

## Conscious Contact

### 10 Steps to building a Conscious Relationship with HKBH

Step 1 – Primary Purpose - Clarification of Tachlis

Step 2 – Conception of Kirvah - Consciousness of Contact

Step 3 – Willingness - To believe in and commit to this Program

Step 4 - Yaish Boreh – “There is a Creator”

Step 5 - Yaish Boreh V’ani Nivrah - “I am his creation”

Step 6 – HaBoreh Hu Manhig Chayaiy - “He’s still in charge”

Step 7 – Yiras Hashem - Developing healthy Fear and Awe of HKBH

Step 8 – Ahavas Hashem – Strong & Intense Love for HKBH

Step 9 – Kivas Hashem – Consciousness of Contact

Step 10 – Hischalilus – “Self / I” Negation

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## General Outline

### Step 1 – Primary Purpose –

Clarification of *Tachlis*  
General *Tachlis* Vs. *Personal Tachlis*  
Sustainable Awareness

### Step 2 – Conception of *Kirvah*

What is our Primary Purpose in this world?  
What is *Kirvah*?  
Is *Shlamus* possible for me, and now?

### Step 3 –Willingness

Do I want *Kirvah*?  
Am I willing to move forward and follow through **BICODAT**  
(Best I Can, One Day At a Time)  
Tefillah I: Praying for Willingness

### Step 4 - *Yaish Boreh* – There is a Creator

Simple and sustained awareness of HKBH as the creative being  
*Yediaha* – Experiential Knowing  
Tasting Hashem  
Patience with Your Progress – Don't Skip Steps!!  
Transforming Your Heart

### Step 5 - *Yaish Boreh V'ani Nivrah* – “I am his creation”

The Pharaoh Within  
The Small Cracks  
Questions and Answers  
Simple and sustained awareness of our “Created-ness”  
Building Practical Awareness

### Step 6 – *HaBoreh Hu Manhig Chayai* “He’s still in charge”

Seeing HKBH in all aspects of life  
*Kas/Anger* - The barometer of *Kirvah*  
*Olam Hatfilah* – Using Tefillah to incorporate HKBH  
awareness into every part of your life

### Step 7 – *Yiras Hashem* – Developing healthy fear and awe of HKBH

Healthy *Yirah*: Brings you to *Simcha* and *Kirvah*  
Which *Yirah* comes first?  
Different Parts of *Yiras Hashem*  
Not all relevant Today and at this Juncture  
*Yirah* relevant before *Ahava*  
*Yiras Onesh* – Fear of punishment and consequences  
*Yiras Shlamus* – Fear of not achieving *Shlamus*

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### Step 8 – *Ahavas Hashem* – Strong and Intense Love for HKBH

2 types of Love –

*Ahava Sh'Taluuya VeSh'Ayno Talyua Bedavar*

*Ahava Sh'Taluuya* - Conditional Love - Gratitude

Awareness and cognizance of all that G-d does for you

*Ahava She'Ayno Taluuya* – Unconditional Love

Focus on your deep existential oneness with HKBH

Quite/Calm deep meditation

Meditative Speech – Tefillah

### Step 9 – *Kirvas Hashem* – Consciousness of Contact

Recognize/Acknowledge HKBH's presence

Verbally and Intellectually

Him Vs. You / Nistar/Niglah

Developing a Personalized Relationship Life's about a

“You” relationship with G-d

Speak to HKBH as a “You”

Set aside times and regular times

### Step 10 – *Hischalilus* – “Self / I” Negation

3 levels of “I” negation – (All are based in belief and meditation and are levels not to be understood with the mind)

1. To internalize and believe that My “Ani” is only a part of the greater existence of hashem

(Intellectual understanding is impossible!!!)

2. I am not even an “Ani”

I only relate to and with HKBH

2 parts and 2 fazes of Level 2

Parts: Part 1 – Meditation on the Vast

Awesomeness of HKBH

Part 2 – More intense yet simple

thought of level 1

Fazes: Faze 1 – Negation of self –

Faze 2 – Negation of others –

everything is an expression of HKBH

3. *Ain Od Milvado* – Beyond our scope

Strengthened through belief and speech but not to be clarified intellectually

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## Section 1 Introduction

What do we mean by Conscious Contact and what does it have to do with Yidishkeit and Hashem? These are some of the questions you may be asking yourself as you begin to explore this book. Our goal in writing this work is to present, in a comprehensive and easily accessible manner, the spiritual *Emunah* building program established in the monumental *sefer Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*. In it, the author presents a clear path and program for how a person can incorporate, through *Emunah*, a vivid and intense relationship with HKBH (*Hakodesh Baruch Hu*), one that can be felt and experienced in your life today as you are. Besides that a person may be self-motivated to experience and feel Hashem in their lives, as the author shows and explains, this is an obligation in Yiddishkeit, and is even the underlying goal for all that we do.

*The Mechaber*, (note: we will refer to Rav Schwartz, the author of *Bilvavi (Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh)* as *The Mechaber*) in his *Hakdamah*, brings down the words of the *Ramchal* in *Mesilas Yesharim*, which states:

*“True completeness lies only in connectedness to the blessed one, and this is what King David meant when he said “And for me closeness to G-d that is ‘Good’ etc”, for this is the only Good and besides this all that people perceive as good is only emptiness and delusion”.*

The *Ramchal* teaches us that the goodness in anything is good in relation to how it attaches one, and engenders a relationship with, HKBH. Simply, *Dviekus* and *Kirvah* is the aim of our *Avodah* in this world, it is ‘Why’ we are here. If that is the case, what we now need, especially today in our times, is a clearly elucidated plan for incorporating *Kirvah* into our lives. *The Mechaber* himself points out in the *Hakdamah* that he is presenting a *Derech*, a path, or a program, for achieving *Shlamus*, for integrating a relationship with HKBH into our *Avodas Hashem*, or better yet to refocus our current *Avodas Hashem* so that it brings us the relationship with Hashem that we crave.

10 Steps what is that about? In order to present the ideas and concepts of *The Mechaber* in the most accessible way we felt it would be most helpful to break down the process into a step-by-step structure that can be practiced and worked on. This does not suppose to replace the study of *Bilvavi* in any way, and anyone who strives to use this path to connect with HKBH

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should purchase the sefer and find a chavrusa to learn it with. Personally though, we have seen many people learn the sefer and are excited by it, but are unable to apply its principles practically to their lives in a sustainable way and so it does change their lives in a meaningful way while they are learning it but after a short time its messages are lost. For this reason we strive to present his *Derech*/Program in 10 step form. Our goal is to simply explain, based on *The Mechabers* words, what the particular step is and how it can be worked on, but ultimately ones growth will come from incorporating this process into ones daily life and to work this program within the context of Judaism.

We don't believe these steps to be a one-time effort but rather a meaningful *Derech* that can be approached and worked on again and again on deeper and deeper levels. We have seen the immense benefit that people all over the world receive when they commit themselves wholly to any growth based program and we believe that within Bilvavi their lies a program that is specifically geared to our generation and the way in which we are meant to serve HKBH through Yiddishkiet and Torah. We would like to note that we feel unworthy to present these ideas, but feel that our experience may allow us some insight into incorporating this holy torah work into the lives of our generation. May hashem guide us to lead no one astray or to misrepresent *The Mechabers* holy ideas.

