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Editor's Introduction

This series, **Reaching Your Essence**, (דע את הויתך), is an adaptation of the series “*Da Es Havayesecha*” (originally entitled “*Yechidah*”), a course consisting of 15 classes in which the Rav explains the essence of Jewish spirituality and several ways of how one can identify and access the deepest part of the Jewish soul: the “*Yechidah*” (the place of “oneness” in the soul).

This series was given immediately after the original series of the author on self-actualization which was entitled *Da Es Atzmecha*, “Getting To Know Yourself.” The original audience who attended the classes of *Da Es Atzmecha* were very satisfied with the material and felt that it greatly clarified to them the meaning of their identity. However, they wanted something a bit more spiritual than the material of *Da Es Atzmecha*. They had also heard about the concept of the “*Yechidah*” and they wanted to know all about it, what it is, and if there is any way to have some access to it at our current level. The Rav agreed to give this special series, which has been named “*Da Es Havayasecha*” (“Getting To Know Your Essence”).

(It would seem redundant to name this series as “Getting To Know Your Essence” when there is already a series called “Getting To Know Your Self”, so it was therefore deemed appropriate to name this series instead as “Reaching Your Essence” – which is what this series is all about.)

It would be helpful to be aware of the following quote from the words of the Rav at the very end of the series:

“The map of how to get there [to the *Yechidah*], though, differs with each person. Most people have to go in the order of *Nefesh*, then to progress to *Ruach*, then to *Neshamah*, then *Chayah*, and then *Yechidah*. Therefore, this series, which explains the *Yechidah*, can only be actualized after a person has reached the four elementary layers of the soul – *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, and *Chayah*; these were explained in a previous series [*Da Es Atzmecha/ Getting To Know Your Self*].

“However, there are some people who were born with natural inner strength to penetrate straight into their *Yechidah*, without having to traverse the first four layers of the soul; these people are able to absorb very clearly the ideas here, without having to work on the first four layers of the soul.

“There are also people who have entered very deep within themselves, but they used methods from impure sources that came from strange places of the world.

“There are also people who, although they were not born with great inner strength of their soul, they still were able to penetrate very far into their deeper self, because they went through certain experiences in life that uncovered great depth to themselves. Either they went through a very traumatic experience, or they went through a deeply joyous one, which enabled them to penetrate straight into the deepest layers of their existence.

“These kinds of people cannot be told to ignore their inner point; they live with it as an existing reality. To tell them to ignore their inner point and to instead work with the lower parts of the soul would be like asking the person if he minds if his leg would be cut off. For such people, their *avodah* is to clarify more what their inner point is and to connect themselves in the proper way to it; these people can begin to enter their work with the soul by starting with this series, which explains the *Yechidah* of the soul.

“As for most people, who are not any of the above three exceptions, they will need to start to understand their soul through the previous series, and only after reaching their layers of *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, and *Chayah* can they attempt to do any of the *avodah* that was described in this series. We are emphasizing this so that you will be aware of this and save yourself from damage, by making sure to go in the order of first working with your *Nefesh*, then with your *Ruach*, then with your *Neshamah*, then with your *Chayah*, and only after that should you begin to try to get to your *Yechidah*.

“However, it is still beneficial for most people to at least hear the words of this series and be aware of these concepts, because even if you cannot absorb it fully at this point, it is still important to know the goal of where you are supposed to end up at. When a person hears about concepts he needs to work on, the initial reaction is that he has to act upon them afterwards, but there is another way to hear: even though you will not be able to implement these matters right after hearing them [if you are not one of the three exceptions listed], you can still hear it just for the sake of building

your soul, by absorbing these concepts. There is a purpose in just hearing concepts so that you can build up your soul, even though you can't act upon these matters right away.

“It is important for you to hear about these concepts, even if you can't work on actualizing them yet, because it is good for you to know what your eventual goal is. “*Sof maaseh b'machshavah techilah*” (The end of action if first preceded with thought). When you hear about the goal, that itself is constructive.

“First of all, it gives meaning to your current level of *avodah*, because you know where you want to end up at eventually, even though you're not there yet.

“In addition, it builds your aspirations. There are people who only act with what is in front of them; they live for the moment, and they never try to develop themselves for the future. A deeper kind of person will build himself up each day with the goal in mind that he wants to form a certain path that will lead him to his goal. This does not mean that a person should become a dreamer, immersed in his fantasies of the future. A person needs to be involved with the here and now, but along with this, he also should expand his future, by building himself a path that will lead him into his future goal.

“When a person hears a *shiur*/Torah lecture solely so that he can arrive at the practical conclusions from it, he is limiting himself in the process. It is detrimental to a person when he needs to know what has to be done as a result of what he has heard, and when he wants to know the practicality of it right now, immediately. Rather, the sensible approach is to hear about concepts even if they won't be immediately applicable in your life, so that you can at least absorb the end goal and be aware of the goal you will eventually head towards. So if you have absorbed these concepts, even if you aren't yet at the level of actualizing them, that itself is a great accomplishment.”

There are also additional places in which the Rav has spoken about the “*Yechidah*”.

In the series “*Reaching Your Inner Silence - Preparation of Hisbodedus*”, the “*Yechidah*” is mentioned in the first chapter. It has also been mentioned extensively in a three-part series of *derashos* of **Sukkos #07, #08, and #09**. The *Yechidah* has also been mentioned briefly at times in several *shiurim* of the “*Tefillah*” series.

It is our hope in releasing this English adaptation of *Da Es Havayasecha* that our life's task on this world gain greater meaning to it; that we serve the Creator genuinely and wholesomely with the awareness of our soul; and that the study of these chapters should help us relate better to the vast endless space of G-dliness that is present deep in our soul, the place in ourselves which is fully aware of truth – the point in our soul which is already at “one” with G-d and is part and parcel with His reality. And may the awareness to this deep place in ourselves be allowed to fully penetrate our entire being, in our own lifetime, and even more so, in the time of the imminent Redemption - where the view from our *Yechidah* will be fully revealed to all, where we will all gain the “collective” *Yechidah* of the entire Jewish people.

01 | Introduction to Jewish Spirituality

Man – An Embodiment of Heaven and Earth

We are nearing the holy day of Yom Kippur so we will try here to explain a little bit about this holy day. First, we will give a short introduction here of what is to come.

At the beginning of Creation, Hashem took the heavens and earth, which He first created separately, and unified them together. Man as well is made up of both heaven and earth. The body, which is a material existence, comes from the earth. The soul is the spiritual part of our existence, and it is hewn from Heaven.

Thus, in order to understand ourselves properly, we need to learn about both our body and our soul [and how they integrate]. If we learn about worldly matters but we don't learn about spirituality, our body will be fed, but our soul will not be. And if a person only learns about the soul and he doesn't learn about the body, his soul will be satisfied, but his body will be neglected.

Although we will be speaking here about heavenly, spiritual matters that speak to our soul, we need to know how to make it practical and actualize it in our life, because we need to involve our body in this as well. If not, the purpose of these classes will be lost.

The Atonement of Yom Kippur

Now we will return to discuss the holy day of Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is called the “day of atonement”. The Sages state that Yom Kippur does not atone for one who does not seek his friends' forgiveness. There are sins between man and G-d and sins between man and his friend, and we need an atonement on both kinds of sins on Yom Kippur.

Sins separate us from the Creator. The *Sfas Emes* writes that there are two ways how a person can become separated¹: One way is when we are separated from our Creator, and the other way is when we are separated from other people.

If there are two kinds of separation that exist – separation from the Creator, and separation from others – then in turn, there are also two ways for how to become unified. These are thus two different concepts of unity (*achdus*): there is unity that can be achieved between man and his Creator, and there is a unity that can be achieved between man and other people.

On *Yom Kippur*, we are able to achieve both kinds of unity – our sins are forgiven by G-d [if we repent], and we can become unified again with G-d. People also forgive each other for the wrongs committed against each other, and there is once again unity among people. *Yom Kippur* is all about unity. The deep reason why we need atonement on *Yom Kippur* is so that we can remove the disparity that has been created throughout the course of the year, and to reveal unity in its place.

These two kinds of unity – unity between man and G-d, and unity between man and his fellow Jews, are completely different concepts. We will explain how they differ.

Unity As It Affects The Jew and The Non-Jew

On *Rosh Hashanah*, the entire world, including the non-Jews, is being judged by G-d. But *Yom Kippur* is unique to the Jewish people, in that it is a day of atonement only for the Jewish people: “*For on this day, you shall be atoned.*” What is the depth behind this? There is a deep matter here. Even the non-Jews have some degree of unity with the Creator, thus, they are judged along with the rest of the world on *Rosh Hashanah*. But only the Jewish people are so unified that they receive the special judgment of *Yom Kippur*.

The non-Jews can also reach unity, but it is only to a certain degree. A non-Jew can unite with another person, but only on a physical level, through the body. It is a superficial kind of unity. They do not possess the inner kind of unity which the Jewish people are capable of.

The Difference Between Jews and Non-Jews

Let us try to explain the difference – what kind of spiritual unity that Jews possess, and what kind of spiritual unity the non-Jew possesses.

Anything physical is from this world, which is a world of disparity and separateness. The nature of physicality is that it cannot bring about any unity with another being; when the body (itself) unifies with another person's body, this is not an attempt to really unify with another being, and it is rather a connection that creates disparity. By contrast, the nature of spirituality is to unify, to bring about unity with another.

Everything in the physical world is combined of the four elements: earth, water, air and fire. The elements are combined only temporarily; when they are broken up, they go back to their original form. The Ramban wrote that anything from fire goes back to fire, anything from air goes back to being air, etc.

Spirituality, however, is all about unifying. For example, the ability to love another Jew is an ability to unify with others. The Torah commands us, "*V'ahavta L'reiacha Kamoicha*", "And you must love your friend like yourself." Love for another is really a spiritual power, and that is why it can cause unity with another.

Non-Jews Are Also Capable of Spirituality

The non-Jews clearly have some level of spirituality. Where do we see this? We can see this from the Egyptians, who were rampant with sorcery. They were able to change nature. The commentators explain that the sorcery of the Egyptians was based on their knowledge of spirituality. Egypt was particularly known for its spirituality, but they used it for evil purposes. Magic is clearly a spiritual power; it can change nature. So it is clear that non-Jews can have spiritual abilities.

Moshe was our greatest prophet, but Bilaam was equal to Moshe in prophecy – and this is the greatest proof that a non-Jew can have spirituality. Bilaam was a real prophet, who spoke face-to-face with Hashem. He was not a false prophet, nor was he imagining it. He clearly possessed spiritual powers. Bilaam was able to curse the Jews as well; he had spiritual powers, albeit evil.

We also know that Esav and Yaakov fought over who would get the World To Come; thus, even Esav has some connection to spirituality. Esav wanted the World To Come, so he has some connection to spirituality, which he fought Yaakov for. In the end, he did not win the fight; Yaakov received the World To Come, while Esav received This World. But he still fought for the World To Come, which shows that he wanted it.

Thus, spirituality is not unique to the Jewish people. It did not start with the Jewish people. Spirituality has always been around, both in the Jewish people and in the gentile nations. In fact, there is an inner spiritual mission that is unique to the Jewish people, and the gentiles have their unique spiritual mission as well.

What is a Jew's role in spirituality – and what is the gentile's role in spirituality? What is essentially the difference between the spirituality of a Jew and the spirituality of a gentile?

Unity Is Only Through The Soul, Not Through the Body

We mentioned before that the Jewish people possess the power to achieve *achdus* (unity), and so do the gentiles have a power to attain *achdus*. Jews and gentiles have different kinds of *achdus*, though, and we will now explain the difference.

We have two basic kinds of *achdus*: unity between man and his Creator, and unity between man and his friend. With man and his friend, there are two ways to be connected – to be connected with others through our physical bodies, or to be connected to others through our soul. What kind of unity do we have with other people – body or soul?

Unity with others is a spiritual kind of connection, a connection of the soul. The *mitzvah* to love others like yourself is to have a soul unity with others, unlike unity with our bodies, which are only temporary and do not last.

What does it mean to have a soul unity with others? It is to be totally unified with each other, a complete bond. Love, *Ahavah* has the same numerical value in Hebrew as the word *chad*, one, because love means to become one with another. The Sages bring that the prime example of love and unity that was achieved in history was the

love that existed between Dovid and Yehonasan, who had achieved a soul connection with each other.

How do souls unify? There are two ways. One way is when souls unify with each other; separate souls come together and connect with each other. Another way to unify is when a person reveals his private soul as being the part of the collective soul of the Jewish people. The first kind of unity is on a lesser level, for it is on the individual level, whereas the second kind of unity is on the broader scale of things, the collective level.

The first kind of spiritual unity mentioned is when two people bond with each other through their souls; souls can connect with each other. Unlike the body, which can only connect to another person temporarily (whereupon disparity is created), the soul can connect with another soul forever, and this is what David and Yehonasan reached with each other; they made a *bris* (pact of loyalty) they made with each other. David and Yehonasan were previously separate, but they made a *bris* with each other to always be connected with each other.

The second way of spiritual unity is to reveal the collective soul of the Jewish people within one's private soul. There is really only one soul that was created, in the beginning of Creation [Adam]. The soul was originally one soul in Creation, and after that, Chavah was created from Adam's soul. Before she was created, she was part of his soul. After she was created, she was separated from Adam's soul, which she was hewn from. The original soul of mankind – Adam's soul, before Chavah was created – was one. After Chavah was created, Adam's soul was split into two, and now there were two souls in Creation. This was the beginning of disparity.

Then there were two more souls which came from them, Kayin and Hevel. So at first, all souls were unified into one piece, and after that, there was disparity, and it kept subdividing into more divisions. Before Kayin and Hevel, before Chavah, the unity in the soul was complete, for all souls were contained in it. It was a whole different kind of unity that the current unity that is attainable.

We were all in Adam's soul, therefore, in essence, we were all one soul. Thus, we all have two layers in our soul. There is one part of our soul which seeks unity, but it feels initially separate from others. There is a more inner layer of the soul that feels already unified with other souls.

This is the depth behind the *mitzvah* to love for other Jews, that we must love others “*kamoicha mamash*”, “like yourself - totally”, because we have in ourselves an ability to love another Jew in the very same way that we love ourselves, that we already one with another at our root. The outer layer of our soul, however, feels that it can love another only “like” yourself, “*kamoicha*”, but not as much as “yourself”, whereas the inner layer of our soul can love another person no less than how much you love yourself: “*kamoicha mamash*”. This is *ahavah* (love), which is really *chad* (oneness). When we are at one with another Jew, we can love another Jew “*kamoicha*.”

Hillel told the convert who came to him that love for other Jews, “*V’ahavta l’reiacha kamoicha*”, is the basis of the entire Torah, and the rest of the Torah spreads out from there. Now we can understand better Hillel’s words: the power to love all other Jews as yourself is the root of the Torah of the Jewish people, and it refers specifically to the kind of unity that the Jewish people are capable of.

We have explained that we have two abilities: “*kamoicha*” (to love others “like yourself”, to unify with them) and “*kamoicha mamash*” (to love others “totally like yourself”, when you reveal that you are already one with the other). Thus, we have an *avodah* (spiritual task) to become unified with others; initially, we are apart, and we must therefore unify with each other. This is our ability of “*kamoicha*”. Simultaneously, we also have an *avodah* to unify with others in the sense that we are already one at our root, and this is the ability of “*kamoicha mamash*”.

The Difference Between “Echad” and “Achdus”

Until now, we addressed the kind of unity that is present in both Jew and gentile. It is called “*echad*” (oneness), and it is a universal power in all people: the ability to achieve unity.

The Ramban describes the concept of “*echad*” when he addresses how all of Creation was originally one unit of “*hiyuli*”/matter, which Hashem then split apart and put each aspect of Creation in its place, and that the Greek philosophers were familiar with this concept. Thus, *echad* was known to even gentiles. It is not unique to the Jewish people; it had always been universally known to the other nations.

Avraham *Avinu* is called so because he is “*av hamon goyim*”, “father of the nations.” All nations come from Avraham *Avinu* (through Yishmael and the other sons of

Keturah). Therefore, they all inherited the power of “*echad*” that was in Avraham *Avinu*. The nations descend from Yitzchak *Avinu* as well, through Esav. Avraham had a wayward child, Yishmael, who is one primary ancestor of non-Jews, while Yitzchok also had a wayward child, Esav, who is the other primary ancestor the non-Jews. The gentiles thus shared both Avraham and Yitzchak as their ancestors and received spiritual abilities from them – the power of “*echad*” - so whatever we received from Avraham and Yitzchok, they received as well.

Why are there three *Avos* (forefathers)? Whenever something is unified, there are always three points that are interconnected. There is one endpoint, and another endpoint on the opposite side, and there is a middle point between them that serves a bridge between them and unifies them. For example, David and Yehonasan were originally separate, and they were unified together through a middle point, which was the *bris* that they made with each other. Thus, all *achdus*/unity involves two endpoints that are connected together through a third, middle point; so there are always three points involved whenever something is unified. Thus, there had to be three *Avos* in order to solidify the unity of the Jewish people.

However, based on the original point of unity in Adam’s soul, “*echad*”, there is only one “father” in the world, Avraham *Avinu*, and not three forefathers. The power to love another person totally like yourself, “*kamoicha mamash*”, represents “*echad*”, which is what even gentiles possess, for they received it from Avraham *Avinu*. Thus, from the viewpoint of “*echad*”, there is only one father of the world – Avraham *Avinu*, father of Yitzchok and Yaakov, and father of the world. Avraham, the “father of all nations”, gave over the power of *echad* to all his descendants, thus, even gentiles possess “*echad*”.

