they are both valid options.

With *daas d'havdalah*, a person disregards an assumption (*hava amina*) in the Gemara after he has learned the conclusion (*maskanah*). A person with *daas d'hachraah*, even after he has seen the conclusion of the Gemara, is still aware that the assumption of the Gemara contained validity.

So *daas d'havdalah* means that when I decide what’s right, the other option is always wrong. *Daas d'hachraah* means that even when I decide what I think is right, I still value the other opinion that argued on how I thought. A hint to this is that the word “*hachraah*” (deciding) comes from the word “*erech*”, “value” – that even when I

decide, I still value the view that opposes me; that when someone argues with my view, I can still have respect him and his views, even though I do not agree with him.

Daas d'hachraah can only be accessed in the higher level of our mind, *mochin d'gadlus*. (Higher than this is *daas d'chibbur*, which is a level of *ruach hakodesh*). When one uses *daas d'hachraah*, he decides between A and B, and since his decision is not stemming from *havdalah*, rather from *hachraah*, he recognizes that his *hachraah* doesn't have to make him feel separated from those who argue with him.

Refining Your Initial Understanding

Now we will get to the deeper ramifications of this concept.

Chochmah is the knowledge that one has seen and accepted from his teachers. *Binah* is to analyze what I have learned by comparing and understanding the information of the *chochmah*. But what is the role of *daas d'hachraah*? Why must I decide between the information, when I have already accepted the information (*chochmah*) and analyzed it (*binah*)? What needs to be 'decided' upon?

When I compare information using *binah*, I am using my own logic. I do not compare using the knowledge of my teachers, which is *chochmah*; I use my *binah*, my own logic, to compare the information I have learned. When I use my own logic, I am really using *medameh*, imagination. The information contained in the *medameh* always contains two options in it: the teacher's understanding about the knowledge imparted, and the student's understanding of what his teacher has said. We receive *chochmah* from the teacher, but we do not receive our *medameh* from a teacher. The understanding from the student's *medameh* is his own novelty, and he did not get this part from his teacher.

This is where the role of "*hachraah*" (deciding) comes in. A person can use his power of *hachraah* in an ever deeper way than what was described until now – he can decide between what he has actually learned from his teacher, with what was just imagined from his own understanding. He can use *daas d'hachraah* to carefully discern

which knowledge is the actual *chochmah* that his teacher imparted to him, and which parts of the information were deduced on his own *binah/medameh*.

This is the depth of the words of the Sages that “one does not understand his teacher’s *daas* until after 40 years”, in conjunction with the statement of the Sages that “at forty years, a person gains *binah* (understanding)”. Here is the secret behind the entire concept of *binah*: before 40 years, you can understand the *chochmah* of your teacher, and after 40 years, you can know the *daas* of the teacher; but in order to get to your teacher’s *daas*, you first need to get to his *binah*. You get to the teacher’s *binah* using your own *binah*; how? Through the power of *daas d’hachraah*. It is to discern between what I personally understand, with what the teacher actually imparted.

At that point, what exactly does one have to decide? I have to decide if the *chochmah* I have received from my teacher, which contains his *binah*, is perhaps being understood all along from only from my *medameh*!

To illustrate the concept, a student might think that has succeeding in comparing and understanding the knowledge he received from his teacher, but if the teacher is asked about the comparison his student made, the teacher might respond that it’s not an accurate comparison. We find all the time that there were arguments in the Gemara between student and teacher.

So the depth of *daas d’hachraah* is to decide what of the knowledge was accurately compared, and which of the information was not accurately compared (thus it came from my own *medameh*]; to analyze the information of the *chochmah* that one received from his teacher.

We are discussing *daas d’hachraah*, which can only be developed after one has reached higher *binah* - someone who already has gotten used to seeing differentiations in his comparisons. What is the role of *daas d’hachraah*, then? The *binah* knows what is similar and what is not similar. But that was only from my own *binah*, my own logic. Now I have another step: to discern if something came from my own logic or from my teacher.

This is the depth behind how after 40 years a person receives *binah* – the power to really compare information. After 40 years a person can gain *binah*, not *Chochmah*. The first 40 years are for knowing the *Chochmah* of one’s teacher, and after 40 years, the *binah*-understanding towards the *chochmah* begins. Until 40 years, my *binah* comes from myself, which is really *medameh*. A student is supposed to be *meivin m’daato*¹¹ – someone who understands from within himself – and this is how he perceives the *chochmah* of his teacher. After 40 years, the student can now receive the *binah/medameh* of his teacher. After 40 years, it is now the *avodah* of the student to gain *binah* – to decide between his own *binah*, and the *binah* of his teacher. (After that a person can ascend to the higher level, which is *daas d’chibbur*; we will not get into this point right now).

Before 40 years, a person can’t do this, because he doesn’t have *daas d’hachraah*. You can’t decide on something you never dealt with. Before 40 years, you decide if your own *binah* is correct or not, but you don’t understand it completely until after 40 years.¹²

So after 40 years, the *avodah* of the student is to try to understand how the teacher came to use *binah* to deduce the understanding of the information. In order to know this, a person needs to make use of constant *daas d’hachraah* for this. It is to constantly decide not only between what’s *chochmah* and what’s *binah*, but to decide between two kinds of *binah*; (it is also called deciding between *binah* and *tevunah*). It is to differentiate between what my teacher understood with what I understand from myself. (What I understand from myself is *tevunah*, which is called “*bas binah*”, the “daughter of *binah*.”)

Daas d’hachraah thus decides between *chochmah* and *binah*, and some describe this as deciding within *binah* itself – to decide between what is the real *binah* of my teacher, and what is my own *binah*, which is *tevunah*.

11 *Chagigah 13b*

12 *In response to a questioner, the Rav said that this is not referring to 40 physical years but rather through maturing in our soul, for everything that is in time is also in the time; thus, if you develop your soul, you can reach “40 years” old in your own soul].*

What am I deciding between, when I decide between two *binah* thoughts? There are two parts to it: what my teacher actually understood, and what I personally understand.

To know the difference between what my teacher said and what I understand, it takes subtle thinking, and this is essentially the power of *daas d'hachraah*. It is not about seeing how A and B are similar and different. It is rather about what I have understood from my teacher's words: Would my teacher agree with the comparison I made, or would he disagree with me?

This can only come after you are already clear how A and B are similar and different, which is viewed through your higher *binah*. After you have reached that kind of thinking, now comes the role of *daas d'hachraah*, which is to use your "*shikul hadaas*" - to weight out the information and see if the very comparison you made was even an accurate comparison to begin with.

"*Shikul hadaas*" of your "*daas d'hachraah*" is not something that can be written about or expressed about. *Daas d'havdalah* can be written down, because you can write down how A and B are similar and different. But *daas d'hachraah* is entirely a kind of "*shikul hadaas*", which is a subtle discerning you can make in your mind, thus, it cannot be written down or expressed about. It is to decide in your own mind between a *binah*-thought and *tevunah*-thought. *Binah* is what my teacher said, and *tevunah* is how I understand what he said; this is *daas d'hachraah*.¹³

Deciding Because of What You Want

Now we will explain about the other source for decisions: when your decision comes from your *ratzon* (will), which is also using your power of *bechirah*. Here, the decision is, that you **decide** what you **want**.

¹³ The Rav clarified to a questioner that if it is clear what the teacher said there is no need to clarify what he said. But we are referring to things you are not clear about.]

Part of our decisions comes from *mochin* (the mind). Chazal say that when a person sins, a *ruach shtus* (spirit of folly) enters him.¹⁴ The meaning of this is that the person loses his *chochmah*, and that is why he sins; this implies that normally, when a person has his *chochmah* intact, he can have proper decisions. Thus, *hachraah* comes from our *chochmah*, which is in our *mochin*/mind. The Ramchal as well writes that a person is *machria* (decisive when it comes to analytical thinking) using his power of *chochmah*.

But there is also *hachraah* that comes from our *ratzon* (will). This when a person is aware of two options, A and B, and because he **wants** A over B, that is why he decides upon A. This is a deeper kind of *hachraah*; it is to be *machria* what my *ratzon* is.

One's *ratzon* is really the mechanics behind his *binah*. How can I use *binah* if I haven't received it from my teachers? How can I ever understand something through my *Binah*? When I use my *binah* to compare and understand, I am understanding based on what I want, which is really "*shochad*" in the soul - mental bribery. I am understanding what I **want** to understand. *Binah* stems from my *ratzon*, which can get swayed. Thus, I have to decide if what my *binah* is telling me is correct or not.

There is a kind of person who has no *shikul hadaas* at all. He never makes any use of his *binah*; he doesn't understand what his teacher said or what another teacher said. He understands things through *binah* solely because he feels inclined to understand A, and not B. A person can come up with all kinds of rationalizations even when he's deciding what the *halacha* should be, and this can come from *shochad*; this is a well-known concept that our Rabbis wrote about.

Thus, *hachraah* is needed to discern what the **reason** is that I made the comparison - if it is coming from my *ratzon* to understand it a certain way, which is biased on my personal feeling coming from my *ratzon*, or if it is coming from my *mochin*, the actual *chochmah* which I received from my teacher.

This is what one needs to ask oneself: "Why do I understand something in a certain way? Why do I feel more inclined to choose A over B?"

¹⁴ Sotah 2a

Becoming Aware of The Personal Motives In Your Thinking

Most people understand things based on personal feeling, tainted with some personal agenda that's causing them to think in a certain direction: “*negios*” (ulterior motivations).

Most people, in general, are still at the level of lower *binah*, so they need *daas d'havdalah* to sort out their mind. But *bnei Torah*, who are involved all day with their *mochin* and are thus regularly involved with *higher binah*, can still be very affected by “*negios*”. Even our greatest Gedolim always suspected that perhaps their understanding was coming from their “*negios*”, from some personal *ratzon* that was pulling them to think in a certain direction.

To counter this deeper kind of problem, we need to use a deeper kind of *hachraah*: we need to decide if our *ratzon* is good or not. This enables us to access our *binah* which can help us see if the *ratzon* is pure or not.

When you see an option in front of you, it appears a certain way; you feel inclined after A over B. That's what you *binah* tells you. Your *daas d'hachraah* tells you, “True, it appears that Option A makes more sense than Option B. But what is the reason that's making you be drawn after Option A? Are you concerned what the truth is - or do you have some personal motivation that is making you inclined after this?”

This is really the secret behind our *bechirah*. The simple use of our *bechirah* is to choose to do the *mitzvos*, so there are many ways we use our *bechirah*. But the depth of *bechirah* is to choose if I'm choosing something because I am seeking the truth, or because some personal interest is leading me to choose this.¹⁵

15 The Rov clarified to a questioner that “Even after we develop the power of daas d'hachraah, we can still have negios/personal motives. There were Gedolim who suspected themselves of ulterior motivations for their entire life, with regards to the area of “kelipas nogah” – matters that are permissible but which can bring down a person's spirituality when he misuses them. There is no one who can say on himself that he has no negios when it comes to these areas. You can go deeper and deeper into yourself and discern your motivations, but you can never know for sure if you are not being affected by “negios.” There is always safek (doubt) in the world, due to Amalek's presence. For this very reason, we must always make use of our power of “daas d'hachraah” for our entire life. You can never know for sure if you are always acting right, so you must always suspect yourself...”

Thus, *daas d'hachraah* can stem from our very mind/*mochin*, and this is the lower use of *hachraah*. A higher kind of *hachraah* is coming from our *bechirah*, essentially our power of *ratzon*, which is also within our *mochin*. We will not get into the broader discussion about *bechirah*; we are rather discussing *daas d'hachraah* stemming from our *bechirah*.

The idea of this is to discern what kind of thought you are having. When you are thinking about A and B and you are trying to decide which of them is the truth, ask yourself if it is coming from your *chochmah*, *binah* or *daas* - or if it is perhaps stemming from some “*negios*”.

As we know, *chochmah* is what one received from his teachers, and *binah* is when a person begins to think about the *chochmah*. The *chochmah* is the original understanding of information; once you activate your *binah*, though, there can be “*negios*” involved. Thus, before you begin to think into the *chochmah*, first use your *daas*, by “cleaning yourself” off from any “*negios*”, and only after that should you use *binah*. So when you begin to think into the information you have learned, first think from a fresh place in yourself – start over your thought process from scratch, as if you’ve never seen A and B. Then, think into it again and analyze it as usual.

The Purified Thinking Process: First Chochmah, Then Daas, Then Binah

So there are two totally different ways to begin thinking about something. The way that most people are familiar with is to first see the *chochmah*, and then they think into it and analyze it, which is *binah*. After that, a person will look back at what he has learned and understood and now attempt to see why he thought the way he did, to see if perhaps he had any “*negios*” involved in how he thought. This is *daas* - to analyze the *chochmah* and *binah*.

The order that people are inclined to go in is *chochmah-binah-daas*. But we have described here a deeper way to begin the approach: first see the *chochmah*, then use your *daas* – and only after that should you use your *binah*. Beginning with *daas*, as opposed to beginning with *binah*, is a much deeper approach to use when you think.

When you begin with *chochmah* and then you use *binah* (which you are naturally inclined to do), you are really learning the Gemara through your own logic. It's much harder to refresh your thoughts after this and to try thinking from a fresh, clean place in your mind. There is an opposite approach you can take, which is deeper: you can start with *chochmah*, the thinking you received from your teachers, and then, use your *daas* to clarify if you are thinking from a pure place in yourself or not.

For example, you are learning a *halacha*. What is the first thing you do? Instead of first clarifying what the *halacha* is and then trying to remove your “*negios*” from how you may be thinking, instead, first ask yourself if you have any “*negios*” in the first place when it comes to this *halacha*. Maybe you are inclined to arrive at a certain conclusion, for whatever personal reason you have. Then, after making this clarification with yourself, you can begin to learn the *halacha* and clarify it.

So the clarification you need to make is: to see if your *binah* is coming from a pure place in yourself, or if it is stemming from your “*negios*” (which you are indeed trying to purify.) If you don't discover any “*negios*”, then your *binah* will be more accurate as you learn Torah. If you become aware that you did have “*negios*” to start out with, then you know that you can't rely on your *binah* as you are learning Torah.

Two Uses of Bechirah: Havdalah and Hachraah

On a deeper level, mankind is charged with the task of rectifying the sin with the “Eitz HaDaas Tov V’Ra” (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil),¹⁶ and it can be rectified both on a lower level as well on a higher level, using our abilities of havdalah and hachraah.

The lower level of rectifying it is when we use “*Havdalah*”: when we separate the “*tov*” (good) and the “*ra*” (evil) from each other; when we choose good over evil. The higher way to rectify the *Eitz HaDaas* is through “*hachraah*”: to be “*machria*” between one kind of “*tov*” and another kind of “*tov*”.

¹⁶ As explained in many works of the Ramchal and others

In other words, there is a concept of choosing between good and evil, and our *avodah* in this is to use our *bechirah* to choose good over evil. That is all but the lower aspect of our *bechirah*. The higher aspect of our *bechirah* is to purify our motivations - even when we are doing something good. In this way, we choose between *toiv* and *toiv* - and we choose a higher kind of *toiv*. This is the depth behind the concept of *hachraah*: to be *machria* between *toiv* and *toiv*, when we purify our inner motivations.

After the sin, a *daas ra* (“evil *daas*” – a mixture of good and evil) entered the world. Since Chavah was the one who sinned, and women mainly use *binah* and not *chochmah*, there was a damage done to the power of *binah* in the world; so *binah* can become infected by “*negios*”. Our *avodah* is now to restore our *chochmah*, which in turn refines *binah*, and then we can properly rely on *binah*.

The Difference Between Deciding Through Mind or Will

So there are two systems of *hachraah*: deciding through our *mochin*/mind, and deciding through our *ratzon*/will.

Our *daas d’havdalah* can be used to practically differentiate between *chochmah* and *binah*, and this is just its superficial use, because it differentiates between our lower *chochmah* and lower *binah*.

As for our higher *chochmah* and *binah*, they need to be sorted out through the higher use of *daas*, which is *daas d’hachraah*. This is a deeper power than *daas d’havdalah*. It is a *hachraah* that makes use of our soul – namely, our *mochin*/mind, and our *ratzon*/will.

As we explained, the *hachraah* we utilize through our *mochin*/mind is to decide what I think, but I still validate the other. This kind of *hachraah* does not involve any *havdalah*, for it does not separate me from the opposing view. In actuality, it is to follow what I decide, but I can still validate the opinion of the other person who argues with my decision; so there is no *havdalah* created here.

Hachraah through my *ratzon*/will is to decide what my *ratzon* is. Unlike *hachraah* of *mochin*, this kind of *hachraah* involves a *Havdalah*, because in deciding to choose A, I am separating myself from B.

So *hachraah* from the *mochin* is really about connection; I hold one way, but I am still connected to the other view. *Hachraah* of *ratzon* is that I decide between true and false.

A person should not approach *hachraah* of his *ratzon* with the same approach he has towards *hachraah* of his *mochin*, because that would bring down his higher kind of *hachraah* (*ratzon*) to the level of lower *hachraah* (*mochin*). When we use *hachraah* of ***ratzon***, it is about *havdalah*, and when we use *hachraah* of ***mochin***, the purpose is not *havdalah*.

We must not confuse their roles. *Hachraah* on my ***ratzon*** is about *havdalah* – it is about separating myself from a *ratzon* that is inappropriate. *Hachraah* of *mochin* is not about *havdalah*; it is so that I can decide if I will act upon A or B, and it is not about invalidating the other option I don't choose.

So when it comes to using *daas d'hachraah* of *mochin*, there are two valid options, A and B, and I decide how to act, but I am not trying to invalidate the other option. But in *daas d'hachraah* on my *ratzon*, I am deciding to separate myself from the other *ratzon*.

Deciding What The Proper Ratzon Is

It is written, “*Wisdom is found in ayin (nothingness)*” - the source of all of one's *chochmah* is called “***ayin***”, a “nothingness”, a hidden source. It is also identified by our Rabbis as the innermost “***ratzon***” (will), because *ratzon* is initially hidden from the person. So the *ratzon* is really the source of our *chochmah*; our *chochmah* is drawn from it. Thus, when I use *daas d'hachraah* to decide which *ratzon* I should follow, I need to separate myself from the evil contained in my *ratzon*.

Today and The Future

In the future when all evil will cease, there will be no need for *daas d'havdalah* to choose between good and evil. Our *bechirah* will entirely be *daas d'hachraah*, to choose between one kind of good and other good, and we will be *machria* between them. But until then, as we live currently, we still cannot use *daas d'hachraah* alone, and we need to make use of *daas d'havdalah*. between good and evil.

In today's times, most of the *bechirah* going on in the world is used on a simpler level: choosing between good and evil. "*Hachraah*" is mainly accessed these days to choose between good and evil, which is really *havdalah*.

Purifying The Mind From Ulterior Motivations

The more a person gets used to using *daas d'hachraah* over his *retzonos* (various desires), the more his mind is purified, and this also refines his *chochmah* and *binah*. He uses his *daas* to separate himself from evil *retzonos*, and his *daas* purifies the mind with the more a person gets used to this. In turn, his *chochmah* and *binah* will get refined and sharpened from this.

The superficial motive of why people want to improve the mind is to "sharpen" the mind and become smarter. But the inner reason of why we must develop and improve our mind is to purify our *ratzon*/will that leads it.

The more a person accesses his point of *ayin*, which is by separating himself from a *ratzon* that is evil, the more *chochmah* he will gain as a result. The less he separates from evil *retzonos*, the less refined his *chochmah* will be, because the entire *chochmah* in a person gets its source from *ayin/ratzon*. Using *daas d'hachraah* towards our *ratzon* gives a person a new mind entirely – it gives a person much clearer understandings because it refines the mind.

This is how *daas* purifies the *binah* and improves it. (Later we will deal with the higher part of the mind, which is *ruach hakodesh* - a flow of *chochmah* from above the mind.) Some people have a flow of thought from *binah*, and some people's thoughts

flow from *chochmah*. By accessing our *daas d'hachraah*, it can purify our *binah* and this in turn improves our *chochmah*.

The more a person purifies his *daas*, he becomes like the “*nekiyei hadaas* of Jerusalem”; those whose minds were cleansed from any impurities. Our *daas* gets its strength from our *ratzon*; when we cleanse the *ratzon* - when we cleanse our various “*negios*” (ulterior motivations) – we then gain *daas*. The *Mesillas Yescharim* describes this as the trait of “*nekiyus*” (inner cleanliness): to be free from “*negios*”; to purify the *ratzon*. This, in turn, refines one’s *binah*.

We have discussed here *daas d'hachraah*; we will hopefully progress in the next chapter, with Hashem’s help, to discuss “*daas d'chibbur*”.

03 | *Higher Da'as and Above Daas*

(Summary: We will continue to explain da'as. We have so far explained da'as d'havdalah (differentiation) and da'as d'hachraah (decision). Now we will explain the third function of da'as, which is da'as d'chibbur.

We have explained that thus far about the lower and higher uses of chochmah and binah.

When it comes to the lower use of chochmah and binah, the da'as can only serve as da'as d'havdalah – to separate between a chochmah-thought and a binah-thought.

In the higher use of chochmah and binah, the role of da'as is hachraah, to decide between the chochmah and the binah.)

Da'as D'Chibbur: Connecting The Knowledge

Now we will explain a third, higher system of how *chochmah* and *binah* work together, in which the power of *da'as* serves to **connect** the *chochmah* and the *binah* together. This is called ***da'as d'chibbur***, which Rashi describes as *ruach hakodesh* (the holy spirit). *Chochmah* sees a general view, and *binah* sees a detailed view. They both “see” either the general view or the detailed view. *Da'as* comes to connect these two views. How does it connect the two views? There are several ways of how it connects them.

Connecting Details

The basic way in which *da'as* connects *chochmah* and *binah* is that it connects together the details of *binah*. The *chochmah* sees the general view, the *binah* sees the details, and now the details need to be combined together; the *da'as* is what combines all the details together.

Connecting Chochmah with Binah, or Binah with Chochmah

Another way of how *da'as* connects is that it connects the *chochmah* with the *binah*: it connects the general view with the detailed view, which gives you the completed picture.

These are the first two ways of how *da'as* connects. The first way mentioned is a lower use of *daas*, and the second way mentioned is a higher use. The lower use of *daas* serves to connect details together. This is a lower use of “*daas d'chibbur*”. The higher use of *da'as* - which is essentially the higher use of *da'as d'chibbur* - is what connects two different views together.

There is a vast difference between these different connecting powers. Compare this to a chain. A chain connects many pieces together; this illustrates the first use of *da'as d'chibbur*. The higher use of *da'as d'chibbur* connects more than details together - it connects two entire views together.

How One Begins To Learn A Sugya of Gemara

To give a simple illustration of the concept, there is a kind of person who will learn a *sugya* of Gemara and first seek to connect all the details together. Another kind of person will first seek the general view of the information, and only after that will he look to see the details.

The first kind of person connects *binah* with *chochmah*, and the second kind of person begins with *chochmah* and then he connects it with *binah*. Some people naturally start with *chochmah*, and some naturally start with *binah*.

People who begin with *binah* want to see the *hekef* (detailed view of the *sugya*) first, and then they want the general view. They see *chochmah* as part of their *binah*. Others want the “*hashkafah rishonah*” (first take) on the *sugya* and they seek to see how all

details are in line with the *hashkafah rishonah*; they start with *chochmah* and then connect it with *binah*, which means that they see *binah* as part of their *chochmah*.¹⁷

Accessing The Root of the Information

Now we will address a third use of *da'as d'chibbur*.

This is the kind of *da'as* that is found above the points of *chochmah* and *binah*. Usually, the order is *chochmah*, *binah*, then *da'as*. But that is all with regards to the lower *da'as*. By contrast, higher *da'as* is above *chochmah* and *binah*. It is not just above the point of *middos* (character traits/emotions) of the soul - it is above the very *chochmah* and *binah*.

It is also referred to as *ayin* – “nothingness”, the plane of non-thought, the source of the very wisdom. It is written, “*Chochmah (wisdom) is found in ayin (nothingness).*” The source of *chochmah* is “*ayin*”, which is the higher *da'as*.

The Gemara says that “those who are “*arum*” (lit. unclothed) in their *da'as* make themselves like an animal and place themselves in a corner” in order to understand the Torah; this does mean to behave like an animal, *chas v'shalom*. It means to access “*ayin*”: the kind of *da'as* that brings one to have *bittul*, to nullify oneself.

People who are willing to have *bittul* on themselves so they can understand the Torah are those who access *ayin*, because by having *bittul* they make themselves into

¹⁷ In response to a questioner, the Rav added: “[These are two different ways how people think. We are not saying which way is better. They are both valid viewpoints. Deciding which way is better is like deciding whose greater, Moshe or Aharon....

On another note: when people don't reach higher *chochmah* and higher *binah*, they are still viewing all knowledge through their “*medameh*”- imagination. His entire *chochmah* and *binah* only “sees” information, and all he will see is imagination! For this reason, most people's *chochmah* is being experienced through their imagination. As an example, a person imagines he saw something in a *sefer*, and he's positive that the *sefer* says the words, but if you look up the *sefer*, you see it's not there. The person merely imagined that it was there but he was positively convinced that he saw the words is that *sefer*.”

ayin, nothing. And from that, they are able to receive the higher *daas*, the very source of the wisdom.

This is really the depth behind *ruach hakodesh*. With *ruach hakodesh*, a person draws forth *chochmah* from the inner source of the *chochmah*.

Chochmah Sees An Outline of Reality, Daas Can See Reality Itself

We will try to understand this a little.

In order to access the higher use of *da'as d'chibbur*, one needs to have *bittul*, to nullify himself to the information. What does *bittul* have to do with *chochmah* and *binah*? How does it play a part in the understanding of information?