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## Step 1: Primary Purpose

### Section 2

#### Clarification of Tachlis

This is the step upon which the whole process lies. Before a person begins anything in life it is absolutely imperative that they are aware of and objectively decide, to the best of their ability, where they are going, why they are going, and have the hope that it is possible for them to get there. This is how *The Mehaber* begins his explanation of the process of incorporating a conscious relationship with HKBH into ones everyday life. *The Mehaber* uses the *Mashul* of a craftsman doing woodwork. Before he begins, the craftsman carefully plans what he would like to create, what materials he will need and how he will go about his task. Even having done this though, if at any point during the procedure of cutting he allows his mind to stray and think of other things he is at danger of making the wrong cut or even G-d forbid hurting himself. The same holds true for the craftsman of life, it is imperative that we understand what it is we are trying to accomplish, what tools we will need to help us and how we will use them. All this though can be meaningless if we don't acquire clarity at all times of how, what and why we are doing what we are doing. If we do not we are at risk of making the wrong cut or even g-d forbid hurting ourselves.

*The Mehaber* teaches us that we must constantly evaluate and reevaluate, not just the means by which we hope to achieve our end but even to clarify and strengthen our awareness of the ends that we strive to, both in the short-term and the long term. The Holy Books teach, as *The Mehaber* explains, that the word *Olam* is rooted in the word *He'elem*, which means confusion. The way in which Hashem created this world is that it breeds confusion. If we don't constantly strengthen our awareness of our Tachlis/Purpose then by nature we will be lost. The basic and simple lesson that this entire process rests on is this; know your purpose in all that you do, to forget it is to be in grave spiritual danger!!

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## Section 3

### **General Tachlis Vs Personal Tachlis**

The next part of this step is to clarify what sort of tachlis we are looking to identify. It is well known that the *Zohar Hakadosh* states that each person was created with a particular *tachlis* and *tafkid* and that they are the only person who ever was or will be capable of achieving their part of the overall *tikkun* of the world. The sefarim even comment that those areas which most puzzle us, and which we most struggle with spiritually, are those very areas in which our *tikkun* lies. If one were to go down the street and talk to different growing and spiritually minded people and ask them what their *tachlis* is right now each would give a different answer. The first guy might say, 'I struggle with anger and I need to work on my self-control when I am angry'. The next person might say, 'I gossip too much, I am not careful with my speech and I need to work on that'. The last might say, 'I need too work on my *Shalom Bayis* that is what Hashem wants for me'.

*The Mehaber* explains that all this is one hundred percent true but that underlying all these is a fundamental *tachlis* that every Jewish person in the world shares. It is this underlying *tachlis* that we need to work on before, and as, we work on our personal and individual ones. Many times people take the underlying tachlis for granted and for that reason lose sight of where, why and how they are going, this, as we learned previously, is extremely spirituality dangerous. So, our first step towards improving our spiritual health is not to look within but to look without, not to look at what we particularly struggle with and fix that, though that is absolutely part of our process, but rather to look keenly at the goal we share with every Jewish brother and sister in this world and keep focused on this constantly and consistently through all that we do. This clarity will bring the spiritual stability that is the foundation of a meaningful relationship with HKBH; we call this: Primary Purpose.

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## Section 4: **Sustainable Awareness**

As we have explained in order to bring about and engender a deep and meaningful conscious relationship with HKBH we have to attain a consistent and stable clarity of the underlying purpose of our lives, our Primary Purpose. Before we go on to define that purpose let's first discuss how one might go about achieving the sort of stable mindfulness we are talking about. *The Mechaber* says, and we paraphrase, if someone was asked "what would you do if I told you I could communicate with the creator of the world and he could tell me exactly what it is your meant to do with your life" what might the person answer. The person asked may answer "If hashem were to communicate to me directly the exact nature of the tachlis of my life and how to achieve it I would surely take out a piece of paper and write down everything he told me." Now I might do this for two reasons one so that while I wrote it the information would be more concretely established in my mind and two so that I would not forget what he told me, so that if at any point I lost awareness of it I could look back and right my ship.

This is exactly what *The Mechaber* suggests for us to do, he recommends that when we do clarify what this underlying and fundamental Tachlis is, we write it down on a piece of paper. He then suggests we carry this paper in our pockets wherever we go and that we cherish and treasure it, for on it is written the very purpose of our existence. He adds that we should keep it close so that we can take it out throughout the day and remind ourselves why we are doing what we are doing, and evaluate if what we are doing will bring us closer to the why of it. This concept underlies one of the fundamental tools that *The Mechaber* introduces to place in our spiritual toolbox, Simple Repetition.

*The Mechaber*, throughout the sefer, reminds us that the most important element of any spirituality is its stability. Stability is created and sustained through simple steps, steps like writing the purpose of your life on a small piece of paper and carrying it with you at all times so that its there for you along the way and insures *Yishuv Hadas* in your *Avodas Hashem*. In this way we can be sure that, as spiritual craftsmen forming and building a sanctuary in our hearts for G-d to dwell in, all of our cuts are straight and our foundation is strong and lasting. What would be the point of building a beautiful temple if the foundation lacked the strength to endure all that nature throws at it. The goal in this process is not to build a relationship with HKBH which is

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great in intensity but poor in might, and that will crumble under the quakes of life, but rather one that is strong and intense, one that will survive and even thrive through all the up and downs that life throws at us.

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## Concrete Suggestions

### Step 1

Take a small piece of Paper and write on it the words of the *Mesilas Yesharim*, or even just those of *Dovid Hamelech*. Put this note in your pocket and throughout the day take it out, read it, and remind yourself that the purpose of your life and all that you do is Dviekus and Kirvas Hashem, Conscious Connection and Closeness to G-d.

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## Step 2: Conception of Kirvah

### Section 5

#### What is our Primary Purpose?

Now that we have established and explained the importance of clarity of purpose, we have to define our underlying general purpose in this world. If one were to ask any religious Jew, they would surely answer “our general purpose in this world is to serve G-d by keeping the laws of the Torah”. As the Mechaber explains, while *Limud Torah and Mitzvos* are absolutely integral parts of our *Avodas Hashem*, they are means to an underlying end. The end, which the Torah prescribes for us, as outlined in the *Mesilas Yesharim*, the Primary Purpose of our existence, is *Shlamus*, completeness. Just as we would not settle for an incomplete in life or brokenness in any area of life, in evaluating the success of the soul-building process called life itself, *Shlamus* is the barometer. Who would be happy to be called a broken person or described as having an incomplete life?

What is *shlamus*, though, how can we define the completeness of an individual? The first answer that usually comes to mind is perfection, but is this what the Torah expects from us, can it be true that our goal is perfection and anything that falls short of this is failure? If this were true we would all be in deep trouble, luckily we can turn to a widely accepted and trustworthy source for the answer to this most important question. The *Mesilas Yesharim* has already told us, as explained in the introduction, that true completeness is a deep and real connectedness to Hashem. He has found this deep and meaningful statement in the words of *Dovid Hamelech* when he says “*V’Ani Kirvas Elokim Li Tov*”, for me closeness to g-d that is Good. As the Ramchal goes on to explain, Kirvah is the Goodness of this world. The extent that a particular person, situation or thing brings one to Kirvas Hashem is the extent to which it is good, “and all else that people perceive as good [outside of this] is a mistake and delusion”. Now we have a clear definition of *Shlamus*. A person who is not broken, is the person who is close [Karov] to HKBH. This all is supported by the well-known and quoted statement of the *Zohar Hakadosh* which teaches that the *Taryag Mitzvos*, 613 Commandments, are *Taryag Itim*, suggestions, how a person can build a relationship with his creator. Simply: Kirvas hashem is the Primary Purpose of a Jew's life and *Avodah*.