However, although they are capable of “*echad*”, they do not possess the other ability to unify, which is called “*achdus*”. Yitzchok was not able yet to receive the ability of “*achdus*” from Avraham, because there was not yet a third point to form the triple knot that would unify the three forefathers together. Therefore, Yitzchok’s son Yishmael did not receive “*achdus*”. Yaakov was the third point that connected all the *Avos* together and completed their *avodah*, and now there could be “*achdus*”. His 12 children were entirely righteous and they received “*achdus*” to bequeath to all of their descendants, and there were no wayward children in his household to receive “*achdus*”; the nations of the world did not receive anything from Yaakov. Thus, “*achdus*” is only in the Jewish people, who descend entirely from Yaakov *Avinu*.

Now we can have a deeper understanding in the story of the convert who came to Hillel and asked the Sage to teach him the entire Torah. Hillel told him that the entire Torah is contained in the *mitzvah* to love another Jew like yourself. The depth behind this is that before he converted, when he was still a gentile, he can still know of the concept of “*kamoicha mamash*”, which is the original power of “*echad*” that everyone possesses; but he is not able to know the secret of “*achdus*”, of “*kamoicha*”, which only the Jews received. Now that he has become a Jew, he can know of “*kamoicha*”, which is “*achdus*”, the ability in the Jewish people to unify with others.

Torah and Mitzvos – The Jew’s Ability of Achdus

We can see this clearly from the world: gentiles are capable of *echad*, but they cannot achieve *achdus*.

There are always one of two kinds of gentiles that exist. Either a non-Jew lives totally for himself, a self-absorbed kind of existence where he spends his entire life pursuing nothing but physical gratification; or, we can find gentiles who become very spiritual, and they connect to the concept of *echad*, but this will not translate into becoming more integrated with other people. They can connect very well with the concept of *echad*, of feeling the inherent oneness in Creation, but they do not connect with “*achdus*” – they don’t see a need to connect with other people. Thus, we can see that the gentiles are capable of *echad*, but they do not have the power of *achdus*, and therefore, in the sum total of things, they cannot achieve a total unity.

Only the Torah, given to the Jewish people, which contains the 613 *mitzvos*, can unify all the disparity in Creation. The gentiles, who do not have the Torah, couldn’t even accept the commandment not to steal and not to murder other people, and the deep reason behind this is because they don’t have the power of *achdus*. Only the Jewish people, who have Torah and *mitzvos*, can achieve *achdus* with other people.

The Five Kinds of Unity

To summarize, we have so far explained three kinds of unity. We will repeat them briefly and then add on a fourth and a fifth level of unity, which are deeper kinds of unity.

The first kind of unity that exists in Creation, which is superficial, is the unity between two bodies. When a person seeks unity with another person's body, this is not really unity though, and it is rather a form of disparity. The body cannot unify with another body; if it does, it is only temporary, and the attempt at unity will only result in disparity. This is the kind of unity that represents this physical world, a world of the body, a "world of disparity".

The second kind of unity we mentioned is called "*echad*". This is a power in both Jew and gentile alike, for it was the original state of Adam's soul, in which we were all part of. It is simultaneous with the ability of "*kamoicha mamash*", the ability to love another "totally" like yourself, in which we can feel unified with others because we are one at our root.

The third kind of unity we mentioned is called "*achdus*". This is the ability which only the Jewish people received, from Yaakov *Avinu*, and it is an ability to leave separation and disparity with people and unify with others, "*kamoicha*".

Beyond this level of *achdus* (or "*kamoicha*") is a fourth, higher kind of *achdus*: the "*achdus* with the *Ein Sof*" of the Creator – to unify oneself to the Infinite Light of Hashem. There is also a fifth level, which is even more sublime, which is "*achdus* within the *Ein Sof*", and it the absolute level of *echad*.

Unity With The Creator Is Only Possible Through The Jewish People

Now we will explain these concepts in more detail.

We can all unify with others. Our body cannot unify; it only causes separation when it seeks to unify, for it can only unify on a physical level, and the nature of physicality is that it only causes disparity. "*Achdus*" is a power of a Jew's soul, and not in a gentile's soul, whereas "*echad*" is both in Jew and non-Jew.

The higher level of "*achdus*", the power to unify oneself with the Endlessness of the Creator, must be preceded by "*achdus*" with other people. Since *achdus* with the *Ein Sof* is a kind of *achdus*, it must be preceded with the initial level of *achdus*, which is *achdus* with other people. *Achdus* with the *Ein Sof* is based on *achdus* with others, therefore, without *achdus* with others, it is impossible to jump to the level of *achdus*

with the *Ein Sof*. If someone does not have the basic power of *achdus*, he cannot go to the higher level, which is unify with the Creator.

Therefore, a gentile, who does not possess *achdus*, is not able either to achieve *achdus* with the *Ein Sof* of Hashem.

Hashem gave the Torah and *mitzvos* to the Jewish people. The *mitzvos* really serve to unify man together, because the 613 *mitzvos* take the 613 separate parts of the body and unify them. If not for the *mitzvos*, man would be a scattered kind of existence. Keeping the Torah's *mitzvos* takes a Jew - after reaching *echad* through being unified from the *mitzvos* - and it connects him higher, to Hashem. In contrast, the gentiles, who do not have Torah and *mitzvos*, cannot become unified with the *Ein Sof*.

Achdus: Unifying The Spiritual With The Physical

These are deep words, and they are the basis of religious Torah Jewry. If a Jew would know about these words, he would never seek to learn anything from a source other than the Torah. Alas, there are Jews these days searching for all over the world for understanding, and in unbecoming places.

The Torah contains the entire picture of how we can understand ourselves, whereas the gentile nations are missing spaces in the map. They are missing certain parts of the bridge that connects one point to another.

They can have the power of “*echad*” revealed in their life [and thus be very spiritual], and they have disparity on the other end of the spectrum, but they are missing *achdus* with each other, whether they are leading a totally spiritual life or a totally materialistic life. Therefore, they cannot either achieve the higher *achdus* either, which is *achdus* with the Creator. They don't have the stepping stool to get to the Creator, because connection with the Creator is a kind of *achdus*, and they don't have the more basic kind of *achdus*, which is *achdus* with people.²

² After this shiur, the Rav clarified to a questioner that although non-Jews are capable of *derech Eretz* and good manners, this is not because they have any desire to deeply unify with others, and it is rather social mannerisms and how to win friends and get along with people, entirely for self-interests.

Now that we have seen the inner workings behind the difference between a Jew's soul and a gentile's soul, we can understand based upon this that a gentile is not able to feel the reality of Hashem in his heart. Only the Jewish people can feel Hashem, in the heart, as it is written, "*And I will dwell amongst them.*"

Gentiles will either understand unity between bodies, which is disparity, or they will understand "*echad*", but they don't have the bridge to connect "*echad*" with disparity and harmonize the two opposite points. They can either grasp one extreme, disparity, or the other extreme, *echad/*oneness, and therefore, they do not know how to unify the physical aspects of life with the spiritual aspects of life. They are "either or." We can see this apparent from the fact that gentiles are either totally materialistic in their pursuit of physical gratification, or they can be extremely spiritual, but with no idea of how to harmonize the two sides of life together.

By contrast, the Torah unifies both sides of our life together. Most of the *mitzvos* in the Torah involve our physicality. We take a ram's horn and use it for a *shofar*. We turn the physical into the spiritual; we unify the physical with the spiritual. We sit in a *sukkah*, made of walls and branches. We don't sit in the Clouds of Glory – we sit in a physical *sukkah*, and that is the *mitzvah*.

The gentiles have "either or" – either spirituality, or physicality, but not both. Therefore, because they don't achieve *achdus* between the physical and the spiritual, they can't either unify with the Creator. In reality, we know that there is a Creator and His creations, and that creations are able to unify with the Creator.

Our Avodah: Cycling Between "Echad" and "Achdus"

A Jew's *avodah* is to leave disparity, and to acquire both levels of unity, *echad* and *achdus*, progressing back and forth between *echad* and *achdus*, in a cycle. It is called the cycle of "*ratzu v'shov*", "running and retreating", in which we go through a cycle of connecting to the higher level, returning the lower level, reconnecting to the higher level, etc. in a cycle. Our *avodah* works very much like a cycle. We have an *avodah* to connect to *echad*, unity between man and his Creator, but we must also balance our life with *achdus*, unity between man and his friend.

This is the depth behind the two parts to the atonement of Yom Kippur. We need to ask others for forgiveness, so we that can have *achdus* with others, and it is also a

day to ask forgiveness from sins between man and his Creator, which represents our *avodah* of *echad*. Without achieving the initial level of *achdus*, which is to unify with others, a person cannot get to the higher *achdus*, which is unity with the Creator.

We should mention that the gentiles do have 7 *mitzvos*, which gives them some spiritual vitality; but it doesn't unify their existence together. This is because there are 613 parts of the body, and the 7 *mitzvos* they have won't be able to bring them to a unified kind of existence within themselves. Only the Jewish people, who have 613 *mitzvos*, can have unity within themselves, through keeping the *mitzvos* of the Torah and then unifying the soul with the Creator.

In Conclusion

These words are an opener of what it is to come. They are deep words, concepts that most of us are not familiar with it.

We want here to know about the roles of our body and our soul. We need to need know about the body's nature and balance them, and at the same time we need to know about our soul, and then balance the two studies together in our life. After that, we need to balance out our soul with regards to our relationship with the Creator.

We will try, with Hashem's help, if we merit, to slowly learn about our soul, and how we can connect it to the Creator. May we all merit to be sealed for a good year.

02 | *Yaakov - Feeding The Jewish Soul*

What Are We Searching For?

All of us have a soul within us, and all of us have a soul that is searching for something. If someone is immersed in materialism, he searches for honor, money, and desires. But we will not discuss this kind of person here. Most people in this generation who are searching are searching for something that is deeper than those things. Most people know that they are searching for something very deep, and we often cannot identify what that deep thing is that we are searching for. But there is one common denominator with all people that search: a person feels empty somewhat, and he is trying to fill the emptiness.

When a person isn't clear about what's going on inside himself, he feels lacking somewhat in his situation, and he can't put his finger on it. He just knows that he's trying to fill the emptiness, but he doesn't know how to fill the void he is feeling. To say this in slightly different terms, he's not really trying to *fill* his emptiness, and he just wants to *relieve* himself of all of the inner emptiness that he feels.

If a person is a bit clearer to what's going on inside himself, he knows how to fill what he's lacking. There are levels of this reaction. Some people will feel that what they are missing in life is calmness and inner serenity; others feel that they need more quiet; others feel that they are missing love and warmth in their life; others feel that they are looking to see the "light", because they feel like they are living in the "dark"; others have a sense of feeling like they are somewhat "trapped", and they express a desire for "freedom".

The deepest kind of search a person can have is to search for the "*ohr Ein Sof*": the Infinite Light of Hashem.

Searching To Fill The Emptiness Vs. Seeking Relief From Pain

Most people are not aware of what they are searching for. They wander the earth trying to find themselves. When a person is searching and he doesn't know what he's searching for, he is actually in grave danger. There are many things he encounters that

he uses to fill his emptiness which, if he would really know what these things are, he would never go near it.

I will try here to explain how one can realize why all the things that people seek are really imaginary forms of filling one's emptiness, and why people come to make these erroneous searches.

When a person doesn't seek to actually fill his emptiness, and he is merely trying to *relieve* himself of emptiness, he is in more danger than anyone else. We can see this, in extreme cases, from those we know who were going through emotional suffering and great stress, and they were suffering so much that they took drugs so they could alleviate themselves. These people can be feeling so much pain in their life that they wish they could die, so they engage in suicidal behavior. This person's thinking is, "Death means that I stop existing, which means I will have no more pain."

A person who contemplates suicide thinks, "When I die, there will be no more "I", and he thinks that this will put an end to all his pain. He's not trying to fill what he lacks - he just wants to stop existing, so that he won't have to deal with the problems of life anymore. The suicidal person thinks that death will be the answer to all the pain. He doesn't seek to fill his emptiness - rather, he wishes to escape all the pain he feels.

How can we know that such a person is merely imagining his great escape? We know the answer. We know that a person has a body and a soul, and that death is not the end of our life. It merely puts an end to our body, while our soul still exists.

At death, there are writings of our Sages that describe what goes on. The body undergoes suffering, so that the soul can escape it easily. If the body doesn't suffer and the mind of the person is still there when he dies, the soul suffers terribly in Hell, *rachmana litzlan* (may Hashem have mercy on him), because in order for the soul to totally pull away from physicality and fully enter the Next World, the physical mind has to have stopped beforehand as well. This is a necessary process in order for the soul to take leave of the body and be serene. So suicide merely takes away the body's suffering, because the mind is still there, replacing it with far worse suffering - suffering of the soul, which takes place in Hell.

These are well-known matters to most of us. But if you think about, even if a person doesn't commit a suicide, he might very well be adapting a suicidal person's

kind of thinking in his own life. A person might live his whole life and never seek to fill his emptiness, and all he does is seek to get rid of his pain! Such a person will seek to live a life of only comfort, in which there is no pain.

We all know that the world is full of suffering. People are lacking in their livelihood and have health problems, etc. How does a person fill what he lacks? One way, of course, is to seek a way to actually do something about it and fill it, whatever that way will entail. The other path that people try is that instead of working hard to fill the pain from feeling lacking, they will instead teach themselves how to detach from feeling any pain. They train themselves to detach from pain and anxiety, to harden their emotions so much to the point that their feelings inside are totally deadened, and in this way, they won't feel the pain of whatever it is that they are missing in their life.

Taking this "easy way out of life" then becomes the way of life for the person. A person can live a life in which his emotions are completely hardened, and he becomes like a stone, which cannot feel anything. He does this so that he won't feel any stress or pain at all in anything in his life. People actually think that is the most perfect kind of existence a person can live on this world, and this is what many people are taught when they want to learn how to have a successful life: "Don't let pain get in the way of your life. The only way to get what you want in life is by avoiding pain, so train yourself not to let anything bother you." In this way, people kill off all their feelings, so that they will be able to be dull to emotions and thus avoid all pain and survive life. People even think that this is the ideal way for a person to live life.

We will address this point later, because there is some truth contained in it. At this point, we are only addressing the root reason of why people think this way. It is basically a subconscious decision that a person makes so that he can avoid pain in life. The person teaches himself, subconsciously, to deaden his emotions, so that he won't feel like he's missing anything in his life, and that is how he solves the problem of feeling lacking in life.

Is it really possible for a person to never be lacking anything? If a person has a good job, a happy marriage, and good children, does that mean his life is perfect? We all know that there is no such thing. Every person is lacking things.

Even if a person would have everything he needs, the very fact that we are human beings makes us limited. So we are always missing something. Even if a person is a millionaire, he's missing another million dollars. It is written, "*He who loves money is*

never satisfied with money.” Humans are limited, thus, we are always lacking. It won’t help to get more money and own more real estate, because we are always lacking something.

The Desire to Escape Limits

So a person thinks about this, and he might conclude, “Fine, I agree. Humans are limited, by essence. But maybe there a way for me to transcend all those limits...”

The Serpent was the first being in Creation to wish to transcend limits. It told Eve to eat from the Tree of Knowledge with the argument that if she eats from it, she will become like a G-d. The Serpent was telling her to leave her limits, to become unlimited. If so, the desire in a person to escape his human limits is, deep down, is like a desire to become like God.

There are even people who wish they could be God! Just like a person can be jealous of another person, so can a person be jealous that he’s not Hashem, and he might wish he could be God. When a person realizes that he can’t get what he’s jealous of, he feels lacking, so he might convince himself that he is a God, in order to avoid the real conclusion, which is painful to him.

The Sages explain that the Serpent was jealous of Hashem that it wasn’t a Creator. Therefore it compared itself to Hashem and eventually thought it was God, and it told Chavah that she could do the same and become God.

Understandably, for all evil that exists, there is always a way to use it for good, therefore, it is possible for a person to use the desire to escape limits for a good purpose. This is the holy way to use the Serpent’s argument. But right now, are not discussing how it can be channeled in a holy direction, and we are analyzing how evil it can be when it is misused.

The desire to become unlimited is evil when a person wishes that he could be G-d and not be limited to anything on this world. The person doesn’t want to have any limits, and therefore he comes to the conclusion that he is like a G-d, and that he can do anything.

It is the greatest error one can make. A person doesn't like to deal with the facts, and he might feel so bothered from the limits that life places on him, that he convinces himself that he is above human limits, that his like a G-d whom nothing can stop, and in doing so, he totally fools himself, in the most erroneous way possible.

People Who Live In Their Imagination

To illustrate, there are people who are living totally in their imagination; they are totally deluded. They can have many wonderful ideas, because they have a powerful and creative imagination, but they do not have the tools or the means to carry out their ideas.

I met someone once who wanted reconstruct Rechov Yaffo, and he was serious about carrying out his ideas, when all of his plans were totally unrealistic, because he did not have the means or the money for it to even start his plans. Yet, he continued to imagine what the new plans for Rechov Yaffo will look like, constantly shaping the image in his mind, without ever doing a thing to actualize his grand ideas. Not only that, but from speaking with him, I realized that in his mind, his new Rechov Yaffa was already built, and he lived constantly in that place he imagined; he was already imagining that people were coming over to him each day and complimenting him over it....

A person might live totally with his imagination, and he has great ideas, but he is unrealistic about them at the same time. Yet, he continues to fool himself. These people live their imagination as reality, and they are really emotionally ill. Whenever this kind of person feels lacking, he will imagine that he already has whatever he is missing - and this is how he feels better about his situation! Imagination is reality to such people.

There are also people who feel that they are literally "everything", that they are unstoppable - it's like they think are a god. They live all the time in their imagination, and they live so much with their imagination that they believe that they cannot even be mistaken at all. They truly believe that they are unlimited and that it impossible for them to ever be mistaken about anything.

As we know, imagination is not always a bad thing. It can help a person achieve things through his creative aspirations. Imagination is a very tangible sense, as the

Ramban writes. But such people not only feel the tangibility of their imagination – their imagination **is** their reality! They don't just imagine - they *live* in the land of imagination in their heads.

