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## Getting to Know Your Imagination - 007 Three Solutions To Evil Imagination

### **Summary of the Previous Chapter**

*We explained last time that our imagination works to exaggerate pre-existing images, and thus the way to fix our imagination is by returning to those images and instead imagining them as they first looked.*

*This is called the power “maaseh beraishis” in the soul – the power to be able to return to the beginning of each thing. We access this power by using our temimus (simplicity).<sup>[1]</sup> It is also known as our power of “tziyur” – let us explain more about it.*

### **Using the Power of “Tziyur” To Fix “Medameh”**

There is another way to fix imagination, and that is through fixing up the image that has been combined with another image.

There are two ways how we use our imagination – one of them is constructive, while the other kind is destructive. The constructive kind of imagination is called *tziyur*, and the destructive kind is called *medameh*.

*Tziyur* is to imagine the image as it truly appears. *Medameh* is to imagine something which does not exist.

An example of *tziyur* is imagining the Kosel, as it is, which gets us to imagining an image exactly as it appears. *Tziyur* can be used to counter the erroneous images caused by our *medameh*.

Our other kind of imagination, *medameh*, tends to make us imagine things which don't exist, and this weakens our intellect. When we use the first kind of imagination, *tziyur* (to image things exactly as they are), it actually refines our intellect. But *medameh* (imagine totally new images) weakens the intellect.

We can see this from a general difference between from men and women. Usually, women have a stronger amount of imagination, and their imagination is more refined. They mainly use *tziyur*, and therefore their imagination is more accurate than a man's imagination; it doesn't make weaken her mind, because she knows how to use imagination better – she usually uses *tziyur*, not *medameh*.

Men, who use their intellect more than they use their imagination, have a harder time developing their power of imagination, and it just weakens their intellect. A man usually uses *medameh*, not *tziyur*, and that is why a man's intellect usually gets weakened when he makes use of his imagination.

### **Using the Power of "Markiv"**

We have given the first solution to fixing evil imagination: *tziyur*. Now we will say the second solution.

In our power of thought, we have two abilities: our actual power to think, which is *machshavah*, and our power to combine thoughts together, which is called *markiv*. For example, a person thinks that he wants something, or let's say he thinks about *emunah*. When he's learning, he's thinking about what he is learning. That is basic *machshavah* - to think a thought.

The more a person learns in-depth, though, he makes use of a deeper power of thought: *markiv*. He learns how to combine the facts together.

Without using *markiv*, a person just "learns", but he's not really thinking. Although it's nice to get used to sitting and learning - as we pray, "*That we should become accustomed to the words of Your Torah*" ("*Shetargileinu B'Torasecha*") - this isn't enough. We need to also become aware of how we think, and to actually think into our learning. We do this by using our power of *markiv*, to combine facts together.

There are people who sit and learn all day, but they space out a lot and imagine about who knows what! What is the source of this problem? On one hand, many people have the quality of being accustomed to sitting and learning in the *beis midrash*, but they haven't yet developed their power to really think. When thought is left undeveloped, imagination takes over.

The solution for this is to start becoming aware of our thoughts, what's going on inside our mind. Getting used to this weakens the imagination. What a person has to do is to set aside some time for this and listen to his thoughts, to see what's going on inside them.

This is also an ability to make use for any person who wants to live an inner kind of life - it can make a huge overhaul in your whole life and affect your whole soul. It helps you become aware of just about everything that's going on in your Avodas Hashem! It is a concept which can be applied to all areas of our Avodas Hashem - our *davening*, our eating, our learning. We can become aware of what we are thinking as we *daven*, what we are thinking as we eat, what we are thinking as we learn, etc.

The more we use our power of *markiv* - to combine facts together - the more we will discover that we won't be able to get fooled so easily by even minor exaggerations. We will discover that we want to have all information *exactly* as it is, and we will naturally recoil from anything in our head that isn't 100% accurate.

### **Using "Markiv" Also Improves Our Middos**

Using *markiv* more and more will help us improve the *middos* as well, which stem from our heart.