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## Section 6

### What is Kirvah?

Having defined the barometer of *Shlamus* as the extent to which a person has achieved *Kirvah*, we now require a working definition of *Kirvas Elokim*. Here, *The Mechaber* introduces an incredibly insightful and original look at our relationship with Hashem and our definition of closeness. He explains that *Kirvah*/Closeness or better yet relatedness can be broken down into two basic categories. The first type of relatedness is **Spatial Closeness**, in this category the extent of closeness is measured by how physically close the person or object is to you. The second type of relatedness is **Familial Closeness**, in this category the extent of closeness would be measured by the extent of family relation, or perhaps for the friend/love type, the intensity and strength of one's feeling and commitment for another person. It is interesting to note that in Hebrew the word for relative is *Karov*, or close one.

*The Mechaber* goes on to explain that if we were to just define *Shlamus* as closeness to HKBH then no further effort need be made by anyone. Who could be defined as closer to us than HKBH himself? From the perspective of spatial closeness we are taught in the holy books, *The Mechaber* explains, that there is no space void of Hashem. If it is true that Hashem fills the space of our existence then there can be nothing closer to us spatially than Hashem himself. In the perspective of familial closeness we can say the same. How does one know that an individual is his *Karov*, his relative, or friend? For example, I know my father is my father because he tells me that he is and demonstrates in action that this is true, because of this I trust that he is in fact my father. The same holds true for friends, how do I know that an individual is my friend. Firstly because they say they are my friends, and then because they demonstrate in action that they are my friends, I trust them. Does Hashem make any statements about how he is related to us in this perspective? **The Mechaber** points out that in the *Torah* and *Kesuvim* Hashem not only describes and is described as a particular relative but as many kinds of relatives. Hashem tells us he is our father and our mother, our spouse and even our children, and even calls us *Yedid* (close friend). In essence Hashem is telling us that he is as close a relative as we have in the perspective of familial closeness.

If this is all true, what is left for us to do in terms of our *Avodas Hashem*? If we are *Shalaym* because we are close to him, then we achieve *Shlamus* just by existing. *The Mechaber*

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explains a most beautiful insight and from his explanation we can gain a clearer understanding of what this entire program entails. It is not closeness to HKBH that we strive for in Judaism, we are granted that the moment we are born, rather it is becoming cognizant and mindful of the contact we already have. Simply, the nature of our *Tachlis* in this world is to achieve *Shlamus* by building consciousness of our connection with our creator.

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## Section 7

### Is *Shlamus* possible for me?

We have defined the *Tachlis* of our lives as achieving *Shlamus*, and have defined *Shlamus* as having a conscious relationship or contact with HKBH, but is this even possible for us on our level? ‘Maybe someone who has the presence of mind to learn torah daily for many hours, or practices deep asceticism, removing himself from the pleasures of this world, can have a conscious and constant awareness of our relationship with G-d, but I am just a regular guy, so am I doomed to an incomplete life or being a broken person?’ *The Mehaber* makes a bold and comforting declaration; these sort of statements stem from the *Yetzer Harah* himself!! The *Yetzer Harah* goal and mission is to remove you from Hashem and so he strives to convince you that it is impossible for you to experience a meaningful relationship with HKBH. This is absolutely false, *The Mehaber* brings down a piece from the end of *Mesilas Yesharim* that states emphatically that the level of *Ruach Hakodesh* and *T’chiyas Hamiesim* is not only reserved for those few individuals who are *tzadikim* but rather for any person who lives his life under the banner of *L’Shaym Shamayim*. Whether one spends his time working or learning this is not important, the only question one must ask is; Is the general direction of my life, and for that matter are the overall individual actions of my life, in G-d’s will or my will?

As an exercise, sit down and think for a moment, how much in your life do you do that is inline with how HKBH wants you to live? Obviously every person has areas of his/her life where they struggle to live up to the expectations or guidelines of the *Torah*, but when you put it in perspective these are few moments in the scope of things, most of your life is spent doing good things, things that G-d wants you to do. The question then that needs to be answered is whether you are doing them because G-d wills them, or because of your own need or other people’s expectation. What we are really talking about in essence is not necessarily changing your life that much. Yes, in this process you may decide to be more careful in some areas of Halachah etc., but really what is going to make or break your ability to internalize these lessons is a simple change in the way that you think as apposed to the way that you act. Having made this psychic change, where you are no longer living in the hamster wheel of self will, but live life focused on fulfilling g-d’s will, some behavior may change but your overall life will probably stay the same.

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Lets illustrate to further explain this idea; an individual works at an accounting firm, he clocks in 9 hours a day plus two hours of travel time. Before he leaves in the morning he catches a quick minyan and maybe learns for a couple of minutes. When he gets home he eats dinner with his family and spends some time with his wife and kids, and now maybe goes out for *Minchah/Maariv*, where he hears a nice *vort* or *shiur*. Then he returns home to pay his bills, maybe make some calls, and relax for a moment. He spends shabbos with family and friends and maybe takes a nice vacation to Florida and *Eretz Yisroel* once a year. This young man might say to himself; “*Kirvas Elokim*, that is not reserved for me I’m just a regular guy, maybe if I was a *Kollel* guy or a *rebbe* I could achieve that but me, maybe I’ll be *zoche* with some *Yissocher/Zevulin* stuff and hopefully my reward will be in the next world.” ***The Mehaber*** is stating clearly, this is just not true; you can achieve *Kirvas Hashem* in your life!!! The question is not whether you work 9 hours a day or learn 9 hours a day but rather the mindset you have when you get on the train in the morning. It is an incredible mitzvah to work and make money to support your family and give to others, now, all you need to do is say to yourself I am going to work for hashem today. To say, I am not going to spend time with my children today only because it makes me feel good but rather primarily because my children are a gift from Hashem and he wills that I spend time with them and care for them. In short to live ones whole life *L’Shaym Shamayim*, by bringing Hashem into every crevice of it by acknowledging his part in it. The crux of this whole program is this concept of G-d consciousness in real time.

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## Concrete Suggestions

### Step 2

Spend some time meditating on the Kirvah that exists in your life already. Build openness to a life of Kirvah by focusing in a simple and spiritual way on living L'Shaym Shamayim. Do this by practicing the thought; 'I am doing this for hashem', when you take any positive actions in your life. Also, continue to build awareness of the underlying *Tachlis* of your life with small reminders of "*Kirvas Elokim Li Tov*

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## Step 3: Willingness

### Section 8

#### Do I want Kirvah?

We now know, and are sure, that our general Tachlis in this world is to build our souls to be connected to HKBH. We have identified Torah and Mitzvos as tools HKBH has granted us to help enable this process of ‘Self’ growth. We then defined working on closeness to HKBH not as building closeness to him, as that is something we already have, but rather building our capacity for mindfulness of those connections, a consciousness of contact. We then discussed the likelihood of a “regular guy” achieving that sort of connectedness, and we were reminded of the words of the *Mesilas Yesharim* who stated that the key to achieving this Hashem Awareness is not to live an ascetic life removed from this world or to study *Torah* all day but rather to accustom oneself to live his current life in Hashem’s will. This takes on two levels, 1) by acknowledging the elements of his life that are already in line with Hashem’s will and 2) Making small changes to get ones life more in tuned with what Hashem’s will is for him. We were reminded that this does not mean necessarily changing our whole life in one day, or one month, or even one year, but rather incorporating small steps forward to bring oneself to a place more in line with the direction Hashem intends for you. The bridge that needs to be crossed now is that of willingness.