People do this so they shouldn't feel like they are missing anything; they imagine that they have everything, that they are the entire world. A person imagines that he is missing nothing, because deep down, he thinks he is like a G-d! Pharoah also imagined that he was a G-d; he honestly believed that he created the Nile River.

It is not only the Serpent and Pharoah who made this mistake of thinking "I am a G-d." Many people make this mistake, and feel that they can be "everything"; they feel like they are unlimited and that they don't lack a thing. If they ever feel lacking, they immediately imagine very strongly that they have already what they are missing.

Knowing Your Limits

We have examined the deep root of why people don't seek to really fill their emptiness: it is because such a person, deep down, wishes he could escape all human limits, and in doing so, he resembles the Serpent's argument of trying to become G-d (or godlike).

Let us see how his thinking can be refuted, first from a logical perspective, and then we will see the matter through a deeper perspective, through the lens of our soul.

If we would ask such people if they think they're trying to be G-d, they would answer, "Of course not." They don't even realize that they are trying to be like G-d! That's how fooled they are by their imagination.

According to his line of thinking, there are no problems in life, because he just imagines that there is no problem. If you ask him if he is aware that he is imagining things, he will say, "True, I am imagining that I am unlimited, but it is still true." He honestly believes that his imagination is reality, and therefore, he continues to think that he is God-like kind of being that is unlimited by this world. So he can very well aware be of his imagination, but he thinks that it's real. If you ask him, "So you admit to me that you're imagining that you're unstoppable. But how are you able to imagine in the first place? Who created your ability to imagine...?"

Here is where he will be stumped. He's refuted from his own logic. But if you try this on him, he will probably answer something like, "Hashem wants me to be like this." But we can all recognize that he has warped his own logic and fooled himself.

We won't go further into this point and how the conversation will continue. We already understand that this person is fooling himself more and more, thus, we see that imagination cannot solve what a person lacks, because such a person doesn't make any sense.

Let us rather focus on a different problem with his thinking, the emotional problem that is really going over here inside this person.

Leaving the Narrow-Minded Perspective About the Soul

People naturally see things as "black or white", and this is a big mistake that people make. All that goes on in Creation is really multi-colored, and nothing is "black or white". This is often the problem of those who want to be unlimited; they are being too narrow-minded, and they see things as "either or."

For example, there are five levels in the soul, which the Sages refer to as the *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, *Chayah* and *Yechidah*. Yet, many people hear this concept and think that they are either just a "*Nefesh*", or just a "*Ruach*." They only see one part of themselves – and think that this is all there is to who they are. A person hears about what the "*Neshamah*" is and he might think, "I am a *Neshamah*", because he identifies more with the *Neshamah* than with the other parts of his soul, for whatever personal reason he has.

When people think like this, they are really feeling something truthful, but they are mistaken in thinking that this is all there is to their existence.

When a person strongly identifies with a part of his soul and connects with it – whether he's identifying with his *Nefesh*, or with his *Ruach*, or with his *Neshamah*, *Chayah* or *Yechidah* - this is certainly stemming from a truthful feeling, but what is wrong with what he is feeling? He is wrong in taking that feeling and thinking that "This is all there is to my existence. I am a *Nefesh*, or I am a *Ruach*, or I am a *Neshamah*, etc."

Falsity Within A Truth, and Truth Within A Falsity

The Sages state the purpose of exile is so we can gain converts, and the holy *sefarim* explain that this is because we are supposed to gain the good from all the places of the world, so that we can pick up truthful points from all of these places. There are truthful points that we can pick up from any place in the world. So we can find truth in all countries of the world, in America, in Iceland, in Egypt, in India, in Japan. We can find truth anywhere.

But what is truth? Truth is *emes*, which has three letters in it – a top letter, a bottom letter, and a middle letter, to show that *emes* is only *emes* when all of the truthful points are connected. Otherwise, even if it contains truthful points, it is ultimately falsity, *sheker*. When we take points that are *emes* and we split them apart, it becomes *sheker*, because the truthful points aren't being connected.

Therefore, just because there are truthful points in what we come across doesn't mean that it is total *emes*. It can have *emes* in it and still be *sheker*, because if we don't know how to unify the truthful points together, in the sum total of things it is *sheker*.

To illustrate the idea, a person borrows a dollar and then returns it the next day to the lender. The lender comes back to him the next day and says, "You borrowed a dollar from me." The borrower responds, "You are right, but I paid you back yesterday!" It is true that he borrowed the money, but it is *sheker* for the lender to demand the money again. He's saying something true, that money was borrowed from him by this person, but it's *sheker* for him to claim it today, when it was paid back yesterday.

Emes is really the power to unify all the "pieces of the puzzle" that make up the world. The Jewish nation had 70 souls who went to Egypt, and there are 70 corresponding nations of the world. What is the difference? The 70 nations of the world are 70 scattered pieces, which are not unified. Only Yaakov *Avinu*, who personifies the trait of *emes*, can be the father of 70 unified descendants. Since all the 70 souls who went down to Egypt all came from Yaakov *Avinu*, they were all unified by him, for his *emes* made him into a connecting point of all of them. The nature of *emes*, when it is total, is that it unifies.

So if we examine any *sheker*/falsity, we can find sparks of truth there, but that doesn't make it *emes*/truth.

When Your Heart Is Feeling A Pull Towards Something

Often, a person can feel a pull towards something, a force of *meshichah* (pulling) that's pulling him after something and drawing him towards it. It can be a desire to visit a certain country, or a desire to befriend a certain person, and he feels the desire very powerfully. People feel all kinds of pulls towards certain things or various people that are tugging at their heart. And they can feel a very strong pull in their heart towards whatever it is that they feel a pull towards.

There is some truth to what they are feeling, but it is still dangerous for a person to following his heart's feelings. Let's examine both the truth and the falsity contained in his feelings. The truth here is that he feels a connection to something, but the falsity here is that it will involve other "connections" along the way with it that are evil.

For example, a Jew might feel a strong connection in his heart with a gentile, and he might feel a powerful feeling of love towards him. How should he view this? Here again we can examine the truth and falsity contained in the feeling. The Sages state that in the future, the gentile will be our servants. So it's possible that a Jew is already feeling that connection now; so there is some truth to what he is feeling. But if he allows himself to become fully connected to the gentile and he goes overboard in his relationship with him, he is acting improperly, and this is the falsity contained in what he is feeling.

The Desire To Explore The World In The Name of "Kiruv"

The inner description behind our *avodah* on this world is that we need to gather together all the truthful points that are spread out over the entire world.

This is the deep reason of why there are Jews everywhere in the world. You won't find a place in which there is no Jewish soul, and it is because there is a truthful spark in any place in the world.

There are Jews all over the world who do not even know they are Jews. However, just because this is true, that does not mean that we are the ones to engage in bringing them all back. If we are to return them, we need to know how to return them in the proper way.

People also want to go to other countries of the world and observe them, so that they can learn lessons from what they see there. They are not totally wrong for feeling that way; our Sages did reveal that there is a “spark of truth” in every place in the world. But the truth is only the truth when it is the complete truth. Seeing only one side of the coin, even if it contains truth, is not yet the total truth. A Jew has to know how to put together all the “puzzle pieces”, and if not, even the truth he is feeling is not called genuine truth, and it instead becomes falsity.

Truth Is Not Always The Total Truth

This is the really the depth of the concept of *achdus* [which we described in the previous chapter] – it is to take all the truthful points from all over the world and then unify them together.

One of the Sages, Rebbi Yehuda HaNassi, would honor the wealthy. His house was always set with the finest of foods, whether it was summer or winter. There are people who hear about this and feel, “If so, I will also honor wealthy people.” But just because Rebbi Yehuda HaNassi did this doesn’t mean that we know how to do this properly. He knew how to see the good in wealth, how it can be *emes*, but for those of us who are not on this level, it connects to the *sheker* involved in amassing wealth.

There are righteous gentiles, “*chassidei umos ha’olam*”. Does that mean we should learn from these gentiles how to act? And *Chazal* say we could have learned *derech erez* (manners) from a cat.³ Does that mean we should observe cats to learn *derech erez* from them? Of course not. Just because there is truth that can be learned from a gentile or from an animal doesn’t mean that we should go observe them and learn from them – and the reason is, because we do not know how to see those truths.

Thus, when the Serpent told Chavah that she will become like Hashem if she eats from the *Eitz HaDaas*, it wasn’t totally lying to her. There was some truth to what it was saying; there is some valid need in a person to wish to escape his limits, and this needs to be channeled in the right direction, but the point is, it was not totally lying to her in its argument. If it was a total lie, then there would be nothing at all to discuss

³ *Erwin 101a*

about its argument, because a lie that is baseless has no claim to it whatsoever. As the Sages state, “When *sheker* (falsity) has no feet, it cannot stand [exist].”

So what was the *sheker* in the Serpent’s argument? The *sheker* was that it was saying that man can become so unlimited that he can become like G-d - which is a total *sheker*. So whatever truthful point that the Snake’s argument contained ended up becoming a total *sheker*.

Understanding Ourselves

Let’s go back to the example we brought earlier of a person that is too narrow-minded when it comes to understanding his soul.

If a person, for example, claims that he only has a *Yechidah* and he has no *Chayah* or *Nefesh* or *Ruach*, he is mistaken – why? If a person says that he has a *Yechidah*, that part of his statement is true. He is saying a truth, because the *Yechidah* is part of the five layers of his soul. However, when a person focuses on any one part of his soul and thinks that this is who he is, he becomes delusional.

Instead, he should see each part of his soul and realize that there is more to himself. Each part of the self needs to be put into its proper place, and then a person can build himself properly.

Thus, the soul is not “black on white”; it has layer within layer, and it is very deep. We describe it generally as having five parts, but there are many, many layers to it to the dimensions in it that we can cover. When people focus only on one part of the soul, they are only seeing one side of the coin, and this isn’t the complete picture.

Complete on the Inside, Lacking on the Outside

To give an example of this idea, the holy Zohar states that “Yisrael, the Torah and G-d are one”. A person might read this statement and only see one side of the coin, and erroneously think that the nation of Yisrael is “one” with Hashem and therefore they *are* Hashem (Heaven forbid such a thought), which means that we don’t have to keep the *mitzvos*...after all, we are “one” with Hashem....

Just because a Jew is “one” with Hashem doesn’t mean that he doesn’t have to keep *mitzvos*. There is a deep part in us that is connected with Hashem, but there is also a part in us which needs to serve Him and do the *mitzvos*.⁴

In summary, when a person only focuses on one side of the coin alone, when he thinks of himself in such one-dimensional terms of “either, or”, such as if he thinks that he is unlimited and unstoppable, this really deadens his own emotions; he convinces himself that he no problems, lost in his imagination.

Instead, one must understand that he consists of many layers. One can realize that there is a deep part in his soul which is “one” with Hashem, but there is an outer layer of the soul which requires observance to the *mitzvos*. The lower part of ourselves lives in the realm of disparity that is This World, and therefore it needs the *mitzvos* to unify its disparity; whereas the deeper part in us is connected to the *Ein Sof* of Hashem; it lacks for nothing. But this deeper reality does not invalidate the reality of the outer parts of our soul, which are not yet connected to the *Ein Sof*, are incomplete, and require the observance of the *mitzvos*.

The Soul Is Complicated To “Feed”

Knowing the soul means to recognize the many layers of the soul, its many “colors” – because as we have explained, the soul is not “black or white”. Every person has many layers to his existence. A person can familiarize himself with his soul layers and then know how to balance himself, and then he will know how to feed his soul properly.

I once knew a person who fed his parrot from the food in his house. He told me about his parrot and that he feeds it with human food, not bird food. So of course I asked him, “What are you thinking? Why don’t you give it birdfeed? It’s going to die!” He said to me, “No, no, it’ll be all right. My parrot can eat regular food.” He honestly believed that this parrot does not need to eat birdfeed, and that it can be fed by human food. The parrot died, of course. A person has to know to feed something properly; the same sustenance cannot be used for everything. So too, with regards to our soul, each part of our soul needs to be “fed” in a different way.

⁴ See *Sukkos_007_The Jew’s Inner Self*

The *Nefesh* part of the soul has a certain kind of sustenance it needs, and the *Ruach* is fed in a certain way, and the *Neshamah* has a certain sustenance it needs. There is no one pill that feeds all of the layers of the soul; you need to know how to take care of each part of the soul and give it what it specifically needs. We all understand that just because we have a soul, that doesn't mean we don't need to feed our physical body. In the same vein, you can't feed the entire soul just by developing a particular emotion that you focus on.

You can't eat more than you need, or else it damages the body. So too, if a person engages in spiritual knowledge that is way above his current level, he damages his soul. Many people don't know about this, and what happens? They seek to fill what they are lacking, and they find something to connect to and they attempt to let it solve all problems in their life.

To illustrate further, just because a person knows about the body, that doesn't mean he knows how to be a doctor. If he has learned one kind of medicine, that doesn't mean his knowledge about this medicine can be used to solve all problems in life. In the same way, just because a person knows one way how to deal with the soul, because he has learned about different aspects about the soul, that doesn't mean that he can apply his knowledge to treat all of the problems that develop in his soul. Each part of the soul is a different field of knowledge.

Even very spiritual people make this mistake. Many people focus on one point in spirituality and decide that this is their entire service to G-d. There is a lack of balance here. We cannot build up the soul based on putting emphasis just on one part of the soul.

For example, some people think that the best way to build up a healthy human soul is by taking care of the body, that it should be very healthy, and by keeping the body healthy one will keep his soul healthy. Others have the opposite view – that only through building the soul alone one builds the soul. Both of these views are incorrect. They are not totally wrong, because as we know, the body and the soul are interconnected and they can affect each other. But in the sum total of things, they are each wrong views, because each of these views is attempting to solve *all* problems based on *one* side of the coin alone.

It is senseless for a person who studies the body, who might know all about health, to think that the body's health can solve all emotional problems of the soul. Just

because a person knows all about the body doesn't mean that all problems in life can be solved with this knowledge. You can't use one field of knowledge to solve problems that have to do with a different field of knowledge.

The Torah incorporates both the body and the soul. There are *mitzvos* we do with our physical body, and there are *mitzvos* we do with our heart or mind. There are *mitzvos* we do with our speech. The Torah is the only framework of knowledge in the world which combines both body and soul and truly integrates them. There are other views in the world which deal with both body and soul and integrate them, but not quite. They only address the outer layers of the soul. Only the Torah shows us how to take care of the body as well as the soul, because only the Torah deals with the inner layers of the soul.

The other views of the world, which certainly contain truthful points to their ideologies, can only be truthful if they consider their knowledge to be parts of a puzzle. But they do not perceive their views in this way, and they instead have the attitude that their knowledge is everything, and that it can be used to solve any problem. They don't view their tidbits of information as merely being pieces of a larger puzzle. They don't see the bigger picture of things, and they instead focus on various "parts" of the puzzle.

Thus, there is no single "vitamin" that heals the entire soul or the entire body at once. In order to solve our problems, we need to study the entire spectrum of the soul, the whole picture of it, and then we can see where to put out knowledge into, which part of the soul's puzzle that it fits into.

Analyzing Wealth and Opulence

We will give an example of how to apply this concept. Let's take the great abundance we see in the world, such as wealth. How should one view wealth? Is wealth a bad thing? Is there is anything wrong with having everything?

Most of us would say yes, it is wrong to be rich, quoting the Mishnah (in *Avos*), "Live a life of suffering." That's what it would seem. Others would say that it is the way of non-Jews to indulge in the world, therefore, it's wrong to be fabulously wealthy and to live in opulence.

Yet, we find many *tzaddikim* (righteous people) who were wealthy, such as Shlomo *HaMelech*, who wrote in *safer Koheles* that wealth is all “futility of futilities”, but before he came to this conclusion, he acquired much wealth. Jewish kings were required to be wealthy, and if they didn’t have wealth, the nation was obligated to make them wealthy. The kings of the Jewish people lived with opulence. Why? Isn’t it wrong to indulge?

Rabbeinu Hakadosh was also very wealthy; his table was always set with the finest of food. Why did he set his table like this every day? Why didn’t he instead just give his money to *tzedakah*? It must be that there is something to it. Although we know that indulging in wealth can be evil, there is some way for it to be used for holiness, as the *tzaddikim* were able to do.

The point of this example is that everything is complicating, with layers upon layers of understanding. I am not suggesting that everyone here set his table with riches every day. Wealth is used for evil by people who don’t know how to use it. If the average person uses it, it becomes *sheker* for him, because he will misuse wealth and become indulged in it. Although nothing is wrong with wealth in essence, that doesn’t tell us that it is a way for us to live.

But we can definitely see that there is nothing wrong with wealth in essence, and we just need to know how to use it. So there is some *emes* to it, and we just need to know how to use it, or else it becomes *sheker*.

Our Avodah Preceding Moshiach: Seeing Truth and Taking It Apart

On a superficial level, we have to see how everything contains truth because we should have an *ayin tovah*, “good eye” on everything, and be positive-minded.

But there is a deeper reason to see good in everything. The deeper reason is because we have to reveal the truth in everything, because our people have the ability of *achdus*, to unify with everything.

Our *avodah* to achieve *achdus* on this world is not simply to gather in all the exiles, all the Jews in Japan and in other countries who don’t know their Jews, and to get

them to realize they are Jews and bring them all to *Eretz Yisrael*. Our *avodah* of *achdus* is rather to gather together all the “pieces of the puzzle” on this world and see the truthful points in everything.

This is really known as the concept of the “spiritual light of *Moshiach*”, which is beginning to radiate, now that we are closer to *Moshiach*'s arrival. The light of *Moshiach*, when it is revealed fully with *Moshiach*'s arrival, will “remove all the impurity of the world”, as the prophets state. We tend to think that *Moshiach* will simply remove all the evil in the world in the sense that he will come and destroy all the churches and temples of idol worship. This is true, but there is more to it. *Moshiach* will see the truth in everything and reveal how everything can be unified. And only *Moshiach* knows how to do this fully. As for us, we have an *avodah* to see the truth in everything, and then take it apart, seeing how something can be truthful and how it isn't.