Chochmah sees information - but it doesn't see the reality of the information. It sees the "*hanhagah*", the "path" of a concept, but it cannot see the concept itself. *Chochmah* is called a "*nesiv*" of *chochmah*, a pathway – there are 32 *nesivei chochmah* ("pathways of wisdom") - because *chochmah* can only see a "*tahalich*", a path.¹⁸

The general "*tahalich*" is called *chochmah*, and the details of the "*tahalich*" are called *binah*. "*Tahalich*" is also called "*tenuah*" (movement), meaning, a person's *chochmah* and *binah* can only see movement of something, but it never views the actual concept. The Sages state that when a person sins, it is only because a "*ruach shtus*" (spirit of folly) entered him¹⁹; the depth of this is that when there is a *tahalich* that is not viewed with *chochmah*, the situation becomes a *ruach shtus*. *Chochmah* is, in essence, *tenuah*/movement.

So *chochmah* is to grasp a "*tahalich*", or a "*tenuah*", of a concept. But *chochmah* cannot recognize the very reality (*havayah*) of a concept. It only sees *tahalich*. "Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world" – this hints to us that the way we [initially] view the world is through *chochmah*, [for the Torah is called *chochmah*],

¹⁸ See *Getting To Know Your Feelings, Part 2 Chapter 3*

¹⁹ *Sotah 2a*

and *chochmah* can only perceive the *tahalich* of this world, not the *havayah* of this world. Only *da'as* can see the *havayah* (reality) of something.

The Sages state that “A Torah scholar who has no *da'as*, a corpse is better than him.” When a Torah scholar lacks *daas*, he is missing the understanding of *havayah*, thus, he is not a real Torah scholar. He has *chochmah*, but he has no *daas*, so he doesn't perceive the essence of a matter; such a Torah scholar is not a real Torah scholar.

“Torah scholars have no *menuchah*” (rest), not on this world and not on the Next World”²⁰ – the depth of this is that their *chochmah* brings them to an endless *tahalich*. All he can understand is *tahalich*, which goes on forever, thus, he never has *menuchah*. But that is only if he has only developed his *chochmah* and he remains at that level. If he accesses *da'as*, though, he can see reality - *havayah*.

Another word for *havayah* (reality) is “*metzius*”. The word *metzius* is used more often by the writings of the Sages, while the Torah uses the word *havayah* to convey reality. *Chochmah* sees the *tahalich* of a concept, and *da'as* sees the *havayah* of a concept.

Da'as/havayah/metzius is the root of the *chochmah*. Thus, *chochmah* is rooted in *da'as*. And what is *da'as*? Recognizing *havayah*.

The Sages state about *da'as*, “If you acquire this, you have all of it.”²¹ If you have *da'as*, you have everything – why? Superficially, it sounds like *da'as* is the most important thing. But why does that mean I have everything if I have it? The true understanding of this is: *da'as* is about recognizing *havayah*, and *havayah* is the essence of everything. (And on a deeper note, there is no *havayah* except for Hashem). Thus, *da'as* is the power to recognize *havayah*.

The Sages say that a person should train himself to say, “I don't know.” Superficially this means that people don't know things, like the time or the date. But the true definition of “I don't know” is, that initially, we don't know what *havayah* is,

²⁰ *Berachos 64a*

²¹ *Nedarim 41a*

so we are usually not seeing reality as it is. There is a statement in our *sefarim hakedoshim*, “The purpose of *yediah* (knowing) is to know that *lo yeda* (we don’t know)”.²² The depth of this is that the purpose of all that we know is to leave lower *da’as* and access higher *da’as*, in which you “don’t know” of lower *chochmah* and lower *binah* - and all you will know of is *havayah*. This is the purpose of all *yediah*/knowledge – to “know that you don’t know” – to transcend the lower view and “not know” of it anymore, because now you see *havayah*/the actual reality.

Higher *da’as* is called *da’as d’chibbur*; what does the *daas* connect? It connects together facts and reveals they are all one at their root. It sees how all is one *havayah*. When it comes to seeing the *tahalich/hanhagah* of things, your *chochmah* can see different angles of understanding in a concept, because there are different levels of understanding. But with *daas*, which stares at the reality behind the concepts, you only see one root concept.

The power to recognize the *havayah* is total *chibbur* (connection) with the knowledge of something, and it vastly differs from what we are used to understanding about the concept of *chibbur*.

We have so far explained that within *da’as d’chibbur* itself, there are three uses – connecting details, connecting two viewpoints together, and viewing the root of two viewpoints by seeing the root reality that is behind them (which is the highest way to use our *daas* to connect). Now we will elaborate further into each of the three uses of *da’as d’chibbur* that we have mentioned.

Connecting Details Through Revealing the Root

The first use of *da’as d’chibbur*, we mentioned, is to connect details. How does one connect details? Superficially, it means that I simply connect one detail to another, but this is a very shallow level of *da’as*.

²² *sefer Bechinas Olam, 13a and 33a*

The real way of how to use *chibbur* is to connect all of the details to their root. It's not simply about connecting details together. The inner way is to reveal the root of the details, through connecting them together. So it means to look for the root.

This is really the depth of *binah*. *Binah* is not just about connecting details. When *binah* just connects details, this is a lower use of *binah*, which is at the level of the *middos*, a lower point in soul than the *mochin*/mind. The Rambam refers to the *middos* as “*de'os*”; in other words, *da'as* can connect the *middos*. This refers to the lower use of *da'as*, where *daas* connects a detail of *binah* with another detail of *binah*. Here, the connection is just to connect details together; such as knowing the difference between good and bad uses of the *middos*. It doesn't necessarily reveal the root behind the *middos*.

The higher use of *chibbur* - *da'as d'chibbur* - is to really use the depth of *binah*. It is really the depth behind *tikkun hamiddos* (rectifying our character traits): to reveal the *da'as* behind each *middah*, for the inner essence behind all *middos* is *da'as*. Here, the *binah* which connects details together – enabled by *da'as d'chibbur* - is an even higher use. It is where one finds the root and the branches of each *middah*. When you find the root, everything can be connected. There is a rule, “Opposites share the one root.”²³ If you find the root, you can see how two opposite concepts bear one root.

For example, the Midrash relays how Rachel cries over her children when they are in exile; she is called *akeres habayis*, “the main mother.” Her children are in exile, and she cries to Hashem, and Hashem tells her that they will return, in the merit of her *davening*. What does her *tefillah* do? Simply speaking, it means that she *davens* for us as we are in exile. But the deeper meaning is because she is the main mother, the *akeres habayis*, when she *davens* for the redemption as her children go into exile, she reveals how the root of exile and redemption are one. The Maharal says that *galus* (exile) and *geulah* (redemption) have the same root - *gal*, to reveal. Both the exile and the redemption are ways that reveal the reality of Hashem, and they are two different angles of understanding, but at their root, they share the same root: they both reveal

²³ Maharal

the root, Hashem. That is why she is called the *akeres habayis*, because she reveals the *ikkar* – the “root” – of both the exile and the redemption.

How To Get To The Root

We only gave one example, but it is a clear concept.

With higher *chochmah* and *binah* and *da'as*, a person sees the root of the information. He then sees the branches of the information, and then he can connect them, because he has the root. He can keep doing this until he connects all of the details in the Torah together. With everything he sees, he thinks into what is opposite entails, then he sees the root of that concept and its opposite, and now he can connect something to its opposite. And from that, he can keep connecting all details together.

On a deeper understanding, using *daas d'chibbur* to see the root of two concepts is essentially taking *da'as d'havdalah* and turning it into *da'as d'chibbur*. *Da'as d'havdalah* separates between good and evil, light and darkness; but Hashem said “let there be light” and there was now “one day”, which represents how *chibbur* (connecting) can reveal the root of all *havdalah* (separation) and, thereby, turn *havdalah* into *chibbur*! All of this is contained in the *binah* that is within *mochin d'gadlus* (the higher mode of thought).

We have tried to make this concept here practical. You can practically work on this concept by getting used to seeing opposite of a concept, then to see what the root of a concept and its opposite; that is how you can connect a concept with its opposite. Try to work on this: try to see the root of the information, the opposite of a concept, and then you can unify them by seeing their common root.

Thus, connecting details for the sake of connecting details is a lower use of *binah*, for it only relates to *middos* (the character traits), which is at a lower point than *mochin* (the mind). This is not the true use of *da'as d'chibbur*. It is actually a use of *da'as d'chibbur* that has become lowered from the level of *mochin*/mind to the level of *middos*.

In the *mochin*, the *da'as d'chibbur* is of a higher use: it connects the root with the details, as we explained.

Connecting Two Views Through Revealing the Root

The higher use of *da'as d'chibbur* is to connect *chochmah* and *binah*, which is to unify the general view of *chochmah* together with the detailed view of *binah*, together. We will explain.

This use of *da'as d'chibbur* doesn't just connect the details. It connects the details into the general view and fuses them together, to form a greater picture of understanding.

Previously, we explained a lower use of *daas d'chibbur*, which is how to connect two details. Now we are dealing with a higher kind of *chibbur*: to connect the details into the general view - to connect all of the details together.

To illustrate the concept, the Torah has many letters. We can connect them and see words. Moshiach will combine all the letters of the Torah, as the Baal Shem Tov says, into one word. The depth of this is that he will combine *binah* into *chochmah*. He will not just connect details to show the root of the details - rather, he will connect all details together and show you the all-inclusive view.

Unifying the details as part of the general view is a much higher *avodah* than what we spoke of previously. It is to see the bigger picture of what all the details can form. This is the deep meaning of "*All of them you made with wisdom*").

The concept implies that a person needs to develop two kinds of *chochmah*. He needs to see the opposite of a concept, and he also needs to see the root of a concept and its opposite.

How can *binah* connect to *chochmah*? How do you reveal the expansive view through all the details? It is by seeing the opposite of each detail, then finding the root of each concept and its opposite, and that gives you the *chochmah*, because you have connected the details/*binah* with the *chochmah*/all-inclusive view.

The Ramchal writes that if someone sees more than two roots in a concept, he won't arrive at *chochmah*. A person has to keep seeing two opposite roots in a concept he's learning about, and then find he needs to find a root that connects the two opposites together.

We are discussing the essence of the power of *da'as*, which is *da'as d'chibbur*, the higher use of *da'as*. Each person can understand this concept as much as he can, on his own level. If a person gets used to this concept, in everything he hears and knows and senses, he will be able to take the information and connect them to their root.

We have been brief here in describing these concepts, but the words describe the root of all *chochmah*. Living like this means to experience all the *chochmah* one learns as entirely one unit.

Seeing All The Details of Torah as One

Without this approach, a person learns the *chochmah* of the Torah and he sees many *sugyos* (discussions in Gemara), but he cannot see the connection between them. He sees many details of the Torah, and “endless ocean” which indeed the Torah is, *sugya* upon *sugya*, and *halachah* upon *halachah*; there doesn't seem to be a connection between all these details. He can combine details, but he doesn't see how all the details can connect to form a greater picture.

But when someone makes use of *daas d'chibbur*, he connects details to a higher view, and he can see all the points in a *sugya* as being connected to one point, and he can connect many *sugyos* as branches of one point.

Of course, it will still be difficult to see the connection, and it will take exertion. But it gives a person an entirely different view towards his learning: seeing every *sugya* as all one *sugya*, and there is only one *sugya*: it's all one point of *chochmah*.

Chochmah is a dot of wisdom, *binah* is when it expands into points that branch out of them, and *daas* is when we connect all the branching points into the root point. This is the meaning of what is written, “*Your thoughts are very, very deep.*” The first

“very” is referring to *binah*, which reveals the depth of the *chochmah*, and the second “very” is referring to using *daas d’chibbur*, which reveals a whole new depth to the *chochmah*.

So there is really only one *sugya* in all of life. The entire Creation is all branching out from one point. “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world” – all of Creation stems from the one point of *chochmah*, which is the Torah. This is called entering the *sod he’echad* – the “secret of oneness.”

Moshiach will come and reveal how all the Torah is one point – it will be the full revelation of this concept to the entire world. The depth of Torah is all contained in point.

Thus, a person should view Torah as all being branches of one single point. This does not simply mean that Hashem is One and that the Torah are the many branches of His oneness. Such a view is actually a view of disparity towards the Torah. The Torah is not a bunch of random details; it is really all one connected unit.

How can our soul deal with the contradiction that “Hashem is One” while the Torah contains endless details?

Some people, in response to this contradiction, feel that part of our *avodah* is spent on closeness with Hashem, and the other part of our day is spent on Torah, and as the *Nefesh HaChaim* says, when you learn Torah, just learn the Torah, and don’t think about connection with Hashem. However, people do not understand this correctly, and they erroneously come to think as if Hashem and Torah are independent from each other (*chas v’shalom*), and that there is no way to contain thoughts about both Hashem and Torah in one thought.

But the inner perspective is to realize that all of the Torah is one *sugya*: it is all stemming from Hashem’s oneness. This is the underlying essence of how we cannot the many details of Torah with Hashem.

Chochmah, in essence, is the all-inclusive view in that it shows us *d’veykus* with Hashem, and *binah* can show us the details of Torah, which shows us the depth of the *chochmah*. It is to see all the “details” one learns about as being but “garments” of the

general view; to see the details of Torah as the “garments” of Hashem. All the details of Torah are part of one point: Hashem.

Rabbi Avraham ben HaRaavad writes that one should view all the details of his soul, his many soul abilities, as being all branches of one root. In this way you can reveal how all the opposing abilities in your soul have one root which connects them. With this perspective, the spiritual light of *d'veykus* with Hashem will then be with you even as you learn Torah.²⁴

This particular concept is describing a very high level which most people do not reach, and we have only mentioned it here to complete the discussion here.

Higher Daas: Going Above Daas

We have described *daas* as being the connecting force that connects *chochmah* with *binah*, and this is all the lower use of *daas*, when *daas* is preceded by *chochmah* and *binah*.

The higher level of *daas* is a higher point than *chochmah* and *binah*, and it is reached through *bittul*, nullifying oneself. Earlier, we brought the statement, “The purpose of knowledge is to know that we do not know”²⁵ – that after we progress through the level of *daas*, you then go above your *daas*. So *daas* can bring you to that level of *bittul*, which is a higher *daas*, above the regular *daas*. There, a person leaves the view from within his *chochmah*, and he enters the deeper view of *havayah*, which we mentioned earlier.

Until now we spoke of *chochmah* as a general view and *binah* as a detailed view, and to connect them and revealed how they are one at their root, which is *daas*. That's all within *chochmah*, which sees only the “*tahalich*” or “*hanhagah*” of concepts. At this level, one cannot see *havayah* yet, as we explained. He can find the root of two opposite concepts and thus find the connecting point between them, but his entire

²⁴ See also 48 Ways of Torah_020_Feeling Hashem In Your Learning

²⁵ sefer Bechinas Olam 13a

daas is still being viewed from within the view of his *chochmah*, which is not yet the higher view.

Higher *daas*, which is to see *havayah*, is not about finding the root of opposites. It is to touch upon the very *havayah* and there, a person does not see any divide at all, because there is only oneness there.

This is the highest point of the entire soul, and it is really above the self. It is like the crown above the king; the crown, which is above the king's head, represents the real glory of the king. Lower *daas* is "in" the person, and higher *daas* is "above" a person; it is what lies on top of the soul.

Thus, *daas* is really the tool we use to receive the spiritual light that is above our own soul. That is the depth of why a person is called a "*bar daas*" – because he can use his *daas* to receive higher *daas*. The *Shechinah* (the recognition of Hashem's Presence) can settle upon a person, but it is always above a person. It is received through our *daas*. So *daas* is the tool we use to receive the *Shechinah*, which is like the crown of the King. Through *daas*, one can go above his initial level of *daas*, and enter above the self.

Daas is really the point you can use to ascend the soul itself and go above the *daas*, and you can then touch upon *havayah*. Above one's *daas*, there is only one point alone: the "*Ein Sof*", the Infinite - the absolute recognition of Hashem.

Recognizing the *Ein Sof* is called "*daas*", and it is essentially *ruach hakodesh*. Our *daas*, which is "lower *daas*" (including *daas d'chibbur*, which is the highest level of our lower *daas*), is thus only a partial *daas*. Above our *daas* is the complete level of *daas*, which is the recognition of the *Ein Sof* - the "I" of Hashem. It is essentially reached through *bittul* (nullification) of the "I."²⁶

Thus, *chochmah* is rooted in "*ayin*", or "higher *daas*", or *bittul* – and this enables one to recognize who the real "I" is: Hashem.²⁷ When one reaches that recognition, it

²⁶ *Bittul* is explained by the Rav in *Bilvavi Part 7 – Entering Havayah*.

²⁷ See *Bilvavi Part 6, Chapter 4 – The True I Is Hashem*.

gives a person an entirely new mind all of the time, and it connects him to the renewal which Hashem renews Creation every day with.

Conclusion

Until now, with the help of Hashem, we have explained the three uses of daas: *Havdalah* (differentiation) *hachraah* (deciding) and *chibbur* (connecting).

We also described, briefly, the level that is above our *daas (havayah)*, which is higher than *daas d'chibbur*. From this point on, if we merit Hashem's help further, we will explore further the details of *daas*, on the levels that apply to the souls of most people.

04 | *How To Avoid Evil Imagination*

The Lesson from the Eitz HaDa'as: The Limits of Our Da'as

We have so far explained, with Hashem's help, the three main uses of the power of *da'as*, which are: "*havdalah*" (separating), *hachnaah* (deciding), and *chibbur* (connecting). Now we will explain the lower uses of our *da'as*.

The first time the Torah mentions *da'as* is by the "*Eitz HaDa'as Tov V'Ra*" (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil). When Chavah was tempted with the fruit of the *Eitz HaDa'as*, the Torah writes, "*And the woman saw that the tree was good for consumption, and that was desirable to the eyes, and that the tree was precious to understand.*"

There were three factors involved here: it was "good for consumption", it was "desirable to the eyes", and it was "precious to understand". Each of these three factors are a different facet of *da'as*. We will elaborate on each of these three aspects and how they apply to our own *da'as*, and the *avodah* that each of these three aspects implies.

(We are dealing with the *Eitz HaDa'as Tov V'Ra* [the *da'as* that was a mixture of good and evil] which contains the three kinds of *da'as* that we currently *possess*, and not the *Eitz HaDa'as Tov*, which was entirely holy).

The first point the possuk says about the *Eitz HaDa'as* was that "*The tree was good for consumption.*" What does this mean? How can you eat *da'as*? Also, Chavah saw that the "tree" was good to eat. What does this mean? Wasn't it the fruit that she wanted to eat?

The matter behind this is as follows. A tree is a root, while its fruit are what branches out from the root. To eat the "fruits" means to just experience the branches of the tree, which are spread out and separate. But to eat the tree "itself" means to experience the root of the tree – the actual tree. Chazal say that before the sin, the bark of a tree tasted like its fruit. The real taste was in the tree, which could not be eaten.

Thus, the essence of *da'as* itself cannot be “eaten”; only its “branches” can be tasted of. This is because there is a rule that the root of something is always hidden. To illustrate, the roots of a tree are underground and cannot be seen. This shows us that the “root” of a matter is supposed to be kept hidden.

The word “*eitz*” (tree) is from the word “*etzem*” (essence), which is from the word “*atzimah*”, “closed”, or hidden. This hints to us that the depth of the sin was that Adam and Chavah attempted to go above their *da'as*: they wanted to taste of something that is supposed to be hidden. They wanted to get to the essence of things.

The Serpent told them that if they eat the fruit that they will be like Hashem. This was the depth of the temptation, and it was an evil desire. *Da'as*, by definition, is to reach the limits of where you are; when a person desires to go above this limit, such a desire is evil. *Da'as* cannot taste the essence of a matter; it can perceive until the essence, but it cannot reach the actual essence of a matter.

So when Chavah saw that the tree was good to eat, and she wanted to become like Hashem, she was attempting to use *da'as* to reach the essence, which cannot be done.

Good Da'as Is To Define Limits, Evil Da'as Is To Break Limits

The lesson we learn from this is that *da'as* is good when it helps a reach until his limits, and it becomes evil when a person is attempting to break his limits.

It is written, “*For no man shall see Me and live*” – the deeper meaning of this is that when a person wants to see Hashem through his *da'as*, the result is death, and that was the depth behind the curse of death.

Da'as represents limits. Hashem created the world with certain limits and boundaries. Limits are a force in creation; when a person wants to break the limits of creation, he resembles the sin of eating from the *Eitz haDa'as*, in which Adam and Chavah wanted to break their limits, so that they could go beyond human limits and enter the essence of things.

The Serpent is called “One who breaks the fences of the world”; the depth of the power of evil is that it attempts to break the rules that Hashem made. *Da’as* is evil when one is trying to break rules and limitations.

To give a deeper description of the concept, in the *Eitz HaDa’as Tov V’Ra*, there was “*da’as tov*” and “*da’as ra*” – good *da’as* and evil *da’as*. The “*da’as tov*” was the kind of *da’as* that allows a person to reach until his limits, while the “*da’as ra*” is when a person wishes to break the boundaries and go above them. So when Chavah desired to be like Hashem, it was not just a desire to be like Hashem - it is was, in essence, a desire to escape the rules.

The real kind of life, had they eaten from the *Eitz HaChaim*, would have been forever, because had they kept to the rules and only eaten from the *Eitz HaChaim*, they would have been fine. They would have merited the real kind of life, which is when the rules are kept. Instead, they desired to break their limits, so they ate from the *Eitz HaDa’as*, which they were told would break their limits.

They wanted to reach the unlimited, and the problem was, they were at the level of *da’as*, and one’s *da’as* cannot break limits. If a person attempts to reach the unlimited through his *da’as*, this is evil. When a person lives within the rules, he is able to live properly.

Earlier, we described the concept of *havayah* (essence of a matter). The very *havayah* (essence) of each thing is really when it is kept to its boundaries. When boundaries are broken, a person cannot live properly. That was the depth of the curse of death; because they didn’t want boundaries, death came to the world.

Now we can understand the depth of the ability of *da’as d’havdalah* which we addressed in the first chapter. Through using the power of *da’as d’havdalah*, a person is really able to keep to his limits.

What is “*da’as tov*” and “*da’as ra*” in our soul? *Da’as tov* is to seek to keep to the rules that are holy. *Da’as ra* is the desire to break boundaries. Thus, trying to break boundaries through our *da’as* is called “*da’as ra*”, evil *da’as*, and building boundaries from our *da’as* is called “*da’as tov*”, good *da’as*.

Defining Limits of Everything

To be clearer, when a person wants to understand something, or how to get somewhere, or he would like to know something in general, part of the understanding is to know the limits and rules of something. Knowing the rules of something is not just another aspect of knowledge – it is the very definition of something. Everything is defined by its limits.

We see the limits of each thing by using our power of *da'as d'havdalah*. All of Creation is a tool to reach something, so everything has rules in how it is used. (The deeper essence of each thing is to see it as a revelation of Hashem. But we are addressing a more basic understanding of everything.)

If a person doesn't want something to have rules, that is called "*da'as ra*". Thus, the depth of the sin of the *Eitz HaDa'as* was that Adam and Chavah wasn't just that they wanted to break their limits. It was that they didn't realize that each thing has limits.

That was how Adam and Chavah desired to be like Hashem. It was because they didn't realize that they need to have rules. It wasn't just that they wanted to break rules – they didn't want to accept that there are rules. We are limited, and beyond the limits is Hashem, and that is why we need to have limits.

In every soul, there are two opposite abilities: The *Ein Sof* (Infinite) of Hashem is in our soul, but there are also limits in us. Our ability of *da'as* we have is essentially the tool which can hold all the spiritual light that we put into it. *Da'as* is thus the root of how we build our soul. Without *da'as*, there is no container in our soul to hold anything, and the light of the *Ein Sof* will then not be able to be contained in the person.

Therefore, a person must be aware that there are limits to each thing, and this in turn will further build his *da'as*. Through building one's *da'as*, a person is then able to become a container that will be able to hold onto the unlimited – the *ohr Ein Sof*, the Infinite Light of Hashem.

We see that when there are less limitations placed on people, there is chaos, and people come to fight with each other. There must be limitations placed on the abilities

of our soul, or else each of the abilities in the soul will be in chaos, and when the soul of a person is in chaos, he gets into clashes with others, as a result of all the clashing inside himself.

Thus, nothing can exist without limits. The world needs limits, and the soul needs limits. To illustrate further, if a bottle holds 2 liters of water, and we don't know that the bottle can only hold 2 liters, any more water we try to put into it will not be able to go in. So we must know the limitations of something.

Da'as – The Key To Good Middos

“Good *middos*” are defined by keeping to the limits of each *middah*. For example, anger is not evil – it is only evil when it goes beyond its limits. *Middah* means “measured”, because they are meant to be kept within their limits. *Da'as* is what enables *middos* to be kept to their limits. A “*bar da'as*”, someone capable of *da'as*, essentially means someone who knows how to limit his abilities – when an ability in the soul needs to be used, and when it shouldn't be used.

Evil Da'as Is The Imagination

Now we can better know the difference between *da'as* and *dimayon* – the imagination, which we mentioned earlier.

The purpose of our *da'as* is to uproot our *dimayon*/imagination. The Sforno and the Vilna Gaon wrote that *Eitz HaDa'as Ra* (the evil in the *Eitz HaDa'as*) was essentially “*medameh*”, imagination. What is the connection with *medameh*/imagination and *da'as ra*/evil *da'as*? What do they have to do with each other? The answer is: *da'as* is about keeping to limits. *Da'as ra* is when *da'as* is used to break limits.

Thus, evil *da'as* is really the essence behind all *medameh*, imagination. The imagination in a person seeks to break limits. Imagination comes to compare and exaggerate, expanding something beyond its boundaries.

The inner essence of all holiness is called “*midas hishtavus*” (arriving at equilibrium)²⁸, and this is the holy way to use the desire to expand. This is also called the “*ohr Ein Sof*”, the Infinite Light of Hashem. But when the desire to expand is used for evil, it becomes *dimayon*/evil imagination, which seeks to break limits and rules of each thing.

The *Eitz HaD’as Ra* was all about *medameh*, to imagine that the rules can be broken. Our “*da’as tov*” exists so that we can uproot *medameh*, and our “*da’as ra*” makes use of *medameh*/imagination and wants to break limits.

All evil in the world stems from the *Eitz HaDa’as Ra*, and since this is identified with *medameh*/evil imagination, the evil imagination is the root of all evil in the soul. Imagination is entirely the result of the desire to break limits. A person imagines what he can’t do in reality. For example, a person wants to be in America, so he imagines he’s there.