The first question that needs to be answered is; Do I want what this program has to offer? Do I want a meaningful awareness of HKBH in my life? As we said above, having a meaningful awareness doesn’t necessarily require significant change but when it does happen at least some change will occur. When we are more aware of the Ribono Shel Olam and of the harmful impact certain activities have on our relation to him, we will many times change some behaviors. People who live with HKBH live a different way, and do you want to live that way? Do I want the benefits that a conscious contact with hashem offers? This is the fundamental question that we must answer. Many people skip over the step of willingness because they believe they have no choice, and in many instances the alternative to following through with whatever particular program they are working, makes it seem like there is no other choice. For example, in this program a person might say; “why does it matter whether I am willing or not, you just said *Kirvah* is the underlying *Tachlis* of my life and if I believe you, do I really have a choice?” You are correct, the choice is glaring and choosing wrong would be foolish, but it’s still your choice

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to make, that's the beauty of free will. Where is it written that free will must mean I get to choose without any consequences for whatever choice I make? In the same vein but on a slightly different point, this is the beauty of the world Hashem has created, we choose. No matter how obvious the choice may be it is still our choice to make. The question we posed ultimately stems from an attitude of being victimized by ones circumstance, "I really don't have a choice do I". Hashem does not create us as victims, he created us free willed people who have the 'right' to make the most insane choices we want, he did this so that when we did make the right choice it would be our choice and that is our gift.

This is the question of the day do I choose *Kirvas Hashem*? If you want, you can close this book right now and never think about *Kirvas Hashem* ever again, its true you might end up with a life devoid of achieving the underlying *Tachlis* and that may be something you don't want, but it is your choice. The most important thing is that you not go into this process feeling trapped by circumstance or guilt. You are not trapped you have a choice, and choosing, even if you are choosing what is best for you, is what sets you free.

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## Section 9

### **Best I Can, One day At a Time?**

The final part left of the beginning faze of this program is practically AM I WILLING. You need to ask yourself; “Do I believe I can achieve Kirvah, and if I do, do I have the willingness and fortitude necessary to follow through with the other 7 steps of this program and live life by the principles contained within them”? At this juncture we need to introduce a simple yet integral life principle we will call **BICODAT**. **BICODAT** stands for Best I Can One Day At a Time, the first thing a person has to accept before working any program of ‘Self’ growth is; I am not perfect. This may seem like a hypocritical statement, “If I thought I was perfect, why would be wasting my time with ‘Self’-growth?” This is one of the paradoxes of classic human behavior; we know something about ourselves based on facts yet can act based on a mindset that is the exact opposite of that. Even when we admit that we need help and we require help there is a part of the Yetzer Harah that says, “You should be perfect and only perfection will do”. He then follows up this ridiculous assertion by adding, You’re a loser for not being good enough, so you might as well just give up, your not going to make it anyways. Many people identify these sorts of perfectionist thoughts and feelings as stemming from a low self-esteem, in fact though, they come from a very distorted ego, one in which you expect yourself to be perfect.

The solution to these therefore does not lie in propping oneself up emotionally but rather from a dose of ego deflation. This is when **BICODAT** steps in, every time the YH confronts you with hypocritical thinking like this, you need to remind yourself that you are not perfect and if anyone knows that Hashem does. Therefore you are only responsible for the best you can for today. Did I try my best today to live up to my responsibility for Today that relates to my general and reasonable process of growth. Many times people set out on a path of growth and will immediately try to act “perfect”, or close to that. This is foolish for two reasons; 1. You are never going to be able to achieve that perfection so quickly and 2. Whatever you do achieve will be unsustainable in the long run. The key here, and another tool for our toolbox, is a focus on Sustainable Spiritual Growth. (When a person is living their lives more *L’Shaym Shamayim* focused, as we discussed in Step 2, this sort of attitude is easier to internalize because ones mindset is more about what Hashem expects rather than what the individual or others unreasonably expect. As far as what Hashem expects, it important to remember that Hashem

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cosigns your continued existence at every moment, and he knows exactly where you are and what you are capable of, and is not blinded by the shortsightedness of being confined by time. Hashem is very patient with us, if you don't believe us on that just take a look in the records of our history in the *Torah* and in the 13 *Midos* of Hashem, as outlined in ***Tomer Devorah***.)

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## Section 10

### **Tefillah I**

#### Praying For Willingness

The next piece of the willingness puzzle is *Tefillah*. To many this may seem a strange element. “What should I pray for, even if the power to act is in Hashem’s hands the willingness to choose the right thing is surely in mine?” Fortunately this is not true; *The Mehaber* encourages us to reach out to HKBH to help us with willingness. To ask Hashem for example; “I want to be close to you, My Father, Master of the World, but many times I lack the willingness to follow through, please help me and grant me sustained willingness.” In fact, as is well known, we say this sort of prayer everyday before *Shemoneh Esrei*, when we say “G-d please open my lips so that my mouth may tell of your praises”. Does that make any sense? Here I am about to praise G-d and I ask him to help me, what kind of Chutzpa is that? Even more so, on the flip side, do we see Hashem as so petty that he will accept praise even though we blatantly admit that we lack the genuine gratitude to give it?

The answer seems simple now based on principle of humility established by an attitude of **BICODAT**. Firstly, Hashem lacks nothing, even our genuine prayers, and so, as we will see in more depth later on in the steps, it is the closeness to Hashem that the *Bakasha* or praise causes that is the primary purpose of prayer in the first place. Therefore all lacking in essence is only further opportunity to build connectedness with Hashem. Secondly, yes we do indeed have every right, and maybe even the obligation, to ask Hashem for assistance even when it concerns our service of him! It is the *Yetzer Harah* fueled by our own egotism that says, “all burden rests on you and if you don’t have what it takes then fault lies in you, to sustain willingness or even just open your mouth to pray”. In reality though, this is far from the truth. All we can do is the best we can for today the rest we leave to hashem, even infusing the very willingness required to follow up on our small choice to help ourselves.

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## Concrete Suggestions

### Step 3

Spend the next few days focused exclusively on Willingness. In your *Tefillos* direct your attention and *Bakashos* to asking Hashem to firm up your willingness to come close to him through this program. Also, spend some time contemplating if Kirvas Hashem is what you want in your life, and if you believe it is possible for you to achieve with divine assistance. Decide firmly that you are going to follow through with your part of working this program and open yourself to let, and ask Hashem to, do the rest. Finally contemplate the fact that Hashem desires and wills that you beseech his assistance in this effort, and that in so doing you are living your life L'Shaym Shamayim, and that he will respond with help and inspiration.

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## Step 4 Yaish Boreh – There is a creator.

Section 10:

### Simple and sustained awareness of HKBH as the creative being

Now we get in to Kishka's of this program of Emunah. In steps 1 through 3, we have studied the preparatory stages. These steps are universal in nature and can be applied to almost any life circumstance and issue. They also can and should be worked on and reinforced throughout this process. Throughout the sefer *The Mechaber* refers to steps 4 through 10 as rungs in a ladder. If they are rungs in the ladder, then the first three steps are the side beams of the ladder itself, and like the side beams of a ladder they uphold each rung and have relevancy in each rung and just as by a ladder if one removes one rung then the side beams lack strength, so too the first three steps only find culmination and have strength when they encompass a fully worked program. Therefore, having established the beams of the ladder, we now introduce its rungs and as we learn and then work each rung step by step we will have a complete and strong ladder by which to live our lives and ascend spiritually to Kirvah.

We preface this section by stating that the principles herein are based on a torah philosophy, as we know and understand it, to the best of our ability. We do not intend, nor is it in the scope of this work or in the ability of the authors, to justify or explain all of torah philosophy we will work to present only the ideas of *The Mechaber*. As stated, our purpose is to assist Jewish individuals in building a practical program of Emunah, which will facilitate a real and felt relationship with HKBH, based primarily on their current observance of Judaism, Therefore we will work from the assumption that you believe in an intelligent creative force and that you accept the *Torah* as an expression of his will for us as Jews. Simply put, our goal is to help you make that knowledge real and experiential.