Two Conditions In Order To Continue

These words are not just for the sake of listening. In order to be inspired from what we have said here, we need to hear them in a way that will cause our soul to really grow from these concepts. But there is a condition we need, before we continue: We need to understand **ourselves**, [our inner workings], **before** we try to see truth in whatever we see in the world. This will include knowing about all our soul's layers.

Also, we need to see how any truthful point we have picked up from anywhere in the world is really in the Torah; we need to be able to see it all in the Torah.

From this point on, we will try to examine various points and see how they can be truthful and how they are not.

Understanding Our Unlimited Aspect

Let's examine one example of something that contains truth to it, but in the sum total of things, it is false. When a person is taught in other places in the world that he can be “everything” and that he is unlimited, that he is perfect and he doesn't have to change, we cannot say that there is no kernel of truth to this. It is true only when a person believes that deep in our soul we are one with Hashem, but at the same time,

we still have to do *mitzvos*, because the outer layer of our soul requires the *mitzvos*. Without this understanding, a person's feelings will become deadened.

In our deeper self [the *Yechidah*] we indeed lack nothing, for we are connected to the Creator in our essence. The deepest part of our self contains the Infinite Light of the Creator revealed in our soul, which is complete and lacks nothing, for it is unified with the Creator. This is true, but it is only correct when we also do the *mitzvos*. Man is like Jacob's ladder, which "is footed on this earth, and its head reaches the heavens". Our head is in Heaven - but our feet are on this world, which is a world of disparity, a world that requires us to do all of the *mitzvos* in order to unify our being together.

03 | *Hearing The Soul's Inner Voice*

Viewing Through the Soul Is A Different Kind of View

We will try now, with the help of Hashem, to draw these matters closer to our soul and be more specific in how to apply these concepts in our life.

We have begun to explain⁵ that a person is comprised of a *guf* (physical body) and a *neshamah* (spiritual soul), and our inner task on this world is to learn how to identify ourselves as a soul. Now we will expand upon these words.

The body, as we know, is not entirely one part. There is a head, feet, hands, and organs. Our soul is also not just one part. It has layers to it. As we know from our Sages, the soul has five names: *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, *Chayah* and *Yechidah*.

It sounds like these are five separate “parts” in our soul, but in reality, they are actually just five different “names” that describe one fact: our soul. They are five “names” that describe the same **existence** (*havayah*) of the soul - and it is just that there five unique perspectives on how to view the essence of the soul.

To illustrate this, think about a house with many rooms. A person can look at each room like a “part” of the house, or he can look at each room like another view of his house. Our soul can be looked at the same way. The soul doesn't have separate parts to it; it is one entity, but it has several “rooms” within it.

So the five “names” of the soul are really five different ways to “describe” the soul. As in the illustration we brought, I can look at a room in the house as a room, or I can see it as being a part of a house. So too, one can look at the soul through five different lenses; one can see it from different perspectives, but whatever the perspective is, it is always a way of how to view the same thing – the soul's spiritual essence.

The way to view the soul's layers is not like when you cut a cake and you get five pieces from it. It's not like a father and mother with three children, which add up for a total of five people.

⁵ *In Da Es Atzmecha\Getting To Know Your Self*

When a child looks at the world, he sees things through a childish perspective, and he can think that things are a game. So too, it is possible for an adult to see everything through a childish perspective – when he only sees things through the lens of his physical body. We need to therefore become accustomed to a *totally* different view on things than what we are used to until now, in order to view things through our soul.

Our body and soul do not view things in the same way at all; we cannot view spiritual concepts through our body's lens. Physical sight is a materialistic kind of view; you can learn how to view the same thing through a lens that sees deeper into the very same thing. When you see through your soul, you see the depth in something which the human eye cannot see.

Seeing the soul is even deeper than how you understand seeing through a microscope. When you look at something through a microscope, you can see more subtleties in it, but seeing through your soul is not simply to see the subtleties in something. It is rather a totally different lens from what you are used to. For example, feeling the cold is a totally different kind of feeling than heat, and vice versa. So too, just because we know to see things through our eyes doesn't mean that we can see through our soul. We need to learn how to gain a whole new way to view things, in order to enter our inner world and identify ourselves as a soul. Therefore, you can't try to know about your soul from your body's perspective. You need to acquire *a whole new perspective* than what you are used to.

Learning About The Soul: Entering The Unknown

Entering the world of spirituality means that you will have no idea what you will be entering! To illustrate, a child learns things on his own by observing the world, and he develops in steps, slowly.

The world of our soul is like a whole different language that we need to learn. There will be mistakes as we learn it, because we are entering a place that we've never been in before, like when you're in a new country for the first time. Be aware that it's a whole different perspective than anything you are used to. Spirituality is just not viewed through the same lens as the physical world is viewed, which you see through your physical eyes.

We are trying to learn here how we can identify ourselves as a soul. How can a person identify himself as a soul, though, if he doesn't know what the soul is?

Many people identify themselves as their background. If a person is Ashkenazic, or Sephardic, or Chassidic, often he thinks that this is "who" he is: "I am Ashkenazi", "I am a Sephardi", "I am Chassidic", etc. But really, your background is not who you are; it is only a comparison of yourself to your background. If a person thinks that he is who he is because of his background or community, he views things through his body and not from his soul.

So how do we identify ourselves as a soul when we don't know what it is? A person cannot be told to get there by thinking certain thoughts, because he is not there yet. He doesn't identify it.

Recognizing True Spirituality: Hearing A New Sound

When G-d came to Shmuel, He appeared to him as a human. Why was it necessary to do this? It is because we are used to recognizing something based on human properties, such as a voice. If he would have heard Hashem's voice, he wouldn't have known what it is, because he never heard it before. We hear a physical voice in something and then we can know it is real.

There are sounds we recognize and sounds we don't recognize. No two voices are the same. This we can recognize already from the physical world; we identify voices. When we hear a voice, we know what kind of voice it is. When the phone rings, we can tell from the voice on the other end of the line if it's our friend, or if it's the bank, just by hearing the tone of voice on other end of the line before he even says a sentence. We can all identify the natures of different voices.

But there are also voices going on **inside** us, and we need to be able to listen to ourselves, and hear those inner voices.

Hearing Your Inner Voices

We all have a *yetzer tov* (good inclination) and a *yetzer hora* (evil inclination). We can tell if there is an inner voice in us is coming from our *yetzer tov* or *yetzer*

hora. Sometimes we hear an inner voice in us and we don't know where it is coming from, and we aren't sure if it's telling us to do something good or evil, so we don't know if it's the *yetzer tov* or the *yetzer hora*. If we hear a voice in us telling to do a *mitzvah*, we know it's coming from the *yetzer tov*, and if we hear that something is forbidden, we know it's the voice of the *yetzer hora* if we want to do it.

But even if we are aware if we're hearing something good or evil, it's not because we recognize the voices. It's simply because we know the nature of what the information is telling us, and therefore we discern where the voice is coming from. But we still don't know how to recognize the actual inner voices. It is something we have to learn about.

Hearing The Subtle Tunes

The Arizal said that there are four "voices" contained in every word of the Torah: *taamim* (the tune of the word), *nekudos* (the pronunciation of the word) *tagim* (the crowns on top of a letter in a *Sefer Torah*) and *oisiyos* (the letters of the word).

The *oisiyos*/letters of a word don't mean much to us, because we can't hear any meaning when we just read the letters of a word.

The *nekudos* begin to tell us what the word is saying, by showing us how to pronounce it - we begin to "hear" the meaning word. But *nekudos* don't fully reveal the meaning, because we can interpret the word to mean different words. For example, when we see the word "*av*", it can be read as *av*, but it can also stand for the words "*aleph beis*".

[The *tagim*/crowns of a letter, are hidden matters that we don't understand, so they do not tell us anything about the meaning of a word].

The *taamim*, the way a word sounds, is what reveals the meaning of the word to us. The *taam* in a word, the tune that it sung/pronounced with, is really like a voice in a word. *Taamim* are thus what gives inner meaning of a word in the Torah. If a person doesn't know how to sing the *taam* in a word, he cannot read the Torah for the congregation (*l'chatchilah*).

Taam means taste. When you taste a food, you recognize its essence. So the *taam* is the inner tune that each word is carrying.

Others describe it in the following terms. The *oisoyis*/letters are like the “body” of a word, while the *taamim* are like the “soul” of the word.

In order for a person to recognize his soul, he must acquire the ability of *taam*, to hear the tune behind something, which gives him a taste of the matter. It is essentially an ability in a person to pay attention to his inner voices.

Using Your Power of Taam/Taste to Discern Inner Voices

If a person knows how to taste foods, it is actually a tool he can use to listen to his own soul. When this ability is never channeled towards spirituality, it is used as an ability to taste food and discern what ingredients are in the food and what it needs. A person can develop this ability and become the best chef in the world, but this is not the deep way to use the power of *taam*/subtle discerning of taste. The ability to sense the *taam* in foods is really a tool given to us so we can sense subtle tastes - the ability of inner listening.

Expanding Upon Our Senses For Subtlety

We need to be able to feel our inner voice; to hear it. To illustrate, there are people who are gruff in their nature, and others have a more refined nature. We can tell right away if someone is like this, just by hearing his voice. Sometimes we do not always make a correct assumption, but often we can sense when we are in front of a person with a tough personality or a sensitive personality; we simply just “sense” it. But we are really “hearing” something in the way the other person talks, and we are discerning what kind of person he is.

Another example of the concept is that when a person is trying to become a musician, he needs a subtle sense for hearing sounds. If he doesn’t already have this subtle sense, I’m not saying he can’t become a musician, but it will be very hard. There are people who were born with a subtle sense for music, and they keep expanding upon it throughout their life, and that is why they succeed with music.

This is the concept – we have already have a bit of a sense to hear subtleties, and we just to have to expand upon it further, in order to hear the subtle inner voices inside us.

Spiritual Sound: Powerful, Yet Subtle and Refined

The Kotzker Rebbe would say that if a person can only cry aloud to Hashem, but he never davens in a whisper to Hashem, this is like the prayers of a non-Jew, for the non-Jews of Ninveh were crying aloud. A Jew, however, can cry from inside himself, and he doesn't have to make it audible to Hashem. That is the unique inner voice that a Jew has.

The Baal Shem Tov calls this a “silent cry.” It is a subtle sense in a person to be able to hear an inner voice going on inside himself – it is a powerful kind of voice, but it is refined at the same time.

Based on this, we can now understand: Why is it that most people are not succeeding at serving the Creator? Some people are simply not searching for it, and some do not have a will at all. Others have a will, and they are searching, but they aren't succeeding, because they don't realize that spirituality is really a world of our inner soul, and the soul is a very refined and subtle kind of world that you have to listen to.

In order to really live the inner world, a person needs to be able to listen to himself. If a person doesn't have that ability of inner listening, he doesn't grow in spirituality. People who live their inner world are able to hear the voices of their soul. As we have outlined, the sounds of the body are gruff in their nature, whereas the sounds of the soul are subtle and refined kinds of sounds.

Chazal say that when Moshe was performing the plagues, the Egyptians couldn't produce lice, because lice is small. The meaning of this is that the magic of the Egyptians, which was the impure knowledge of spirituality, cannot create subtleties. Evil spirituality can create blood or frogs, which are big, but it can't create something that looks like a small kernel, because the real spiritual world is a very subtle world. Thus, they couldn't create lice, which are small and subtle, because the nature of evil spirituality is that it is gruff, and therefore it cannot produce anything subtle.

A person can't live the inner world of spirituality if he has a gruff and unrefined nature. In order to live and experience the inner spiritual world, a person has to hear its sounds, which are subtle, and it is very different from the nature of physical sounds that we are used to.

The “Bas Kol” – The “Heavenly Voice”, and Beyond

The voice of a person changes as he gets older. A child and a teenager sound very different, and the voice of an old person is another kind of voice. But the soul in us has its own voice, which always remains the same.

Again, as I said before, it's hard to describe the inner world. It's like trying to describe color to a blind man. You can describe to him a shape, but you can't get him to actually see. So too, we have a soul and body. When we live through entirely the body, all we hear are physical sounds, and we will be deaf to the sounds of the soul.

However, there is no person who lives totally in his body. If a person was totally controlled by his body, he can't survive. All of us are being held alive by our soul. Although this is true, though, a person doesn't know how to differentiate between the voices of the body and the soul. When a person never learns how to discern between all the voices, he remains with a salad-like mixture of voices going on inside him.

We have in us the body's voice and the soul's voice. It is not possible to hear both of them at once, except for certain rare individuals.

Chazal say that every day, a *Bas Kol* (“daughter of a voice”, a Heavenly voice) goes out every day by *Har Sinai* and says, “Do *Teshuvah*, wayward ones.” The Baal Shem Tov explained it that any person who has thoughts of doing *Teshuvah* is really hearing the *Bas Kol*.

The *Bas Kol* is not the actual *kol* (voice) itself our *neshamah*, however, because it is only the “*bas*” of the *kol*, the “daughter” of the “voice”; thus, it is the “*bas kol*” of the *neshamah*, but it is not the “*kol*” itself of the *neshamah*. The actual *kol*/voice of the soul, itself, is the essence of our soul which we need to get to – it is the inner and most subtle point of life that there is. Just to hear the “*bas*” of the “*kol*” is like remaining with the branches and missing the root.

Listening To The Inner Voice

Thus, either we are hearing the sounds of our body, or we hear the *bas kol* of our soul. We can't hear both at once; either we are involved in physicality and thus deaf to spiritual sounds, or we are involved with spirituality and we can't hear anything physical. If we can't do both at once, and we have a body and a soul, then how do we listen to our inner voice?

In *Birkas HaMazon*, we say "*BaKol, Mikol, Kol*". Avraham said "*Yeish Li Kol*", "I have everything." This represents the ultimate level of *kol*, to feel that one has everything inside himself. The *Gemara* says that *BaKol* is referring to Avraham, *Mikol* is referring to Yitzchok, and *Kol* is referring to Yaakov.

Shabbos is called "a resemblance of the World To Come". *Chazal* are telling us how to "taste" the World To Come - how to hear the to the sound of the World To Come. The *kol* that we currently hear in us [the voice in us that is motivated to do *teshuvah*] is a spiritual sound, but it is not yet the ultimate spiritual sound we can hear in ourselves. It is only a *bas kol*, which is a partial *kol*, thus it is not yet the inner point of a *kol*.

If we want to hear the actual *kol* - the inner voice itself - we need to realize, that a partial *kol* that we hear inside ourselves is only the *kol* of the body.

There is only one *kol* that is complete and not partial: the *kol* of Hashem. It was a *kol* that could have created the world in one sound, but Hashem split it into ten sounds. It was a complete *kol*. Any *kol* we hear is *kol*, from the word *kelalah* (curse), which implies that the *bas kol* we hear is incomplete. But the "complete" *kol* which we need to hear is *kol* from the word "*kaf*", and it is the inner *kol* contained in the *neshamah*.

We are used to hearing *kolos* (voices) in ourselves that are only "partial" kinds of *kol*, because they are different from each other, and thus impermanent. We need to get used to hearing the *kol* of the *neshamah*, the *kol* of the World To Come, the *kol* of Hashem, Who is One. It is a *kol* that never breaks up, and it is only one *kol*, unlike the many *kolos* we hear, which can become split up and broken up into many different voices.

All Jewish souls were by *Har Sinai* and thus we all heard Hashem's voice. That voice remained forever, for it is the voice of Hashem, and thus it can still be heard, deep in the soul. We need to learn how we can listen to it.

There are five names to our soul. The lower layers of the soul, from *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah* and *Chayah*, all came after Adam's sin. Had Adam not sinned, we would have remained with just our *Yechidah*, which hears only one voice, the voice of Hashem.

We can get to our *Nefesh* and *Ruach* and *Neshamah*, and maybe to our *Chayah*, if we become aware of our inner voices. But to remain at that level is still not the level of hearing our actual essence, which is always one voice alone. We need to hear our essence, which is our *Yechidah*, thus we need to get used to listening to the one voice alone, which contains everything that we need. It is the *kol* that is *hakol*, "everything." It is also known as the *kol demamah dakkah* ("soft, silent voice").

Everything is there! We need to hear the inner voice in us, which is the complete kind of voice; it is the voice of our actual essence.

The inner voices we are familiar with are sometimes loud and sometimes quiet; they fluctuate in their frequency. How do we hear the constant kind of voice, which is the voice of our actual essence? When someone is talking, we hear his voice, and when someone is not talking, we don't hear his voice. So how do we hear a voice that is constant?

The voice of our essence never ceases, thus it is can always be heard. "*Hashem is not found in a great noise, but in a kol demamah dakkah (soft, subtle voice)*" – Hashem's voice is found in the voice of our soul's essence, which is a "soft, subtle voice". That is the voice we need to hear how to listen to.

We hear voices of our *yetzer tov* and our *yetzer hora*. Sometimes we hear one of them more than the other, while the other one goes to sleep. But those are just partial voices, because they fluctuate, and therefore, even the voice of our *yetzer tov* isn't yet our innermost voice. We need to hear the voice of our very essence, which is always one voice.

We are trying to learn how to identify our “I” as a *neshamah*, a soul. What does that really mean? It means to listen that we need to listen to the voice of your soul’s actual essence. That is how we will come to identify our *neshamah* as being our true self.