Imaginary Pleasure

Now we can understand the following. We mentioned it before and now we can understand it better.

Whenever a person has pleasure from evil, it always stems from imagination. When a person sins and he enjoys it, he doesn’t enjoy the act itself; he enjoying a fantasy. It is written, “*Stolen waters are sweet*” – a person enjoys the feeling of the stolen pleasure, and what is stealing about? It is about breaking rules. So the pleasure in a sin is all about breaking rules.

When this power is used for holiness, it is the secret of true *oneg Shabbos*, in which a person can enjoy endless pleasure; as Chazal say, “Whoever has pleasure in Shabbos, merits a boundless inheritance.” The opposite of *oneg*/pleasure is *nega*/evil pleasure. When a person enjoys evil, his entire enjoyment is derived from the evil force of *nega*. The enjoyment of *nega* is essentially when a person has broken the rules, and that is

28 A term mentioned in *Chovos HaLevovos*

the evil pleasure of the soul present in every act of sin. The breaking of the rules is the real feeling of the pleasure, and it is experienced through the garment of the imagination.

Now we can deeply understand what a person enjoys when he sins. The inner essence of the pleasure is the fact that he's breaking rules, and it is experienced through the imagination, which is like a garment that covers over the very essence of the evil pleasure. There is good *taanug* and evil *taanug*. Developing our "*da'as tov*" establishes boundaries and uproots evil *medameh*.

(We are addressing evil *medameh*, not *medameh d'kedushah*/holy imagination. We do not want to uproot the *medameh* itself, for *medameh* can be used for holiness, as we know. We are trying to uproot the evil use of *medameh* – the desire to break holy rules and limits). What happens when a person connects to the *Eitz HaDa'as Ra* in his soul? It is when a person doesn't want rules, and that is what enables his evil imagination to get started. The *taanug* of *nega* (evil pleasure) is essentially the meaning behind the statement, "The Serpent breaks the fences of the world." The whole *tannug* in evil is when a person breaks rules.

Every person identifies with this: people love to break the rules. There is a certain *taanug* in it. To illustrate, when a child runs away from school, his pleasure is not just in the fact that he won't have the pressure of his studies anymore. The pleasure is in the very act of running away from school. He enjoys going free from his boundaries. (When this power is channeled towards holiness, a person desires to connect to the *Ein Sof*, which is endless pleasure.)

Stopping Evil Imagination At Its Root

Thus, good *da'as* is about setting boundaries.

In one second, when a person forgets about limits and rules, he falls immediately into imagination! Chavah saw that "*the tree was good for consumption*" – as soon as she saw the tree and she forgot about her rules, she fell into her imagination. If a person would be aware of limits, he can't fall into imagination.

If a person wants to stop his imagination for evil, he might try to take apart his imaginative thoughts and weaken them in the attempt of trying to get rid of them; he tries to kill off each imaginative thought. This is a very difficult task, thus, it is not feasible to use.

We have to get to the root of the problem. One has to get out of his imagination entirely and return to boundaries.

Using Da'as D'Havdalah To See The Limits of Each Concept

In this way, a person is “*machria*” (decisive) in sorting out his imagination. Earlier, we spoke of *da'as d'hachraah*, but now we are returning to discuss *da'as d'havdalah*, and we will explain how it can lead to *hachraah* with regards to “deciding” not to listen to the imagination.

The role of *da'as d'havdalah* is to separate between the information that one's *chochmah* sees and the information that one's *binah* has compared. We already explained this earlier.

The lowest function of *da'as*, as we explained, is *havdalah* - to separate between *binah* (a real comparison) and *tevunah/dimayon* (imagination). One way to do this is by taking apart each *binah*-thought, such as by thinking: “Am I making a real comparison now to what I have seen in my *chochmah*, or is it just my imagination that is comparing?” This is what we described earlier. *Havdalah* is to see the similarities and the differences between A and B, and then to decide if they can really be compared.

Now we will take this further: we can use *da'as d'havdalah* to leave the vision of imagination entirely.

We can do this by returning to our *etzem* (essence), from the word *atzimas einayim*, the closing of the eyes. In other words, our imagination, which is a kind of vision (albeit mental), is what sways us. If we leave the vision of the imagination, we return to the essence. Returning to the essence of something is how we leave imagination.

Thus, the way to use *da'as d'havdalah* to fix *medameh* is by realizing the boundaries of each thing, and this is how we return to the *etzem*/essence of each thing, which is defined by its limits. So in each thing, realize what the limits are. The more you get used to seeing how each thing has limits, you escape evil imagination.

This is the depth of using *da'as d'havdalah*. Earlier we explained the simpler use of this power, which is to see differences and similarities between two thoughts. Now we are describing the deeper use of *da'as d'havdalah*: to realize the limits of each thing.

A Practical Way To Use Havdalah

It is hard to give a practical solution how to use this concept in defeating the imaginative thoughts of the *yetzer hora* when it comes to tempt you, because Chazal say that when the *yetzer hora* comes to a person and tempts him for evil, there is no *yetzer tov* present. So it will be very hard to summon forth this concept in your mind as actually you're being tempted by the *yetzer hora* do commit a sin.

I can give examples on how you can actualize this concept, but as for when you're actually being tempted, I cannot give an example that you can use to overpower the *yetzer hora*. Instead, you need to develop a kind of self-control already from before the difficulties comes. Here is an example of how you can do it (again, don't wait to work on this as you're being tempted, because then it will be pointless. Work on this before the *yetzer hora* comes to you).

We find that whenever the Gemara finds a contradiction, the Gemara asks, "What are we dealing with?" We see from this that a person should always ask himself what the limits are, when he encounters a contradiction. So we need to realize that our logic is only to be trusted in certain situations, thus we cannot always trust our thinking. This is how you can begin to see limits.

This is a solution that can help you attack the root of evil imagination. *Da'as d'havdalah* can take you out of mental "vision" (*re'iyah*) and enter you into a purely "intellectual" mode (*haskalah*) of your mind, and that is how you leave the view of the imagination.

Earlier, when we spoke of *da'as d'havdalah*, we addressed how to separate between two “visionary” kind of thoughts. You separate between what you actually saw and what you compared. But here we are describing the deeper use of *da'as d'havdalah*: by realizing the limits of something, you leave the mode of vision and you enter the realm of the intellectual, and this weakens the vision of your imagination.

To illustrate, we all look at the sky. Does it have an end? It seems to be endless. But Hashem created everything with limits, so nothing in Creation is endless. When a person looks at the ocean, does it have an end? It seems to be endless. Chazal describe the ocean as “an endless ocean”, because when we look at it, it seems endless. But that’s all based on our physical vision. It really does have an end, just, we can’t see the end.

So our vision makes us see something endless, and that breeds evil imagination, the root of all problems. But when we seek the limitations and rules of each thing, we use our *da'as* properly - and that is how we escape evil imagination.

Da'as d'havdalah essentially serves to take one out of his mental vision (*re'iyah*) and into *hisbonenus*, reflection. This is the depth of *havdalah*: to separate between I **see** and what I **think**.

Chazal say, “A judge only sees what he sees”; there is physical vision, and there is mental vision (which comes from the heart). When you see the difference between what you see in front of you and what you think about what you see in front of you, and then you train your soul to differentiate between vision and intellect.

This is the depth of how *da'as d'havdalah* can fix your *medameh*. It takes you out of *Eitz HaDa'as Ra* - or evil *medameh* - and enters you into *Eitz HaDa'as Tov*. When you turn mental vision into intellect - and not intellect into mental vision - this is the root of fixing all problems in the soul. The root of all problems in the soul is when a person turns intellect/*da'as* into a mental vision. The root solution, then, is to turn mental vision into intellect.

Train yourself in that whatever you see, think about what its limits are; and then you will see through the *einei haseichel*, the “eyes of the intellect.”²⁹

Getting used to this uproots all *taavah* (evil desires) as well. Desire is a pull, and it is rooted in the element of water, which has a nature to pull. The pure intellect shows you the limits of something, which weakens the “pull” of the imagination on you. It takes you out of the “vision” you’re seeing, and on a more general note, it helps you leave the mode of imagination entirely.

Defining Each Thing By Seeing Its Limits

This is a concept that affects our whole view on life as well.

“*Da’as tov*” is when we see the limits of things, and “*da’as ra*” is when a person wants to break limits, via the imagination. If we want to uproot the root of all inner evil in the soul - the *Eitz HaDa’as Ra*, or *medameh*, which seeks to expand past limits – we need to begin to see limits of each concept, and this will weaken the *da’as ra*, or our evil imagination, which is trying to get break rules.

The depth of a Torah scholar is not someone who gathers much knowledge about Torah. Rather, a true Torah scholar is always defining the concepts he learns about. Torah scholars are called “builders”, and the depth behind this is that a true Torah scholar knows how to define the limits of each concept he comes across. He knows when and where something applies, when it doesn’t. Anyone used to learning Torah in-depth identifies with the concept. A Torah scholar is someone whose entire life is spent on giving definitions to what he learns, and this is done by seeing the limits of each concept.

Thus, the good way to use *da’as* is to always seek to give definitions to something, which is by seeing the limits of each concept.

Again, we must repeat and emphasize that this advice is not something you can practically use to defeat the imaginative thoughts of the *yetzer hora* when it actually

tempts you. Rather, it is a way to go about life, which gets you used to defining things, and with the more you get used to defining concepts, giving them their proper definitions and limits, it will greatly weaken the evil imagination (the *“Eitz HaDaas Ra”* in the soul) and prevent it from dominating in the first place.

When a person merits to weaken his evil imagination, this is the deeper meaning of *“And death will be swallowed up forever.”*

05 | *Rectifying The Eyes*

“The Eye Sees and the Heart Desires”

Let us study more about what went on with the *Eitz HaDa'as*, which contains the entire subject of *da'as*, for it shows us when *da'as* is good and when it is evil.

Previously, we discussed the fact that the fruit tasted good. Now we will discuss the second aspect: the fact that the fruit was “desirable to the eyes.”

Desire (*taavah*) is an emotion experienced through our heart; how does the “eye” have desire? We know that the eye sees, but it is the heart which desires something. “The eyes see, and the heart desires.” Our eyes do not have a desire; our eyes see something, and then our heart can desire it, but the eyes don't desire. So why does the *possuk* then say that she felt a desire for the tree in her eyes?

To know the answer to this, we must know what “desire of the eyes” is. It was a desire to know of the “*da'as ra*” (the evil *da'as*) contained in the *Eitz HaDa'as*. When there is a desire for “*da'as ra*”, this prompts “desire” in the eyes. So if we understand what “*da'as ra*” is, we can understand what “desires of the eyes” is.

Where Is Our Da'as Located?

In which part of the body is *da'as* associated with?

Our *chochmah* is located in our brain. Our desires are located in our heart. Where is our *da'as*? It is a very lengthy discussion amongst the works of our Rabbis. Some say it is in the brain, and our brain contains three parts: *chochmah*, *binah* and *da'as*. Some say it is located in the forehead. Others say that is in the back of the neck. Others say that it is in the mouth, for the Zohar says, “*da'as ganuz b'pumei*”, (the “*da'as* is hidden in the mouth”). Others say that is in the place of the *Bris Kodesh*. Others say it is in the heart, because of one of the abilities of the heart is *da'as*. Others say that is in the shoulders.

All of these views are correct, but we are discussing where our “good *da’as*” and where our “evil *da’as* is.” It is actually very complicated to know where our *da’as* is.

“*The tree was good for consumption*” – this was referring to “*da’as ra*”. “*The fruit was desirable to the eyes*” – this was also part of *da’as ra*. “*And the fruit was appealing to the intellect*” – this was also part of *da’as ra*. They were each three factors of the fallen *da’as* that began since Chavah laid eyes upon the *Eitz HaDa’as* and desired it.

In our *seichel*/intellect, we have *da’as*, and it is merely upon us to know what good *da’as* and what evil *da’as* is; this is clear to all. The fact that *da’as* is in our mouth is also clear; it means simply that *da’as* is in the mouth.

But it is hard to understand how *da’as* can be in our eyes. There is no opinion in Chazal that *da’as* is in the eyes. So what does the *possuk* mean that the fruit was “*desirable to the eyes*”?

When Da’as Falls Into The Eyes

We find that by *tefillin*, it must be placed “in between” the eyes, so we see that *da’as* can be “in between” the eyes. Where do we put the *tefillin*? On top of the eyes. Yet, it is still called “in between” the eyes in the *possuk*.

Thus, “good *da’as*” is really above the eyes (between them), and “evil *da’as*” is when that *da’as* falls into the eyes themselves. That is when it becomes “desire” of the eyes. But there is no *da’as* in our eyes. The *da’as* is really in the forehead, above and in between the eyes; that is where the *tefillin* is placed.

Da’as is always the middle point. We have explained how *da’as* separates, decides, and connects, so it is always between two points. When *da’as* falls from in between the eyes, it falls into the eyes, and it then becomes “desire of the eyes”.

This is the depth of “*da’as ra*” – when *da’as* has fallen from “above” the eyes, into the eyes themselves.

Moshe is called “*tov ayin*”, one who has a “good eye”. For all good that exists, there is an equally evil force to counter it, and the one equal in evil to Moshe’s holiness is the wicked Bilaam. Bilaam had “*da’as ra*”, and he is called “*stum ayim*” – “closed-eyed”; he had “*ayin ra*”, an “evil eye.” Moshe is also the epitome of “*da’as tov*”, and Bilaam is the epitome of “*da’as ra*”.

Here we can begin to see the concept of how *da’as* can be in the eyes. But we need to understand that the eyes themselves do not have *da’as*. In between the eyes there is *da’as*, but not in the eyes. Bilaam had an “*ayin ra*” in his eyes - because his *da’as* fell into the eyes.

This is the concept of *da’as* in the eyes, and we will try to slowly understand it.

Desire of the Eyes

What is “desire of the eyes”?

When *da’as* is “in between” the eyes, it is good and holy, and this is also referred to as the concept of *ratzon* (will) by Chazal. Moshe personified *da’as*, and the *gematria* (numerical value) of “Moshe” is “*ratzon*”. Thus, a true “*bar da’as*” is someone whose *da’as* is connected to his inner *ratzon*. We are referring to the true inner *ratzon* of the soul, “Our will to do Your will”, and not to the other *retzonos* we have. This is called the *da’as* “in between” the eyes.

When *da’as* falls from above the eyes into the level of the eyes, the *da’as* becomes a *ratzon* in the eyes, and this is *taavah* (desire) of the eyes. Every *taavah* in the eyes is rooted in this.

Again, the eyes themselves do not desire. The heart is what desires, for the heart is the source of all *ratzon*. But *ratzon* of the heart is rooted in the brain, which is the *da’as/ratzon* of the forehead, and when this falls into the eyes, there is *ratzon* in the eyes, and then a person wants what the eyes see. That is “desire of the eyes”.

Thus, *ratzon* does not really begin in the heart – it begins in the eyes. The *ratzon/da’as* falls into the eyes, and here is the root of all difficulty that we recognize.

The Sages say that there are two tools of sin – the eyes and the heart. The eye starts the desire, the heart already can will something (and this is the nature of the heart). When the eyes desire something – which resulted from the *Eitz HaDa'as*, because it was not initially created like this – here comes the root of all the difficulties we know of that are related to guarding our eyes.

Here we come to a new point: “desire of the eyes”, which begins in the eyes. If not for the sin with the *Eitz HaDa'as*, desire would remain in the heart. The desire which began in the eyes, ever since the *Eitz HaDa'as*, is a novelty, and this is what started all the difficulties related to guarding our eyes. It is all rooted in the desire of the eyes which began ever since Chavah laid eye upon the *Eitz HaDa'as*.

When Da'as Falls Into The Eyes

Now we can understand better the following.

What is the purpose of our eyes? A person can see holiness, but what is the *avodah* of the eyes after that? Its role is to imprint this information onto our mind. The eyes are called by our Sages as the “lens of the brain”, because the eye is *ayin*, from the word *iyun* (analyze); it puts the vision into the brain, and the brain analyzes it. The eye sees something, and the heart sees when the eye sends the information to the heart; this leads to sin. This is the meaning of the eyes see and the heart desires.” This is also the meaning of “A person does not sin unless a *ruach shtus* (spirit of folly) enters him.”

The role of the eyes is to send the information to the brain so that the brain can analyze what it's seeing. Otherwise, the eyes send the information to the heart, and the heart desires what the eyes have seen, and this leads to all sin.

But when *da'as* falls to the eyes, the eyes attempt to analyze using the *da'as* that has fallen into it, and this is what leads to sin. The *da'as ra* of the eyes analyzes what it has seen and isn't able to register that there is something improper here.

Whenever a person sees something, he is always thinking about it. The eye really wants to put the information into the brain, and that is its role. When it sees holiness, it imprints it into the brain, the brain analyzes it, and it becomes clarified. But when *da'as* falls into the eyes, a person sees something and he attempts to analyze it through his *da'as*, but it is *da'as ra*, for it has fallen into his eyes. That is what leads a person to sin. It sends the information to the heart, and then what happens? As the Sages say, “The eye sees, the heart desires, and the tools of action complete.”

This is a subtle point. Whenever we use our physical vision, it always includes *da'as*. The *da'as* is in between the eyes, so the eyes and the *da'as* are always interconnected.

If it remains above the eyes, the eyes see something and then it returns the information of what it has seen to the *da'as* of the brain, and then the heart won't desire what the eyes have seen, because the brain has already analyzed it and realized that it has seen something improper.

But when a person sees something when his *da'as* has fallen into the eyes, the vision doesn't get sent to the brain – it is evil *da'as*, and then the heart desires it, and this leads to sin.

This is the depth of “desire in the eyes”. It is not simply that desire becomes created in through the eyes; the deeper aspect of the problem of seeing improper sights is that *da'as* falls to the eyes, which doesn't return the vision of the eyes to the brain, and this leads to the heart desiring what it has seen.

Our Current Level of Da'as Is First In The Eyes

Thus, the *da'as* that we know of and experience is *da'as* of the eyes, and not *da'as* of the forehead. Even when it comes to holiness, our *da'as* has been downgraded to the level of the eyes. Chazal say that “a judge only sees what his eyes see” – this is about seeing holiness, and it is a *halacha*, that a judge is allowed to rule based on what he has seen with his eyes and understood.

Our *da'as* is currently in the eyes. Initially, *da'as* was above the eyes. Ever since the sin with the *Eitz HaDa'as*, even our good *da'as* has been lowered to the level of the eyes. It is used for evil when a person desires what he sees, and it is used for holiness in the case of a judge in *Beis Din* who sees what his eyes see. But it's still not the initial level which we need to return to.

Thus, the depth of all our free will (*bechirah*) on this world is if we will choose to have an *ayin tova* (good eye) or an *ayin ra* (evil eye). Our free will, simply put, is to choose. But the depth of it is that our entire *da'as* is currently in our eyes, which is not the ideal level. Our free will is to choose to listen to the *da'as* in our eyes or not.

When we stood at Har Sinai, the *zuhama* (spirit of impurity) that was upon us since the sin with the *Eitz HaDa'as* was removed, and we returned to our *da'as* that was above the eyes. It fixed not only the *da'as ra* that we fell to after the sin, but it fixed even the *da'as tov* that fell to the eyes and placed it back into the forehead, above and between the eyes. [After the sin with the Golden Calf we once again fell from our purified state].

“A prisoner cannot free himself from his own prison.” When *da'as* is in the eyes, a person can't clarify what he sees and try to sort out what's proper and improper in what he has seen, because his *da'as* is *da'as ra*. The *da'as* is being experienced through the eyes, which cannot clarify a vision and take it apart like the brain can.

Evil Da'as: Connecting To An Evil Vision

Now we will return to discuss what we began discussing, in connection with what we have just explained.

We explained earlier about *chochmah*, *binah* and *da'as*. In *binah*, there is higher *binah* (generally called *binah*), which is when you make an accurate comparison in between information. Lower *binah* is called *tevunah*, also called *medameh* - the imagination, c a result of erroneous comparisons in the mind. We explained that the way to differentiate between an accurate comparison, *binah*, and imagination,

tevunah, is to use *da'as d'havdalah* - to separate between what I actually saw (*chochmah*) and what I ideas of my own that I have formulated (*binah*).

Now we can understand the following.

The eye sees, but what does it see? It cannot see through higher *chochmah*. It sees through the *seichel*, the basic intellect, which is really lower *chochmah*. It sees what the eye sees.

We explained earlier that there are three levels of *chochmah* – there is lower *chochmah*, higher *chochmah*, and highest *chochmah*. The highest use of *chochmah* is to see holiness through the *seichel*/intellect and clarify it. The intermediate level of *chochmah* is what we learn from a teacher, and lower *chochmah* is to see the actions of our teachers. So lower *chochmah* sees through the physical eyes. *Tevunah*, which is lower *binah*, sees imagination; the eyes don't see imagination. The eye sees something, and the mind imagines about it.

When a person has *da'as ra* – when his *da'as* has fallen into the eyes – what happens? The *da'as ra* in his eyes essentially takes the power of *da'as d'chibbur* (connecting knowledge) and connects a person with what one has seen. That is “desire of the eyes” – it uses the power of *da'as d'chibbur* for evil!

Lower *chochmah* sees through the eyes, and lower *binah* is to imagine and compare erroneously – the imagination is being confined to what one has seen.

To say it even clearer, a person sees a certain improper vision, and he fantasizes about it. It is his *tevunah/medameh* which has fallen. That is how it becomes *taavah* (desire), and *dimyonos* (fantasies) start. When *da'as* connects a person to an improper vision he sees, this is the meaning of “Attached to the sin like a dog.” This is the depth of “desire of the eyes.”

So *da'as ra* is essentially when the power of *da'as d'chibbur* becomes lowered, and then the entire mind will be stuck to the imagination, in what a person has seen. The imagination will continue, the heart will desire it, and this leads to sin.

When Hisbonenus/Mental Reflection Is Evil

Another point we come to with this is as follows.

As we explained, there are three levels of *binah*: lower *binah* is to compare through imagination, intermediate *binah* is to compare through logic, and higher *binah* is to see detail after detail until one sees the *tabalich* (path) of the information. Intermediate *binah* is essentially *hisbonenus* – to analyze.

If a person looks at and reflects on something evil – for example, if he looks at a wicked person, or the rainbow (which we are not allowed to look at), he brings down his *binah* to the level of *tevunah*, which is imagination. This is not just *dimyonos* (fantasies) - it is that he reflects deeply on something evil. He misuses the power of *hisbonenus*, and his deep power of *hisbonenus* falls into reflecting into a physical vision that is improper.

This is another way of describing how *da'as d'chibbur* falls from its level and is misused to take a person and connect him to the evil vision he has seen. This is the depth of *da'as ra*.

We have explained what *taavah* (desire) in the eyes is, and how it gets formed. This is the root of all the difficulties we have when it comes to guarding our eyes.

Rectifying Evil Desires of the Eyes

The question is: How indeed do we escape the desires of our eyes, which we have fallen to ever since the sin with the *Eitz HaDa'as*?

As we know, all of the *middos* are good in their essence; there is no such thing as a bad *middah*. *Taavah*/desire as well is not evil in its essence; the only question is how it is used. For example, Hashem has “*taavah*”: He “desired” to have a dwelling on this world.

The eyes themselves do not desire; rather, desire falls into it. The things our eyes have seen are fed by what has fallen into them, thus, the root solution is to bring our

eyes back to the way it was before. Superficially, this means to close your eyes from seeing evil. But the deeper meaning of it is to close your eyes not just from seeing evil, but to make sure you don't have an "*ayin ra*". It is to return your *ayin ra* (evil eye) to an *ayin tov* (good eye). This is the depth behind the concept, "*Oitzem einav m'liros ra*", "closing the eyes from seeing evil."

Revealing our Ratzon

When we reveal the inner power of *ratzon*, the desires of the eye are removed. At Har Sinai, we said "*Retzonenu Liros Es Malkeinu*" - "It is our will to see our King." What is the depth of this? In this lies the depth of fixing desire of the eyes.

Our eye itself has no *ratzon* to see Hashem; the eye itself has no *ratzon*. If our *ratzon* enters the eyes – in other words, when our *da'as* falls from above the eyes into the eyes (which is our current state) – it becomes *taavah*, and such a *ratzon* will not wish to see Hashem, because it is fallen *da'as*. But when we reveal the *da'as* "in between" the eyes, we reveal the will to see our King.

Without revealing our *ratzon* to do the will of Hashem, we can't reveal the will to see the King. So first we need to reveal our *ratzon* to do Hashem's will, *retzonenu laasos retzoncha*, "It is our will to do Your will."

Then, when we close our eyes from seeing evil and we concentrate on the concept of *retzonenu liros Es Malkeinu* – the "desire to see our King" – that is what fixes the desire of our eyes to see evil, and it returns the eyes to its root - which only desires to see the King.

So our *ratzon* to do Hashem's will is not in our eyes; it is in between our eyes. When *ratzon* falls into the eyes, the eyes will simply have *ratzon* for *taavah* - and they will not be able to desire to see the King. Thus, if a person reveal his *ratzon* to want to do Hashem's will, and he encounters an improper sight, he has gotten in touch with his inner *ratzon*, and the *ratzon* above his eyes can now push away the vision that his eyes have seen. Why do people have a hard time pulling away from the vision they see?

The eye sees, the *da'as* has fallen into the eyes, and the *ratzon* has fallen into the eyes - so the *ratzon* of a person will desire *taavah*, and he will “be tied to it like a dog”.

The superficial solution that people employ when they encounter forbidden sights is *hesech hada'as* from what one has seen – they take their mind off it. That is only advice that can work when a person has already fallen very low. The inner solution is to develop your holy *ratzon* already beforehand, so that when you encounter a forbidden sight, your holy *ratzon* to do Hashem's will overpower the eyes' desire.

The Raavad writes that the five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch) are rooted in the brain. Now we can apply this in a more subtle way. Our eyes see something and have a desire. Do our eyes desire to see a sound? It desires to see something tangible. It cannot see sound. The Sages say that a blind person cannot enjoy his food, because the whole desire for food comes from *taavah* (desire), which begins in the eyes, now that we live after the sin.