With that said, we can now approach the first rung in our ladder, the principle of Yaish Boreh, There is a creator. In this step we focus specifically on building strong yet simple Emunas Hashem or if you will to build consistent mindfulness that acknowledges HKBH as the creator. This may seem small and petty in many ways but as we explained earlier, this program is about establishing a sustainable spirituality that can thrive through all life throws at us and *The Mechaber* explained that this world is called Olam from the *shoresh He'elem*, hidden, and that, in this world if we do not make efforts to solidify even the most simple and fundamental of

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concepts we will remain in a status of being hidden. Therefore, we begin our process by establishing the most simple and fundamental spiritual principle of all, that there is a G-d and that he created the world.

Besides this concept though of focusing on the simple to combat the forgetful nature of this world, *The Mehaber* teaches us that simple messages are those that most relate to our soul. Every morning we wake up and thank Hashem for returning our soul in the *bracha Elokai Nishama*, and in it we say “you gave it to me and it is pure”. Our soul is pure and simple, like a child, and it responds to simple and true spirituality not deep and complicated intellectualism. In this process it is our soul we are talking to and so we need to speak its language. For this reason also we will stay focused on simple concepts.

*The Mehaber* warns us in very strong language not to underestimate the importance of this step. For those of us who have grown up in religious backgrounds belief in G-d seems elementary. We might admit that at times our faith in the Hashgacha of HKBH falters based on negative events in our life, but to not believe in Hashem at all seems ludicrous and far fetched. Even for those who agnostically struggle to accept that Hashem is still actively involved in our individual lives, they never the less admit to believing that he created the universe. You might be thinking “It seems silly to spend any extended time on this matter, I should probably skip forward a little and leave this to the baalie tshuvahs”. *The Mehaber* explains that these thoughts are completely erroneous; every single person needs and is required to work on this, the simplest element of spiritual growth, Yaish Boreh.

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## Section 11

### **Yediah – Experiential Knowledge** “There’s knowing and then there’s *Knowing*”

Having just stated that the awareness of Yaish Boreh is not only necessary for all but required of us as observant Jews, we now need to clarify what we mean exactly when we say Yaish Boreh awareness. Does *The Mehaber* mean that we are all required to throw ourselves into the depths of philosophical works that discuss this topic? To these questions he emphatically answers no, not in the least bit. What then is this *chiyuv*, what is the avodah of the 1<sup>st</sup> rung and 4th step of the program?

To understand our Avodah we need to clarify the *tachlis* of this step, what are we aiming to achieve. It is true that we know that HKBH created the world but what does “know” mean, what level of knowledge are we talking about. In the torah there are a number of different *leshonos* used to describe knowing something or Knowledge, each a description of a particular form or origin of knowledge. Here we will specifically concern ourselves with the *lashon Yediah*, and not just *Yediah Stamis*, simple knowledge, rather *Yediah Shlamus*, complete knowledge. What is *Yediah Shlamus*, complete and real knowledge? What sort of awareness and knowing is the torah referring to?

As we just stated, that there are two types of Yediah, there is “knowing” something in a disconnected way, *Yediah Stamis* and “knowing” in a connected way, *Yediah Shlamus*. *The Mehaber* explains the difference with a parable; lets say there are two friends Shimon and Levi, and one day Shimon, with Levi watching, wins 20 million dollars in the lottery. Now, both Shimon and Levi know the same information; that Shimon won 20 million dollars, but you would be remiss to say they both “knew” it the same way. Shimon’s “knowledge” is much different than Levi’s, Shimon’s whole existence is wrapped up in this knowledge, all he can think about is the wonderful things he will do with his wealth, on the other hand Levi knows Shimon won and he even spends some time thinking about it, but not in the same way. Shimon has connected knowledge *Yediah Shlamus*; Levi has disconnected knowledge, *Yediah Stamis*, and this is precisely the difference we are looking for here by *Yaish Boreh*.

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You may know that there is a G-d that created world but do you “know” it like you won 20 million dollars. Let us be clear, again we are not talking about a depth of philosophical understanding, but rather, on the level that you do understand there is a Hashem is that knowledge alive within you, and are you aware of it all the time. This is the level of mindfulness that we strive for, to live simply with Hashem in our life in an experiential way. There are many words in Hebrew that translate as knowledge; *Yediah*, as we have shown, is the sort of knowledge that you live with, that burns inside of you. This sort of HKBH awareness will change your life completely; it will start you on the path to a life of *Kirvah*. Simply stated; The Path to a life of *Tov*, one lived close to G-d, starts with the constant *Yediah* that there is a G-d who created the world, and this is the most important factor of your Avodas Hashem.

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## Section 12

### **Tasting Hashem**

*Taamu Ve'Rau Ki Tov Hashem*

Using everything in your life to enhance simple awareness

*The Mehaber* now introduces an incredible idea to the process, Tasting G-d. This seems like a strange *Lashon* to use describing a spiritual experience, how can I taste G-d that is ludicrous? Even if we were able to experience G-d in a physical way, tasting would hardly be the sense we would use to describe that experience, maybe touch or see or hear but taste how does that work?

In fact, it is Dovid Hamelech himself who introduces this idea, and *The Mehaber* expounds upon it. In *Tehillim Dovid Hamelech* says “Taste and See the Goodness of Hashem” or rather as *The Mehaber* explains “Taste [in order] to see the Good of Hashem”. What *Dovid Hamelech* is teaching us is that in order to see and experience HKBH one needs to work on experiencing G-d in a way that he metaphorically describes as tasting. Perhaps, we should approach our question with a slightly different angle now. What was *Dovid Hamelech* referring to when he said *Taamu*, how does one Taste G-d? Maybe revealing this secret will grant us further clarity on incorporating *Kirvas Hashem* into our lives?

*The Mehaber* explains that the level of tasting HKBH is impossible when ones awareness of him lies only in the *Sechal*, the intellectual realm. Rather, tasting Hashem comes when one matures his G-d awareness to a level of knowledge of the Heart, in *Lashon Hakodesh* the distinction would be between *Yediah Shel Sechal* and *Yediah She'belev*. In review, there are a number of terms used in Torah literature to describe knowing something and all of these have a number of applications when translated into English but each has a specific meaning. Earlier, we said that the level of *Kirvas Hashem* is attained through *Yediah* and that *Yediah* is having the sort of knowledge or awareness of something to the extent that it encompasses ones whole existence. To explain metaphorically we described the difference between two people with the same information one that won the lottery and one that was witness to such an event. We said that, both shared the same information and were as positive as the other who had won the lottery but the person who won the lottery has a much more intense awareness then the other, it is personal and all encompassing, this level of knowledge is called *Yediah Shlamah*, and this is the way we seek to know HKBH. Having said that though, even if one attains a knowledge that is all

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encompassing if it only lives in the realm of the mind and does not transfer to the realm of the heart, where a person experiences it, *Kirvah Amitis* will not occur. Therefore, having developed a *Yediah Shlamus* in the intellectual realm we no need to transfer that to the heart.

In short; the spiritual program of the Torah is one where knowing G-d is of such a sort and on such a level, that I feel it, in *Lashon Hakodesh, Chush B'Lev*. When I achieve this level of simple awareness I can spiritually taste HKBH in my life and as a result see his true goodness, which the *Mesilas Yesharim* describes as underlying all that is good in this world.