In Conclusion

Concerning Channah the prophetess [mother of the prophet Shmuel], it is written, “*And Hannah spoke on heart, and only her lips were moving, and her voice was not heard.*” This does not mean simply that she spoke quietly or that she whispered. The depth of this matter is that she spoke from her heart, from her innermost voice, the voice of her very being. In that inner place in herself, her voice could not be heard, not because she was whispering, and not because it was a quiet *tefillah*, but because it is the eternal voice of the soul’s essence, which is found in the deepest inner silence. It is the inner voice of Creation contained in each soul.

I hope that besides for hearing these actual words, that you be able to hear and feel the soul of the words contained in them. They cannot really be described in words, for they can only be understood if you connect deeply into yourself. It is my hope that all of us here should reach the essence of our soul.

04 | Beginning To Reach the Innermost Point of the Soul

The Difference Between the Yechidah and the Rest of our Soul

So far, we have begun to discuss how to reveal our true self. We have explained that a person is comprised of a body and a soul, and that the true essence of a person is his soul, and that the body is only a “garment” on top of the soul.

The soul, itself, is really one piece. In terms of our Sages, it splits up into five “names” – *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, *Chayah*, and *Yechidah* - but it is essentially one unit, one reality. These five “names” of the soul are all describing the soul in different terms. These are not five separate compartments of the soul, for there is only one essence of the soul. The five names of the soul are not splitting up the soul into five different parts as we understand in the simple sense; rather, they are five names that are all describing the same reality.

To explain this a bit more, it is only our body’s viewpoint which views the soul as having five “parts” to it, but the true view of how to view the soul is through our soul’s viewpoint. The soul’s view is essentially the view from deepest point in the soul, which is called the “*Yechidah*”.

The “*Yechidah*” in our soul knows that our soul is really undivided, whereas the other layers of our soul do not comprehend this deeper reality. But we have the ability to have this deep understanding – that is, when we reach our *Yechidah*’s viewpoint. When we reach this deep inner understanding, we would be able to see how our soul is really all one all-inclusive unit, which contains everything.

Searching for the Truth

The story of Reb Elazar ben Durdaya is famous. He begged all of Creation to plead mercy on his behalf until he realized, “The matter is dependent only on me.” Then he cried so much until his soul left him.⁶

⁶ *Avodah Zarah 17a*

Reb Elazar ben Durdaya had an inner push in him that was searching for the truth. He had sunk very low with all his sins, and he was in the lowest kind of impurity; he had sunk to the “fiftieth level of impurity” – the most depraved state possible.

But it was precisely then that he was able to reach the greatest holiness. There is a rule that for everything evil that Hashem created, Hashem created a force that is equal to it in good. When a person has fallen so low into the “fiftieth gate of impurity”, he actually has the opportunity to reach deeply into himself and to come to the “fiftieth gate of holiness”.

The inner voice of the soul – which is essentially the “fiftieth gate of holiness” that is deep in the soul - is an endless voice inside a person that demands the truth. It doesn't let a person rest until he satisfies its calling.

Compare this to a person who needs heart surgery. He goes to the doctor and they tell him, “For five shekel, we'll start the surgery.” Not only won't they succeed, but nothing even starts. So, too, when a person is searching to overcome his problems, he might get rid of the external layers to his problems, but he can still be ignoring the root of his problems. His inner voice inside him is pleading for something else, and it isn't being satisfied.

People have all kinds of problems in life. The outer layers to our problems might be solved by going to a psychologist, but it won't help to satisfy the inner voice of our soul; our soul wants something else. No one in the world will be able to take away the root of our problems. In fact, not even the holy *Avos* would be able to take away a person's problems if he would go to them! Why? Because the soul of the person is demanding that he should do something about it. He won't be able to silence it until he reaches the “all-inclusive perspective” of the soul (the *Yechidah*).

We can compare this to a metal spring. The more we pull it back, the more it will spring forward. The inner voice of the soul, which is telling a person that he needs to grow, that he needs to search, is like a spring. If a person only seeks partial perfection, he will get sprung only half the distance that he could have reached. But if a person pushes as much as he can and aims for the complete level, he will be able to reach the end, because he will get sprung very far.

Many people in the world are searching for something. People always searched. Why don't people find what they are searching for? It is because not everyone is

searching like Rebbi Elazar ben Dordaya, who cried from the depths of his soul until his soul left him.

When Rebbi heard about the story of Rebbi Eliezer ben Dordaya,⁷ he said about him, “There is a kind of person who acquires his World To Come in a one *shaah* (hour).” It is not easy to acquire the World To Come so fast. What’s the difference if a person acquires it through one hour or through 100 hours? The word “*shaah*” means to be “*poneh*”, to “turn”. It means to turn to one goal alone. When Rebbi Eliezer ben Dordaya saw that one could help him except himself, he turned only to his inner voice of the soul and heard it, which told him that he must seek only the *Ein Sof* (the Infinite) of Hashem.

Knowing Why We Are Searching

We are trying to learn about how we can reveal our soul. If someone doesn’t search for this, he wouldn’t be interested in reading or hearing about this. Anyone who came here to learn how to reveal his soul obviously came here out of a desire to reveal the soul. But the question is: How much you are *really* searching for this?

Compare this, *l’havdil*, to a person who wants *kavod* (honor). Every person would like *kavod*, but some people don’t pursue it so much. Others run after *kavod* and get very offended when their *kavod* is slighted; there are even people who die out of a broken heart if their *kavod* is severely attacked. So there are some people who merely would like *kavod*, while there are others who live entirely for *kavod*. The first kind of person will be a bit sad if he doesn’t get *kavod*, but he’ll get over it. He knows he exists even if he doesn’t get *kavod*. The second kind of person, however, seeks *kavod* as if it’s his whole life, because he attaches his existence to the pursuit of *kavod*.

In the same way, we can understand that if we want to truly reveal our soul, we have to really search for it, and it will not be enough if we just try partially to reveal it. We need to search to reveal it no less than how we understand a person who is hungry for honor – he does not just search for it partially; he seeks it totally.

Thus, the question is, when a person searches to reveal his soul, if he is only searching for this partially, or if he is searching for this totally.

⁷ *Avoda Zara 17a*

If a person has a partial aspiration to reveal his soul, but he feels that he can move on in life if he doesn't, then he might get to a partial revelation of his soul, but he won't get to a total revelation of it. If a person completely seeks to reveal his soul, however, then such a search is emanating from his innermost point of the soul, which contains everything – and he will indeed get to his desired goal.

So when a person is searching, for any goal, he has to know where this search is coming from in himself. How much is a person willing to expend on what he searches for? If a person is only a little interested in searching for something, he won't get that far. Only when a person is willing to search for something completely does he truly search for it, and only this kind of person will get reach what he wants on the complete level.

Avraham *Avinu* searched for the Creator. Nimrod, also, was also searching for the Creator in his life. But Avraham *Avinu* was willing to jump into a fire for this. Nimrod was not ready to do this. The depth behind this is that a fire cannot destroy the innermost point of one's soul. It can destroy only the external parts of the soul, but it cannot destroy our essence. If a person searched in his life only for things that were superficial, then indeed, if he were to be thrown into a fire, he is destroyed by a fire.

But as for those who reached their innermost point in the soul, when they were thrown into a fire, they were not destroyed. There were Jews in previous generations who let themselves be thrown into a fire to sanctify Hashem's Name. The depth of their act was because they knew that fire could only destroy their body. It could not destroy their essence, their innermost point of the soul.

A person might be searching to reveal his soul, but only because he is suffering physically. He wants to have an outer-body experience so he can leave the pain of his body, but not because he really wants to reach his soul. Such a person will be satisfied as long as he reaches the outer part of the soul, because his whole wish is to leave the pain of his body.

How do we reach our innermost point of the soul, which contains everything? Before we do anything, we need to want to get there. It's not enough to think of how to get there. We must reveal a true will for it.

Why Do We Want Moshiach?

One of the thirteen principles of faith is to believe that *Moshiach* will come – “And although he tarries, even so, I still wait for him, every day, that he should come.”

The Chasam Sofer was asked: Why is believing in *Moshiach*'s arrival one of the prerequisites of faith? If a person believes in G-d but he's a bit skeptical about when *Moshiach* will arrive, why is he considered to be a non-believer?

There is a famous story that someone once came to his Rebbe that he was having troubles with his livelihood and with the local *poritz* (czar). The Rebbe told him, “Either *daven* that *Moshiach* should come, or, go to *Eretz Yisrael*.” He asked his wife what they should do, and she said: “*Daven* that *Moshiach* should come, so that *Moshiach* should come and get rid of the *poritz*!”

There is a deep statement of the Baal HaTanya: “The *Moshiach* that people *daven* for will not come, and the *Moshiach* who comes is someone that people do not await.” What did he mean? There are many people who want *Moshiach* to come so that *Moshiach* will solve the overdraft that he has in the bank, so that his daughter will get her *shidduch*, so that he should be healthy, etc. This kind of person wants *Moshiach* so that he can be comfortable. He's not really awaiting *Moshiach* - he's awaiting someone who will come solve all his problems.

If *Moshiach* would come for that reason, then belief in *Moshiach* wouldn't be one of the 13 principles of faith. Awaiting *Moshiach* is to await the all-inclusive light that will come to the world. It is not about awaiting the time in history of *Moshiach*, but rather, to await the time in which Hashem's Name will be one.

If one hasn't yet reached his innermost point of the soul, he doesn't await *Moshiach*, because in his mind, when *Moshiach* comes, he won't get any more Bamba or Bissli (nosh)!

Who truly awaits *Moshiach*? Only the innermost point in our soul, our *Yechidah*, really wants *Moshiach*. Our body wants *Moshiach* so that we will be comfortable. Our *Yechidah* wants *Moshiach* because it wants the all-inclusive light that will come to the world.

Thus, we must await *Moshiach* every day, because one must learn how to leave his superficial viewpoint and enter into the all-inclusive viewpoint, in which he sees how all details are unified, which will be fully revealed to all with the coming of *Moshiach*.

There is Chassidic story told of Reb Zusha of Anipoli, who would frequently meet with Eliyahu *HaNavi*⁸, and he asked Eliyahu when *Moshiach* will be coming. Eliyahu told him that the Sages say that “The son of David will not come until every *perutah* (coin) is missing from our wallets”, and then Eliyahu *HaNavi* explained the deeper meaning of this: *Moshiach* will not come until all the “*peratios*” – every divided part – is no longer. *Moshiach* will come only when there are no more “divisions”; when there will only be unity. We are in exile and we await the redemption. What is the exile? There are many layers to the exile. There is physical sickness and suffering. This is the physical aspect of the exile. Jews are living in other countries other than *Eretz Yisrael*; we are controlled by non-Jews and we don’t have our own nationality; an even more inner problem is that exile has caused the Jewish people to become lax in keeping the *mitzvos*. But all of this is yet the external layer of the exile.

The core of the exile is that we aren’t yearning for the state of spiritual perfection of *Moshiach*’s times. That is the true inner meaning of the exile we are in.

Moshiach will come to reveal each person’s *Yechidah*. Thus, if we want to reveal our *Yechidah*, then we need to aspire for its perspective. We must wish to come out of our “partial” viewpoint, the view from the outer layers of our soul, and enter into the all-inclusive viewpoint of the soul, which is the view from the *Yechidah*, the very essence of our soul. There are layers to how we can identify our self as being a *neshamah*, a soul. The inner way of how we can do it, though, is by truly realizing that our soul’s essence is all-inclusive, because everything is really in it.

The View From The Yechidah: Realizing That You Have Everything

The Arizal said that all of the high levels that he reached came from his happiness in Torah and *mitzvos*. There are many explanations to what he meant; the deeper meaning is as follows.

⁸ *Elijah the prophet. It is brought in the many holy books of Jewish literature that the truly righteous (the tzaddikim) merit a revelation of Elijah the prophet, who reveals to them the secrets of G-d and His Torah.*

We must know what happiness is. What is happiness? The word for happiness in Hebrew is “*simcha*”, which has the same letters as “*chameish*”, five, meaning, a person usually has happiness in various “parts”, which is the idea behind “five” as opposed to “one.” A child is happy when we give him anything to play with, usually pieces. But real happiness is, “*The righteous rejoice in Hashem.*” In other words, happiness is when one is happy with something all-inclusive. The Arizal reached the complete understanding that the soul contains everything, and that was the root of his deep happiness that he reached.

This is not a ‘*segulah*’ to reach our innermost point - it is rather the actual definition of our innermost point. We need to arrive at the point in us that is “everything.” It is called the *ohr Ein Sof*, the Infinite Light, in the soul.

If we don’t uncover it in ourselves, then we will only be happy when we have a good experience here and there in life, like when we “have a nice time” or when we go on an exciting trip. This happiness is only in the “parts” of life, and it is not real happiness. The true happiness is to arrive at your real “I”, your soul, which is your innermost point, which is when you reach the inner understanding that you really have everything, and not just good “times” and good “parts” in your life. It is a very deep understanding in which you realize that you really have all that there is inside yourself.

Our soul is who we are, while our body is a garment. We must know what the structure of the soul is. Our body is a garment over our soul. The lower/external layers of the soul are garments covering over the higher/deeper layers. Our *Nefesh* is the garment over our *Ruach*. Our *Ruach* is the garment over our *Neshamah*. Our *Neshamah* is the garment over our *Chayah*. Our *Chayah* is the garment over our *Yechidah* – and our *Yechidah* is, so to speak, a garment over the Infinite Light of Hashem. Our innermost point that we can come to recognize is our *Yechidah*.

There are two ways to get to it. One way is to get it to slowly, penetrating through all the garments of our existence until we get to the innermost point. The other way is

9 Editor’s Note: This is the theme of the Getting To Know Your Self series (which includes Getting To Know Your Self, Getting To Know Your Soul, Getting To Know Your Feelings, Getting To Know Your Imagination, Understanding Your Middos, and Fixing Your Earth\Water\Wind\Fire), which explains how we can get by layer and layer of ourselves until we can reveal our innermost point of the soul.

to penetrate straight into the innermost point¹⁰. Rebbi Eliezer ben Dordaya reached this – he merited, in one moment, to reach his innermost point.

We have a choice: either we can either turn to our body, to our layers of our soul - or we can turn to just our innermost point, which is our essence.

In order to realize that we are a soul, we need to gain the perspective of how everything is contained in our essence, and that it is not merely another “part” of our self. It is the understanding that our soul is really all one existence that includes in it *everything*.

Holding Onto Part of Our Soul Can Help Us Hold Our Entire Soul

How do we gain this inner viewpoint?

There is a concept of the Baal Shem Tov that “If one holds onto the edge of *achdus* (the unified essence of everything), it is as if he is holding onto everything.” This is possibly the deepest statement ever said by the Baal Shem Tov.

In other words, if you can’t grasp everything, you can hold onto part of it, and it’s like you’re “holding onto” everything.

To illustrate, it doesn’t seem that we can hold onto everything. You can’t hold onto every apple, and if you hold onto an apple, that doesn’t mean you are really holding onto every apple in the world through holding this apple. So the words of the Baal Shem Tov are not to be understood by regular human logic.

The Baal Shem Tov said that there is a way to hold onto everything, that if you hold onto a little, you are able to hold everything through it. Superficially, it means “as if”, but that is not the meaning, *chas v’shalom*. It’s the deep fundamental understanding of the entire soul.

“Holding onto a little of everything” really doesn’t make sense. How do you hold onto a little of everything? Is it like holding onto a string that goes around the entire world? There is no such string, and even if there would be, holding onto that string

10 As explained in the final chapter, the 15 chapters of this series (Reaching Your Essence) are coming to explain this path.

wouldn't mean that we are holding onto the entire world. So what does it mean that you can get everything by holding onto a little of it?

It means that there are two ways of how to grab onto the edges of our soul. One way is to grab onto it by trying to perform positive actions to get there, and this is called *chiyuvi*. There is another way of how to grab onto the edge of the soul: sometimes, we must not “do” anything at all. This is called *shelilah*. We will explain what this is.

The Concepts of “Chiyuvi” and “Shelilah”

When a person is afraid of losing his apartment, he holds onto his money and is afraid of losing it. This is a kind of grasping which is about accomplishing something because if he lets go of the money, he won't be able to keep his apartment. This is a kind of “grabbing” that we are familiar with; it is called *chiyuvi*, to do an action that accomplishes something. But sometimes, the way we hold onto something is by letting go of it! This is called *shelilah*.

What does it mean to grasp something by letting go of it? To illustrate this concept, if a person really wants to have good children, Reb Pinchos of Koritz *zt”l* said that even though one must show love to his children, he must keep a little distance as well. Why? Because if a father shows too much love to his children, they will actually lose some of their self-esteem. They will never develop their own confidence if their father only showers love on them and never once keeps a distance from them.

When there is too much love, one's close relationship with his children can actually harm them; there are parents who don't let their children anywhere, not even to the supermarket, because they are so attached to their child. If you really want the child to develop, give him some space so that he can develop his individuality.

Here we see that there is a way for a person to let go of something, yet that allows for growth.

We can give more examples of the concept from the physical world. A person is brushing his teeth. If he brushes too hard, he will bleed and hurt his mouth. If he lets go of his strong hold on the brush and he brushes lightly, he will be able to brush

properly. So we see that sometimes, letting go of your grasp on something is what allows you to gain.

We know of Hashem as the all-capable Being, which is the meaning of *Elokim*. We think He is strong than billions of humans together, that He is above all of us. Our entire perspective is in terms of *chiyuvi*, of how things are accomplished in the active sense, as the Rambam writes. We are not used to the other perspective, of accomplishing things through refraining from action, which is called *shelilah*.

The depth behind this matter, *shelilah*, is because there is a deep point in the soul called *ayin*: “nothingness”. It is an ability in our soul in which we refrain from doing something – the power of *shelilah*. This is a deep power that has to sometimes be utilized. Sometimes, we have to “not do” something. It is not so known to most people.

In order to grab onto the essence of our soul, which is *ayin*, you can't grab onto it in the same way you grab onto anything that is *chiyuvi*. It is rather grasped through *shelilah*. There, a person can find his innermost happiness.