This is because a person initially eats on the level of *taavah*, thus, he cannot be satisfied unless he sees it.

The Kotzker zt”l said that the people complained by the *manna* because it was lacking in texture, even though it tasted good. This further brings out this point, that since eating is initially experienced on the level of *taavah*, it has to be desirable to the eyes, and it is not satisfying if it tastes good. So there is no desire to see sound. Our sight cannot see sound, because our sight is based on *taavah*.

Returning From 'Vision' Mode To 'Intellect' Mode

Thus, the way to fix our desire of the eyes, is as follows.

Our eye sees and it cannot desire, in the original state before the sin. After the sin, the *ratzon* fell into the eyes, and now the eye desires. Based on this understanding, the way to return to the original state is that a person can return the vision to the intellect.

For example, a person encounters a forbidden sight, so the problem is, he's stuck in a certain vision his eyes are looking at. The remedy is therefore to leave the very mode

of vision and enter into the thoughts of the mind. The thoughts of the mind can then come and inspect what one has seen, sending a message to a person that the sight is improper to look at.

This does not simply mean to run away from vision into thought; that is the simple advice that most people use when they encounter a forbidden sight, and it is superficial. The point is to get busy thinking so that the mind can inspect the vision and it registers that the sight is improper, and in this way, a person returns the very vision into his thought.

There is a problem, however, with using this solution: if someone has a very strong imagination that fantasizes about images, if he gets busy thinking, he might imagine even more about the sinful image, and this will lead to sin. But if someone has worked to purify his mind somewhat, however, then by entering his thoughts, the thoughts can disconnect a person from the vision he has seen.

Returning To Ratzon

The other way to fix the eyes is to return our fallen *ratzon* to the root of our *ratzon*, which is *Retzoneinu Laasos Retzoncha*, “It is our will to do Your will” – to remind ourselves of our inner *ratzon* to always do Hashem’s will.

We all had this by Har Sinai completely; after the sin with the Golden Calf we fell once again from that level, and now we cannot return to it completely. But we can all somewhat return to this root *ratzon*, albeit not fully.

The Superficial and Deeper Ways To Use “Hesech HaDa’as”

In the first solution, when a person takes his thoughts off what he has seen, *hesech hada’as* (removal of one’s thoughts from the subject), he can return the vision into his thoughts. This reveals the higher *da’as* which comes and inspects what one has seen, and shows a person that it is improper.

Another way of describing this is as follows; it is based on what was said above, but it is more subtle. The eyes see, while the thoughts are utilized when our intellect reflects. This is not simply to take your mind off a vision and instead get busy thinking. It is to leave the prism of the eyes and instead enter into the prism of your intellect. These are really two different viewpoints in our soul – the view through the eyes, and the view through our intellect.

For example, when a person sees something forbidden, he can distract himself with a picture of a *tzaddik* and think about it. This is the simple method which people employ *hesech hada'as*. But if a person is faced with a very tempting sight in front of him, it is very difficult to take his eyes off what he's seeing and get busy with his thoughts. For this, the solution is to imagine something that you like to think about, and the vision of your imagination will then overpower what you're seeing. In this way, you use a picture to cancel out the other picture.

When a person encounters a forbidden sight that he's very pulled towards, he should take with him a holy picture he can focus on, and imagine to himself a picture of the Kosel, Kever Rochel, the Me'aras HaMachpailah, the grave of Rashbi – each to his own taste. This is how you can employ imagination techniques to counter a forbidden sight in front of you.

However, using this method is all within the mode of “vision”. It is simple advice that can help a person who doesn't know how to use the deeper way to use *hesech hada'as*. Others try something even simpler, by trying to distract themselves with doing something else, because it's hard for them to get busy thinking anything at all. This is an even more superficial method than the aforementioned one, because it barely involves any thought at all.

The higher way use any of these two solutions is to do so with the underlying intention to leave the mode of “vision” and enter into intellect.

The Deeper Solution: Awakening Your Inner Ratzon

An even higher way to use the solution is to return your *ratzon* to its source. When you encounter something improper, you can tell yourself, “It is impossible for me to look at this.” Your inner *ratzon* recoils from forbidden sights. In this way you awaken your inner *ratzon* and you return the desire of your eyes to where it came from, which is the *ratzon* above the eyes.

Summary

Thus, the depth of “*da’as ra*” is that it is desire which has fallen into the eyes. “Desire in the eyes”, as we have explained, is when all of the abilities in the mind (*chochmah*, *binah*, and *da’as*, all the way until *da’as d’chibbur*) has fallen into the eyes, and the general outline of the remedy, we said, (without getting into the rest of the details) is to leave the mode of mental ‘vision’ and instead enter into the realm of the purely intellectual which is non-visionary [and the deeper way to do this is by awakening your inner *ratzon* to do Hashem’s will].

“Eyes of the Intellect”

If a person merits to purify his eyes as much as he can – (let us emphasize here that no one is perfect, but a person can still purify himself as much as he can), he can merit the higher kind of vision. At Har Sinai, Hashem revealed all the heavens and showed us all that He is One. He “showed” it to us, so we all saw it. A person can merit a higher kind of vision, *einei haseichel*, “eyes of the intellect” – as the *Chovos HaLevovos* describes.

(The *Chasam Sofer* said that there are two forms of revelation of Eliyahu HaNavi. One way is to actually meet him, and the other way is to see him through the mind; but even when one sees him, he is not seeing Eliyahu through the eyes, but through the mind. The eyes never see; rather, the intellect is seeing, and the eyes are just the lens of the intellect).

So when one leaves “desire of the eyes”, he enters into holy vision, and these are “eyes of the intellect”. Such a person lives in a world in which he sees G-dliness!

(Before the sin, all Adam saw was G-dliness. After the sin, Adam didn't see G-dliness anymore; he had to hide. The depth of his hiding was that he stopped seeing G-dliness after the sin.)

When a person merits to leave desires of the eyes and he enters holy vision (again, no one reaches this perfectly, because we live after the sin of the Snake; but we can all merit it to a prominent extent, albeit partial, and all the *tzaddikim* throughout all the generations reached it), he enters the “eyes of the intellect”. There are two parts to this. Part of this is “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world” – he sees wisdom of Torah through his lens of a higher intellect, and in addition, he can see G-dliness.

At Har Sinai, both of these revelations were present. The Torah was revealed, and Hashem revealed Himself there, when he opened up all the heavens. This implies that one can see the Torah revealed through a higher intellect, which is his higher *da'as* – the *da'as* in between the eyes, which is the higher source of the *da'as* – and through that perspective, one can come to see creation through the lens of Torah.

This is a perspective that came even before the Torah was given at Har Sinai – it is based upon a perspective that comes from the Torah that was already around before Creation, in which there was nothing but *Ain Od Milvado* (There is nothing besides for Hashem). It is an amazing point when you think into it. The eyes see G-dliness in this way. This is the way to fix the desires of the eyes – when the eyes see the wisdom of Torah, and when the eyes see G-dliness.

In Conclusion

We open our eyes all the time. What do we see when we open our eyes? We see a room, a bed, a menorah, etc. When we open our spiritual eyes, what do we see? We see what is really there. And what is there? Hashem, and the Torah. This is how a person lives all the time with Hashem and the Torah, the root of all Jewish souls,

which are all interconnected. But this vision is all that the “eyes of the intellect” sees – Hashem and His Torah.

May we merit from the Creator to return to the state of Har Sinai, and that we not be among those who were scared of death if Hashem speaks to us – may the full revelation of the Creator be revealed.

06 | *The Desire For Knowledge*

Desiring The Eitz HaDa'as

When Chavah ate from the fruits of the *Eitz HaDa'as*, she saw that it was “*desirable as a means for wisdom.*”

What was so bad about this? What was wrong with the fact that Chavah desired the knowledge of the *Eitz haDa'as*, which was a desire to know of more holy knowledge?

The simple understanding of this is because the *Eitz HaDa'as* contained a mixture of both good and evil *da'as*, so perhaps she was curious to know what evil is. Just as a person would like to know what good is, so can there be a curiosity to know what evil is. In essence, it is a good thing to desire knowledge, but to desire knowledge about evil is detrimental.

We will explore several aspects that were involved with this, which give us a deeper understanding of the matter.

The Desire For Knowledge

Let us return to what we began to discuss.

At first, she saw that the fruit was “desirable to the eyes”, and then she found it “desirable as a means for wisdom”, that it was pleasing to her intellect. So her desire to know what it was really was, was a continuation of her eyes’ desire for it.

Chazal say that “a judge does not see except what his eyes see” – the desire for knowledge is based on what one sees, and even more so, a person is drawn to know about something based on what his eyes have seen. This is the concept of *shochad*, a bribe, which can sway even the mind of a *tzaddik* and wise person.

Thus, the desire for knowledge about the *Eitz HaDa'as* came after her eyes laid on it and she desired it, so there was *shochad* (mental bribery) involved in her desire for

knowledge. It didn't come from a desire to know truth – it came from what she felt drawn to, based on what she had seen.

Preconceived Notions When It Comes To Learning Torah

Ever since the sin with the *Eitz HaDa'as*, a person naturally understands something based on what he sees. For example, a person is learning a *sugya* or a *halacha*, but he has a desire based on what he has seen, so he has “*shochad*”. A person naturally sees a distorted understanding, and he doesn't see truth.

Many people think they have clearly seen the *halacha* when they research a matter in the Gemara and then in the *Shulchan Aruch*, but they are really making an erroneous search, because they are not viewing the *halacha* through a lens of truth. The soul, ever since the sin, does not initially understand things through a truthful lens, rather through various personal motivations are leading him towards.

When a person sees two options, A and B, he will naturally desire the option he has first seen. It does not come from a search for truth, but from some desire of the eyes.

Seeking the Truth: First See Two Equal Options

How can a person indeed know what the truth is? This is an internal question which any person who seeks truth struggles with.

The *Chovos HaLevovos* describes “*midas hishtavus*”, to see things as “equal”. The Ramban says that if a person is in doubt what the *halacha l'maaseh* is, before he learns, he should think of two options that equally make sense, otherwise, he is beginning to learn a *sugya* leaning towards one of the options. If a person doesn't begin with *hishtavus*, the conclusion is basically decided!

A person might think he doesn't have “*negios*” (ulterior motives), but this is a mistake. Even if one is not aware of his “*negios*”, he can still have “*negios*” deep in his subconscious.

So before a person begins to learn about a matter (in Gemara or in *halacha*) which will be containing several opinions, first, he has to see two equal options in front of him of what the *halacha* is (Hashem knows what's going in his heart if he's really earnest about this or if he's really leaning towards a certain option more than another), and he needs to consider them both as equal options.

This is the root of how a person can leave the viewpoint that was created from the sin of Adam. It is called the "*Eitz HaChaim* in the soul", otherwise known as the "Torah" in the soul.

Without revealing this point, a person derives his understanding from the view of the "*Eitz HaDa'as Tov V'Ra*" in his soul, which is a mixture of good and evil that cannot be trusted.

Therefore, in whatever a person is involved in, he needs to first remove himself from "*negios*", which is by revealing "*hishtavus*", equality, by first seeing two equal options, and only after should he probe into the matter of Torah he is learning about. Otherwise, he will never get to the truth. He might know a lot of Torah and *halacha*, but he doesn't arrive at a truthful understanding.

Thus, a person has to get to the truthful point in the soul which has no "*negios*". This is a very clear and relevant concept for every *halacha* a person learns.

Without basing one's Torah learning on this point, all of one's Torah learning is not stemming from true *da'as*. Maybe people will say about him that he is "*Da'as Torah*", but can all be "*Da'as Torah*" of the "*Eitz HaDa'as Tov V'Ra*"! His entire *da'as* is leaning towards a certain option, and not because he has seen two equal options in the first place and that he has really "decided" to go with Option A over Option B.

We have been brief in describing this concept, but it explains the secret of the soul's power to search for truth. This concept can be further refined and made more subtle. In this point lies the entire inner work with how we use our soul. Without revealing it, nothing will be based on truth, and if something isn't based on truth, it doesn't last.

Thus, when the desire for knowledge is coming from desire of the eyes, there can be no truth in such desire for knowledge. It is good and evil mixed together, so it cannot be relied upon.

(Rav Elya Lopian zt"l, when he would daven for the congregation, would say the words, "*V'taher libeinu l'ovdecha b'emes*" (And purify our hearts to serve You in truth), and he would stress the last word, "*b'emes*", in truth. This has so many applications. For example, it's possible that a person does many acts of kindness, but it doesn't come from a true place in his soul. A person has to always suspect himself that maybe he's not acting truthful enough.)

All of *p'nimiyus* (inner reality) is based on inner truth of the soul, which is accessed through revealing "*hishtavus*". When a person doesn't access it, his entire *da'as* will mislead him.

There is not much *da'as* present in the world, and the little *da'as* that there is in the world, is inaccurate. There is a rare amount of *da'as* in the world which is accurate, for every generation merits some individuals who possess true *da'as*. These are people who have "*nekiyus hada'as*" - totally clean *da'as* - because they have worked on their inner refinement to a great deal.

Why Does A Person Desire Knowledge?

Let us now return to discussing the desire for knowledge. What was wrong with Chavah's desire to know of the *Eitz HaDa'as*? As we explained, it was because she first saw it and desired it, thus her desire for knowledge was entirely based on desire of the eyes.

Another point regarding this is, however, is as follows. We must know: Is the desire for knowledge, in essence, a good thing or a bad thing? It depends on why we want to know more.

After the sin of the *Eitz HaDa'as*, everything became a mixture of good and evil. So nowadays, when a person has a desire for knowledge, it's unclear if it is coming from a

good place within himself or not. It is either coming from the *Eitz HaDa'as Tov* or the *Eitz HaDa'as Ra* in the soul.

Before the sin, though, there was no evil yet. What then was wrong with Chavah's desire for knowledge? All she wanted was to know more Torah. Can this be a bad thing? Isn't a desire for knowledge of Torah always a good thing?

It depends why the person wants to know more. Most people do not have a desire for knowledge; this is the depth of the difference between a Torah scholar and an ignoramus. Torah scholars have a desire to know more Torah, while an ignoramus does not. Even an animal wants to know things, for the Vilna Gaon lists 70 forces in both humans and animals, and one of them is "*chefetz Hasichli*", desire of the intellect; so even animals are somewhat curious for knowledge.

What, then, is the difference between a human's desire for knowledge and an animal's desire to know things? When we know the difference, we can then understand when desire for knowledge is good and when it is evil.

Desire for knowledge is good when it is used as a path to get to a great goal. It is evil when one seeks the knowledge as a purpose to itself. In different terminology: it is good when it leads to something constructive, and it is evil when it leads to something detrimental.

Good Desire For Knowledge – When Knowledge Is A Tool To A Greater Means

Let us first begin to explain the first way to understand the difference, which is that desire for knowledge is good when it is used as a means to a greater goal, and not as a purpose unto itself.

Desire for knowledge is good if it is used as a means to a greater goal. It is evil when it is used as a purpose unto itself. This is the "*Eitz HaDa'as Tov*" in the soul - the desire for knowledge as a means for a greater goal.

By contrast, if it's a desire for knowledge just for the sake of the knowledge alone, such *seichel*/intellect is from the word "*sochol*", "fool." It defeats the whole purpose of knowledge.

Our Rabbis wrote that we have two "*mochin*" (brains/minds): a right brain and a left brain. The right eye sees through the "right brain", and left eye sees through the "left brain". These are two opposite lenses to see things through. The right brain sees an opposite view than the left brain, and vice versa. In other words, the desire for knowledge is viewed from one part of the brain, but when it is viewed through the lens of the eyes' vision, the intellect becomes distorted.

Earlier, we explained that the desire for knowledge is evil when it is based on what the eyes desire. Now we are saying a deeper definition. Desire for knowledge is evil when the intellect is distorted, when it is being made into a goal unto itself. When the desire for knowledge is viewed through the eyes - through vision - the entire intellect is turned upside-down and it shows a distorted view.

It is not just because the view is based on physical vision and thus misleading. It is intellect that has become downgraded to the level of the eyes, and then, what seems like right looks like left, and seems like left is really right. This is the depth of "*Eitz HaDa'as Ra*" in the soul.

In contrast, "*Eitz HaDa'as Tov*" in the soul is a view through the pure intellect, unclothed by the garment of vision; and "*Eitz HaDa'as Ra*" is when the intellect is viewed through the garment of vision, when "the eye sees and the heart desires." But even more so, as we have now explained, the desire for the "*Eitz HaDa'as*" was evil because it was intellect viewed through the eyes, which distorts the intellect.

Our Rabbis wrote that the words of an ignoramus show us what the truth is, because whatever he says is really the opposite of the truth. The depth of this is that an ignoramus understands only through vision, while a Torah scholar understands through the prism of intellect without vision.

Thus, if a Torah scholar says that right is left and left is right, Chazal say to listen to him, because the Torah scholar has the accurate view, while the average person thinks

he has the correct view but he's really seeing the incorrect view. The Torah scholar sees through intellect without vision, so he can see right and left, while the average person sees intellect through vision, which is a distorted view – it sees right as left and left as right. Therefore, we are told to always listen to the Torah scholar's opinion. It is not just to have *emunah* (trust) in the words of the Sages – it is rather to realize that the Torah scholar has the true view on things, while the average person doesn't see properly.

When vision distorts the intellect, this is the mixture of good and evil in what our soul sees. This is the “*Eitz HaDa'as Tov V'Ra*” in the soul. Thus, Chavah saw the opposite of what she was really supposed to see. To illustrate, a mirror shows you the opposite – left appears right, and vice versa. The eye sees through the black pigment and not through the white part, and the black part of the eye sees the opposite. When you see through the eyes, you see the opposite of the true view.

Distorted Perception

Hashem placed a churning sword of fire to guard the *Eitz HaChaim*. The depth of this is that vision shows us an upside-down view. Vision turns over the intellect and distorts it, showing you an opposite view of the truthful perspective. Herein lays the root of all mistaken perspectives: when people understand through vision, and not through intellect. The intellect sees something as it is, while vision shows you an upside down view.

Shochad, mental bribery, essentially ties a person to a vision he has seen. His mind is limited to the vision, so he comes to make an erroneous conclusion. The word for “eye” in Hebrew is *ayin*, which has the same letters as the word *ani*, “I”, because the eye shows a person what “I” want to see. The eye turns over one's *da'as* and this shows a person a distorted view.

“Desire of the eyes” is when a person doesn't actually see an accurate view. It is a biased view. The eye turns over everything! Vision turns over the accurate view and

shows a person the opposite view of the unbiased intellect. To put it briefly, this is the root of all problems.

Turning Over The Initial View

Now we will return to discussing the first point. These are matters which are very essential to how we work with our soul.

Ever since the sin, we see a distorted view. Man was created *yoshor* (upright), but after the sin we fell from the state of “*yoshor*” into a state of *cheshbonos rabim* (“many calculations”).

The secret of Purim is “*V’nahafoch Hu*”, to turn over what we see as “*hafoch*” (upside-down), and then we see the “*hafoch*” (opposite-view view) of the “*hafoch*” that we currently see - which is really the first, accurate view on things.

This is really the power of imagination. “*Hafoch*” is related to the word “*kaf*” (ladle), and *kaf* is an allusion to the letter “*kaf*” of the *Aleph Beis*, which is the letter that is used to describe the imagination (“*kaf hadimyon*” – the letter “*kaf*” means “as if”, alluding to the idea of comparing, which uses the imagination). Imagination is thus fueled by the power of “*hafoch*”, because it turns over things. The mind shows you the accurate view, and the imagination shows you an upside-down view. (We rectify it for holiness by ‘turning over’ the turned-over view, which returns us to the straight view of *yoshor*).

These are the words of our Rabbis, and we are just simplifying them. Vision shows us an opposite view of the truth. This is also called *kelipah kodemes l’pri*, “the shell comes before the fruit.” First we see an opposite view of things, or, we first see “*achor*” (the back) and not the *panim* (front) of something. Our *avodah* is therefore to remove the upside-down view and reveal the *panim* of something.

Now we can return to the first point with greater clarity. Why indeed was the desire for knowledge for the *Eitz HaDa’as* an evil desire? It was because the desire for knowledge was seen as a means to itself, and this is a really an upside-down view. We

have to see the “*hafoch*” of the “*hafoch*”, to turn over the upside-down view, which is the view of “*Eitz HaDa’as Tov*”.

When a person sees something through his eyes, he sees what he sees, and that is the root of all problems. So a person has to tell himself that what he sees is really the opposite of the true view! Keep turning everything over. Turn over the vision, and then you will see the intellect of something. This is the meaning of “*seichel d’kedushah*”, holy intellect.

Thus, if we think we understand something just because we see it, this brings down the intellect to the level of the eyes. But if a person realizes that the eyes are the opposite of real intellect, and that what the eye desires is really a sign that the mind disagrees, he then accesses his mind’s view, which turns over the turned-over view of the eyes. The intellect is essentially a tool to turn over the turned-over view we initially see, and that is how we use the role of the intellect. This is the “*Eitz HaDa’as Tov*” of the soul.

(*Seichel*, intellect, comes from the word “*salek*”, to remove. This shows us that we need to remove our initial perception of something, which is the opposite of what it really is. Then we need to see what it really is. We need to remove what we “see” and instead see what something really is.) Hashem created this world for us to fix it and bring it to its perfection. We do this by turning over everything in creation and revealing its opposite.

(A wife is called *eizer k’negdo*, a helpmate who opposes man. The depth of this matter is that marriage is a change in which a person totally turns himself over. A person reaches his perfection precisely through being opposed by his wife.) So the desire for knowledge is evil when a person thinks that what he sees is reality; his intellect is confined to what his eyes see. It is good when a person realizes that what he sees is really the upside down view.

The Difference Between Chemdah/Desire and Havayah/Essence

Now we will proceed to discuss a higher point.

There were two parts to the evil desire for knowledge for the *Eitz HaDa'as*. First of all, there was an *etiz*/tree, and secondly, the tree was “*nechmad l'haskil*”, pleasing to the intellect. So the entire *seichel*/intellect here was coming from “*chemdah*”, desire.

The *sefer Iglei Tal*³⁰ famously writes that one is allowed to enjoy learning the Torah and that enjoying one's learning is not considered *shelo lishmah* (learning Torah for ulterior motivations); and not only that, but that enjoying your learning is considered learning the greatest kind of *Torah lishmah* (for its own sake). There is supposed to be *chemdah* in one's learning.

We *daven* every day that we should become accustomed to learning the words of Torah, that we should have a *hergel* (habit) in it. The Kotzker Rebbe zt”l explained that the level of *hergel* in Torah is above *chemdah* in Torah – it is more praiseworthy to be accustomed to learning Torah than to desire it and enjoy it.

There is a level of learning Torah through either *hergel*/habit or *chemdah*/desire. The holy kind of *hergel*, which is to have *hergel* in Torah, is to realize, Torah is reality, therefore I am learning it. It is above the level of *chemdah* and *taanug*.

The lower use of *chemdah* in Torah is to simply have *chemdah* for it, which is when we said “*Naaseh V'Nishmah*” (We will do and we will hear). The higher level is to have *hergel* in Torah, which is when we were forced to accept the Torah. It would seem simply that *chemdah* is a higher level than *hergel*. But the depth is really the opposite, according to our Rabbis: *hergel* in Torah is a higher level than *chemdah* in Torah.

“*Naaseh V'Nishma*” came from our *ratzon*, our will, while the fact that we were forced to accept the Torah showed that there is a higher point in the soul than *ratzon*. Our *ratzon* can change, for it is essentially our power of *bechirah*, free will. But there is a point in us that is above *bechirah*, which is a deeper point in the soul.

Accepting the Torah through “*Naaseh V'Nishmah*” means we accepted it from our *ratzon*, which implies that without our *ratzon*, we wouldn't have accepted it. The fact that we were forced to accept the Torah shows that our very *havayah*/existence

³⁰ *Iglei Tal, hakdamah*

demanded that we accept the Torah, regardless of our *ratzon* or not. That was a much higher level than our *ratzon* to receive the Torah. That *havayah* was revealed through our *ratzon*, of course, but the *havayah* still exists regardless if there is a *ratzon* or not.

Let us examine the desire for knowledge. Does it come from *ratzon* or above the *ratzon*? With the desire for the *Eitz HaDa'as*, it came from man's *ratzon*, for it was "desirable to the eyes". The *Eitz HaDa'as* was about knowledge stemming from a *ratzon* to know.

Had there been a desire for the *Eitz HaChaim*, it would have been a desire to know because it is our very *havayah* to know, and it is not dependent on *ratzon*. When Chavah desired the *Eitz HaDa'as* and then she found it "pleasing to the intellect" as well, it was rooted in the same thing: a desire to know, stemming from *ratzon*. What did she want to know? She wanted to know the difference between *tov* and *ra* (good and evil).

Had she desired the *Eitz HaChaim*, it would have been a desire for *Chochmah* (wisdom) which is to know *havayah* (essence of wisdom). The *Eitz HaChaim* was not about knowing what *tov* is, for it was not a mixture of *tov* and *ra*. The desire for the *Eitz HaDa'as* was a desire for *da'as*, was to a desire to know the difference between *tov* and *ra*.

The Rambam says that *emes*, truth, is what exists, while *sheker*, falsity, is what doesn't exist. Thus, *emes* is really about knowing *havayah* – the true meaning of reality (and *sheker* is anything that is not *havayah*). *Tov* and *ra* (good and evil) both exist, and currently, they are mixed together, for we live after the sin, where good and evil became mixed together. Our *avodah* is to use our power of *ratzon* (will) to choose *tov* (good) over *ra* (evil). The system of *tov* and *ra* is to know what *ratzon* is, while the system of *emes* and *sheker*, which existed before the sin, is to know of *havayah*.

Thus, when a person learns Torah simply because it is enjoyable, such desire for knowledge is purely stemming from *ratzon*, which contains a mixture of good and evil. The higher level of learning is to realize that Torah is our very *havayah* - thus, the understanding is that it is *sheker* not to desire Torah.

The Ibn Ezra explains that the commandment of *Lo Sachmod* (“Do not covet”) is to recognize that you can’t be envious of something that’s impossible for you to reach.