This is the level of *Kirvas Elokim*, and it is possible and within our reach. To achieve it we don't need to be, or study the works of, great philosophers, but rather we need to incorporate a simple and experiential awareness/*Yediah* of the existence of a creator in the universe. This is the secret key to a true spiritual life, to think about and be aware of constantly, the Creator, HKBH. A life devoid of these simple thoughts is a superficial life, but a life with them is a life of deep meaning and *Shlamus*. To quote *The Mechaber* "Learn Torah and do Mitzvos, but '*the Ikar, is to know before whom you are making effort*' (these are the words of the Chazon Ish), at all times and at every moment...and to the extent that a person incorporates this awareness deeper in his heart is the extent he will experience on deeper and deeper levels "Taste and See the Goodness of HKBH", and experience the *Oneg* of Hashem here in this world, now."

The question we are now left to answer is how does one transfer *Yediot Shel Seichal* to *Yediot SheBlev* and *Chushai Ha Leiv*? How can we take our awareness of Hashem to the next level where we can feel and taste him in our lives? In the coming sections we will show how this can be done simply and systematically based on ones current spiritual level.

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## Section 13

### **Patience with Your Progress**

At this juncture in the process *The Mehaber* introduces a most important and comforting element of his program, Self-Acceptance. *The Mehaber* implores us to be aware of our current level on the spectrum of Hashem Consciousness, and not to be bashful or ashamed of that level. Feelings of shame concerning our spiritual level will many times cause a person to try to force growth upon self and even skip steps in this process. For example, a person having learnt up until this point may, and hopefully is, excited to incorporate these spiritual principles into their lives. Having read through the first four steps they may want to start living in more awareness of the *Boreh*, as prescribed in Step 4, but if this person has not appropriately and significantly worked step 2 for example but they have awareness of the importance of clarity and are sure to the best of their ability that Hashem wants *Kirvah* from them, but they don't have a clear enough conception of what *Kirvah* is, moving on to Step 4 would be unwise.

Therefore at this point, and throughout this process, before we move on more concretely with the next step, we need to humbly ask ourselves "Do I feel confident in my working of the previous steps? Is the Primary Purpose of my life, Kirvas Hashem, clear to me? Do I have a clear and working definition and understanding of what experiential Kirvah entails and that it is possible for me now on my level? And finally, Am I willing to follow through with the rest of this program and live a life of Kirvah?" Should the answer be No, to at least one of these, do not hesitate to move forward with this book as the aim in reading it is just to learn what the program is not working the program itself. Rather in your spiritual work stick to the step you are up to. *The Mehaber* implores us to take our time with the earlier steps even for example to spend years incorporating the awareness that Kirvas Hashem as the Primary Purpose of our lives. We are in this world to serve G-d and Kirvah is our primary Avodah, and so it would be unwise to skimp on this process, no matter how long it takes. There is no rush, take your time, and build strong foundations upon strong foundations, that will serve you for all your life.

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## Section 14

### **Transforming your Heart**

Having evaluated our growth and strengthened our work of the previous steps we now need to face the most important part of Step 4, How do I taste Hashem. How can I transform the simple and basic understandings of my mind about the existence of Hashem to a level that I can feel and experience him? *The Mehaber* has taught us that the program he has designed is based on a principle of facilitating sustainable spiritual growth. He explains that this is not achieved as a result of intense efforts that wear one out and leave one emotionally and spiritually spent. Rather, we achieve it through simple actions taken at regular and consistent intervals intended to strengthen our spiritual self. These actions, specifically mental and verbal acknowledgments of our Tachlis and then of the existence of a *Boreh*, should be done in the simplest of ways, *Peshita She'BePashtus*. He teaches us that it is these simple messages repeated over and over that impact us the most, especially, transforming them from intellectual knowledge to *Liev* experience.

We learn this from the Mashul and story of Rabbe Akiva, the famed Taana. The story goes that Akiva, who until 40 was an ignoramus and hated Rabbis, was walking along when he encountered a rock with a gaping hole in the middle. He noticed that this hole was created by erosion from a small drip of water that was dripping on the rock. Over thousands of years these small drops of water had created this hole. This gave Rabbe Akiva great inspiration and he went on to become one of the greatest Jewish leaders of our deep history.

What is it that Rabbe Akiva learnt from the rock and how did this give him the inspiration to turn his life around in such a drastic way? To understand let us analyze the story a little. Each drop of water that fell on the rock was extremely small, weak and insignificant. Water is one of the softest materials while rock is one of the hardest. What is it that allows soft and pliant water to erode hard and fixed rock? The water's strength lies in its consistency. Each drop of water, over thousands of years is no different than its predecessor, the first drop resembled the second drop exactly. Simply; it is not the *Koach* of the water that shaped the rock but rather the consistency of the drop. Even if you took all the water that had dripped over all that time and shot it at the rock at one time it would lack the strength of the consistent small drops. This is what inspired Rabbe Akiva; our hearts, which Chazal describe as being rock, *Liev*

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*Even*, can be changed. How can we open them making them flesh and alive, through simple small drops applied consistently, and because it is not complicated, it is not overwhelming. It is not deep thought that will make the difference, though that can be a critical element, for those naturally inclined to it, but rather our ability to follow through with simple small actions on a regular basis with consistency. Through that we can we convert the hardness of our heart to soft and living flesh. “What is a heart that is alive, a heart that is alive is one that recognizes its creator, HKBH.” By simple actions we can transmit our Emunah from Yediah Be’sechal to Yediah B’Lev and through that merit to taste hashem “Taamu Verau Ki Tov Hashem”

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## Concrete Suggestions

### Step 4

Having thoroughly completed steps one through three, incorporate Boreh awareness into every element of your life. At first you will require reminders; and so set them up throughout the day. Begin with every half hour and then every fifteen minutes, just say Yaish Boreh, until you have achieved a simple constant awareness of the Creator. Don't make it complicated, that will only get in the way of your real concrete growth. *The Mechaber* leaves us a prayer to start our day with. In it he says; "When you awake, what is the first thing you should think about? Running to shul or getting to work etc.? No, the first thing on our minds should be Yaish Boreh. And once that feeling exists you should wake up and say "Who got me up out of bed this morning and gave me the power to get out of Bed? You HKBH. And so I ask that I live this day in your will, because it is my will that I live this day in your service" It is simple prayers such as these along with simple reminders and acknowledgements that will help us attain the sustainable spiritual growth that our Neshamos crave.

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## Step 5

### Yaish Boreh V'Ani Nivrah – “There is a Creator”

Section 15

#### The Pharaoh Within

Having verified our Primary Purpose as *Kirvas Hashem* and solidified our hope for achieving shlamus through the Bilvavi Program, we made a hardy decision to follow through with the rest of the steps. In Step 4, We learnt about the effort one must make to solidify their basic and simple awareness of HKBH throughout the day. *The Mechaber* implored us to be patient with our progress in this program and even went so far as to say that it may take years to properly incorporate *Yaish Boreh* into our lives. He taught that the importance of Step 4 stems from the principle that a simple awareness of G-d is the key to opening a spiritual life. When we feel we have mastered *Yaish Boreh* it is time to move on to the next rung in the ladder Step 5; *Ani Nivrah*. The fifth step in the program seeks to engender a simple and steady awareness of ones “created-ness” – ones place as a creation in the created world of HKBH. Immediately the thought that should come to mind is; Really, do I need to work on that, its pretty obvious to me that I am a creation, I didn't create myself?

There are two answers to this question, the first should be obvious considering what we learnt in Step 4; yes you know it but do you “KNOW” it, do you experience it? Besides that answer *The Mechaber* introduces an incredible *Yesod* that shows the importance of this step in the process. Step 5 is not just the logical follow up to Step 4, with the intention being once you have *Yediah* of *Yaish Boreh* the obvious follow up is *Yediah* of *V'ani Nivrah*, rather Step 5 stands on its own, it is a critical step in the achievement of *Kirvas Hashem*. (An authors note; we realize that the word “Created-ness” is not actually a word but for lack of a better applicable alternative we will use it with quotations.)