Doing, and Not Doing

Our *mitzvos* are contained of 248 positive commandments and 365 negative commandments. This shows us that the essence of our *avodah* is to refrain from certain actions. Simply, we think that only doing the *mitzvos* gives us holiness, while refraining from committing a sin does not give us holiness, and it is just an absence of impurity. But the truth is that even refraining from a sin gives us holiness!

People are more interested in “What to do”, while there is very little interest in “what not to do.” But the non-active part of our life is important, and in fact, it represents the nature our soul's essence, and thus, it is the basis of how we reach our essence.

To give an example, look at the summer and winter seasons. In the summer, generally there is more action, and people are much more active in the summer. The winter is a time where there is not much activity going on, just staying indoors mostly. People that are more active love the summer – but they hate the ‘boring’ winter. But there is a lot to be learned from the winter season. It is a time in which we must learn

that just as we can perform by being active, so too can we accomplish and perform even when we aren't active.

Similarly, by daytime we are more active, and by night, we are less active. We need both aspects in our life, because there is what to gain from each of these facets to our life. Sometimes we act, and sometimes, we need to 'not' act.

We need to learn a new language: the power to "not do" something. Just like we can move, so can we learn how to refrain from movement.

Chiyuvi gives us partial gains, while *shelilah* can give us everything. Only *shelilah* can connect us to the concept of how everything is contained in our essence, which is the viewpoint from our *Yechidah*. In order to get to this perspective - which is really the Infinite Light of the soul - we need to realize what our point of *shelilah* is and how to work with it.

At first, when Hashem made the world, He took away some of His space, and after that He put Creation into that empty space. This was the first, starting point of Creation. Thus, non-action is really the root of everything in our existence.

We are usually active, and sometimes we are not active. But the point of non-action is the innermost point of our soul. In order to reach our innermost point, our *Yechidah*, we need to reveal the power of this empty space in the soul, called *ayin*, which is revealed through utilizing our power of *shelilah*.

When a person wants to reveal his soul he tends to do certain actions to try to get there. But the innermost point of our soul is non-action. Therefore, we need to recognize what this is in ourselves, and after that we can reach our essence, our *Yechidah*.

To illustrate the concept, at first, when Rebbi Eliezer ben Dordaya realized that he needed to repent, he turned to all of Creation to pray on his behalf, but they did not want to pray for him. He wanted action; he wanted a great noise to stir him and get him moving. But anything he turned to refused to help him, and that's when he realized that all of these actions of prayer for him will not get him to the inner point that he needed to reach. He realized the depth of this concept, that "non-action" is the root of how he will get to his essence, and that is indeed how he got there.

It is written, “*For no man shall see Me and live.*” The Zohar says that this is only while a person is alive, but when a person dies, however, he does get to see Hashem. What is the depth of this? The simple meaning is that a person cannot see Hashem when he is alive, because he has a physical body that gets in the way. After he dies, he no longer has a body and he is entirely a soul, thus he can see Hashem after death. But the deeper meaning is, after death, a person realizes his inner point of non-action, and from that he is able to reach everything.

Utilizing The Power of Mesirus Nefesh (Sacrificing Your Desires)

The Sages say that one should “die before he dies.” On a deep note, we have the power to “die” in our soul by not doing anything at all, the power to say, “Enough is enough.” We don’t need any action for this.

This is not referring to putting a stop to physical non-action, but to the soul’s power to realize that no action has to be done. This is referring to the power of *mesirus nefesh*, the ability in a person to die for Hashem. The Arizal says that when a person is willing to die *al kiddush Hashem*, he merits the revelation of his *Yechidah*.

If a person doesn’t want to die for Hashem, from a deep perspective it really means that he doesn’t know how to put a stop to his “action” mode of the soul. Some people can’t close their store on Shabbos – that’s one kind of problem. A deeper kind of problem is, that there are people who have no Shabbos in their own soul! They have no inner rest. They only know how to be active.

We only know what Shabbos is. It’s the seventh day of the week. But Shabbos exists in our soul as well. On Shabbos, it is forbidden to speak of mundane things. It is about stopping the world, saying “Enough” to all action. The Shabbos we have today is only a “mini World To Come”, and not the entire World To Come. In the future we will have the eternal Shabbos, the eternal *menuchah* (serenity). But if someone reaches his Shabbos in the soul, he reaches the eternal Shabbos in his own soul.

When we speak of the concept of *mesirus nefesh* here, this does not necessarily mean that we have to die in order to have *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice). We can have *mesirus nefesh* every day! By uncovering our power of *Ayin* in our soul – by learning how to refrain and not do something – we can reach *mesirus nefesh* every single day! It’s a Shabbos-like attitude in our soul.

I met a person yesterday who told me he was very nervous. His wife was expecting a baby, and now the doctors told him that the fetus might not survive. I asked him, “So, what’s the problem?” He told me, “What do you mean what’s the problem?! Because the fetus might die.” I said to him, “And what will happen then?” He was incredulous: “What do you mean?! I already feel that this is my future child!” He is right. He does feel connected to this future child. If he wouldn’t feel at all connected to this child, then that would be a different problem. I told him, “Let’s think about something else for a minute. Take your mind off this a bit and think about the following.

“Why do you want children? So that you can teach them the ways of Torah. You want your children to continue your path and to serve Hashem. That is why a person should want children.

“Hashem told Avraham to kill his own son. Nobody else has even been given such a test. The test you have is much smaller than the test that Avraham had, because Avraham was told to kill his own child. But Hashem is testing you, on a far smaller level. A fetus is not yet born; it is not a child you have raised. You are really being tested with a smaller version of the *Akeidas Yitzchok*.

“If Hashem would tell you that you need to lose your future child, are you prepared to listen to Him? If “No”, then what is the point of living? What do you want this child for if it’s not about doing the will of Hashem? If a person just wants to have a child for his own reasons, he does not want a child to serve Hashem. Such a person is not prepared to accept Hashem’s test if he were to lose this future child. But if a person wants to have a child so that he will teach Torah to this child and so that the child will serve Hashem, such a person is able to accept Hashem’s will that he lose the child, because he understands that the purpose of his life and all that we desire in life is to do Hashem’s will”.

The Practical Way To Gain Mesirus Nefesh: Nullifying Your Will

Let us look at the opportunities we have every day for *mesirus nefesh*, our power of *shelilah*.

What happens to a person when he wants something and he doesn’t get it? A person who never works on himself says, “*Chaval!*” (or “*Oy!*”), or something like that,

which voices his frustration. A more inner kind of person will believe with *emunah* that this is what Hashem wants.

But if a person is a bit more inner, he can react in an even more inner way. How can a person be more inner than having *emunah*? Is there anything more inner than having *emunah*? The answer is, there are levels and levels to *emunah*. The deeper way to use *emunah* is to use it for *shelilah* – to realize, that just like I need to do actions in order to serve Hashem, so are there times in which my *avodah* is not to do any action [*bittul haratzon*/nullifying the will].

There are people who want to open up a *chessed* organization or do something big, and they don't succeed. What is the reaction? "This is due to the Satan." Or, "It must be a *tikkun* (rectification)". Or, "There must be *kelipos* (spiritual husks) in this place." All kinds of "spiritual" reactions. This might be true, but there is a much deeper way to react. Just as you understand that you need to do things for Hashem, so can you understand that there are times where your *avodah* is to realize that Hashem doesn't want you to act.

We have the six days of the week, in which we do action, and we have Shabbos, in which we rest from action. We need both aspects in our life. We need action, holy action, which is the purpose of the six days of the week. Shabbos represents the power of non-action.

When a person does something and he doesn't succeed, he should connect himself to the point of "Shabbos" in the soul and let go of his need for action. [He should realize that if his *ratzon* didn't happen, it must be that Hashem wanted him not to have this action fulfilled, whatever it was.]

The Ramchal wrote that the reason why there were decrees throughout the generations which forbade Jews from learning Torah, although it made it hard for us to learn - which seemed to be nothing but a bother to us - was also for a purpose. It was to show us that sometimes, we serve Hashem by not being able to do something.

The deep aspect of serving Hashem is when we have to refrain at times from action. As one of the Sages said, "Just like I receive reward for expounding, so will I receive reward from abstaining."

In Conclusion

We have not completed the picture yet, but we have begun to explain the basis, of how we can reach the innermost point of our soul, the perspective of our *Yechidah*, which is entirely about non-action.¹¹

In slightly different terms, we have a power of *chessed/ahavah*/loving kindness, which represents action, and we have also have an opposite power, *gevurah/yirah*, restraint, which is our ability to refrain from action. We must reveal both of these powers of the soul. *Ahavah* is the partial way to get to the soul, thus, doing certain “actions” can help us get to the outer layers of the soul; but it will not get us to the innermost point of the soul, which is the realm of non-action. *Gevurah/yirah*, or *shelilah* [or *ayin*] is the path that helps us get to the complete revelation of the soul, the innermost point, the *Yechidah*, which is not a partial view on things, but the complete view on things – the view that is all-inclusive and unifies all details together.

In order to reach the inner perspective of the soul, we need to reveal more our power of *shelilah*, to get used to the concept of non-action; and from that, we have the key to reach the inner perspective in the soul.

May we merit from Hashem to continue to expand upon this, to learn how to use our point of *shelilah*, so that we can to get to our soul, namely, our actual essence.

¹¹ This concept will be further explained in Chapter Eleven

05 | *Taking The Jump*

The Yechidah – The Place In The Soul That Reveals The Infinite

We will continue the discussion we began on how a person can reveal his identity as being that of a *neshamah* (soul).

Our soul has five names to it – *Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah, Chayah* and *Yechidah*. The true “I” is the *Yechidah* of our soul.

The *Yechidah* of the soul is a feminine expression, as opposed to the word “*yachid*”, which would be a masculine expression. This is because the *Yechidah* is the tool a person can use to connect man to Hashem, similar to how a woman connects herself to her husband by allowing herself to become a *kli* (receptacle/container) to him.

If a person wants to be a “container” for Hashem’s Presence – if he wants to feel Hashem inside him and with him, that He fills all of existence – that He is everything – in order to feel this, a person has to reveal the Infinite Light in his own soul. This is the *Yechidah* of the soul, which is the tool to reveal how Hashem is endless, how He fills everything.

When we speak about this concept of *Ein Sof*, the Endless, it’s the opposite of a *sof*, an end. So in order to understand what *Ein Sof* is, we need to know its opposite concept, which is the idea of *sof*, an end.

The End, and Beyond the End

Normally, there is an end to everything. There is nothing that has no end; everything has its limits, its rules, its end. We can see this from the concept of time. There is always an end when it comes to time.

Throughout the end of many times of the year, we keep meeting up with Dovid *HaMelech*. The end of the day is nighttime, in particular, midnight, as we see from Dovid *HaMelech*, who hung a harp on his bed which would blow at midnight, which signaled the end of the day. The end of the week is *Melave Malka*, which is called the

“meal of Dovid *HaMelech*”. The end of the month is *Rosh Chodesh* – it is the end of the last month, and the beginning of the next month. *Rosh Chodesh* is also called the festival of Dovid *HaMelech*. The end of the year is *Rosh HaShanah*, which is about declaring Hashem’s kingship. Dovid *HaMelech* is the epitome of a king on this world, thus he is a parable to the kingship of Hashem, so *Rosh HaShanah* is also connected with Dovid *HaMelech*. Every 7 years is *Shemittah*, and *Chazal* say that *Moshiach* can come on *Motzei Sheviis*; and *Moshiach* comes from Dovid *HaMelech*. So the end of every 7 year period is also connected with Dovid *HaMelech*.

On a year of *Yovel*, which is after 49 years - 7 cycles of *Shemittah* – it is the time when slaves go free. *Yovel* represents the concept of no more boundaries, the *Ein Sof*, the endless.

There are two people who are called “*Moshiach*”¹² – *Moshiach* ben Dovid, and *Moshiach* ben Yosef. What is the depth of this concept? Why do we need two Messiahs?

The word “Yosef” is from the word “*sof*”, end. Dovid represents the “*Ein Sof*”, as we have seen above. Whenever there is a “*sof*”, an end, after that is the point of the *Ein Sof*, which is represented by *Moshiach* ben Dovid. So *Moshiach* ben Yosef represents a “*sof*”, while *Moshiach* ben Dovid represents the “*Ein Sof*” – the point of the endless, which comes after the endpoint.

Jumping Into The Infinite

Now we will draw this concept closer to our souls.

In each of our souls, there is a point of “*Moshiach* ben Dovid” and a point of “*Moshiach* ben Yosef”. We can reveal the light of the *Ein Sof* in our soul - after we reach the *sof* of our soul. As an example, the *Zohar* says that at death, a person can see the *Shechinah*, because when we get to the end, we can then receive higher comprehension, the comprehension that comes after the endpoint - which is the *Ein Sof*.

¹² *Messiah; the redeemer of the Jewish people who will herald the redemption to the world and reveal the glory of G-d upon the world*

When we get to the last point of what we can comprehend, after that, all we can do is “jump” to Heaven, to the Endless. “The task is not upon you to complete” – after we do as much as we can, from there, we can jump beyond the endpoint and enter into the Endless.

There are two ways to get to the Endless (the *Ein Sof*). One way is to get there step-by-step, until we reach the endpoint of our soul, when are standing at the point of the Endless; and when we get to that point, all we can do is to take a “jump” in order to get to it. The other way, though, is, to begin our entire *avodah* already with the ability to jump straight into the Endless.

The truth is that, practically speaking, if we take the first method, which is based on steps of growth, then when we get to the end, we won't be able to take the jump anyway, because jumping is the antithesis of everything we had been doing until then, which was all about taking steps. But if we already develop from the start our power to “jump”, then when we get to the endpoint, we will be able to take that jump, because we will already be familiar with what it is.

The Understanding of “No Barriers”

There is a deep parable from the Baal Shem Tov to explain this concept - of how we reach the *Ein Sof* of Hashem.

Once there was a king who wanted to see how much his son loved him. So he built a fortress around his palace and sent his son out of the palace, so that his son will break through the fortress and get to him.

The son thought, “How will I be able to break through this fortress? It will take me a lifetime. Why did Hashem place me outside the fortress if it's impossible to break through??”

He thought and thought, and then he came to the following conclusion. “It must be that there really is no fortress here, because if there was, why would my father place me outside of it if I can't get to him, when he wants me to get to him? It must be that this whole fortress is a mirage. Maybe it's magic. But it's definitely not a real fortress.”

This is a deep parable. It means that we really do not have any barriers to get to Hashem. Nothing is really holding us back, even though it appears that it is.

However, this deep understanding about life is only one side of the coin. The other side of the coin in our life is that, yes, we do have difficulties. We must also be aware that life is full of difficulties. We all have difficulties; there is no one who does not have difficulty.

How can we deal with them? *Chazal* say that the evil inclination gets stronger every day, and that we cannot overcome it unless Hashem helps us (*Sukkah 52a*). We are facing struggles that we simply cannot overcome with our human strength. So why did Hashem give us such a test, when we cannot overcome it? It is because Hashem wants us to take a jump. We cannot complete our task, but that doesn't exempt us, as *Chazal* say.

So we need to work hard in our *Avodas Hashem*, step by step, building and developing and improving ourselves, but we must also realize, that we also need to be able to take a jump, and we have the ability to do so - to take a giant leap and reach the unlimited.

The possuk says "*Behold, it [the redemption] will jump over the mountains and skip over the hills*". The meaning of this is, that we have a part of our *avodah* to "jump", to realize that we have no barriers, as the Baal Shem Tov said.

What does that mean?? We don't have any barriers?! Don't we have many problems and obstacles in our way? We have bad *middos*, we have desires, and we have sins, *chas v'shalom*. So we do have barriers! What does it mean then that there are really no barriers in our *Avodas Hashem*??

The answer is, there are five parts in your soul. From the viewpoint of either your *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah* or your *Chayah*, you have barriers. There is *avodah* and hard work to improve those layers of your soul. But when you gain the viewpoint of your *Yechidah*, which is the inner view, you see that there are no barriers.

So if a person *only* tries to break all the barriers that are in his way of serving Hashem, and he never awakens his actual "I", his *Yechidah*, then it will be very hard work, and not only that, but he won't get to the inner point of his soul. Hashem gave

us a deeper power to work with in our avodah: our *Yechidah*, which tells us that there are no barriers in our avodah.

Two Viewpoints At Once

Maybe a person will get carried away with this concept and say, “So you mean to say that I don’t have to work hard at anything, because there are no barriers?” But this is erroneous, because we have other layers in our soul, our *Nefesh* through our *Chayah*, which feels that there are barriers. So yes, we do need to work hard to overcome struggles, because we have the four outer layers of our soul, which require us to work hard and grow in a step-by-step ladder.

We can compare this to someone who says “I am totally spiritual, because I have a *neshamah* in me. I don’t have to eat or drink.” He is being suicidal! So maybe a person will say, “Okay, so I am not a *neshamah*, because I will die if I don’t eat or drink. So I must be a body, and not a soul.” But that’s also incorrect. As we explained previously, a person is not “black or white.” We are a complicating existence. We are made up of many layers, and we need to balance out all our layers.

To illustrate, when you want to grow a garden, it’s not enough to feed it and water it. You have to plow it properly and give it enough fertilizer. If you don’t, the garden will not grow. It’s not enough to simply feed it. There are other factors to consider.

So too, you are multi-faceted. You need to feed each part of your soul. This is how you build yourself. You can’t jump too many levels at once. But that’s all within the first four layers of your soul. But in the *Yechidah* of your soul, in that deep place in yourself, nothing has to be built in a step-by-step manner. The *Yechidah* in you is not developed in the same way that you work with your *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, or *Chayah*. It involves totally different thought patterns than what you are used to.