The desire for knowledge for the *Eitz HaDa’as* stemmed from their *ratzon* to know of its knowledge, and it was expressed through their desire of their eyes. It was a desire for *chochmah* that stemmed from their *ratzon*, which made it into a desire for *da’as*, not for *havayah*.

This folly was fixed when the Jewish people said *Naaseh V’Nishmah*, for they were willing to do Hashem’s *ratzon* because we realized that it was our very *havayah* to do His *ratzon*. We said *Naaseh* before *Nishmah*, to show that we will do even before we hear, because it is our very *havayah* to accept the Torah.

“*Naaseh*” was uttered before “*Nishmah*”. The question is: Now that we already committed ourselves to the Torah, what is there left for us to hear, if we already know what to do? It is to hear the view of intellect, which is above the level of action. It is the *avodah* to hear from our very *havayah* (essence) – which is a higher level than hearing from our *ratzon* (will). Had we said *Nishmah* before *Naaseh*, we would have been hearing from *ratzon*, and then the forcing to accept the Torah would have been about being forced to accept the Torah’s *mitzvos*. But when we said *Naaseh* before *Nishmah*, we were saying that we will accept the Torah from our very *havayah*, regardless of our *ratzon*. We gave up our *ratzon* and we wanted Hashem to force us into accepting the Torah.

Thus, the desire for knowledge, for the *Eitz HaDa’as*, was a desire to know because it was desirable. But the desire for the *Eitz HaChaim* is to want to know even if we don’t find it appealing. Their desire for knowledge was evil because it came entirely from *chemdah* to know, while the ideal desire for knowledge is to have a desire for knowledge even when we don’t have a *chemdah* to know – to desire knowledge because it is our very *havayah* to know.

Now that we live after the sin, we have *shelo lishmah* (ulterior motives), mixed into everything, so now we require *chemdah* in our Torah learning.

The root of the sin with the *Eitz HaDa'as* was that it was a desire to know out of *chemdah/ratzon*, and not out of *havayah*. Had there been a desire for the *Eitz HaChaim*, it would have been a desire to know of *havayah*.

These are two totally different viewpoints. Generally, they are called *Eitz HaDa'as* and *Eitz HaChaim*. The meaning of *chaim*/life is not about *chemdah*, it is about *havayah*. There is a will to live, but life itself is not *ratzon* - it is *havayah*.

How To Use The Power of Chemdah/Desiring Knowledge

To make this concept practical, now we can understand what holy *chemdah* is and what unholy *chemdah* is for knowledge.

If one uses *chemdah* for the sake of *taanug* (enjoyment) in having *chemdah*, this is negative, and this reflects the desire for the *Eitz HaDa'as Ra* in the soul. But if one uses *chemdah* as a way for me to connect to the Torah, this is *Eitz HaDa'as Tov*.

Thus, when one enjoys his Torah learning, if he's learning solely for the sake of the enjoyment, this is "*Eitz HaDa'as Ra*". But if one uses *chemdah* in his learning as a tool to connect himself to the *chochmah*, he is only using the *chemdah* as a means to a greater end - and this reflects the "*Eitz HaDa'as Tov*".

In our current level of *da'as*, as we live now after the sin, we have two uses of our *da'as*. *Da'as* is the highest point in our mind which we can use to ascend to the point above the mind, which is the *ratzon* (will), and from there, we can use our *da'as* to reach our *havayah* (essence). The *da'as* can differentiate and decide what our *ratzon* is; it chooses.³¹ A higher power is *da'as d'chibbur*, the power to connect information, and this can connect a person to the point above the *ratzon*, which is *havayah*.

They are two different systems of *da'as*: a *da'as* that stems from *ratzon* (a will for knowledge that stems from desire, and not from the essence of the soul), or a *da'as* that stems from *havayah* (a desire for knowledge that stems from one's very essence, which desires to know).

³¹ As was discussed earlier in Utilizing Your Da'as #01 (Deciding) and #02 (Differentiating).

Ratzon is when “I want”, while *havayah* is what I am supposed to do – what came before my “I”. This is also known as *emunah*, and it is also known as higher *da’as*. It is way above the *ratzon*. They are two totally different ways to live life. One kind of person also does what Hashem wants, while a higher level is to do what Hashem said because that is what He decreed upon me to do, what He has “carved” me to do.

There are two steps. Step One is to nullify my *ratzon*, which is called *hishtavus* (equalizing). Step Two is to accept what Hashem decrees on me, for I am not in charge. What’s the difference? When a person has worries and concerns, after he makes the necessary effort, he needs to first nullify his *ratzon*, and then accept whatever Hashem has decreed.

(We are not talking about choosing between good and evil, which is a lower use of *bechirah*. When it comes to refraining from a sin, we must refrain from it whether we want to or not. We are talking about choosing in areas that are not outright evil, that in order to choose what is correct, the *avodah* is to nullify one’s *ratzon*, in these two steps).

In Conclusion

To conclude, if one’s *chemdah* for *da’as* (desire for knowledge) is causing one to want to connect to his *havayah* – meaning, he sees the knowledge he is trying to obtain as his very *havayah*, thus he has *chemdah* towards it - this is *da’as* of the *Eitz HaDa’as Tov* in the soul, and it is holy *chemdah*. Such is the correct attitude to have towards learning Torah.

But if it’s just *chemdah* being used for the sake of *chemdah*, it reflects the desire for the *Eitz HaDa’as Ra*, a mere desire for knowledge, a curiosity, a will that must be nullified.

Even in using holy *chemdah*, which is the *Eitz HaDa’as Tov* in the soul, it must be used as a tool for a greater goal, which is to bring oneself to the *Eitz HaChaim* in oneself, which is greater than the *Eitz HaDa’as Tov* in the soul – a desire to connect to the knowledge of the Torah because it is one’s very *havayah*.

07 | *Turning Back Over*³²

Daas HaMis-Hapeches: Turning Over A Concept

In this chapter we will discuss another power of our *da'as*, called “*da'as hamis-hapeches*” (when *da'as* which “turns over” information).

Previously, we discussed the three abilities of *daas d'havdalah*, *daas d'hachraah*, and *daas d'chibbur*, and then we discussed the three aspects of the evil “*Eitz HaDaas*” in the soul, which is the desire to break limits, the desire of the eyes, and the desire for knowledge.

Another of ability of *da'as* is that it can “turn over” information. This is called “*daas hamis-hapeches*”. Earlier, we mentioned it briefly, and now will expand on this concept.

When Adam was sent out of Gan Eden after the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas* (Tree of Knowledge). Hashem placed a churning sword of fire to guard the *Eitz HaChaim* (Tree of Life). This was called the “*lahat hacherev hamis-hapeches*”, a fiery sword that churns upside-down. The simple understanding of this is that it guards the path to the *Eitz HaChaim* so that no one can get near the *Eitz HaChaim*. But the truer, deeper meaning is that the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas* is what had caused this churning, upside-down sword of fire to appear.

When Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*, the concept of *da'as hamis-hapeches* was introduced, therefore, the sword of fire which churns upside-down came, to show that the sin of Adam created a “turned-over” kind of *daas*.

What is the root of “*daas hamis-hapaches*”, the “turned-over *daas*”? We explained earlier that the *daas tov v'ra* (knowledge of good and evil) in the *Eitz HaDaas* contained both *daas tov* (good *daas*) which is essentially the pure intellect, (*seichel*) and

³² This translation has omitted much of the original Hebrew audio version due to its heavy esoteric content, so it is for the most an adaptation.

daas ra (evil *daas*), which is essentially the evil imagination (*medameh*). The power to turn over information is really the imagination, because the imagination turns over a fact and shows you an upside-down version of the original information.

Imagination shows you that A and B are similar, therefore, it tells you that A and B are comparable and exchangeable. If A and B wouldn't be deemed in the mind as being similar, the mind would never think that they can be compared and exchanged. When the mind sees Fact A and Fact B as being similar, the mind then thinks that A and B can be exchanged with each other. If they are not similar ideas, there is no notion in the mind to exchange them with each other.

The imagination is evil when it “switches” something good for evil. It is used for good when one turns something evil into good. So the power to turn over/switch around (in Hebrew, the word ‘*hafichah*’ means to turn over, and ‘*chalifah*’ is to switch or exchange) can be used for either good or evil.

Evil Imagination: When The Goal Is Switched

In a line, there are two endpoints, and a middle point of the line. The endpoints of a line represent the different paths that lead to the middle of the line, and the middle of the line represents the center, the goal that all the paths lead to.

We can understand that people will mistakenly compare one endpoint with another endpoint, that point A on the line and point B at the other end of the line can be interchanged. As for the center point itself, however, it is impossible for it to be switched around with anything else, because there is always one center point.

The nature of our imagination is that it switches around things. It will convince a person that A is the same thing as B or that B is A, and this is how it switches around the “endpoints” of a line. But it can even go so far as to switch around the center point of the line, even though the center point has nothing it can be compared with. That is the depth of the evil of imagination: it convinces a person that the goal of life, the center point of life, can be switched around for a different goal.

The desire to eat from the *Eitz HaDaas* was essentially imagination at work, turning over the goal of life and switching it for a different goal. The *Eitz HaChaim* was in the center of the garden, because it represented the middle point, the goal that all paths on a line lead to. The *Eitz HaDaas*, by contrast, was outside of the garden, as the Ramban writes. The imagination convinced Adam and Chavah that the goal of life, the *Eitz HaChaim* [life itself, which is to truly recognize Hashem] could be switched for another goal, and that was the knowledge of the *Eitz HaDaas*.

Now we will try to make this practical, and how it applies to our own power of *daas hamis-hapeches*.

Our [evil] imagination has two abilities to “turn over”: it turns over “endpoints”, and it turns over the “middle point” as well. When we turn over endpoints, we turn over A into B, and this can be an erroneous comparison, but with this kind of comparing, at least we understand that there are endpoints. Here the mistake is that one is turning over the path to get to the goal, but he is not turning over the goal itself. But when we attempt to turn over the “central point” of the line, we turn over the goal, and this is the totally evil use of the imagination.

This is also the depth behind all heresy: when the “middle point” of the line is turned over - when the goal of life is switched for a different goal. It is to imagine a different goal of life.

As an example of this concept, Bilaam wished that he could die like a Jew; he said, “*May my end be like theirs.*” What didn’t he realize? He turned over the goal of life (to recognize Hashem) and instead came up with a new goal: an honorable death.

When someone takes something and turns it into the ultimate goal of everything, this is the depth of evil of imagination. It doesn’t matter what it is. As long as a person turns something else in his life (other than the actual goal of life itself, which is to recognize Hashem) into his greatest goal, it is evil imagination at its total level.

So we have two kinds of *medameh*, in which we imagine and “turn over” our priorities: when we turn over and switch the “endpoints” of a line with each other, and when we turn over the “middle point”/goal of life, which is even worse.

We can all see both of these abilities in ourselves. We can all be mistaken in what the goal of life is, and we can be mistaken in how to get to the goal of life. There is partial heresy, which is to be mistaken in a path, and total heresy, which is to be mistaken about the goal of life.

Our hands represent our endpoints, for they are at the ends of the body, while the mouth is at the center of man. (This is a very deep discussion to itself but we will not get into it here). The sin of Adam began with the Snake, who used its mouth to sin, which shows us that evil begins when the “central point” (represented by the mouth) is exchanged for a different “central point”.

The first kind of evil imagination (being misguided about how to get to the goal of life) is represented by the letter *kaf* of the *Aleph Beis*, for *kaf* is referred to as *kaf hadimyon*, the letter that acts a prefix to a word in order to compare things. The second kind of evil imagination (to be misguided about the goal of life) is represented by the letter *pei*, which also reads “*peh*”, mouth. We have five points in our *kaf* hand, because we have five fingers, but we have only one *peh*/mouth. This is because there can be many endpoints, but the central point is always one point.

Leaving The Evil Imagination

We began to explain that *hafichah* (turning over) leads to *chalifah* (interchanging). The question we began with was, we know how that ever since the sin of Adam, we have gone from good to evil; how can we leave that state and turn back all evil into good?

There are two parts to our power of *medameh* (imagination), as we explained. The lower function of *medameh* is referred to as *kaf* (the hands), and the higher function of *medameh* is called *peh* (the mouth).

Medameh is evil when the “center point” is turned into an endpoint; when a person thinks that the goal of life, which is to fully recognize Hashem, is just another random aspect of life, and he forgets that it is really the central point, the goal. To illustrate,

when a person is heretical, he might be aware of *emunah*, but he doesn't know it's the central point. He has taken the central point and turned it into a side point.

Good turns into evil through *medameh*. This we see from the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas*, in which *medameh* was dominant, and turned our *daas tov* into *daas ra*. We were essentially lowered from the level of “*peh*” (mouth) to the level of the “*kaf*”, represented by the hands – we fell from the goal of life, the central point, into the endpoints. Thus, the converse is true as well: in order to go from evil to good, we need to switch from the level of *kaf* to *peh*. Herein lays the outline of how we leave the evil state we fell to and to turn back over again to our original good state.

Adam, before the sin, only learned Torah. After the sin, he was cursed with work, so he was essentially lowered from the level of “mouth” to the “hands.” Thus, we need to return to the “mouth”.

Rectifying Evil Imagination: Leaving Action

That was the outline of the concept, and now we will explain this in simpler terms.

The concept that we need to return from the “hands” to the “mouth” is really because the entire power of *medameh*/imagination is based on the “hands”, which represents physical action. This is clear.

Here is an example of this concept: before the sin, there was no work. After the sin, man is cursed with work/action. So clearly, the sin caused man to become demoted to the realm of physical action, as a result of the *medameh*/imagination that man entered into after the sin. Originally we were on the level of the mouth, for Adam only learned Torah and spoke about Torah, and after the sin, mankind fell from the mouth and into the hands. Earlier, we spoke about *medameh* that takes places in our logic³³ (erroneous comparisons) and now we are discussing a lower use of *medameh*, which is when our *medameh* is used in the realm of action.

³³ In the first three chapters of “Utilizing Your Daas.”

If we ascend from the level of action to speech, then we have essentially left *medameh*, because the entire power of *medameh* in the soul thrives on action. Two actions seem similar to a person and are thus compared, and this is the root of evil *medameh*. Even the undeveloped *medameh* experienced through our logic (erroneous comparisons) is a result of *medameh* in action. Esav is also called *Edom*, from the word *medameh*, because Esav [the gentile nations of the world] represents the realm of action.

So evil *medameh* is when we have been lowered from holy action into the realm of mundane action, and by contrast, holy *medameh* is to go from the level of improper action to proper action.

Nighttime is a time when imagination is dominant, as the *sefarim hakedoshim* write. The depth of this is that because there is generally no action at nighttime, whatever one “did” by daytime in his imagination, he “does” in his sleep.

How, essentially, do we leave our fantasies? The general outline is, by leaving the realm of action. This is how we leave “*Eitz HaDaas Ra*” in the soul and enter into the *Eitz HaDaas Tov*.

Look at twins. The first twins were Kayin and Hevel, but Yaakov and Esav are the first set of twins which the Torah calls as twins. They were constantly switching roles. Yaakov was supposed to exit the womb first, then Esav fought him and came out first, then Yaakov took the firstborn rights. Esav is Edom, from the word *medameh*, who is involved with the world of action.

This is the secret behind Shabbos, when we leave work and action. It represents the concept of leaving the realm of action so we can ascend to the higher realm (which was revealed completely before the sin of Adam), which is the realm of speech. On Shabbos we are also not allowed to have mundane speech, and the reason for this is, because not only do we leave action on Shabbos, but our speech as well is sanctified. Thus, a Torah scholar, who is called “Shabbos”, does not involved himself with physical labor, for his main occupation is in the realm of Torah study, which is the true level of speech.

Leaving Imagination: Letting Go Of The Fantasies

How, essentially do we leave the evil imagination? Now we will say it very practically.

Imagination thrives on the realm of action. Therefore, we can uproot it by letting go of action. Practically speaking, when a person imagines that he should do something, he can tell himself that it hasn't been actualized yet, thus, we have taken away the "action" aspect of it. If one is very clear about this, the imagination ceases.

So a person call tell himself: **"There's nothing I can do about it to make this happen. It is impossible for me to make my imaginative thoughts happen in reality."** The soul will then be calmed when one realizes that he can't actualize what he imagines he can do.

The depth of imagination is that it settles upon some kind of action. As we have explained in the past, the power of [lower] *chochmah* is about seeing action, and [lower] *Binah* is about comparing actions. So *medameh* is only activated when there is some action involved. If you divest yourself from action, you lessen *medameh* more and more.

Thus, a Torah scholar who does not labor, has much less *medameh*, and that is why he is called "Shabbos". (Of course, sometimes even a Torah scholar is involved with action, but he "wears" it as a "garment"; this is represented by the six days of the week, which are about action. But on Shabbos itself is no physical labor, and a Torah scholar generally is not involved with actions, thus, he is called "Shabbos").

Later, we will elaborate on this concept more: that the way to turn over all evil into good is essentially by leaving the realm of action.

May we merit from Hashem to reach the higher and complete kind of *medameh*.

08 | *Rectifying Evil Imagination*

Good Da'as Is True Reality, and Evil Da'as Is Imagination

Previously, we spoke about how *daas* “turns over” information. We will continue to discuss this, *daas hamis-hapeches*.

As we explained, there is “*daas tov*” – the good kind of *daas*, which was the *daas* of the *Eitz HaChaim* (Tree of Life), to know reality. “*Daas ra*”, the evil kind of *daas*, was the *daas* that entered us after Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas* (Tree of Knowledge), and it is essentially the imagination.

Both *daas tov* and *daas ra* have the common power to “turn over” something – *daas tov* can do this for a good cause, and *daas ra* does this for an evil outcome.

These two opposing kinds of *daas* are complete opposites, and they represent how everything in Creation consists of two parts – the concept of each thing, as well as the opposite of that very concept. The opposing perspectives of *daas tov* and *daas ra* are the root of the concept of how everything is made up of both itself and its opposite.

So *daas tov* is really *havayah*/reality, and *daas ra* is the *medameh*/imagination. These two concepts, *daas tov* and *daas ra*, are the root of all opposing concepts.

Medameh/imagination, is called “*daas ra*”, evil *daas*. When a person imagines something that isn't true, what is he really doing? He's using his *daas* to turn over reality and come up with the opposite of reality.

This is also called “*sod hafachim*”, the “secret of opposites”, that on one hand, we have our *daas tov*, which is reality as it is, and on the other hand, we have a falsified reality that gets created through our “*daas ra*”.

“Oid” (More) vs. “Ad” (Until)

Now that we have explained the outline of the concept, we can reflect into the following.

The word *daas* contains the letters *daled* and *ayin*, which can either form the word *da*, to “know,” and it can also mean *ad*, “until.” The letters *daled* and *ayin* can also form the opposite of *ad*, which reads *oid*, “more.” In other words, the opposite of good *daas* is when a person wants “more”. We will explain this.

Ad (“until”) says: there are limits. *Oid* (“more”) says: there is always more. They are both rooted on the same concept, however, as we will see.

The entire concept of *medameh* (imagination) is based on *oid*, “more.” The imagination says that “more” can be added on to reality - that if something is not here in reality, we can add it on to reality.

Medameh (imagination) is associated with Yosef Hatzaddik, of whom it is written “*Oid Yosef chai*”, “Yosef is still alive.” The word “*oid*”, “more”, is alluding to the imagination, because the imagination is “more” onto reality. Yosef had dreams, and he could interpret dreams, and dreams are a form of *medameh*. *Medameh* is therefore also called “*hosafah*”, adding, from the word “*Yosef*”. There are good and evil kinds of “adding”, and the evil kind of *hosafah*/adding is *medameh*.

Thus, *medameh* is all based on wanting to add – with imagination, a person seeks to add onto things that don’t exist. Yosef, who represents the power of *medameh/ hosafah*, is also called *tzaddik yesod olam*, (the righteous foundation of the world), which refers to *holadah* (procreation), for he was faced with a test to his *kedushah* (holiness) with being tempted by Potiphar’s wife. In the body, *hosafah/holadah* is with the mitzvah of child-bearing. This is the trait of Yosef, who represents *yesod*, the foundation, the power to guard one’s personal holiness and thus sanctify the ability of procreation.

The power to add is used for holiness when it is used for the mitzvah of childbearing, which does not merely add onto reality, but it continues reality, for it is a continuation. However, the evil side to this power is *medameh*, imagination, which is a deeply rooted evil desire to become like Hashem and know of good and evil, to be “a Creator of worlds”, a power to add. The Snake convinced Adam and Chavah

through the power of *medameh*, but it was all based on *hosafah/oid*, telling them that there is “more”.

When is *hosafah* good, and when it is evil? It is good when it is used for childrearing, which starts from a droplet in the brain, and it is evil when it creates a new reality. So *medameh* is nursed from the power of *hosafah* in the soul, and this shows us how to rectify it, which we began to mention earlier.

“*Ad*” and “*oid*”, while being opposite concepts, have the same root. *Medameh* is based on *oid/hosafah*, thus, the way to repair *medameh* is by revealing “*ad*” within “*oid*”, which limits the power of “*oid*” in the soul from expanding. With *medameh*, a person is involved with the mode of *oid* in his soul. He has to come out of the mode of “*oid*” and enter into the mode of “*ad*”.

(We find that when a person is imagining, and suddenly he gets scared of something, his imagination stops. Why? It’s not because he has taken his mind off his fantasies. It is because he has entered into the mode of “*ad*” in the soul, by getting in touch with reality, which is essentially the concept of *yirah/awe*, to realize the limits of reality.)

Medameh causes a person to desire to break boundaries. The way to rectify this evil is through entering the mode of “*ad*” in the soul - to place limits. *Medameh* can only be active if you’re in the mode of *oid* in the soul, thus, the solution is to leave the viewpoint from *oid* and enter into the viewpoint of *ad*.

A Deeper Awareness

To say this in deeper terms: if you have become more clear about your soul, you are familiar with expanding and contracting the soul, and you can realize that imagination essentially makes you contract into yourself, thus, if you catch yourself imagining/contracting, the imagination ceases.

However, this can only help someone who has clarified his soul abilities and he is consciously aware of his expansions and contractions of the soul. If he’s not yet this

clear, he should just use the first, simpler solution, which is to focus on the limits of a reality. When he catches himself imagining, he should think about his surroundings, realize he is limited to reality, and this will silence his imagination, because it gives focus to the soul. Therefore, if someone has a tendency to imagine, when he catches himself imagining he should think about limits, and that will weaken his imagination.

Thus, *medameh* is based on the viewpoint of *oid* (“more”) in the soul and the way to leave it is to enter into the viewpoint of *ad* in the soul, which places limits on you and thereby helps restrict you.

What kind of *ad* should you enter into? There are many kinds of *ad*, because there are many ways how you can see limits. But the point is to **be focused in your thoughts and your vision on something that is *ad*, to think about the limits of something.** Everything had *ad* in it, because Hashem is in everything, and He has placed His limits in each thing He created.

To work on this concept, **don’t look at something endless like the sky or the ocean, because that will only increase the imagination more. Only look at things that are limited and keep yourself focused on its boundaries and how it is limited.**

This is how you rectify the *oid/medameh* in the soul: when you enter into *ad*. Soon we will explain how we leave evil *oid* and enter into a holy kind of *oid*, a concept that we mentioned earlier a little.

A Second Way To Rectify Imagination: Using The Holy Kind of “Oid”

As we have explained here, *oid/medameh* says that there is “more”, and that is why the mind desires to imagine. *Medameh*, as we explained earlier (in Chapter One), causes *dilug* (jumpiness) in the mind.

However, there is a holy way to use the power of *oid*: when the imagination is done with *seder*, orderliness. Unholy *oid* is when the *medameh* is happening through *dilug*, jumpiness, while holy *oid* is when the thought patterns of the imagination are taking

place in an orderly fashion. For example, in a dream, there is no *seder* (orderliness), just *dilug*.

Medameh causes *oid*, a “new reality” created by the mind, and even more so, it has patterns of *dilug*, with no *seder* to it.

We don't imagine something that doesn't exist – we put together images in the mind, one image on top of the other, with no *seder* to it. *Medameh* takes images in the mind and combines them randomly. It is *dilug*. It is not *yeish m'ayin*, to create something from new; it is rather *yeish m'yeish*, to create something from something already existing.

Thus, another way to leave evil *medameh* is to enter the holy kind of *medameh*, which is to leave *oid* and enter *ad*, as we mentioned. (There are also higher ways to access holy imagination, and here we have only addressed the lowest use of it).

In this way, a person leaves the evil expansion mode and enters into a good kind of expansion, otherwise known as *oid d'kedushah* - to have *seder* (orderliness) in his imagination. Therefore, when a person catches himself imagining, he should get involved with *seder*, and that will sanctify his imagination.

To work on this practically, when you catch yourself imagining, try counting 1, 2, 3, 4, and so forth, and this trains you to get used to *seder* within your *medameh*. You can take a paper and write down numbers in order, or you can count the *sefarim* on the shelf. This weakens the evil imagination, because evil imagination thrives on *dilug*, as we explained.

When you enter into *seder*, you weaken *dilug* of the mind. To give a simple example of this concept, we can see that a person with *seder* in his life has much less *medameh* going on. His mind is less jumpy, because he is used to more orderliness in his life, so there isn't much room for the imagination to take hold on him.

So far, we have explained two ways of how to leave evil *medameh*: through entering into the viewpoint of *ad* in the soul (accessed by focusing on the limits of something), and through *oid d'kedushah*, by giving order to your thoughts, via the act of counting in an orderly manner.

A Third Method of Rectifying Imagination: Using The Power of 'Hosafah'

A third way to leave evil *medameh* is, through the power of “*hosafah*” that we mentioned. There are good and evil ways of how to use this power. “*Hosafah*” is evil when it is used for evil imagination, and it is holy as follows.

Reality, which is called *havayah*, is really endless. What is the difference between *havayah*, which is endless (also called the *Ein Sof*/Endlessness) and *medameh*/imagination, which is also endless? The *Ein Sof* is “to hold onto a little of *achdus* and then you have everything,” as the Baal Shem Tov said. In other words, the entire *Ein Sof* is all contained in one point. But *oid*, or *medameh*/imagination, says that reality keeps expanding - not that everything is here in this point. So the *Ein Sof* is one *havayah* that contains everything.