To understand the nature of Step 5 *The Mechaber* points to Pharaoh, King of Egypt. In the Torah we are taught the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, and in the story the protagonist is non other then Pharaoh. The *Medrash* teaches us that within the dialogue between Paroh and Moshe we can detect the source of his problem. It is not that *Pharaoh* lacks acknowledgment of Hashem as a powerful god, but rather that he sees himself as a god and even believes that he created himself. The *Medrash* brings the *pasuk* in *Yechezkel*, which quotes Pharaoh as saying,

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“*Li Yeori Va’Anochi Asisani*, I have my river and I made myself”. We see therefore that people can believe in Hashem but still not believe *Ani Nivrah*.

How can we honestly make this comparison? Pharaoh must have been delusional and insane to think that he created himself, would we really think such things, do we need to work on that? Furthermore even a casual analysis of the story of *Mitzrayim* shows the extent of Pharaoh’s psychosis when he leads his chariots into the sea behind *Klal Yisroel*, as Hashem holds up the walls of water that could crash down on him at any moment, this after months of brutal plagues that were visited on him and his people. What can we possibly learn from this, does it have any bearing on our lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

***The Mechaber*** points out a critical and fundamental Torah principle that we are taught in the holy sources. Every personality in the Torah is there for us to learn from, from each of them we can find parallels and learn lessons both from the heroes and the protagonists of *Tanach*. We learn further though that it is not simply that their experiences are metaphorically connected to our struggle, rather, it is much more than that, each of us has a part that is a person from *Tanach*. We have a part called Avraham and called Yitzchak and called Moshe and on the flip side we have negative parts which are called and correspond to the *resha’im* like Bilaam and Pharaoh etc... So, ***The Mechaber*** explains, there is a part of us that is Pharaoh. In fact the Rambam calls Pharaoh the *Yetzer Harah* himself. That part of us, against all reason, sees ourselves as being self created. It does not strive to forget the existence of the creator but rather to deny experiencing the feeling of being a creation. It is this natural phenomenon that ***The Mechaber*** instructs us to counteract. ***The Mechaber*** points out that this part of ourselves may be hidden or we may not be cognizant of it but assures us that it does exist. He also states firmly that if we do not counteract it, whether cognizant of it or not, it will leave a crack in the foundation of our spiritual lives. As one grows, this crack will be amplified and it will haunt one’s experience of *Kirvas Hashem*.

We can see therefore how step 5 stands on its own accord and needs to be worked on no matter what one’s level of *Yediah* is in relation to “created-ness”, because we must counteract the negative manifestations of our inner Pharaoh. ***The Mechaber*** explains that every struggle we experience in our *Emunah* is not a lack of knowledge or wisdom about HKBH or his *Hashgachah* or anything of that nature but rather the result of small cracks in the foundation of

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our spiritual self, concerning *Yaish Boreh Olam* and *Hu Boreh Osi*! Therefore our work now is in simplicity. To strengthen the simple fundamental principles of our life, first “There is a creator” and next “He created me”.

[In modern terms the phenomenon of Inner *Paroh* could be related to the term “a self-made man”, in essence there is little distinction between believing that we created our selves biologically to believing ourselves self created emotionally, psychologically or even financially all is in the hands of the *Boreh*. This relates to *Hashgachah Pratis* and will be dealt with more in step 6.]

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## Section 16

### **The Small Cracks**

In the previous section we identified the inner Pharaoh, that part of our *Yetzer Harah* that seeks to deny our “created-ness”. Having accepted this reality we need to counteract this effect, this is primarily the work of Step 5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> rung in the program. Before describing what it is we must do though, *The Mehaber* explains why these sort of efforts are so integral, to our Avodas Hashem in general, and the achievement of *Kirvas Hashem* is particular.

In our lives we find that we go through times of *Aliyah* and times of *Yediah*. By this we mean, there are periods in a person’s life when doing the right thing comes more naturally and they are highly motivated to act and strive forward in the way that is appropriate for them. For every person though, on their own level, there will be times that they struggle. Doing the right thing and growing the right way is very hard and there is a greater inclination to do wrong. Besides, these down times there are also periods when our *Emunah* is lacking. Why we have a harder time accepting that there exists *Hashgachah Pratis* or even a god at all. Where do these come from, how does this happen to someone who is generally trying to do the right thing, is it all out fault?

The Mehaber explains an incredible and fundamental principle, that the root of all these struggles, of any *nefillos*, is hairline fractures in our spiritual foundation. They stem from a lack of our working on and perfecting our Boreh and Nivrah awareness. Whether we experience our Inner Pharaoh or not it effects us. These foundational cracks could be slight and miniscule but as the building grows their impact is manifested more and more.

Therefore, as we described earlier, it is incumbent upon us to smooth these cracks and to continuously strengthen and guard over our spiritual foundation to insure that cracks do not develop. We have shown time and again that the basis of this program is to build sustainable spirituality, and it is plain to see why this concept is so important. If the foundation of the Sanctuary of my heart is not strong and perfected then my structure will be faulty and, eventually under the right circumstances, it will fall. The strength of our heart sanctuary is not in its height or width or even beauty but rather in its foundation.

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For this reason, we assume, *The Mehaber* places so much emphasis on fundamental concepts and simple foundation building rather than complicated and intense spiritual messages. The intensity of our spirituality will stem from working the Torah program of life and will come as a natural consequence of building a strong foundation and right living. It is the building, or rather strengthening, of the foundation that he concerns himself with. This is where our work lies, where our Avodas Hashem begins, simple concepts such as Yaish Boreh and V'ani Nivrah.

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## Section 17

### **The Q&A Principle** Questions and Answers

In the past two sections we explained Step 5 as creating awareness of our “Created-ness”, of being creations of the Boreh we recognized in Step 4. We explained that this step is necessary in its own right as a result basic human nature, which contains a part that seeks to deny its own “created-ness”. This part of our selves we identified as Inner Pharaoh. We then explained that the danger in overlooking this issue is significant in that it represents and creates small cracks in the foundation of our Emunah and is therefore the underlying source of all *nefillos* we experience. If this is all true and accurate then it is imperative that we seek to combat and fix these cracks, especially if we strive to build a spirituality that is sustainable through all circumstances that life throws at us. How does one do this though? How can we combat and smooth over foundational cracks that I don’t even feel or experience? I believe in HKBH, I believe he created the world and I definitely know that I didn’t create myself, what else can I do?

*The Mechaber* brings down from the Chofetz Chaim, that when he experienced *nefillos*, his solution would be to open and learn *Maasa Bereishis*, the creation of the world according to the simple understanding. No one would accuse the Chofetz Chaim of having a lack of Emunah or even forgetting *Bereishis*, so what was he doing? To understand *The Mechaber* introduces an important tool that is a long-standing but perhaps misunderstood principle in Jewish education and learning, Questions and Answers. He explains, in order counteract the effects of the inner Pharaoh one has to practice the principle of Q&A in his interaction with the world, this was the tool the Chofetz Chaim was employing.

What is the principle of Q&A, and how does one practice it? *The Mechaber* explains that we learn this principle from the Seder on Pesach, when we see that even a great sage who is on his own on Pesach night must ask the 4 questions and answer himself. Why is that, is it just to reinforce meaningless ritual, the sage knows the answers, so why ask the Questions? *The Mechaber*, explains a most beautiful *pshat*. The purpose of asking the obvious questions is to give validity and voice to the inner agnostic, Inner Pharaoh, and then to answer him. This process removes the cracks that he creates, by dragging him out of the subconscious realm into the conscious where his false claims can be refuted and stamped out. When we ignore and

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suppress Inner Pharaoh, we make him powerful because, metaphorically speaking, he can continue his spiritual guerrilla warfare unabated. But, when we force him out onto the spiritual battlefield his weakness is shown and we can defeat him. This is power of questions and answers and so the answer to our dilemma is to approach life with a perspective of Q&A.