. Here we come to a great fundamental in all our inner work. We have an inner point in us which is a whole different perspective, a whole different way to work with, and it gives us different comprehension. So if we want to identify ourselves as a soul, we need to carry over this perspective into all five parts of our soul. We have to keep identifying ourselves as our inner point. This will give us a change of perspective entirely towards our avodah than from what we are used to.

This concept will be explained more in detail, but to give a general outline of it, we have in us a *Yechidah*, which has a different kind of comprehension towards things. We all have it. But we have to believe that it is in us, and we must want to reveal it, and we must want to know how to reveal it.

A person can have two perspectives at once! He can be working to uncover the first four layers of the soul, while at the same time, he is aware that he is a *Yechidah*, and thus he can let the perspective of the *Yechidah* to carry over into any stage he is at. He can work hard, going in the steps of developing the soul, from lowest stage to the higher stages, while at the same time being aware, that there is a deep point in him which can realize, that there are really no barriers – from that point of view.

How We Relate To Hashem

To give a simple example of this concept, we know that Hashem fills the entire world, but does a person really *feel* Hashem fills the entire world? Do we really feel that way? We need to feel a reality that we know of; it is not enough just to “know” it on an intellectual level. If we just know about it and we don’t feel it, that means we don’t consider it to be real.

If you get a bill from the bank and you don’t pay it, it means you don’t consider the bill to be real. You need to feel the reality, not just know about it in your mind. So too, we can’t feel the reality of Hashem’s existence if we just know about it.

There is a deep point in us which can feel that reality. Only through reaching one’s inner understanding of the *Yechidah* can a person feel this. The other layers of our soul cannot arrive at this great perception.

Our bond with Hashem has many layers to it. At first we need to develop the bond in the lower layers of our soul, and then we can go higher and higher in it, until we get the deepest layer of the bond.

There are different ways how a person can relate to Hashem: “Hashem loves me”, or “Hashem gives me my needs”, or “I feel gratitude to Hashem”, or “I feel the greatness of Hashem when I *daven*.” These are all different angles of our bond with Hashem. Do each of these aspects contradict the other? No. To illustrate, if you have

many children, you love all of them. Your love for one child doesn't get in the way of your love for the other child.

When a person *davens* to Hashem, how does he view this? Does he feel that he is on this earth while Hashem is in heaven? That is one perspective a person might have. Or, a person can daven to Hashem and feel that Hashem is next to him and that he is speaking to Him. Both of these views are correct, but to adapt one view alone is only half the picture.

Each person has different periods. Sometimes we relate to Hashem in the first way and sometimes we feel closer to the second method. We have times in which our heart is more open, like when we have happy occasions, and we can feel like Hashem is next to us in our actual life. But every person also has times in which his heart is closed up, times when he feels a great darkness in his life, and he feels like Hashem is in heaven, while he is on this earth, far from Him.

Indeed, Hashem is in heaven, while we are on earth. How are we able to develop a bond with Him, then? How can we bond with Him knowing that He is in heaven, while at the same time, to realize that He is literally next to us? The answer is: we have two opposite views going on in us at once. The outer layers of our soul relate to Hashem as being in heaven, while we are on earth, and that we have to climb the ladder of growth to get to Him. At the very same time, there is an inner perspective we can access, the view from our *Yechidah*, which already feels that Hashem is next to us, and that we can speak to Him because He is right next to us. The *Yechidah* in us says, Hashem is here, right next to you, because He fills all of existence.

We all want to get there, to the inner point of everything, to the complete bond with Hashem. If we want to put that goal into clearer, practical words: it is really the view from our *Yechidah*, which we need to get to.

But there are people who feel, "How can I get close to Hashem? I am on earth, while Hashem is high up in Heaven. How dare I speak to Him?"

There are also people who, if you tell them that our *avodah* is to feel Hashem's existence in our hearts, they will respond, "Please. I am not one of the 36 hidden *tzaddikim*. I have sins; I know exactly where I'm holding. First I'll try to keep a little *halachah*, the bare minimum of *Yiddishkeit* which I need to improve on, before I try to become so lofty."

He's right, but he's wrong at the same time. As a person is trying to be on this earth and to be realistic and have his feet on this earth, at the same time, he also needs to realize that he can still find Hashem, even though he's on this earth. Just like a person realizes that he needs to keep *halacha* and be realistic and to be in touch with this earth, so can a person simply realize that he can realize the innermost point of the soul, which can bond with Hashem and realize the highest point of all: the awareness that Hashem is right next to him.

Balancing Our Limits With Freedom

There are people who live a very limited kind of life; they live a prisonlike kind of existence. They never buy anything more than what they absolutely have to. Such a lifestyle actually harms the soul, because it places limits on the soul as well. It takes the soul and locks it up. Humans have a need to expand a little past the absolute necessities. It is because while we must certainly be aware of our limits, we also have a deep need to expand a little past our limits.

Of course, if a person spends water money like water, that is also bad. The need to expand past our limits has to be balanced. The sensible way is to be careful with your money, but to also put aside some money so you can buy something extra with it. In this way, you balance yourself out.

Our Sages state that "There is a rule, but for every rule, there is an exception". What does this mean? It means that we have rules, which we need to follow in order to survive and be healthy, but we also need to come out of limits sometimes, or else we will suffocate. You need to develop a space you can go to in which you are free from limits. We need to come out of the limits we put ourselves in. This will feel like freeing our soul from its captivity.

It is important to have limits and rules in our life, but we need to balance this with knowing how to be free. We need to expand our soul a bit. We must have rules and limits in our lives – absolutely. Therefore, we need to go in steps in our growth. But there is also an ability in our soul to be above limits which we need to be aware of, at the same time.

We do not mean for one to have a life of total freedom from limits; such a life will not be a successful life. But there is a deep power in our soul to escape limits. As we all

know, there is no job in which there are no off days. People simply cannot work if they never have vacation from work.

Chas v'shalom, when a person uses this power for evil, he wishes to be free from the *mitzvos*. But the sensible way to use this power is to give yourself the ability to go free from certain limits. It is a power that comes from the deep point in your soul of your *Yechidah*, (and it is also known as the “fiftieth gate of holiness” in the soul). We all feel a need for freedom from limits. The question is if we are using it correctly or not. When it is used incorrectly, people use freedom for materialistic desires. They feel a need to go leave the country for vacations.

But the real way to use our power of freedom is, in the realm of the spiritual. We need freedom in our very *Avodas Hashem*. This does not mean that a person should abandon *Avodas Hashem* sometimes. It means that as you are involved in serving Hashem, you can serve Him sometimes through using your power of inner freedom.

Examples of Using The Power of Freedom from Limits

For example, the Ramban said that a person should think before he talks. This is a commendable thing to do, but it needs to be balanced. Is it always a good thing to be so exacting about every word that comes out of our mouth? No, it is not. We see that sometimes, we have to daven to Hashem and cry out to Him, without thinking into this beforehand. If we would think before davening about how we will daven, this is detrimental to our davening, because our davening has to flow out of us freely.

There is a kind of prayer called *tzaakah*, to cry out to Hashem when we are in pain, and we don't have to think beforehand about what we will say to Hashem. If we have to think about what we will say when we talk to Hashem, it shows we are not really in pain. A person in pain screams out, without organizing his thoughts. So there are times when we can't always think and be so organized.

There is a point in us which we need to develop and build, and there is an inner point in our soul which is allowed to be set free; it doesn't have to be developed and built in a step-by-step manner that we are used to from working with the outer four layers of our soul (*Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah* and *Chayah*).

Maybe a person will think that this means that we don't have to work hard and build ourselves and that we can do whatever we want. But this is wrong, because the Ramchal writes that even when we admonish ourselves, it should only be towards the outer layers of our soul. The inner point of our soul should be allowed to roam free, because its nature is to escape limits and be free.

To illustrate, a parent needs to let his child run around sometimes, so that the child can feel space in his life. But you can't let him run around in a place which is dangerous and he will hurt himself. So too, we need to be able to free, but that doesn't mean we can be free all the time, or else we will get hurt. But we definitely need to open our power of inner freedom.

How can we use our inner need for freedom? I will tell you that it is dangerous to use the power of freedom. Most people use it for inappropriate motives, as we can see from what goes in the world, that people who want to be free have no limits are destructive. Without rules, people would be at each other's throats.

The way to use the power of inner freedom is as therefore as follows: Remember the words of the Baal Shem Tov we brought before: that all 'barriers' in our *Avodas Hashem* are a mirage. That is the constructive way of how you can use your power of inner freedom. It is the power of the *Ein Sof* in your soul, which the outer layers of your soul cannot bring you to.

Work and Freedom At Once

Thus, your avodah is two utilize two different understandings at once. You need to build your "I", which is the perspective based upon the outer layers of your soul that require a step-by-step approach to build it. This entails hard work and following rules. But at the same time, you must also realize, that you have the ability to let yourself go free from limits, and this is not something you need to build step-by-step. The normal rules don't apply to this inner space.

So if we want to use our power of inner freedom correctly, then the way to do it is, make sure you are following all the rules you need on this world, which you need to do and continue; and to bear in mind that at the same time as you work to improve yourself, you also have a point in yourself which you don't need to work on to develop.

Balance

To give an example of how we need this balance of limits and freedom, I knew a person who will come exactly five minutes before *davening* starts, every day. But he admitted to me that he feels a tremendous inner anxiety from this. The nature to be very exacting doesn't always come from a pure place within the soul; this kind of person will know very well how to keep to limits, but he imprisons his soul too much, because he has locked himself into a sort of self-imposed prison. He isn't balanced with the ability to be free.

There are many earnest people who serve Hashem that are like this; they excel when it comes to limiting themselves, but they aren't balanced, because they don't know how to free themselves from limits.

I am not saying you shouldn't come early to davening. The point is that if it is causing you to feel inner anxiety at this, if it causing you to have guilty thoughts if you don't come early to davening, then you are locking your soul up and placing it in a prison.

There are people who are very exacting to follow every law in *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law), but they don't know how to work with their soul. There are people who are actually found in the deepest levels of impurity even with all their strict observance, because since they don't know how their souls work, they end up falling very low spiritually – they fall into the in the 49th level of impurity, and sometimes even into the 50th.

Opening Yourself Up To Freedom

So we need to reveal our power to be free, but it must come along with following the rules of all that we are required to do which we are familiar with; but we must not seek freedom out of a desire to throw off the rules.

I will try to explain how you can use it in a positive way.

There are people who will never buy a lottery ticket. This is an example of being too constricted. Don't buy lottery tickets all the time, but once in a while, you can buy one, just to open your soul to the concept of going free.

We all need to be balanced. If a person is always happy with himself but he never has aspirations to grow higher, this is one kind of negative extreme. Yet if a person only has aspirations and he doesn't know what it means to be content with himself, this is the opposite extreme, and it is also bad. He is too limited.

There are people who are always seeking "success" in everything, because they feel like they have a lot they must know about: "I must become very successful in serving Hashem..."

Others have a different problem, and they are confident that they know their souls very well. They never seek success, because they think they are already successful.

Both people are being extreme, because they aren't balanced. We must know our limits and be realistic, but we must also realize that we do have the power to "jump" in our spirituality to levels that are higher than the current point we are at.

Believing In Your Ability To Take The Jump

If we never believe in it, we will indeed break the key to escaping our limits. We need to believe that we have in ourselves the power to jump. That doesn't mean we must always be jumping. It just means that we need to be aware that there is such a concept, that we are able to jump. We must clearly believe that it exists, or else we will disable it from working.

When a person wants to build up his self – his true "I" – he must know that there is an "I" in him which he can understand. Although initially it is very hard for a person to understand who he really is, know that it is possible, and it is within your reach. When we have *emunah*, when we believe that we can understand ourselves, we have the key. If we give up because we know it's hard, then we destroy any possibility.

The *Yechidah* in us always exists, thus, we always have the ability to "jump" all the way until the highest point, even though the other layers in our soul are still in the development process and need more improvement. The *Yechidah* in us is already at the Infinite, ready to take the jump into the Infinite, into the complete connection with Hashem that we can have. We just have to use our power of *emunah* and believe that it exists in us! If we don't believe in its existence, then it won't work!

Rav Nachman of Breslev said, “There is no such thing as despair in the world.” What is the depth of his statement? Don’t people give up all the time? The deep understanding of it is very clear. What he meant was that if we reach our inner understanding of our *Yechidah*, we will be able to see how there is really no such thing as despair. We can reach an understanding that we can always be successful, and that there is no reason to give up. Our *Yechidah* understands this, but we need to access its understanding, by believing that we are able to reach such an understanding in ourselves.

If we don’t believe we can get to our *Yechidah*, then we definitely will not have hope. If a person doesn’t succeed at reaching it, it’s because he isn’t trying to connect to it.

Only if we believe in our *Yechidah* can we succeed in revealing its deep perspective [that we have described here]. This means for one to believe that he has in himself the deep ability to not be confined to any limits; just like you understand that you are limited, so can you understand, simply, that you also have a point in yourself that can reach the unlimited.

If a person only lives with rules and limits, he lives a very confined kind of life. He focuses on his failures: “I tried to get there, again and again, but I failed and I failed!!”

But when a person reveals from within himself that he can go free from limits and from step-by-step growth, he will have an opening to enter into the inner depths of his soul, which is his actual essence.

This is how you hold onto a little of *achdus* [the concept we elaborated upon in the previous chapter]. If you never believe in it, then you’re not holding onto it. If you believe you can do it, though, then you are holding onto it.

In Summary

We are both limited and unlimited. We know we are limited, but we must also reach the understanding that we have in us an ability to be unlimited.

If a person only lives with rules and limits of his soul, with such an attitude, his life has already ended a long time ago. If a person believes that he can reach inner freedom and connect to the Endless, then he has the key.

We have two ways in how we can use the power of *emunah* in our soul. We use *emunah* to believe in Hashem, Who is endless, but we also can use *emunah* to believe in ourselves, that we have in our soul a deep ability to connect to the Endless [in spite of the fact that we must also improve ourselves] - that we can connect ourselves to Hashem, Who is endless.

06 | *Listening With Your Heart*

Reaching the Yechidah: Leaving The View From The Inside

We have begun to explain how we can identify ourselves as a soul, and to be more specific, to identify our essence as being that of the “*Yechidah*” in the soul, which is our innermost point.

We will try to reveal it from many angles of understanding, in a way that is not just for the sake of listening, but to really experience these concepts. In deeper terms, we will try here to make these matters recognizable through our soul (as a *hakarah*, an inner recognition).

The *Yechidah* of our souls is termed “*Ohr Makif*” – a spiritual light that “surrounds” a person. *Chazal* say that the *Nefesh* is in the liver, the *Ruach* is in the heart, and the *Neshamah* is in the brain. The *Chayah* surrounds the body, and the *Yechidah* surrounds the entire existence of a person.

Part of the soul resides inside a person, while the deeper layers of our soul are outside us and above us. The three lower layers of the soul known as *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah* are inside us. The *Yechidah* is not inside us, and it rather surrounds us. How can we connect to it then, if it is outside us? We have to leave the self. If we remain inside our self, we can’t get to it.

So learning about the *Yechidah* is not about understanding what it is on an intellectual level. It is about connecting to it. A person can be taught information in order to understand something, but learning about the *Yechidah* is not about understanding it on a conceptual level. When we learn about it, it should be because we want to enter it and connect ourselves with it.

Intellectual Understanding Vs. Heart Connection

If a person gets very sick and was hospitalized, sometimes he has to learn again how to breathe. How do they teach him how to breathe again? It is not about learning how to breathe. He is learning how to breathe so he can actually breathe!

If someone is angry or sad, he is taught how to leave his negative emotions, in all kinds of ways. But can they teach a person how to love? There is no way. You can't figure out with your intellect how to love. When you smell a scent, you have to actually smell it, and it's not enough to learn about smell. Smell is the most spiritual sense because you have to actually experience it in order to know what it is, unlike sight or hearing, which you can know about as long as you learn about it.

Our *sefarim hakedoshim* state that Mashiach will be able to “smell” the true essence of a person and truly feel each person for who he really is. Thus, *Mashiach* is called the collective “*Yechidah*” of all souls. Each of us have own “private” *Yechidah* in our soul. It is not a power we use to know or understand things. It is rather a power to breathe a concept.

Deepening Our Listening

As an example, the act of talking can either be experienced on a basic, physical level, and you just hear and understand the words, but if you become connected to what lays behind the words, you come to really experience the words that are being spoken, and it a whole different kind of awareness. It is written, “*My soul leaves when I speak with him.*” If we would really experience what talking is, we would feel ourselves utilizing our very soul as we talk.

The power of speech is called *kolmos halev*, the “ink of the heart”, in reference to prayer, when we verbalize what's in our heart. All words we hear really have two layers to it – an outer layer, and an inner layer. The outer layer of the words is when we understand them on an intellectual level, while the inner layer of talking is to realize what is contained in talking, what lays behind it.

To further illustrate, the words being said here are just the wrapping of the concepts that lay behind them. These words I am telling you are not just for the sake of listening to them and understanding them. We should be interested here in what lays behind the words here.

Words are just a tool we can use to enter deeper into what lays behind them. When we hear words, we try to understand them with our intellect, and this is the external layer of the words. But the inner layer of the words is not something you grasp

through intellect. It's a heart matter – it is to get to the root of what lays behind the words you hear.

A New Kind of Listening: Listening With Your Heart

Now that we have brought these examples, we can understand better how to connect to the *Yechidah*. We need to have a certain inner recognition of it; it is not enough just to learn about it and try to understand it intellectually.

To illustrate, a deaf person can hear what is being said, but he doesn't understand what's going on.

To explain the concept a bit more, when a person is taught how to get to a certain place, he arrives there using his intellectual comprehension. But let's say you are listening to a song. Is it the same kind of understanding?

We can all understand that hearing a song is not an intellectual understanding, but a matter of the heart. If someone is listening to a song intellectually, he is only listening to the technical aspects of it. When we hear a song, we are really listening to it with our heart, and we are not trying to use our intellect. You don't have to use your mind when you listen to a song. You listen to it naturally, and you are really listening to it from your heart.