To illustrate, a chair is not a table, whereas the *havayah* of the *Ein Sof* is one point that contains everything in it. But *medameh* is another kind of *havayah*, a *havayah* that keeps expanding – *oid, oid, oid*, more, more and more.

The root of *medameh*, as we explained, is rooted in the idea of “*oid*”. But there is a more inner root of *medameh*: that it creates “*hipuch*” - it turns over realities. “*Hipuch*” doesn't mean you turn something into a new thing; it means to give a new face (*panim chadashos*) to something.

Everything in Creation has all the “faces” of reality in it, because there is only one *havayah* in Creation, and it is just that *havayah* has many facets to it. We see a “world of disparity” in front of us (*alma d'piruda*), in that we see many faces of reality, but there is still only one *havayah*/reality.

This is the depth behind the concept of *daas hamis-hapeches* (which we began to discuss in the previous chapter), which is the power of imagination: it turns over *havayah* and gives it other “faces”.

If someone understands this well, he knows the secret of all creations – that there is only one *havayah* (Hashem), and there are just many faces to the same *havayah*.

Thus, imagination thinks of new realities, because it's really all 'faces' of the same reality. If we look at imagination in this way, we can use imagination for holiness and thus rectify the evil of the imagination.

These are subtle matters.

Rectifying Imagination Through Using "Havayah" (Comparing Imagination To Reality)

The depth of *medameh* is that there is only one *havayah* and that it can have many faces to it, therefore, I can be *medameh* (fantasize) it. The secret of all of creation is that it is all one *havayah*. The word *oid* simply means *oid*, more, but it can also mean *gam*, "also" – another side to the same reality.

So the root of *medameh* is not just coming from the mode of *oid* in the soul; that's already the second step. The first root of *medameh* is from the one *havayah* that binds everything together, which enables *medameh*.

When this concept is used for holiness, it is "*adameh l'Elyon*", to resemble the Creator. When it is used for evil, it is to create new realities – *panim chadashos*, "new faces", which is the power of evil *medameh*/imagination.

This is also the root behind the concept of *kefirah* (heresy). Heresy is to deny *havayah*. So holy *medameh* is to realize that *havayah* includes everything, and evil *medameh* is to come up with new realities. *Medameh* denies the first *havayah* and comes up with a new *havayah*.

Therefore, "good" *medameh* doesn't come up with something new. It is not simply to channel the evil kind of imagination for holiness. It is a whole different kind of imagination; it means to imagine that Hashem exists, to imagine that there is a *Beis HaMikdash* – to imagine something that already exists. We don't see a *Beis HaMikdash* revealed, but we can connect to it in our imagination, because the *Beis HaMikdash* still exists in the inner realms that we don't see.

Based on this understanding, evil *medameh* is to imagine something that does not exist. If someone merely channels the evil kind of imagination towards a holy purpose, this is not the true meaning of holy imagination, because as we have explained, evil and holy imagination are two totally different concepts of imagination.

Thus, to leave evil *medameh*, one can imagine the reality itself, and that destroys his imagined reality. For example, when Yosef was tempted, he imagined the image of his father. He didn't just create a new image. When he saw his father's image, his entire imagination fell.

This is a subtle matter. The idea is to **compare the first imaginative thought with the second imaginative thought, realizing what the reality is, and this realization will cause the first imaginative thought to cease.**

In Summary

Thus, *daas hamis-hapeches* can be used on a deeper level to turn *medameh* into *havayah*. How do we leave *medameh*? The three ways we mentioned were: through the power of “*ad*”, through the power of “*oid d'kedushah*”, and through the power of *havayah*. The third solution (*havayah*) is essentially to recognize how to use holy *medameh*: to understand that even *medameh* is really part of *havayah*. Holy *medameh* is really the *p'nim* (essence) of the *havayah*. *Medameh* is to give new *panim*/face to something, and *havayah* is the *pnim* of reality.

Thus, from a deeper understand, it is not that “*daas tov*” is *havayah* and that “*daas ra*” is *medameh*. According to this approach, *havayah* and *medameh* are not opposite viewpoints; rather, *medameh* is seen as part of *havayah*; the imagination is returned to reality. If we understand this, we can proceed to the next point.

Opposites Bear The Same Root

There is a rule that all opposites bear the same root. As the Maharal writes, the words *geulah* (redemption) and *galus* (exile) bear the same root: “*gal*”, to reveal –

because both the redemption and the exile are forms of revelation. They are just different forms of revelation. Why, indeed, do opposites share the same root? [We will explain as we go along].

With *medameh*, I can imagine something that does not exist. But to say it deeper, all *havayah* contains everything, because *medameh* is also part of *havayah*. It seems that *medameh* begins where *havayah* ends. But the root of *medameh* is that it is part of the *havayah*.

For example, there are the opposites of Yaakov and Esav, and there is the opposites of Adam (whom Yaakov is compared to) and there is Edom (another term for Esav). When Yaakov and Esav got older, their differences became apparent, but at first, they were one *havayah*. Therefore, at their root, Yaakov and Esav are called “brothers”. Thus, all of *havayah* includes its opposite – which is its *medameh*.

Evil *medameh* is also called “*achor*” (the view from the back), and holy *medameh* is when it is revealed that *achor* is only a “*pnim*” (inside). The view of *achor* is related to the word “*acher*”, other, because when one has a view only from the back, he sees another person as “another”. The view from the *panim* (the front) says that the person you see is Reuven, while seeing the back of Reuven’s head tells you that it’s just someone else, because you can’t recognize him from the back.

But if we use the view of *achor* to reveal *panim*, then one can reveal the *panim* of Reuven even when I see his back. This is called the “*sod h’achdus*”, the secret of oneness, that can be reached through *medameh*. Thus, the root of all opposites is always one root. All of *havayah*, including the imagined reality of *medameh*, is always part of the root. Everything has something it looks like – a table looks like another table, and that is a partial level of *medameh*. The general level of *medameh* is that mankind is either “*adam*” (ideal state of man) or “*edom*” (evil state of man, in which man follows his fantasies). But they are all rooted in one *havayah*.

In the future this will be revealed to all, so we cannot use this point practically in our times. But this concept, that *havayah* includes everything, is the deepest advice to overcome evil *medameh*.

Returning Medameh To “Havayah”

To practically access this deep power, **look at everything as being rooted in one *havayah*. In everything you see, think about its opposite, and then think how it is rooted in one *havayah*, and this will uproot your evil *medameh*.**

When the view from “*achor*” is turned into “*panim*”, when you see everything as being two sides of the same coin, this uproots the *medameh*; this because *medameh* is all about another reality, and when you view *medameh* as part of the *havayah*, the problem is solved at its root.

So the entire power of *medameh* gets its strength from “*dovor v’hipucho*”, seeing something and its opposite; when you see the connection between the two opposite concepts in a *dovor v’hipucho*, there is no place for *medameh*; it is when you see the *panim* and *achor* of something as being two sides of the same coin. In the future, we will realize that “we were like dreamers”³⁴ - we will realize that “*achor*”/*medameh* is really just another “*panim*” (facet) of *havayah*. This will completely remove *medameh*.

To practically work on this, **look at each thing and see what its opposite is, and then remind yourself that they are rooted in one root, for there are always two sides of the same coin.**

This concept, seeing “*dovor v’hipucho*” (something and its opposite) and thereby returning each thing to its *havayah*, is the deepest way to fix evil *medameh*.

³⁴ *Tehillim* 126:1

09 | Nullifying Your Da'as

Da'as and Bittul (Nullification)

With the help of Heaven, we are learning about the concept of *da'as*. Let us explore here a particular aspect of *da'as*, which is a multi-faceted topic. We find a common term used by our Sages: “He nullifies his *da'as* to all people.”³⁵

There is an ability we have that even when we disagree with how others think, we can still nullify our way of thinking to others. From where does a person derive the strength to have this ability of *bittul* (self-nullification) to others?

Three Kinds of Bittul

We find several kinds of *bittul*. There is a concept of *bittul* when it comes to a mixture of food (a *ta'aruvos*), where part of the food can be “nullified by a sixtieth”, or by the majority. There can only be *bittul* where there is a mixture; if something does not mix with something else in the first place, there can be no *bittul* on it.

There is *bittul* when it comes to mixtures, but there is also another kind of *bittul* we find: When something becomes nullified to something else. An example of this is when part of a *sukkah* is considered “nullified” to the ground; the *halachah* is that a *sukkah* higher than 20 cubits high is invalid for use, and the Gemara says that if we want to make it kosher, there are ways to cause part of the *sukkah* to be nullified to the ground, and then it is considered to be less than 20 cubits high.

But what does it mean that a person can nullify his *da'as* to others? We all have a certain *da'as*. How do we nullify our own *da'as* to others? Making the question stronger, the Gemara says that “Just as all faces are not equal, so are all *de'os* (ways of thinking) not equal.”³⁶ Each person has a different kind of *da'as*, a different way of

³⁵ *Berachos 35a; Shabbos 70a*

³⁶ *Berachos 58a*

thinking. So if each of our *da'as* is different from one another, how are we able to nullify our *da'as* to others? What would cause a person to nullify his *da'as* to another?

Da'as Requires Connection To The Da'as of Others

We must conclude that our ability of *da'as* is not an ability that stands on its own. Our *da'as* stems from a mixture, from a giant pool of a more collective understanding, and from there, each person receives his own unique *da'as*. And since our *da'as* comes from a mixture of all the many different *de'os* (opinions/ways of thinking) of others, it follows then that we can nullify our *da'as* to the *da'as* of others, because our *da'as* is ultimately connected with others.

The source of *da'as* is in the *Eitz HaDa'as Tov V'Ra* (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil), which contained a mixture of both “*da'as tov*” (good and holy *da'as*) and “*da'as ra*” (evil *da'as*). From this we can see that all *da'as* comes from a mixture. This further proves the idea we are saying that the ability of *da'as* is not an ability that stands by itself, since all *da'as* is coming from a mixture that involves other kinds of *da'as*.

Another proof to this is that the Torah writes, “And Adam knew (“*vayeida*”) Chavah”, and here the word *vayeida*, a use of the word *da'as*, is referring to connection to another. This further shows us that *da'as* is always about connecting; *da'as* is never found alone and by itself. We can now understand with greater depth why each person’s *da'as* is different: because *da'as* can only be “*da'as*” in the first place when viewed in relation to others. Therefore, by its very concept, *da'as* has to be unique with each person.

When one cannot understand others’ thinking, he is all by himself and wrapped up in his own way of thinking, and such “*da'as*” is not real “*da'as*”. The ability of *chochmah* (wisdom) in the soul can be considered “*chochmah*” even if one does not understand the *chochmah* of others, but there is no such thing as having *da'as* one when is all alone in his own *da'as* and he cannot accept the *da'as* of others. Thus, we can now understand the depth of why a person can nullify his *da'as* to others: it is

because our *da'as* really stems from a place of connection with others. *Da'as* is always connecting outward from itself; it is never by itself.

To give an example, the Gemara says that every time a person betroths a woman, he is doing so based on the *da'as* of the Sages. Here again we see that *da'as* depends on others. If *da'as* would be by itself, my *da'as* would depend solely on my own *da'as*, and it would not depend on the *da'as* of the Sages. But since *da'as* is never by itself and it is always about connection, my *da'as* depends on a greater *da'as* that is beyond my own *da'as*. We also find that Betzalel was blessed with the ability of *da'as* to make the Mishkan; the Torah writes that he is called “*yodeia l'tzoref*”, “the one who knows how to connect”, implying that *da'as* is the ability to connect outward.

We have brought many examples that illustrate the idea that *da'as* is not a trait that exists by itself; *da'as* always connects outward, in order for it to function. This is the underlying essence that describes the entire concept of *da'as*.

The Connection Between Da'as and Bittul

Now we can understand how *da'as* enables a person to feel *bittul* (nullification) towards others. *Bittul* gets its strength from *da'as*. This is because our *da'as* depends on others' *da'as* in order for it to function; it is always connecting to other *de'os*. Each person's *da'as* is different, so how are we able to connect to others? Only through a *bittul* of our *da'as*.

Without being able to have *bittul* on our *da'as*, we would never be able to connect to others. We would be disagreeing with others all day and no one would be friends, because no one would know how to nullify themselves to others when there is a difference of opinion. But since *da'as* is all about connecting to other *de'os*, our *da'as* enables us to connect to others and have *bittul* to others.

Previously, we mentioned that the word *da'as* has the same letters as the word *oid* (more).³⁷, and now we add on another implication behind this: it hints to us that *da'as*

³⁷ See previous chapter

works when we connect to “more” than ourselves – when we nullify ourselves to others. So *bittul* enables *da’as* to thrive. If not for the ability of *bittul*, our *da’as* cannot function.

Another Difference Between Holy and Evil Da’as

Now we can understand better what “*da’as tov*” (good and holy *da’as*) is and what “*da’as ra*” (evil *da’as*) is, a concept we have begun to explain in previous chapters³⁸: “*Da’as tov*” is when I can have *bittul* on my *da’as* for others, whereas *da’as ra* is when I remain with my own *da’as* and I cannot nullify it to others.

Da’as tov is all about connection; *da’as ra* is all about disparity. *Da’as tov* connects *de’os* together, while *da’as ra* places each person’s *da’as* into a separate compartment, where there is no connection to other *de’os*. Upon a deeper look, *da’as ra* is not true *da’as*, because it doesn’t allow for *bittul*, and that is why such *da’as* cannot really thrive. This is essentially the “evil” itself that is contained in *da’as ra*: its unwillingness to accept the *da’as* of others. So *da’as tov* is always connecting to the *da’as* of others and nullifying itself, while *da’as ra* cannot cause connection and it only furthers disparity.

Nullifying one’s *da’as* to another is a kind of *da’as* that can connect to others; a *da’as* that understands that all *de’os* are really connected at their root, for it recognizes that all *de’os* are really connected under one unit. Therefore, the concept of being able to nullify your *da’as* to another is not simply so that you should nullify yourself to that certain person, but because we understand that all *de’os* are ultimately connected to each other. So although each person’s *da’as* is different, all the many *de’os* of are connected at their root, and that is why we should nullify our *da’as* to all people.

Thus, *da’as tov* is where a person’s *da’as* is causing him to connect to the *da’as* of others (and on the broader scale of things, when each person does this, it is a *da’as* that

³⁸ See *Utilizing Your Da’as* chapters 04, 07, and 08

unifies us all together), whereas *da'as ra* is a kind of *da'as* where each person's unique way of thinking causes him to be apart from another.

Now we can have a better understanding of the aspects of “*tov*” (good) and *ra* (evil) contained in *da'as*.

Two Sources of Connection: Ahavah/Love and Da'as

What is the power in our soul that fosters connection to others? The simple answer is the power of *ahavah* (love). That is true, but there is also another power in the soul that enables connection: *da'as*. These are two different sources of connection to others, and they are not the same mode of connection.³⁹

It is clear to us that *ahavah*/love connects us to others, but how does our *da'as* connect us to others? It seems that *da'as* is something that separates us from each other, being that we all have a different *da'as*. But this is only true when we view the external layer of *da'as* – the fact that we all have a certain way of thinking. In this aspect, we are certainly different from one another, and this does not connect us to others. But when we view the inner layer of *da'as*, we can see how *da'as* really connects us all together. We will explain.

Let's understand how *ahavah*/love causes connection to others, and how *da'as* causes connection to others, and the difference between these two kinds of connection.

We mentioned the concept that at our root, all *de'os* are connected. But what is it that actually connects us all together? Simply speaking, it is because there is only one true *Da'as* that exists [the recognition of Hashem], and we are all nullified to that *Da'as*. All *de'os* can be nullified to that *da'as*, no matter how much of each of the *de'os* differ from other, because ultimately, we all agree to that one *Da'as* that we are united under. That is one way of how we can see that all *de'os* are connected.

³⁹ For more on the difference between connection based on *ahavah*/love and connection based on *daas*, see *Getting To Know Your Thoughts – Chapter 08*.

But there is a more subtle way of explaining how all the *de'os* are connected. It lies in the understanding of the difference between how *ahavah* causes connection to others and how *da'as* causes connection to others. With *ahavah*, I love another, but I am not nullified to him. But if I connect to another out of my *da'as*, I can nullify myself to him.

This can also be explained in terms of *ahavah* (love) and *yirah* (awe). *Ahavah* connects two people together, and *yirah* nullifies each person to the other. For example, a person of lesser stature must have *yirah* towards one who is greater than him; he must nullify himself to him. There is also a concept of a greater person nullifying his own *da'as* to a person who is of lesser stature than him.

So *ahavah* connects two people together, and *yirah* nullifies each person to the other; it nullifies the smaller person to the greater person. But with *da'as*, even the greater person is nullified to the smaller person. Thus, it is *da'as/bittul* which connects all people together.

We have explained thus far there are two ways of how *da'as* connects everyone together, in spite of the fact that each person's *da'as* is different. One way to explain it is because all people are ultimately nullified to one *da'as*. The other way of understanding how it works is that when there is *bittul* in each person's *da'as* to the *da'as* of others.

Bittul is not limited to when a smaller person nullifies himself to a greater person, being that he understands that the greater person knows more than him. The Sages state that in certain cases, a greater person should know how to nullify his understanding to a person with lesser understanding.⁴⁰ To clarify, I should know how to have *bittul* to others not because I must learn how to see the truth in others' thinking. Even if I don't see a truthful way of thinking in others, my *da'as* can still enable me to nullify myself their thinking.

⁴⁰ Editor's Note: Perhaps the source for this is the Mishnah in Avos, "I have learned much from my teachers, and even more from my friends, and from my students, I have learned the most."

Two Ways of How To Reach Da'as

Until now, we have explained two ways of how our *da'as* enables us to connect to others. Now let us understand a deeper point about *da'as*.

We have been discussing here concepts that can apply very practically in our life. Now we will see how these concepts can practically apply in our own life: there is a way for one to reach the holy and true kind of *da'as* - by nullifying his own *da'as* to others.

There are essentially two ways to reach the power of *da'as*. One way is to reach *da'as* is by constantly trying to get to the truth of a matter and to keep refining how well we understand something [when it comes to our Torah learning]. We keep digging deeper and deeper and probing our understanding, in order to get to the truthful understanding of the matter.⁴¹ This is one way of how we can reach *da'as*.

But another way to reach *da'as* is by nullifying our *da'as* to the *da'as* of others; by accepting that others also have their own way of thinking. When one has nullified his own understanding to others, he has become connected to others, and since all others are united under collective *da'as* as a whole, the person who has nullified his *da'as* receives *da'as* from the higher source that all of the *de'os* are connected to.

This is not just another aspect contained in the concept of *da'as*. It is the very way to reach *da'as*! When one nullifies himself to another's *da'as*, even when he disagrees with him, not only has he learned to accept what another says; he receives an illumination of spiritual light, a higher *da'as*, in connecting with the other's *da'as*. He receives it because he has essentially nullified himself to it - by nullifying his own *da'as* to another's *da'as*.

Higher Da'as

There is also a third, deeper way to reach *da'as*. *Da'as* touches upon the highest spiritual dimension, which is referred to as the plane of “*echad*” (oneness). There are

⁴¹ See *Getting To Know Your Thoughts – Chapters 02, 03, 04*

external and inner layers to *da'as*. The external layers of *da'as* are many, but at the inner layer of *da'as*, it is entirely one point of *da'as*.

The Gemara says that there were three instances in which Hashem's *da'as* agreed with Moshe's *da'as*. The depth of this is that Moshe's *da'as* was united with Hashem's *da'as*. That is how Moshe reached Hashem's *da'as*. It is not simply that Moshe did something and then Hashem agreed, *chas v'shalom*. Rather, it means that Moshe's *da'as* reached such a high level that it touched upon the very oneness of Hashem. Moshe's *da'as* became intertwined with Hashem's *da'as* and that is how Hashem's *da'as* "agreed" with Moshe's *da'as*.

We find a reoccurring theme that the concept of *da'as* is usually associated with the number three⁴². Moshe used his *da'as* three times where Hashem's *da'as* agreed. The understanding of this is because when there are two points, a third point in the middle serves to connect them. But even though *da'as* causes three points to occur, it stems from one point; it is rooted in a place of oneness. The root of *da'as* is always one point, for *da'as* is rooted in "*echad*".

Thus, we can now have a deeper understanding of how all *de'os* are connected together: because there is only one true *da'as* in the world, and all *de'os* are connected to that point.

The Gemara says that one of the students of Rabbi Meir said he never saw the end of Rabbi Meir's *da'as* until after forty years of understanding him. What is the difference between the beginning of Rabbi Meir's *da'as* and the end of *da'as*? The beginning of *da'as* is when it is in three points, and the end of *da'as* is when it is one point.

To be clearer about this, at the lower plane, which is our current dimension of understanding, *da'as* forms three points; thus there are "many" *de'os*. But on the higher plane of reality, *da'as* is entirely one point. On this world, we see many *de'os*;

⁴² Editor's Note: There are also "three" kinds of *da'as*: *da'as d'havdalah*, *da'as d'hachraah*, and *da'as d'chibbur* – see *Utilizing Your Da'as* chapters 01-03

everyone has different opinions and different ways of thinking. But on the higher plane of reality, there is only one *da'as*.

The *de'os* on this world are many; people disagree. In the Gemara, we find many disagreements of our Sages, and it seems to us that one of them must be the correct opinion while the other is wrong. But the Gemara says, “*Their words, and their words, are the words of the living G-d*” – that even if one of the Sages says a certain *halachah* is forbidden and the other Sages says it is permissible, Hashem is learning their words in Heaven and He is saying, “They are both correct.”⁴³ This is because in the higher plane of reality, there is a higher *da'as*, in which there many arguments in the words of our Sages do not have to imply that only one opinion is the correct one; rather, all of the *de'os* are true, because their *da'as* is connected to their higher root, which is a place of oneness.

Because we live on this lower plane of reality, we must decide between two opposing *de'os*. This is because we live in a “world of action”, and we must know how to act, therefore, we have no choice but to “decide” between the two different *de'os* on how to act. But even so, we must know that above in Heaven, Hashem agrees with all of the *de'os* of our Sages, because all of their *da'as* is rooted in His oneness.

“Higher *da'as*” is not about knowing what the *halachah* is in case where there are two differing *de'os* of our Sages and to decide which opinion is the most truthful. Rather, higher *da'as* is to see the matter in all of its totality, to see all its dimensions; to see above the matter and below the matter, to see in front of the matter and behind it as well.⁴⁴

In contrast, “lower *da'as*” sees certain parts of the situation; it only sees divisions, and from that viewpoint, it decides what the truthful understanding should be.

Arguments are called *machlokes*, from the word *cheilek*, “part”, because when there is a *machlokes*, each person is only seeing certain parts of the situation, and not the

⁴³ *Gittin 6b*

⁴⁴ *Editor's Note: In other places, the Rav has mentioned that the spiritual dimension contains six directions: north, east, south, west, above, and below.*

totality of the matter. Lower *da'as* contains many different *de'os*, and therefore there is *machlokes* in the lower plane of reality that we live on, because each person's *da'as* sees different "parts" of a situation.

Korach argued with Moshe. As is well-known, Moshe represents *da'as*. Korach saw only a part of the situation; thus he thought he could argue with the *da'as* of Moshe, because he perceived the *da'as* of Moshe only through his 'partial' understanding; thus he didn't see the total picture. He argued with Moshe's *da'as* because he had only a divided kind of *da'as* which could only see divisions.

By contrast, when a person has reached higher *da'as*, he sees the totality of the situation, and not just certain parts of the situation. Higher *da'as* can understand that something can either be forbidden or permissible.

Of course, there is no such thing as one person who can say that something is forbidden and permissible at once; each person must have his own *da'as* towards a matter that he sticks to, otherwise he contradicts himself. But one person can say it is forbidden and another can say it is permissible, and they can both be right in Heaven - from the viewpoint of higher *da'as*.

In summary, the difference between "lower *da'as*" and "higher *da'as*" is, that "higher *da'as*" sees all the dimensions of a matter, whereas "lower *da'as*" sees one "part" of a situation, and decides from there.

Applying "Higher Da'as" To Our Torah Learning

When we only use our "lower *da'as*" as we analyze a matter in the Torah, we are either separating or deciding in the information; these are the abilities of *da'as d'havdalah* and *da'as d'hachraah* which we have learned about previously. But if we remain at that level, we will only have a partial and divided understanding towards the matter, which is incomplete. But if we access the understanding of higher *da'as* – which is essentially the depth behind the power of *da'as d'chibbur* – then we can see all of the dimensions to the matter, as opposed to seeing just certain parts of the matter.

The Depth of Exile and Redemption

Today there are many *de'os* in the world; there is much arguing and there are so many different opinions that people have. But in the time of the future redemption, there will be oneness, and all *de'os* will be unified. In today's times, each person sees something else in the very same thing. This defines the depth of exile: we can only see partially, as we are in exile. In the redemption, we will see things in their totality.

Summary of The Three Ways To Nullify Our Da'as

This is the depth behind the concept of nullifying our *da'as* to all others. To summarize, we have explained three ways of how to nullify our *da'as*.

The first way we explained is when one is concerned to get to the truth of the matter, and he keeps refining his understanding until he gets to the truthful understanding. The second way is to actually nullify ourselves to others' *da'as*, and this enables us to receive the collective *da'as* that we are all connected to. The third way we have explained is that nullifying ourselves to others' *da'as* means to nullify ourselves in the sense that we all realize our mutual connection to each other.

The third way, which is the deepest method of all them, is essentially a yearning for the higher *da'as*. It is not simply because there is one *da'as* that unites all our *de'os* together. Rather, all of our many *de'os* are part of one reality. This is the perfected level of *da'as*, and it is the depth of nullifying our *da'as* to all others.

Da'as That Is Unwilling To Nullify Itself: Imagination

There are many *de'os* in the world. When are our *de'os* nullified to others, and when are they not nullified to others? When one's *da'as* is genuine, when his opinion is valid, such as *da'as* is a part of the collective *da'as*, in which all *de'os* are valid. But if one's *da'as* is apart from any of the *de'os* in the collective *da'as*, such *da'as* is not valid *da'as*, because it has no part in the higher plane of reality, and therefore it has no place on this lower plane of reality either.