How does one go about this though, what does *The Mehaber* mean by a perspective of Q&A? He gives us concrete examples using *Bereishis*, the pathway of the *Saba Kadisha*, the Chofetz Chaim. One begins “*Bereishis Barah Elokim Es Hashamayin V’es Haaretz* – In the beginning Hashem created the heaven and the earth”. Let’s break it down Q&A style. *Bereishis*, in the beginning, Did the universe as we know it exist forever, who says it didn’t? Ahh now I see, I might have thought there was no beginning, but Hashem this *Pasuk* tells me that there was a beginning to creation. Next, *Barah Elokim*, Hashem created – Maybe the world created itself is that possible? Ahh we see here that this part of the *pasuk* is telling me that there is a creator, and who is he, *Elokim*, Hashem. This is just a taste of how one can approach something with Questions and Answers, and more can and should be seen in Bilvavi. *The Mehaber* goes on to show though how one can approach all of life in this fashion and how doing so step by step incorporates *Nivrah* awareness into your consciousness. We will elaborate further in the next few sections.

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## Section 18

### **Simple and sustained awareness of our “Created-ness”**

#### Introducing Inner Abraham

In the past few sections we established the problem that Step 5 looks to solve, small cracks in our spiritual foundation. We ascertained that the source of these cracks is a force called Pharaoh, or Inner Pharaoh. We explained that our natural response to this agnostic force is to suppress and ignore him, because his claims are illogical and counterproductive. The problem arises though because suppression supplies him with the perfect environment to carry out spiritual guerilla warfare on our souls and this allows for the creation and continued existence of those spiritual cracks that are the source of our inner struggles. We explained, that because these spiritual downs are symptoms of an underlying problem, in a program based on creating sustainable growth to remove them permanently we seek to confront the source of the problem itself rather than just control or remove the symptoms of it. We have Boruch Hashem been supplied the answer to this problem, implementation of the principle of Q&A into our lives. The question now is, practically how do we do that?

*The Mehaber* proposes a three-part campaign that aims at removing these cracks, specifically those related to the denial of ones “created-ness”. The first part of the campaign against inner Pharaoh is **Everything “Created-ness”**, the awareness that all we see around us is a creation of HKBH. Using the principle of Q&A we spend time thinking about the things we see all around us and ask ourselves where did these things come from. Where did those trees come from, maybe they created themselves? And then we answer ourselves, No they couldn’t have created themselves it must be you hashem who created them. What about that moon in the sky where did he come from, did he create himself? No that’s not right it was you hashem who created him.

You may be thinking; “this process seems silly, why would I do that, how is it helping me attain Kirvah on a deep level?” The reason this helps is because we are accessing and giving life to our Inner Avraham. Just as Avraham had to search out nature and the world around him to recognize HKBH so too we begin by seeing HKBH through creation around us. Inner Avraham, therefore, is the antidote to Inner Pharaoh. Even though our god experience is very different from Avraham, the concept of approaching nature to see Hashem puts us in touch with

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our Inner Avraham, which represents the simplest and most pure parts of our souls. By giving life to this part we smooth the first layer of cracks in the foundation of Emunah that cause our *nefillos*.

The next phase in this process is **Personal “Created-ness”**, the awareness that we are creations of HKBH. For this we employ the same practices as before but apply them to our selves. Starting with our bodies we say for example, who made this arm, did it develop on its own? No you hashem created it and so on and so forth committing our entire selves to the service of G-d by acknowledging his creation of it. *The Mehaber* explains that this is the process which creates that which the sefarim refer to when they discuss being *mamlich* hashem over all your limbs. In this way we show that each part of us, biologically, physically and spiritually is a product and creation of hashem. By doing this we seek to firmly establish in our hearts in a simple and experiential way, that we are his creations. This phase in the program is critical, therefore as long as it is not firmly established we must continue in these efforts, no matter how long it takes us.

The last phase of this effort is **Now “Created-ness”**, the awareness that everything that unfolds around us is a creation of HKBH. Having established firmly and experienced simply the awareness that everything around us, including ourselves, is a creation of hashem, we now seek to see the constant manifestation of his creating in our lives. Namely, to look at all that occurs to us and around us as being a revelation of his continuing sustenance and recreating of the world. This phase connects Step 5 to Step 6, Hashgachah Pratis, and therefore, we will not go into detail about this element, as we will work on it at length in the next step. Never-the-less a simple awareness of **Now “Created-ness”** is an integral part and finishing touch of this step.

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## Section 19

### **Building Practical Awareness**

The final element necessary to work Step 5 is an understanding of a principle that is necessary in any spiritual process of growth, and is one of the fundamental tools introduced by *The Mehaber*; **Constant Awareness** and **Daily Meditation**. This means that in every step we are imparting on a two-part process, first building a simple regular awareness of the particular area or phase that he is working on, as we did in step 1 with Primary Purpose, and then also setting aside time in the day to think about this area in a more in depth way.

There is no great chiddush in this concept, it really is common sense, but application of it and following through with it can be most challenging. The principle entails lending mindfulness throughout your day to whatever concept you are working on. Having this kind of commitment can be difficult, but in many ways what is most challenging is really setting aside “quite” time to be *misbonen* on that area. As a person trains himself to think constantly about spiritual things it is second nature it will not interrupt your day but to have the fortitude to set aside that time, putting other pressing matters aside takes real commitment. This all brings us back to Step 3, where we spoke about willingness to follow through, and if you are unsure about your willingness it might make sense to return to that step, and take *The Mehabers* advise, to pray to HKBH for continued willingness to follow through with the rest of the program.

*The Mehaber* ends step 5 by reiterating that this entire process cannot have success unless a person is tolerant and accepting of the area he is currently working on and warns us to be patient with our progress as he did in step 4. The thought may cross your mind; “How long am I going to spend on this thing aren’t there other areas of my Judaism that need my focus?” It is important to remember that the length of time it takes to truly work this program is unimportant because this is why we are here in this world; this is our primary Avodas hashem. Torah and Mitzvos are the tools given to us to facilitate G-d Consciousness, but G-d consciousness in general is what we are meant to be working on. *The Mehaber* himself says this, explaining “this is why we are here, so take as much time as you need”. Who cares how long it takes to totally incorporate the awareness of everything around you as the creation of HKBH, as long as you are really working on that, Hashem put you here to work on that and that is precisely what you are doing.

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## Concrete Suggestions

### Step 5

Starting with the awareness of the “created-ness” of everything around you establish a practice of Constant Awareness and Daily Meditation. Begin your Constant Awareness at ½ hour intervals. By this we mean, every half hour take a moment and look at everything around you and ask yourself, for example, “Who created this?” then answer, “You did HKBH”, as simple as that. After this is perfected, and second nature to you, bring it down to every 15 minutes, then ten and then 5 etc etc until its your second nature to see everything around you as a creation of Hashem. Along with this you must set aside time (1/2 hour, 5 minutes or whatever you can according to your level) to sit down quietly, without distractions, and think deeply about the “created-ness” of everything around you. When you have achieved significant second nature awareness and mindfulness of the “created-ness” of everything around you follow the same steps now focusing on your own “created-ness”. When you have finished this you are ready for Step 6, Hashgachah Pratis, to practically see hashem working in your life in an intense and real way.