Our Sages say, "The mind can control the heart."<sup>[2]</sup> The depth of this matter is that our mind has the power to place limits on the *middos/emotions* of our heart. Until we make use of our mind, we are left with undeveloped *middos/emotions* in our heart which are unrestrained; the more we use our mind - through our power of *markiv* - the more we limit our *middos* in our heart, and this holds back the imagination of our heart from taking over our *middos*.

This is our main avodah in fixing our *medameh*: using *markiv*. The more we develop our actual

thinking mind, the more we fix our imagination – enabling us to internalize all the facts we need to internalize in life.

The possuk says, “*And you shall know today, and you shall place the matter on your heart.*” Our avodah in life is to internalize what we know in our minds. But our heart isn’t able to internalize anything as long as the imagination that resides in it is still in control. The more we refine our thinking mind, using the power of *markiv*, the more we limit the *middos*/emotions of our heart, and then our heart will be able to internalize, free from the control of the unbridled imagination.

### **A Third Solution To Evil Imagination: Letting Your Imagination “Destroy” Itself**

Until now we said two ways how to fix imagination: through *tziyur*, and through *markiv*. Now we will say a third way – a totally opposite approach to the above two solutions. This method, however, was not used by most of our previous leaders.

It is a power to go into our imagination and then let the imagination destroy itself! This is by going into the fantasy and seeing how the fantasy is actually self-destructive.

Imagination, by essence, is for a person to have no limits. When a person has no limits, he does whatever he pleases – he acts spoiled and unrestrained.

There are parents who take their children to the store and say to them, “Take whatever you want from the whole store!” or they show them the pantry and say to them, “Take as much as you want.” This is harmful to the child’s development, because then he grows up so spoiled, thinking that he is allowed to get anything he wants.

This is what imagination is about – it is about having no limits. We can see how much evil and ruination it causes to a person’s life when he thinks that there are no limits to what he can have, and that he is allowed to get whatever he wants.

What can a person do if he has developed this problem? For this, we can make use of a third solution: let your imagination loose, and let it *destroy* itself!

For example, let’s say a person has a problem with overeating. When people overeat, they go over their limits and eat much more than they really need. This is due to imagination, because imagination says: “There are no limits. Do whatever you want – eat as much as you want, without any restraint.” The imagination is what is supplying the gluttonous desire. What can a person do about this?

He can imagine, very vividly, how destructive he is being to himself by overeating. After doing so, he will find that the next time he sits down to eat – like when he comes to the Shabbos meal and there’s lots of food in front of him – that he thinks more this time before he eats. He will find it easier to hold back from eating as much he wants.

Here we see an example of how a person can use imagination to destroy his own evil imaginative thought! Until now, the imagination was fueling his desire to eat more food. He imagined that he needs to eat so much; his *middah* of *taavah*/desire was going past its normal limits. Now he has imagined how bad it is to eat so much, which can stop his imagination from controlling him.

In other words, the person with the overeating problem can let the imagination to overeat run wild. He can imagine himself eating and eating, as much as he wants – and then see what this leads to. It leads to killing himself!

By doing so, a person can use the very same evil power of imagination and use it for good: he can see

for himself how not having limits is destructive.

### **Summary of the Three Solutions To Imagination**

To summarize, we have so far said three methods how to fix evil imagination.

The first method is *tziyur*, and this was explained in the last chapter: to our power of *maaseh beraishis*, which is by returning to the original image of something.

The second way is through *markiv*, which is not only a power that fixes problems with imagination, but a power that can help us improve our entire soul in all areas.

Both of these two abilities have a common denominator, that we are placing limits on the imagination and stabilizing it, recognizing how we must not let our imagination break any limits.

The third way is the opposite approach: letting your imagination loose, so that one can see for himself how destructive it is. It is to use the very same power of imagination – which is to have no limits – for good purposes, because then a person will be able to see how bad it is to have an imagination that is unrestrained.

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[1] Temimus\simplicity is discussed at length in Bilvavi 2 Chapter 28, and in in Bilvavi 3, Section V (Mussar), Chapter 10, as well as in Bilvavi 4 chapters 9-11.

[2] *Sefer Tanya*

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