What is such *da'as*, then? It is not *da'as*; so what is it, and where does it come from, if it is not *da'as*? It can only be *da'as ra*! We have explained in the past that *da'as ra* is synonymous with the concept of *medameh* (imagination)⁴⁵, which is actually not a genuine kind of *da'as*.

To explain more the difference, if my *da'as* is part of the collective *da'as*, it is valid *da'as*, even if my *da'as* differs with others. In the future redemption, the *da'as* of each person will be recognized; all *de'os* will be seen as valid, for all *de'os* will be seen as part of the collective whole of *da'as*. In our current times, one's opinion has no validity if it differs with the majority, but in the higher dimension, it is still regarded as valid, and this will be fully revealed in the future. But if one's *da'as* is not part of the collective *da'as* [as we explained, this is when he doesn't know how to have *bittul* on his *da'as*], such *da'as* is "*da'as ra*" – evil *daas* – which is *medameh*/imagination. This kind of "*da'as*" is "nullified" to others in the sense that it is totally disregarded, for it is cannot be valid.

Our Initial Level of Da'as Is Stemming From "Medameh"

Let us now return to the original question we began with. What causes us to nullify our understanding to others? In summary, we explained three different approaches.

One reason is when a person is concerned to get to the truthful understanding. The second reason is because the very concept of *da'as* requires *bittul* in order for it to function. The third reason is because just as *medameh* is considered nullified; for it is disregarded and apt to be destroyed. This is based on the verse, "*We were like dreamers*", which implies that in the future, we will realize how we lived in a dream-like reality, like when we wake up from a dream and we realize that it wasn't real. Imagination ends up destroying itself; imagination is only a temporary state, and eventually, it disappears.

⁴⁵ In *Utilizing Your Daas_04_Separating The Imagination*

Based upon the above, we can now conclude with a deeper understanding of how our *da'as* is nullified to all others: our current level of *da'as* is stemming from *medameh*, and therefore, it is “nullified” – it is disregarded when contrasted with reality. However, we can ask: If imagination is only temporary and it eventually destroys itself, why is it that there are many fantasies in the world that people have, which continue to remain? Why aren't those fantasies disappearing?

But it is because those fantasies only exist so long as they aren't contrasted with the *de'os* of others. Once we compare the fantasy with the *da'as* of others, the reality of *da'as* will prove how the imagination is false, and the imagination is cleared up.

Using Our Da'as To Sort Out The Imagination

As long as a person has never yet reached *da'as*, he is missing the ability to sort out his fantasies and clear them. When a person begins to use his abilities of *da'as d'havdalah* and *da'as d'hachraah*, he is able to differentiate and decide; he can decide between what his *chochmah*/intellect is telling him and what his *medameh*/imagination is telling him; he can throw out the imagination and listen to reality. Thus, our *da'as* is nullified to others only when our *da'as* is deciding between listening to intellect/reality over imagination. Nullifying our *da'as* therefore refers to our ability of *da'as* to clear out the imagination and “nullify” it.

On a deeper note, nullifying our *da'as* to others requires a higher revelation from Above. Without this revelation, we aren't able to nullify our *da'as*, because our *medameh* will dominant and it won't let there be *bittul* on our *da'as*. Only when we have a revelation of the higher *da'as* can we nullify our own *da'as*. Thus, nullifying our *da'as* to others can only be accomplished when we nullify our *medameh*/imagination.

Acting “Based Upon The Da'as of Tzaddikim”

There is a well-known matter that a person is able to do certain action based upon the *da'as* of the *tzaddikim*, based upon the words of the Gemara that when one

betroths a woman, he is doing so based upon the *da'as* of the Sages. For example, before a person is about to perform a certain deed, he can think, “I am doing so based on the *da'as* of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai”, etc. This custom is brought in our *sefarim hakedoshim*. What is the depth behind this custom? It is an attempt to clear out our *medameh*/imagination and connect it to the higher, holier *da'as*.

It is well-known matter to do actions “based upon the *da'as*” of certain *tzaddikim*, but here we have explained the depth behind it. Without being aware of this point, a person will just be acting out of a place of imagination in himself when he does the act. But by being aware that one is acting upon the *da'as* of a holy person, this is the depth of nullifying his own *da'as* to others, and this clears up his *medameh*/imagination. It connects his *da'as* to the perfect and higher *Da'as* that connects all *de'os* together.

10 | Dimensions of Daas

Four Kinds of Anger: Four Kinds of “De’os”

We are learning, with the help of Heaven, about the power of *da’as* (understanding).

The *Mishnah* in *Avos*⁴⁶ states that there are four *middos* (character traits) of “*de’os*” (beliefs): “One who is easily angered and easy to please, one who is easily angered and difficult to appease, one who is difficult to be angered and difficult to appease, and who is difficult to be angered and easily appeased.” The *Mishnah* is describing four kinds of anger, and categorizes them as “*de’os*” (beliefs). These four kinds of anger are all *middos* that are within the category of “*de’os*” - a use of the word *da’as*.

The *Mishnah* states that the trait of being “slow to anger” is called “*erech apayim*”, whereas being easily angered is the trait of “*ketzar ruach*”, (short of breath). What is the connection, though, between *daas* with being slow or quick to anger?

Let us reflect into what is contained in these words of our Sages, and then we can have a better understanding about our very own *da’as*.

Different Levels of Da’as

We find in the words of our Sages that there are several levels when it comes to the quality of one’s *da’as*.

One example is, “Women have light *da’as*”.⁴⁷ Regarding a deaf person, the Gemara says, “A deaf person has weak *da’as*”⁴⁸, and the Gemara there has an argument if the *da’as* of a deaf person is able to work clearly or not. Both of these kinds of *da’as* (“light *da’as*” and “weak *da’as*”) are an incomplete kind of *daas*.

On a different note, the Sages said that “Three things give a person *yishuv hada’as* (a settled mind): a [pleasant] sound, a [pleasant] sight, and a pleasant scent.”⁴⁹ *Yishuv hadaas* can also mean a “return” of one’s *daas*, as if he has previously lost it and he is now retrieving it, through these three

⁴⁶ *Avos* 5:1

⁴⁷ *Kiddushin* 80b

⁴⁸ “*daas kelushah*” – see *Yevamos* 113a.

⁴⁹ *Berachos* 57b

things. Similarly, the above-quoted Gemara also adds on that there are three things which give a person *harchavas da'as*, an “expanded” mind: a beautiful home, a beautiful wife, and beautiful utensils.

So far, we have brought from the words of the Gemara there are different levels of *daas*: (1) “Light” *daas*⁵⁰, (2) “Weak” *daas*⁵¹, (3) “Settled\returned” *daas*, (4) “Expanded” *daas*.

Each of these kinds of *daas* merits its own discussion, but the point we see from all of this is that there are different levels of *da'as*. The lower levels of *da'as* are called “light *daas*” and “weak *daas*”, and these can graduate to the level of “settled” and “expanded” *da'as*. Each of these are levels are also present in our own *da'as*.

Length, Width, and Depth of Da'as

The *Mishnah* quoted earlier from Tractate *Avos* lists four kinds of anger, which are termed by the *Mishnah* as four different kinds “*de'os*”, beliefs. A person who is “slow to anger” is called “*erech apayim*”. The word “*erech*” is from the word “*orach*”, which means “length.” This shows us that there is a “**lengthening**” of *da'as*.

Earlier, we mentioned the term “*harchavas hadaas*” (expansion of the mind) used by our Sages as well. This is from the word “*rochav*”, “width.” So there can also be “**widening**” of *da'as*. Thus, *da'as* is more complete when it has “length” and when it has “width”.

There is also a third dimension of *da'as* that we find, which is called “*omek*”, depth. This means that one can “**deepen**” his *daas*. So, altogether, there is “width”, “length”, and “depth” within our power of *da'as* – one can either ‘widen’, ‘lengthen’, or ‘deepen’ his *daas*.

What is the difference between the concepts of width, length, and depth? Simply speaking, the differences are in how they expand dimensionally: width expands in a horizontal direction, length expands vertically, and depth is where length and width expands into a three-dimensional plane. But what we really mean to ask is: How are these different perspectives, different kinds of *de'os*? What is the difference between the different viewpoints that we can see from the length, width, or depth that is within our power of *da'as*?

50 “Light *daas*” is the subject of the next chapter (#011)

51 “Weak *daas*” is explained in chapter #012

‘Lengthening’ Our Daas

It is written, “*Longer than the earth in measure, and wider than the sea.*”⁵² Why is length represented by the land, and why is width represented by the sea?

We first need to know what the conceptual difference is between length and width. Length enables an expansion that goes beyond boundaries, whereas width is an expansion within the boundaries. Length is called “*maarich*”, and we find the term “*maarich af*”, to “delay anger”, which is similar to the term *erech apayim*, “slow to anger”. The term “*af*” also can mean the “nose”. The nose is the part of the body which sticks out the furthest from the body. The widest part of the body is the shoulder, whereas the longest part of the body is the nose. Length expands beyond limitations. When one is *maarich af*, when he delays his anger towards someone, one is essentially expanding his boundaries towards the other person [by being more patient].

This also a deeper reason why length usually takes up a greater amount of space than width [for example, the length of an item will usually be longer than the width of an item]. Width is an expansion within its own borders - whereas length stretches beyond its borders and expands them.

Thus, the “length” of something is when one is *maarich* it, when he expands beyond the current borders. When one has *erech apayim*, when he delays anger, he is being *maarich*, he is “lengthening” and expanding his borders, for someone else.

‘Widening’ Our Daas

In contrast, width does not expand beyond its current space, and it is rather an expansion within its own space. To illustrate this idea, the Sages said that Hashem first filled the world with water, and then Hashem gathered all of the water into one place. What happened? The water lost all of its length, and it remained only with its width. Although there is a statement of the Sages that there are “endless waters”⁵³ of the world, can we say that the waters of the world are actually endless? The water is confined to its place and it cannot get past the land, so it is contained. Therefore, the waters of the world are not truly endless. Since the waters of the world represent the idea of “width”, we see that “width” can only expand within its own space, but it cannot expand past its current space, just like the oceans and seas.

In the words of our Sages, there are differing views as to where the power of *daas* is contained in the physical body. One view is that *daas* is contained in the brain, and that there are three general

⁵² *Iyov 11:9*

⁵³ *Yevamos 115a*

parts of the brain, which correspond to the three kinds of knowledge: chochmah, binah, and *daas*. The middle section of the brain corresponds to *daas*. According to another view, *daas* corresponds to the forehead, and according to another view, *daas* corresponds to the back of the neck which connects to the back of the head, where the knot of the tefillin is placed. Another view is that *daas* corresponds to the mouth, for “*Daas* is hidden in the mouth”⁵⁴. Another view is that *daas* corresponds to the shoulders, for the *Beis HaMikdash* was built through the *daas* of Betzalel who fashioned the Mishkan, and the *Beis HaMikdash* is situated at the “shoulder” of Binyamin’s portion to Yehudah’s portion in Eretz Yisrael.

The aforementioned kind of *daas* corresponds to the “widening” of *daas*, which is symbolized by the expansiveness of the ocean. A hint to this is that the Gemara says that when the emperor Hordos renovated the *Beis HaMikdash*, he made it look similar to the color of the ocean.⁵⁵ This was really because the *Beis HaMikdash* corresponds to “widened” *daas*, symbolized by the ocean, for the *Beis HaMikdash* was a place that “widened” the *daas* of people, and in this sense, the *Beis HaMikdash* corresponds to the *daas* represented by the ocean, and this is the implication of “*It is wider than the sea*”.

The Essential Difference Between Lengthened and Widened Daas

So far we have explained about the concepts of length and width. How does this apply to *daas*? What is lengthened *daas*, and what is widened *daas*? Lengthened *daas* brings a person to infinite, unending *daas*, whereas widened *daas* brings a person to the greatest amount of *daas* possible within one’s *daas*. Length expands past the boundaries of something, whereas width will expand the current boundaries of something. The *Beis HaMikdash*, which corresponds to “widened” *daas*, was able to be destroyed, because it was contained within the limits of this world. The word *rochav*/width has the same letters as the word *chorav*, “destruction”, because all destruction can take place within the dimension of width. Lengthened *daas*, though, has no end.

Widened Daas Corresponds To The Eitz HaDaas, Lengthened Daas Corresponds To The Eitz HaChaim

There are essentially two different systems of *daas* within a person: a *daas* within the bounds of Creation, and a *daas* that can expand beyond the limits of Creation.

⁵⁴ Zohar II 123a

⁵⁵ Succah 51b

“Lengthened” *daas* can take a person beyond the bounds of the Creation. This is the implication of the term “he who knows the knowledge of his Maker” (“*yodeia daas Kono*”), and this is also what is meant by “he who knows upper knowledge” (*yodeia daas Elyon*).⁵⁶ This is a kind of *daas* that takes a person beyond his current boundaries, beyond the limitations of Creation, and since it can go above this Creation, it is therefore not within the possibility of destruction. By contrast, “widened” *daas* can only expand within the boundaries of *daas*, and therefore, it is limited, so it can be destroyed. “Widened” *daas* can give a person a vast, expanded understanding of Creation, but it is ultimately limited.

“Lengthened” *daas* can touch upon an infinite kind of knowledge, which is called the “*daas* of the Creator”. The Sages said that there were three instances in which “the *daas* of Hashem agreed to the *daas* of Moshe”⁵⁷, and this is referring to the higher, infinite *daas* that goes above Creation.

As mentioned in previous lessons, the word “*daas*” contains the letters *daled* and *ayin*, which can be an acronym for the word “*ad*”, “until”, implying limitations, or it can be an acronym for the word “*od*”, “more”, implying the infinite. “Widened” *daas* corresponds to the concept of “*ad*”, “until”, for it is a limited kind of understanding, whereas “lengthened” *daas* corresponds to “*od*”, “more”, implying the infinite, for it can extend endlessly.

When one has the ability of “lengthened” *daas*, he can keep increasing his *daas*, more and more, all the way into the infinite, whereas “widened” *daas* is when a person increases his *daas* within the limitations of this world.

The *Eitz HaDaas Tov V’Ra* (Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil) contained an impaired kind of *daas*, whereas the *Eitz HaChaim* (Tree of Life) contained a holy kind of *daas*. Had Adam and Chavah eaten from the *Eitz HaChaim*, they would have lived forever, because they would have gained the ability of “lengthened” *daas*, infinite knowledge that would know no end. By eating from the evil *Eitz HaDaas Tov V’Ra*, they brought death to mankind, and this was because the expansion of *daas* that they gained from the *Eitz HaDaas* ultimately placed a limitation on their *daas*. While it certainly widened their *daas*, it would keep man limited within the bounds of Creation.

Thus, “widened” *daas* is a product of the *Eitz HaDaas*, and it brought destruction and death of the world, hence it is a kind of *daas* that can be susceptible to destruction, whereas “lengthened” *daas* is the product of the eternal *Eitz HaChaim*, so it is a kind of *daas* that is eternal.

Since “widened” *daas* comes from the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V’Ra*, which contained *daas tov* as well as *daas ra*, there are both good and evil uses of “widened” *daas*.

⁵⁶ *Bamidbar* 24:15

⁵⁷ *Shabbos* 87a

Imagination Is Limited Because It Is “Widened” Daas, Not “Lengthened” Daas

When a person has “lengthened” *daas*, he can keep gaining new perspectives. With “widened” *daas*, a person can only gain new “garments” of the same knowledge, different angles of the same knowledge, but he cannot actually gain new, additional perspectives.

The imagination (*medameh*), which is a product of the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V’Ra*⁵⁸, is entirely within the dimension of “widened” *daas* – meaning that the imagination can only “widen” one’s *daas*, within the bounds of this Creation, and it cannot extend into the infinite. Imagination can only “widen” and expand what one already knows, but it cannot create new knowledge. Imagination works based on mental comparisons, and every comparison uses already existing information. There is both good and evil imagination, but in either case, the imagination can only expand already existing information.

When one uses the imagination for holiness, he is utilizing the “*daas tov*”, the good part of the *daas*, that is within the power of “widened” *daas*. When one uses imagination for evil purposes, he is using the *daas ra*, the evil part of the *daas*, that is contained in widened *daas*.

I hope that these ideas are being understood well in your soul. To summarize, when one has the ability of widened *daas*, he is able to keep expanding his already existing knowledge, but he does not gain any new perspectives. With lengthened *daas*, one keeps expanding his knowledge past its current limits, and he keeps revealing new insights, where he can go above his *daas*. One can keep entering new dimensions, through “lengthened” *daas*. Ultimately, there is a limit to how much one grasp, but in essence, “lengthened” *daas* is infinite.

“Deepened” Daas

We have so far explained about “lengthened” and “widened” *daas*. Now we will explain about the third dimension of *daas* mentioned earlier, which is called “deepened” *daas*.

“Lengthened” *daas* enables a person to keep acquiring new perspectives, and “widened” *daas* will sharpen one’s already existing knowledge, showing a person different angles of the same point. What does it mean, then, to “deepen” one’s *daas*?

There is a verse, “*And through knowledge (daas), chambers become filled*”⁵⁹. This refers to “deepened” *daas*: when one uses *daas* to fill an empty void with content. It can be compared to digging an empty point and then filling all of the space in the pit. To deepen one’s *daas* is to take

⁵⁸ *The Gra and Sforino identify the Eitz HaDaas as “medameh”, the “imagination.”*

⁵⁹ *Mishlei 24:4*

something that is multi-layered, with many different parts to it, and to reveal one single point that connects it all together.

When one first becomes aware of a kernel of knowledge, this knowledge is called *chochmah*, and when one becomes aware of the details of this knowledge, the understanding graduates from *chochmah* to *binah*⁶⁰. When one connects all the details together, he can now see the big picture of the information, and the understanding now becomes comprehensive. This is called *daas*, and in particular, “deepened” *daas*. When one can see many details and he can see how they connect, and he sees the comprehensive picture of it, he can then now see the “depth” within information (*chochmah*) and details (*binah*).

First, one needs to see the root of the information (*chochmah*) and how it can be explained in many different ways (*binah*), which are essentially the many different “garments” of the same root piece of information. In order to get down to all the details of something, one needs length and width of the information, and then one can use the power of depth, to integrate the length and width together.

This process is similar to how *daas* integrates the combined knowledge of *chochmah* and *binah* together, which are also explained in terms of combining together the “masculine” way of understanding [*chochmah*/seeing the root information], with the “feminine” way of understanding [*binah*/seeing the details]. When the length and width of a matter are combined together, one can arrive at the depth of a matter. When one goes deep into a point, he uncovers both its length and width, as in the term, “*l’orcho u’rovcho*”, “by its length and width.” Through the ability of depth, the dimensions of length and width are combined and integrated together.

Viewing our Daas as a “Kli”/Vessel: All That We Understand is a “Tool” to a Greater End

Let us first see how “deepening” the *daas* offers a new dimension of understanding, and how it integrates the understandings of “lengthened” and “widened” *daas* together.

What does “depth” create? Depth creates a *kli*, a “vessel”, which enables one to contain more knowledge. In contrast, “lengthened” and “widened” *daas* cannot turn one’s *daas* into a “vessel”. The root “vessel” from all of the various different *keilim*/vessels that exist in Creation is the power of *daas*. *Daas* is referred to by our Sages as *keilim*, “vessels.” Our Sages state that “The purpose of knowledge

⁶⁰ Refer to *Getting To Know Your Soul: Part II: Chapter 5: Chochmah/Wisdom and Chapter 6: Binah/Contemplation*

is to know that we don't know"⁶¹, in other words, our *daas* is the "vessel" by which we can enter into the infinite.

When it comes to "widened" *daas* or "lengthened" *daas*, we are viewing our *daas* as a spiritual illumination (*ohr*), but we do not view this *daas* as a *kli*/vessel. Only with deepened *daas*, can we view our *daas* itself as a *kli*/vessel.

The *Eitz HaDaas* contained a *daas* that is viewed by a person as *ohr*/spiritual illumination, as opposed to viewing the *daas* a *kli*/vessel, whereas the *daas* contained in the *Eitz HaChaim* was a *daas* that could be viewed as a *kli*/vessel [a "tool" by which one can reach a greater end, as opposed to a complete spiritual illumination in and of itself].

The Torah is called "*Torah Ohr*", a Torah of light, implying that it should be viewed as *ohr*/spiritual illumination, and not merely as a *kli*/vessel that is used to reach a greater end. However, the Torah is also called the "*kli umnos*", the "tool of craftsmanship", of Hashem⁶². This appears to be a contradiction: Is the Torah to be viewed as *ohr*/spiritual illumination, or as a *kli*/vessel [a "tool" to reach a greater end]? The way to reconcile this contradiction is as follows. The "light" of the Torah, "*Torah Ohr*", is the lower dimension of the Torah. The fact that Torah is called a *kli*, however, is the higher dimension of Torah.

Now that we have learned about the outline of the concept, here is our question: Do we view our own *daas* as a spiritual light, or as a vessel/tool? The difference between these two different perspectives will come into play as follows. If I view *daas* as a spiritual light, as opposed to a tool, that will mean that I am not able to divest it from myself. Since it is not merely a tool, but a spiritual light, I cannot separate it from myself and I would thereby be limiting myself to my *daas*. But if I view my *daas* as a mere "tool" that I use, then I can divest myself of it, because it is just a tool that I use and no more. A hint to this is that the word for vessel/tool is "*kli*", from the word *kilayon*, "destruction", implying that a *kli*/vessel can become destroyed, and thereby divested, of itself.

Thus, the way to divest oneself [of the soul's garments] is through attaining "deepened" *daas*, which is when one views all of his *daas* a *kli*/vessel, a tool and a means that he uses to get to a greater end, as opposed to *ohr*/spiritual illumination.

⁶¹ *Sefer Bechinas Olam* 13:33

⁶² *Beraishis Rabbah* 1:2

Example of Viewing Our Daas as a “Tool”

In clearer terms, which can apply to us on a personal level: How do we view each piece of knowledge that we come across? Do we look at our knowledge as something that enlightens us – and we do not further than that - or do we view all of our knowledge as a “tool”, a means to get to something else?

For example, the Gemara says that “Great is Torah learning, for it leads to action”⁶³. This implies that Torah learning is used as a “tool” to lead to one to better his actions. But elsewhere, the Sages state that one should learn areas of Torah even when it won’t lead to action⁶⁴. From the above statement of the Sages, it seems that is a greater level to view Torah as a spiritual illumination, rather than as a tool. However, in the teachings of *Chabad Chassidus*⁶⁵, it is explained that “the root of *keilim*/vessels is above *ohr*/spiritual light”. So the higher perspective towards Torah learning is to view Torah learning as a *kli*, as opposed to *ohr*.

We all have much knowledge, *Baruch Hashem* - but how do we view all of this knowledge? Do we see all of our knowledge as a “tool” to get to a greater end, or do we view all of our knowledge as a spiritual illumination, in and of itself? When we have “deepened” *daas*, we gain the truer perspective about our own knowledge, viewing all of it as a mere “tool” that we use in order to get to a greater end. *Daas* - at its very depth – is ultimately a “tool” that we use, a *kli*, which enables us to get further with it. While *daas* is certainly spiritual light – as in the term “*ohr hadaas*”, “the illumination of *daas*”⁶⁶ - that is only the “extension” of *daas*. At its root, *daas* is not *ohr*/spiritual light, but a *kli*/vessel.

Any person, as long as his heart has become a bit opened to gaining new perspectives, can access the ability of “lengthened” *daas*, where he can see an entirely different way of viewing things, and certainly anyone can access the ability of “widened” *daas*, to see the same point from many different angles.

“Deepening” the *daas*, though, can only come after one gains the view of lengthened and widened *daas* and he can integrate the two views together – meaning, that one has the perspective that lengthened and widened *daas* are but “tools” that we use to get to a greater end, and not an end in and of itself. When one has “deepened” *daas*, he is aware that whenever he is “lengthening” his *daas*

63 *Bava Kamma* 17a

64 See *Sanhedrin* 51b and *Sanhedrin* 71a

65 *Chabad Chassidus* began with the *Baal HaTanya*, *Reb Shneur Zalman of Liadi*, whose seminal works include *sefer Tanya* and *sefer Likutei Torah*.

66 *Likutei Moharan: Tinyana*: 7

(gaining entirely new perspectives) or “widening” his *daas* (uncovering different angles of the same perspective), he is aware that all of his knowledge is just a “tool” to get to something else.

Without deepened *daas*, a person will view his *daas* as *ohr*, as a spiritual illumination that is complete in and of itself, as opposed to seeing it as a *kli*/tool to get further.

Here is an example. The Sages state that women have extra *binah* (understanding of details)⁶⁷, and this is because they usually will have a greater ability of “widened” *daas*, which gives them greater ability to expand their knowledge and uncover details. However, as explained earlier, when one has widened *daas*, one does not view this *daas* as a tool, but as a spiritual illumination, and it has been explained that the truer way to view *daas* is to view it as a tool. So even the quality of “extra *binah*” has a drawback to it, for it is the category of “widened” *daas*, which does not view *daas* as a *kli*/tool. As long as a person has only “widened” or “lengthened” *daas*, one is not able to view his/her *chochmah*, *binah* or *daas* as a *kli*/tool.

When we reveal the ability to “deepen” our *daas*, we can reveal how everything in Creation is a *kli*/tool that is used for something else. By the party of Achashveirosh, the Megillah says that they served “*vessels of different form*”⁶⁸, and on a deeper level this is a hint to the concept that each thing in Creation is really a “vessel” that is used for something else.

All of Creation is a Tool to Reveal the Light of the Infinite

How is everything in Creation a *kli*/vessel? All of Creation is essentially a *kli*/vessel to contain the *ohr EinSof*, the “light of the Infinite”. Since everything on this world is ultimately a tool for the Infinite to settle upon, one can have the deep awareness that there is no spiritual light here, and there are no other “tools” here either – there is nothing here in Creation except for a “tool” to reveal the light of the Infinite. The Creation is not full of many different spiritual illuminations - only the light of the Infinite. The light of the Infinite, which is above Creation, also shines into our own dimension, Creation.

Identifying Our Abilities To Lengthen, Widen and Deepen Our Daas

Practically speaking, when it comes to any of the knowledge that we have, we need to identify in our soul these powers to “lengthen”, and “widen”, and “deepen” our *daas*.

⁶⁷ Niddah 45a

⁶⁸ Esther 1:7

To summarize, it was mentioned here that there are two different ways by which one can reveal an infinite kind of *daas*.

One way is through “lengthened” *daas*, when one gains the ability to keep revealing new perspectives. Since one can keep gaining new perspectives, this is a kind of *daas* that has no end, because there is no end to how many new perspectives and insights can be uncovered.

Another way to access an infinite kind of *daas* is through “deepened” *daas*, which is when one is aware that that all of his *daas* is but a tool to reveal the Infinite. When we reveal “deepened” *daas*, we reveal the infinite kind of *daas*: that all of Creation is merely a tool to reveal the light of the Infinite. This kind of *daas* is endless, for it is about something that is endless, and therefore it can keep expanding endlessly. Through “deepened” *daas*, one can reach the meaning of “The purpose of knowledge is to know that we do not know”⁶⁹.

As explained before, this is not *ohr*/spiritual illumination of *daas*, but the *kli* “vessel” that is *daas*. Although *daas* is also referred to as *ohr*/spiritual light, this is only at the “extended” level of *daas*, but at the root, *daas* is a *kli*/vessel.

One needs to first acquire *daas* (as the Gemara says: “If you acquire it [*daas*], what are you missing?”⁷⁰), and then one must realize that all of this *daas* is a mere *kli*/vessel, as opposed to *ohr*/spiritual light.

Certainly these are very deep matters, but each person on his own level should be able to identify these three powers in his own soul: widened *daas*, lengthened *daas*, and deepened *daas*.

⁶⁹ *Sefer Bechinas Olam* 13:33

⁷⁰ *Nedarim* 41a

11 | *Light Daas – Narrowed Thinking*

“Light” Da’as – When A Person Cannot Think Objectively

We are learning about the power of *daas* (understanding). We already began to mention in the previous lesson that the Sages discuss certain kinds of *daas* that are incomplete. One of the incomplete kinds of *daas* is referred to in the statement “Women have light *da’as*”⁷¹.

The Gemara in Tractate Shabbos recounts that when Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son hid in the *Beis Midrash* from the Romans, the wife of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai would come and bring them food each day. When the Romans were trying to find him, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was afraid that they would pressure his wife to tell them of his whereabouts. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said, “Women have light *daas*. If they threaten her with execution, she will give in to the pressure and reveal to them my hiding place.” So Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai fled the town and hid in a cave.

From this we see that women have light *daas* in the sense that if they are pressured due to the fear of death, they will give in to the pressure. That is one side of the coin: they have light *daas* when they are afraid of death.

On the other side of the coin, the *Mishnah* in Tractate *Kiddushin* states, when discussing the laws of *yichud*⁷², states that it is forbidden for a man to be secluded in a house of women, but it is permissible for a woman to be secluded in a house of men. The Gemara explains that the reason for this difference is, because “Women have light *daas*, and they can be easily convinced to sin”. In other words, women have “light *daas*” in the sense that they can be easily convinced into pleasure (*oneg*).

We see here that there are two sides of the coin. The Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos* says that women have “light *daas*” when they are threatened with pain. Pain is referred to as *nega*, the opposite of *oneg*, pleasure. On the other side of the coin, the Gemara in Tractate *Kiddushin* says that women have light *daas* in the sense that they can be easily coaxed into having more *oneg*/pleasure.

So it can either be pain (*nega*) which causes a woman to lighten her *daas*, or it can be faulty pleasure (*oneg*) which causes women to have light *daas*.

Any sensible person will understand that this issue of “lightened *daas*” does not only apply to women, even though the Sages taught it about women. It can apply to men as well, because anyone can have the problem of “lightened” *daas*.

⁷¹ *Shabbos 33a and Kiddushin 80a*

⁷² *forbidden seclusion between men and women*

In summary, we have seen so far that there are ‘two sides of the coin’ as to what causes lightened *daas*. On one hand, light *daas* is brought on through feeling pressured from the threat of pain, or it can come from being convinced into having pleasure.

“Light” Daas Can Be Caused By Either Joy or Pain

Chazal state that a person cannot be held accountable when he is in anguish.⁷³ Here again we can see that pain causes a person to lose his ability to think objectively, and that one doesn’t fully have his *daas* when he is in pain. Elsewhere, Chazal state that when a person is at a particularly joyous time, he becomes lightheaded, and it is not appropriate at that time to engage in prayer [he should only engage in prayer from amidst a state of joy that comes from doing a *mitzvah*].⁷⁴ Lightheadedness is called *kalus rosh*, which is another term for *kalus daas*, lightened *daas*.

Let us analyze these two different sources of “light *daas*”. When a person has lightened *daas*, he will either fall below his normal level of *daas*, and he will become elevated above his *daas*. In a time of pain and difficulty, a person will usually fall below his *daas*, and in a state of joy, a person will usually go above his *daas*. It is also possible for pain to elevate a person above his *daas*, because pain can bring a person closer to Hashem, and it is also possible that joy can lower a person below his *daas*, because joy can bring on a state of lightheadedness.

When pain pulls a person down, below his *daas*, a person falls into *daas ra*, the “evil *daas*”, which was contained in the mixture of the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V’Ra*, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. What is this *daas ra* that a person can fall into, as a result of lightened *daas*?

“Light” Daas: Seeing Only Option

Whenever a person has “light” *daas*, a person will only see one side. Normally, when a person’s *daas* is functioning as it should, a person will always see two different options to choose from, and he uses his *daas* to decide between the two different options. We explained about this in the earlier lessons when we discussed the abilities of *daas* to separate, decide, and integrate. But when a person can only see one option in front of him, there is no *daas* here to decide between different options, because he is only seeing one option. This is light *daas*.

⁷³ *Bava Basra 16b*

⁷⁴ *Berachos 31a*

Light *daas* can either come from *daas ra* (impaired *daas*) or from *daas tov* (holy *daas*), but in either case, it can only see one option. Joy can bring a person above his *daas*, where he will only see one side – the option that is good and holy, which is *daas tov*. Pain can cause a person to descend below his *daas*, where he will only see one side – the option of evil – which is *daas ra*.

When one's *daas* is able to see two different options to choose from, this is complete *daas*, and when one's *daas* can only see one option to choose from, this is light *daas*.

Now, let us examine again the statement of our Sages that women have light *da'as* when they are convinced to sin. Their light *daas* does not simply mean that they will easily choose sin. It is because they are only seeing one option! That is the depth of how they are convinced into the sin.

Someone who is called a true "*bar daas*", one capable of *daas*, is someone who is able to see all of the different options and possibilities in front of him, seeing the whole picture, and he can decide sensibly between all the different choices in front of him. He can be told of an idea and think of an opposite approach. One who acquires the ability to think of the opposite options is able to become a great *bar daas*. Without uncovering this power, one may know a lot of Torah, but he is not yet a *bar daas*, for he has not yet revealed the ability to think about all the different possibilities, and he never sees the bigger picture.

In order to see the bigger picture of something, one needs to get used to thinking about a concept and then the opposite of that concept. This is because there is a rule that in order to really know a concept, you need to understand what its opposite entails. A person has to always be able to see 'both sides of the coin' if he wants to understand anything.

The Essence of the Yetzer Hora's Power of Persuasion

When people can only see one option in front of them, and they aren't able to see that there are two sides in front of them to choose from, they can be easily convinced into doing something they shouldn't. This is light *daas*.

When people are under pressure from the threat of pain and they are coaxed into sin, they are not "choosing" to act lightheaded – rather, they are only seeing one option. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai feared that his wife would reveal his hiding place to the Romans, not because he thought that she would choose to do the wrong thing, but because the pressure she would feel from the threat of death would make her see only one option – to reveal to them where he is. She wouldn't have been choosing between good and evil – rather, the problem would have been that she would only see one option in front of her.

With lightened *daas*, a person only sees “one side of the coin” in the situation, and he doesn’t take into account the whole situation. This concept is found with the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) that exists in all people. The *yetzer hora* convinces a person to sin, through its cunning power of persuasion, by showing a person one particular side of the situation that the person will find appealing. When a person only sees one part of the situation, it’s almost as if he has no free will to choose, because he sees nothing to choose between! He only sees the evil, and it looks pleasing, because he doesn’t see anything else going on. It is even more than that: the *yetzer hora* convinces a person that he has no free will at all right then, and that is how it gets people to sin.

The *Rishonim* discuss the concepts of *bechirah* (free will) and *yediah* (the knowledge that everything is foreseen by Hashem). Every person has the *bechirah* to choose between good and evil, but a person is able to transcend his *bechirah* and have the perspective of *yediah*, which is to know that there is only one option: to do what Hashem wants. In the side of holiness, *yediah* is the power to see only one option, the option that is good and holy. Through the perspective of *yediah*, a person is aware of only one option: “*Hashem is One and His Name is One.*”⁷⁵ The *yetzer hora*, though, uses the power of *yediah* on the side of evil, by making the person see only one ‘option’ – the side of evil.

This is the depth of how the *yetzer hora* convinces a person to fall into sin. By convincing the person that there is only one side of the coin here – the option to do as one pleases – a person will feel almost coerced, as if there was no other choice in the matter. The person only sees the side which the *yetzer hora* has shown him. This is the disastrous result of light *daas*.

Chazal state that when the evil inclination is present, there is no mention of the good inclination⁷⁶. The evil inclination’s power is that at a time when a person faces difficulty or pressure, it convinces a person that he has no free will to choose between two options, and that there is only one option: to do the sin. Evil convinces a person that there is no other option except to do the sin.

Many people, when they make certain mistakes, are asked, “Why did you choose that option? Why didn’t you do something else?” And they answer, “I didn’t know, I wasn’t aware of another option. This was the only option I thought about.” That is how people fail – instead of seeing two options in front of them to choose from, they are only seeing one option, so they feel like they have no choice. This is not referring necessarily to a Torah scholar who thought that he was in the category of “a forced person, who is not held accountable by the Torah”⁷⁷. It is rather describing a certain erroneous perspective that is commonly found in many people.

⁷⁵ *Zechariah 14:9*

⁷⁶ *Nedarim 32a*

⁷⁷ *Avodah Zarah 54a*

Using This Power of “Seeing Only One Option” For Holiness

However, a person is able to take this power of “seeing only one option” and use it for holiness. One can use joy as a way to elevate himself to the holy use of light *daas* - of going above one’s *daas*, where one sees only one option: truth.

As opposed to seeing the view of the *daas ra* (evil perspective) of the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V’Ra*, where one only sees an evil option to pursue, one can gain the view of the *daas tov* (holy perspective) contained in the *Eitz HaDaas*: the view of the “*Eitz HaDaas Tov*” alone (The Tree of Knowledge “of Good”), separated from the “*Eitz HaDaas Ra*” (the Tree of Knowledge “of Evil”), to only see the option of holiness. When a person is in a state of joy, he can become elevated above his *daas*, and see that there is only one side: the truth. He can see that truth is the only option, and that there is no option of sin.

This is also called the ability known as “higher free will”: a person is able to “choose not to choose”, because there is no option to choose evil. He only sees one option: the will of Hashem. This is not the regular use of free will, in which a person simply chooses between good and evil because he knows that this is what Hashem wants. (That is “lower” free will.) It is for a person to feel like there’s really no choice, because the only choice is to do what Hashem wants! “Lower” *bechirah* is to simply choose between good and evil, and “higher” *bechirah* is to “choose not to choose”, to go above free will, and to ‘choose’ that there is only one option, the side of holiness.

Thus, there is a lower use of “light” *daas*, as well as a higher use of “light” *daas*. The lower use of light *daas* is when a person only sees the evil option. The higher use of “light” *daas* is when a person only sees the holy option. Joy can bring a person to the higher use of “light” *daas*, where pain can cause a person to descend into the lower use of “light” *daas*.

Marriage - The Fusion of Complete/Masculine Daas with Partial/Feminine Daas

Thus, there is complete *daas*, which is when one can see ‘two sides to the coin’ in a matter, and there is incomplete *daas*, which is “light” *daas*, when one sees only one side of a matter.

Where does complete *daas* come from, and where does “light” *daas* come from? Simply speaking, it appears to be that women have light *da’as* while men have completed *da’as* because woman (Chavah) was created from man’s (Adam’s) rib,⁷⁸ and that is why the woman’s *da’as* is only “partial”, incomplete *daas*, for by her very creation, she is a “part” of the man’s *da’as*. But there is also a deeper

⁷⁸ Beraishis 2:22: “Then Hashem G-d fashioned the side that He had taken from the man into a woman...this shall be called woman, for from man was she taken.”

understanding. It is because, by the very design of Creation which Hashem has dictated, there must be two kinds of *da'as*, which are needed to complement each other: “complete” *daas*, and “partial” *daas*. In order for *daas* to be perfected, there must be a fusion of “complete” *daas*, corresponding to the masculine, as well as “partial” *daas*, corresponding to the feminine.

Moshe Rabbeinu personifies the concept of *daas*, for he arrived at the most perfected kind of *da'as* a person can achieve. Hashem agreed to Moshe's *daas* in three instances.⁷⁹ If so, can we say that Moshe's *daas* was the same as the *da'as* of Hashem? What is the difference? The *da'as* of Hashem is “complete” *daas*, whereas the *da'as* of Moshe is only partial *daas* - a part of the complete *daas*. So Hashem was agreeing to the “partial” *daas* of Moshe Rabbeinu (and even then, it was only in three particular instances). So there is *daas* of the Creator, which is called “complete” *daas*, and there is *daas* of a created being, which, at most, can be “partial” *daas* - a part of the complete *daas*, but only a part.

When a man and woman become connected together through the union of marriage, this union is called *daas*, as it says, “*And Adam knew Chavah.*”⁸⁰ This is not simply that they are now connected together through *daas*. Rather, it means that there is a combination of two kinds of *daas* here, the man's *daas*, which is complete, and the woman's *daas*, which is partial. Together, they arrive at the perfect *daas*. This is when they are not just two *de'os* (opinions) living together, but one unit of *da'as*. At the lower level of marriage, marriage is a physical union of two bodies uniting together, and at the higher level of marriage, it is a bonding of two different *de'os*, two different ways of understanding coming together: the *daas* of the man, and the *daas* of the woman - the fusion of the masculine\complete with the feminine\partial.

Complete Da'as and Partial Da'as

Bilaam was called one who had “heavenly knowledge” (*daas elyon*).⁸¹ Chazal state that Bilaam knew how to calculate the exact time that Hashem gets angry.⁸² Bilaam equaled Moshe in prophecy, and he also possessed *daas* on the side of evil, the antithesis to the holy *daas* of Moshe. However, the *daas* of Bilaam was not completely equal to the *daas* as Moshe. What was the difference between these two kinds of *daas*?

79 *Shabbos 87a*

80 *Beraishis 4:1*

81 *Bamidbar 24:16*

82 *Berachos 7a*

The *daas* of Moshe was “complete” *daas*, for Moshe’s *daas* was all-inclusive of all *de’os* of the Jewish people. In contrast, the *daas* of Bilaam could only perceive parts and details, as opposed to a collective *daas*. Bilaam knew the moment when Hashem has anger, and that was all of his *daas*: one detail alone. Moshe was connected to the collected knowledge of his *daas*, whereas Bilaam used his *daas* to grasp onto certain details.

Although Bilaam also had a collective kind of *daas*, Bilaam ultimately used this collective *daas* in order to perceive certain details, such as the specific time when Hashem is angry, without being aware of the ‘bigger picture’ that is represented by the collected knowledge. Moshe, however, had a collective *daas* by which he viewed the all-inclusiveness of the knowledge, the ‘bigger picture’ of the collective *daas* he had, as opposed to various ‘parts’ and ‘details’ contained within the knowledge.

Moshe was able to give the Torah to the Jewish people, in spite of the fact that every Jew has a different *daas*. As the Sages state, “Just as their faces are not the same, so are their *de’os* (ways of thinking) not the same.”⁸³ No person has the same *daas* as another person, but Moshe’s *daas* included the *daas* of every Jew, and this was the all-inclusive kind of *daas* that enabled Moshe to be the giver of the Torah to the Jewish people. In contrast to Moshe, who possessed complete *daas* through being connected to the collective whole of the Jewish people, Bilaam possessed only partial *daas*, which focused on certain parts and details, and not on the whole.

The depth of the mistake of Korach and his group, who challenged Moshe, was that Korach was arguing on the collective *daas* of the Jewish people, so it was as if he was arguing with everything.

This is also the depth behind the difference between Torah and *mitzvos*. Torah represents the complete *daas*, whereas *mitzvos* represent partial *daas*. The *mitzvos* are details, while Torah is the all-inclusive knowledge about everything.

After the sin, where we are now affected by the impaired, “partial” *daas* of the *Eitz HaDaas*, our *daas* can only be partial, and it is never complete and comprehensive. Chazal state that “Torah learning is great, for it leads one to action,”⁸⁴ and this is because the Torah is currently perceived by us on a level of “*mitzvos*”, as partial *daas*. In the future, when a “*new Torah will come forth from Me*”⁸⁵, there will be a revelation of Torah that is complete *daas*.

The *daas* of mankind, ever since the sin of eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*, has fallen from the level of “complete” *daas*, the masculine *daas*, to the level of *daas* of woman, which is “partial” *daas*. Adam

83 *Berachos 58a*

84 *Bava Kamma 17a*

85 *Yeshayah 51:4*

separated from Chavah after the sin for 130 years.⁸⁶, and the depth of this is because he wanted to separate from her lightened *daas* and gain back his complete *daas*.

Our Daas is Complete only when we view our Daas as a “Partial” Understanding

In anything that we perceive, we can only perceive it with partial *daas*, and we can never have complete, comprehensive *daas* about anything. Often a person may think that his *daas* about something is complete, and that his *daas* must be the truth. But if a person thinks that way, his *daas* is actually a perfect example of “light *daas*”.

In contrast to light *daas*, “complete” *daas* is when one is aware that there are many different views on a matter, for there are 600,00 different souls in the Jewish people, which can each have a unique understanding about any given matter. One can have his own view, but he can be aware that his own view comes from his own individual, private soul, which is part of a larger picture – the many different *de’os* that there are in the 600,000 souls of the Jewish people.

“Light *daas*” is when I understand something and I think that this must be the truth, whereas complete *daas* is when I am aware that there many different *de’os* that exist, and that my opinion is my own *daas* is private and unique to me; as opposed to thinking that my opinion must be the absolute truth for everyone. But if I think that my own partial *daas* must be the absolute *daas* for everyone, this is lightened *daas*, and it is like the narrowed perspective of the *yetzer hora*, who convinces a person that there is only one option – its own.

Anyone who learns Torah is able to gain a simple level of *daas*, but there is a higher level of *daas* reserved only for those who have complete *daas* – meaning that they view their own *daas* as partial, and not as the absolute truth for everyone else – and this is the kind of *daas* that is referred to as “*daas Torah*”.

The Exile and Redemption of “Daas”

It is written, “*And I will surely conceal My face.*”⁸⁷ The Baal Shem Tov noted that from this we see two different attitudes one can have: partial *daas*, which is when one doesn’t see any concealment at all, and complete *daas*, which is when is aware that Hashem conceals Himself, but that it is only *hester panim* – concealment of Hashem’s “face” alone, but not a total concealment. When I am

⁸⁶ *Eruvin 18b*

⁸⁷ *Devarim 31:18*

aware that my *daas* is partial, this is the complete *daas* - but if I think that my own partial *daas* is the truth for everyone, and that everyone else must agree with me, that is light *daas*.

The state of exile we are in is essentially because each person thinks that his own *daas* is the truth for everyone. When people are involved in *machlokes* (dissension) with others and they do not relent, it is because they have a view that comes from partial *daas*, because they think that their partial *daas* is the absolute truth for everyone and that all others must agree and nullify themselves to their own personal opinion.

In the future, the complete *daas* will be revealed to all; “*And Hashem will fill the earth with knowledge.*”⁸⁸ This will be what the redemption will reveal – it will reveal that all *de’os* (opinions) of people are part of a bigger picture of a collective *daas*, and that all the different *de’os* of every Jewish soul are really all part of one, general, collective whole of *da’as*.

The Sages said that the nature of people is “each person would swallow the life of another”⁸⁹, and this can be understood on a deeper level as referring to our state of exile, where each person thinks that only his way of thinking is the correct one, and that another must agree to his *daas*. A person concludes that he is right about something, that at he has arrived at the truth, and he thinks that the truth must certainly be with him, and that anyone who disagrees with him is wrong. This narrowed kind of thinking, which is the general attitude of people today, describes the depth of our exile.

The following is an example of the above idea. Chazal teach that each generation has its leaders, and one must not compare them to previous leaders.⁹⁰ Does this mean that the teachings of that generation’s leader are applicable to every generation? The leader of the generation is the truth for that generation, but it is not necessarily the truth for all other generations. Each generation has its own truth, which is given to them by the leader of that generation. There is no truth that becomes absolute truth for all other generations to come, and this is because that each truth was said for that particular generation.

When a person decides what the truth is, he might the mistake of thinking that the truth can only be his own conclusion and that no other option can be correct, because he thinks that the truth must be certainly be with him. However, not only isn’t this “truth” – it is actually the depth of falsity!

88 *Yeshayah 11:9*

89 *Avos 3:2*

90 *Rosh HaShanah 25b*

Gaining The Perspective of Redemption

The secret of the Redemption is when one gains the perspective aware that there many different truths, and that his personal conclusion is not the all-inclusive truth – rather, it is only part of the many truths that exist. Currently, where we are in exile, this is not the general perspective of people. The Sages taught that the exile in Egypt was an “exile of our *daas*”, and that the exodus was the redemption of our *daas*.⁹¹ This means that they left the feminine kind of *daas*, which is “light” *daas*, partial *daas*, and they entered into the complete (masculine) *daas*. Their *daas* was “redeemed” from its “exile”, in the sense that they now had the perspective that their own *daas* was only part of a bigger picture, that their *daas* could only be partial, that each person’s private *daas* does not represent the *daas* that is true for the entire world.

When one is aware that his *daas* can only be partial *daas* – his own personal “truth” which he has arrived, but not the all-inclusive truth that applies to everyone else – only then does one have the proper perspective, the perspective of the Redemption, and only then can one’s *daas* be complete.

When a person thinks that the truth can only be with him and with no one else, this is the “exile” of *daas*. “Redemption” of the *daas*, then, is when each person realizes that his own *daas* is no less true than anyone else’s *daas*. If one never gains this perspective, then one cannot live in the state of the Redemption, for it will be revealed then that everyone’s *daas* is also part of the truth, and he will not be able to handle such a revelation, because he thought that only his *daas* was the correct one...

Thus, the inner experience of the Redemption will not be a sudden arrival of Mashiach that will redeem each Jew from exile. Redemption will only be experienced on an inner level by those who redeemed themselves from their own narrowed thinking! Redemption is about realizing that every person’s *daas* can be true. Certainly there are *de’os* (beliefs and perspectives) which are false, but in essence, the Redemption will be a revelation that all *de’os* are correct (and it will even reveal how even false *de’os* are rooted in truth).

Daas – The Root of Ahavah\Love

The Sages explained that the outer layer of the *middos* (character traits) are the *middos* themselves, and that the inner core of the *middos* is “*daas*”.⁹² The root of all the *middos* is the *middah* of *ahavah* (love). In line with the above, this is because the revelation of *daas* that will be at the Redemption will be a revelation of love, where everyone realizes that each person’s *daas* is truth. This doesn’t

91 Cited in the name of the Arizal

92 in the name of the Arizal

mean that everyone will agree to the same opinion, for that is impossible, since every person is created with a different way of thinking.⁹³ Rather, it means that everyone will realize that each person contains a different angle of the truth.

Currently, when we do not yet have this future revelation of *ahavah* between all of Creations, there is instead *sinas chinam*, baseless hatred, which destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*.⁹⁴ and which is still rampant today. That is the external layer of the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*: a lack of *ahavah*. But the inner layer of the destruction today is that “*daas*” is missing.

In Summary and In Conclusion

To summarize and conclude, one needs to view his *daas* as partial, as part of the collective *daas* of the Jewish people, and that is how his *daas* actually becomes complete. Even if I disagree with another person and I think that another is wrong, I should have the awareness that there is also truth contained in the other’s opinion, even if I personally do not agree with him. True, complete *daas* is when I view my *daas* as only partial, and not as the absolute truth for everyone. In contrast, if I view my own personal *daas* as the absolute truth, that means I view my *daas* as complete, there could be nothing more erroneous than this perspective.

In summary, it has been explained here that the meaning of “Women have light *daas*” is because they can be easily swayed to see “only one side of a matter”, without seeing two different options in front of them. This loss of objective thinking can lower a person from his\her normal level of *daas*, and lead the person towards sin or otherwise acting foolish. The factors that can bring a person into this situation are either through temptation to experience more pleasure (*oneg*), or from feeling threatened with pain (*nega*). On the other hand, pain can also cause a person to use this power of “seeing only one option” for holiness, if the person uses the pain to become closer to Hashem, where the person will only see the *daas tov*, where it is clear that there is only one, holy option to pursue.

Joy can also cause a person to have “light” *daas*, either for good or bad. A person can become elevated above one’s normal level of *daas* during a very joyous state, which enables one to see only one, holy option to pursue. On the other hand, joy can also cause a person to become lightheaded, where a person will fall below his\her normal level of *daas* and only see one option in front of him, the option that the *yetzer hora* is persuading the person with.

It was explained here that the way to repair the problem of “light” *daas* is to gain the “complete” level of *daas*, which is when one has the perspective that “My *daas* is only partial *daas*. My way of

⁹³ Berachos 58a: “Just as their faces are not the same, so too are their *de’os* (ways of thinking) not the same.”

⁹⁴ Yoma 9b

thinking, my opinions - my *daas* - are my own personal *daas*, and even though I may be right, that doesn't mean that everyone else in the world is wrong. Others also have *daas*, and there is truth contained in the *daas* of every person. Even if my *daas* is true, it is only part of a bigger picture of truth."