If I talk to a person on a purely intellectual level, I ask someone for directions. Maybe I tell him "Thank You", but my words here are not about connecting to him. It's not out of *ahavas Yisrael* (love of Jews). But there is another way to talk to someone – to talk to someone in order to connect with him and have *ahavas Yisrael* to him.

It is thus apparent that there are two kinds of hearing. There is a basic kind of hearing, which we use our mind's five physical senses, our intellectual awareness. There is another kind of hearing which is deeper and more subtle than our physical sense of hearing: when we hear with our heart.

Most people only hear through their intellect, and that is why they don't reach their essence. Hearing from the heart is to hear from a whole different place; it is to

experience what we hear. It is not about hearing information; it is about allowing your heart to experience.

To illustrate further, people often want sympathy, and they don't always want solutions to their problems. We want others to feel what we are going through. When a person needs therapy, the therapist might give him the best advice, but he can leave very disappointed, because what he really wanted was sympathy. He wanted the therapist to feel what he was feeling. He wasn't that interested in rational solutions.

If a couple has a good marriage, they listen to each other well. They learn each other's language. Of course, we can't build our marriage just through our heart, and if the bank tells us we have an overdraft, we can't tell the bank to feel the stress we are going through. We need an intellect that thinks. But the rational intellect alone will not help us enter inward into our soul. It doesn't help us get to the Infinite, which is a concept beyond the realm of the rational.

So in order to hear about the inner point of the soul, it's not enough to listen to these words with your intellect. You have to experience it. It's heart information, not brainy information; thus, it is perceived in a different way than what you are used to.

So the tool we need is to get used to listening from a different place in ourselves. When a deaf person learns how to hear, he feels like he has received a gift, a new set of ears. We also have a new set of ears that we need to get.

When we just hear with our intellect, it is a desire to know and understand. Our desire for intellect will not be enough to help us understand spiritual matters. Many people make a very big mistake: they try to understand spiritual matters in the same way that they understand intellectual matters, and they think that you can navigate your way through spirituality in the same way that you use a GPS. They erroneously view spiritual matters as intellectual matters.

With hearing spirituality, each person hears differently. Everyone hears spirituality from a different place within themselves, because it is not the same thing as the regular hearing. Some hear spiritual matters only using their intellect (which means they don't understand it), while others hear them in a very palpable way which they can actually sense; they really experience it.

We must point out that one should not only attempt to use his heart to hear and never use his intellectual mind. If a person shuts out his mind and only wants to use his heart, such a person is acting only according to his feelings, and feelings alone do not amount to anything.

In order to connect to the *Yechidah*, we have to first become the right receptacle in order to receive it. This is done by learning how to listen from a whole different place in ourselves. We have physical ears, *Baruch Hashem*, but you should know that we also have “spiritual” ears.

Believing and Revealing

Chazal say that every day, a *bas kol* (Heavenly voice) goes out and calls out that everyone should repent. Why don't we hear this voice? It is because we are spiritually deaf. We need to open up our spiritual sense of hearing.

Most people are deaf to this kind of hearing. We must first realize that we are spiritually deaf, and then we can learn how to listen to inner sounds.

The first step of this is that we need to simply believe that we have in us the *Yechidah*. After this, we can train ourselves to listen to our *Yechidah*. It sees and hears differently. It smells and speaks differently. We have five senses; these are revealed to us. The *Yechidah* also has five senses which we need to learn about.

To illustrate the concept more, Adam on the first day of creation was able to see from one end of the world to the other. The depth behind this was that he saw from a whole different kind of view than the normal kind of view. From where did he view this from? How could he see endlessly? He viewed this from the point in the soul that is unlimited (which we spoke about in the last chapter).

At *Har Sinai*, there was “a great voice that did not stop”, and it is still going on today. How come we don't hear it? It is because our hearing is limited, but a spiritual sound is unlimited. You can't sense the unlimited using the limited. But if someone accesses the sense of hearing in his *Yechidah*, he can hear it – he can hear an endless voice in Creation that never stops.

There is no end to an ability that comes from the *Yechidah*. Talking from our *Yechidah* is the endless voice that does not stop, because it is coming from the unlimited. We don't have it only because we haven't revealed our *Yechidah*. However, before revealing the *Yechidah*, first we need to believe that our *Yechidah* has these senses, and we also need to learn how to listen to these deep senses.

So first we must believe that there is a place in our soul where we can hear an endless voice. We must reveal that sound. But we must realize that it's a different sense. It is not reached through our physical senses we are used to. It's already in us, and we just need to learn how to listen to it.

Seeing New Perspectives In The Same Thing

To try to understand this, let's compare this to a person looking at a painting. If he looks at it for five minutes and then another five minutes, he sees a whole different picture than five minutes ago. The more a person looks at a picture, the more details he notices in it, and it's not just that he notices more in the picture; he reveals a whole new picture than what he saw five minutes ago. There is always more to uncover in something. This helps us understand the concept we are describing: how we can see that nothing ever really has an end, because there is always more.

A person reads something and thinks he understands the material. He thinks he knows what it's all about. He thinks that there can't be more to understand than what he sees. His perception is entirely based on what he has seen or read. But there is always more depth to everything, because there are so many layers to everything in Creation.

Chazal say that there are seventy interpretations for every *possuk*. Are there only seventy? There is really no end to how many ways there to interpret a *possuk*. Even the recorder in front of me is full of depth, much more than we understand. There can always be more discoveries to its inner workings. We know that more and more discoveries are always being uncovered about the body. Any scientist knows that the body is an endless study.

Understanding spirituality is not limited to the physical sense of sight. Just because we can't see it with our eyes doesn't mean that it's not there. Spirituality is a whole

different kind of sight than what we see physically. Even when it comes to physical sight we see how limited it is, because a microscope can show us much more.

The Ramban says that the root of all mistakes is that people don't see what they believe. Aristotle knew so much, but he only believed in something if he could see it. "Seeing is believing", people erroneously think. If a person can't see something, he doesn't believe. People think that if they can't see a spiritual matter, it must not exist. That is the root of all mistakes, because understanding spirituality is not at all like how you see something physical.

Imagine if they would said 1000 years ago that there will be a microscope which can see further into anything. No one would believe in it...

When people want to always know exactly "what to do" in matters of spirituality, they are using their understanding of the physical to try to understand spirituality. Such understanding is superficial and will not help one to understand the spiritual. If a person reaches an inner understanding from his soul, he understands that really there is no such thing as exactly "what to do" in spirituality. It's not something that can be given exact guidance.

Inner Listening: Experiencing

Let's go further with this concept.

Let's say a person reads and learns about something; does he have a hard time reading it again? Some people can easily read something again, because they forgot about it and they won't mind reading it again. It feels like they're learning it for the first time. But other people can't read something again that they have already read; they have no interest in doing so. What is the root of this?

It is really because such people only use their intellect to understand something. They don't know how to really *experience* their knowledge. If people would know that by hearing something again that it is a way for you to experience it again – then there would be no end to what we would be able to hear! We can read the same words of *Chazal* and understand new things each time. It makes no difference if you heard it already, because each time you hear, you can uncover a new depth of understanding to the very same words you keep hearing.

When you eat the same food again, why do you enjoy it? You've already tasted it! It is your heart which is enjoying a new taste each time in the same food. *Chazal* say that a person should have a *lev shomea*, a "heart that hears." What this means is that a person should develop a whole new kind of hearing. It can change a person's entire life around.

When a person gets married, it's a huge change from being single. So too, hearing the inner senses of the soul is a huge change from your regular hearing. You can hear a new sound in the same words you hear. This is not just to receive new intellectual understanding in something, but to hear it differently. It is to use the power of "taste" for spirituality, which we mentioned earlier. To give another example, the love that a spouse feels towards the other in a marriage can be a new feeling each day. It's the same spouse, but you experience love in a different way each time that you love your spouse.

Practically Developing This Inner Ability

When a person looks at a picture one day and the next day he looks at it again, he can ask himself what he sees in it today that he didn't see yesterday. This gets him used to the concept we are describing. Or, a person hears a song today, and the next day he can hear the same song, and try to notice something new he didn't hear in it the day before.

After this comes the next, deeper stage: listening to yourself. You will reveal a new "you" with the more you do this. You can keep uncovering more depth to yourself with the more you listen to yourself. The soul is vastly deep. Self-recognition is never the same each day; you can keep noticing more about yourself. You can uncover more layers in yourself. This is how you can begin to enter inward.

Listening To Yourself: Discerning Your Inner Motivations

Our soul has many layers to it. Recognizing yourself doesn't mean to know your weaknesses. That's just a part of it. We are referring to a power of inner recognition.

For example, a person needs to buy a broom, so he can sweep the house for Shabbos. Why is he going to buy the broom? If he looks deeply into himself, he can

uncover many reasons he has. There is no one reason that is motivating him. He might even have ten reasons why he wants to buy a broom. It's not just because he wants to buy the broom for Shabbos. There are more inner motivations he really has. He can learn how to feel those inner motivations.

To illustrate this concept, in *sefer Michtav M'Eliyahu*, Rav Dessler wrote that once a student of his had a nightmare in which he dreamed that he killed his son. He woke up terrified and ran to his teacher to ask him what such a thing meant, and how could he dream of such a thing. Rav Dessler told him that "Sometimes, you get annoyed at your son, like when he wakes you up in middle of the night for a drink, and you get so frustrated with him that for a few seconds you wish he wouldn't be there. Because you had such a thought, you were able to dream that you killed him."

The source of understanding ourselves is that we believe that our soul has many layers to it, depth within depth. In order to get to our innermost point of the soul, we need to learn about the more outer layers of our soul that cover over it, the map. So we need to come to recognize ourselves.

You can't discover your self-recognition in any *sefarim* store - you can only find it within yourself. You can only understand yourself by being aware that you have many layers in yourself, and that your essence is in the innermost point, which is the *Yechidah*. We need to hear the outer layers of the soul and then to get to hear the soul's essence, so we need to hear from a different place in ourselves.

The Power To Have Inner Experiences

Here we will not discuss how to hear the outer layers of our soul, and we will focus on how we hear the inner layer of the soul. In order to hear it, you can't hear it intellectually. You hear it through your heart. It is called the power of touch in your soul (*mishush*). The *Yechidah* is really how you "feel" yourself. We feel if something is hot or cold. But we need to use our *Yechidah* all the time to feel it.

The *Yechidah* feels one thing alone, while our hands feel different things. Only our *Yechidah* is the inner way to touch. In order to feel something, we need to have contact with it, and we think about it. But to hear the *Yechidah*, we must learn how to do one thing alone: take one thought alone and keep focusing on it.

To focus on one thought alone is not just about learning how to concentrate (which is also wonderful); it is the tool you can use to enter inward into the soul. That is its purpose. How do we concentrate on one thought alone? Isn't this impossible? The answer is, if you experience what you do, you will be focused.

A *chassan* and *kallah* are very focused at the time of the *chuppah*. They are not spacing about; they are completely immersed in the experience, thus their thoughts do not wander.

After the wedding, though, the wife is washing the dishes, and her thoughts are elsewhere; she has many things on her mind. How can she concentrate? Her thoughts are in one place, her heart is in another place, and she is doing something else entirely, trying to change the diaper as she's doing other things. Compare this to the focus she was having when she stood under the *chuppah*.

The lesson from this is, when a person is scattered inside himself, he cannot access his inner layers, and then he can't experience himself.

The inner voice of the *Yechidah* is really the way to experience the actual soul. It is a way to constantly experience. Most people are too busy and don't have time to experience themselves, thus their *Yechidah* is never revealed.

The way to access the senses of the *Yechidah* is to experience what we do, which is to remain focused on our thoughts in one action alone – to be in it totally, which gives us inner unity. This is the tool we can use to enter the *Yechidah*.

A person on this world goes through many experiences and he likes to relay them to others: "I went here, I went here, I saw this and this". But the truth is that you really can't relay your experiences to others. No one else can experience what you experienced. You can get another person to feel a pull towards what you experienced, but not more than that.

Experiencing Vs. Renewal/Excitement

What is the main deterrent that holds people back from reaching their *Yechidah*? It is because people aren't really experiencing the moment. People only have experiences

at extreme occasions, such as a wedding, or a very sad occasion. But people are not experiencing life itself! In order to experience life, you need to experience it always!

The happy or sad occasions of life come and go. They are subject to change, and they vanish. We need more than those rare exciting experiences. We need to experience the essence of life.

When a person has a child, he experiences it. When a person makes money, he experiences it. But to experience each day – people wonder: what is there to experience?! But it means to experience the *essence of life* itself, each day. And this is a *constant* experience.

We can't develop our experiences based on extreme occasions in our life which come and go. If we experience our very daily life itself, we have the tool to get to our *Yechidah*. But if all a person experiences are the major events and occasions of life, which are extreme moments, as well as fleeting - he has no real inner experiences.

We are speaking of how to listen to the inner place in ourselves. It is really about learning to listen to our constant experience of life.

The *Ein Sof* (Endlessness of Hashem) is constant. If we want to access its light in our soul, through our *Yechidah*, then we must already be familiar with what it means to experience the same, consistent reality. We must not seek “new” understandings it - rather, we need to learn what it means to truly *experience*.

Constantly Experiencing The Same Reality

The *Yechidah* in us contains everything we need. We have layers and layers to ourselves; we need to experience life, and there are experiences of our *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah* and *Chayah*. But the deepest experience you can have is to experience your very self, which is your *Yechidah*. This is what we need to learn how to listen to.

The *Yechidah* is not just called so because it is “one” collective piece. It is because it always experiences one experience. What does that mean? How can you keep experiencing the same thing alone? Doesn't that sound boring?

We can compare this to a person who has a wedding on every night of the week. In the first wedding he goes to, he'll be happy. When it comes the second wedding of the

week, he is less excited, and then when it comes the third wedding of the week, even less. His excitement eventually dies down until it is gone completely, and he has no joy whatsoever in attending a wedding with the more and more he attends weddings so much. Why? His happiness was based on a feeling of renewal, and now the renewal is gone, because the joy of the wedding is not “new” anymore to him.

If a person learns how to enjoy his very essence, he can have constant experiences. If not, he will feel like he has no renewal, and that will lead him to feel that he has a void inside, and he won't be able to fill it. Perhaps he will look for some *sefer* to read that will revive him, or some new and exciting idea, but in reality, nothing can help him, because his problem is that he seeks renewal, since he needs renewal to feel content.

Chazal say that the fish keep jumping out of the water to receive new drops. But their real vitality, which they don't realize, is contained in the water they are already in. The Rambam says that all *oneg* (pleasure) is in yourself, in your soul. You don't have to search outside yourself for pleasure. All you need to do is learn about yourself, and you will find the greatest pleasure there. Your “I” does not seek anything new.

We want to get to our inner essence, which we are learning about here. Everything is in it. To learn how to listen to our inner self is really to learn how to recognize that we really don't need renewal! Our inner essence contains everything we need, and we just need to listen to our essence.

People always want to hear the news, or what new music CD came out. But you can take the same old things you heard and keep listening to them and hear new things.

Who would want to review the same words again and again? What's new? But the truth is, you can keep experiencing the essence of the same words. You can hear the same *shiur* again and again and hear new things in it each time you hear it; you don't need to give a new look to the room you're hearing the *shiur* in or switch around the tables and chairs to make it feel like a different and fresh experience. Rather, you can hear the same words, again and again, and keep experiencing them anew each time, although they are the same old words.

People tend to seek renewal and changes, but this really prevents the way to reach the *Ein Sof*. The *Ein Sof* of Hashem is unchanging, and you can't keep understanding “new” perspectives in it. It is rather something you experience more and more with

the more you connect with it, even though it is something that always remains the same in its essence. The outer layers of our soul – our *Nefesh* through our *Chayah* - require renewal. It searches for new things. It's boring when we hear that people are having children, because everyone is having children, because it's not news to us. So we need to have some "new" things going on in our life in order to satisfy the outer layers of our soul.

But if we want to get to the inner point of the soul, the *Yechidah*, we must familiarize ourselves with the concept that our essence is not about finding renewal, for it is connected to the *Ein Sof*, which is unchanging. New things are certainly interesting, but they don't get you to the inner point of the soul.

The Baal HaTanya said *Moshiach* will come to reveal how all is one, which will fully reveal the *Ein Sof* of Hashem. You can't feel "new" understandings in the *Ein Sof*.

Renewal Vs. Consistency

So you need to believe that there is a way to keep experiencing the same thing, constantly, which doesn't change, even though it does not feel new each time. The way to get to our essence is to realize that a constant experience is deeper than the feeling of renewal from new things. This is a change in perspective that we are not used to. Many times people tell me after Tishrei ends, "I miss the Yomim Tovim, when I was on a much higher level." I tell them, "Winter is better. Winter is the best Yom Tov - because it's the *same* each day, you don't get overwhelmed by the changes of the festivals. You can just keep experiencing the same thing again and again without getting thrown around between all the changes!"

So entering our essence is about seeking to experience something, constantly, and it is not about finding something "new".

I hope that we will succeed in learning how to listen to the more inner layers of our soul, until we can finally arrive at listening to the very innermost point.

07 | *Nullifying Your Will*

The Essence of the Soul Is Above Any Place

We have explained that learning about our *Yechidah* is not an intellectual matter; it is a soul matter, and we need to use an inner kind of listening in order to sense it. We are learning here about how to feel and experience the “I” within us – our very essence.

The *Yechidah* can be understood from many angles, but what we are trying to understand is always one thing alone. We are trying to open up many doors to get to it. But it’s always about one thing alone here that we are seeking. The *Yechidah* is always the same essence, and it is just that there are many angles we can use to try to enter it.

The *Yechidah* is also referred to with the term “*Keser*” (crown). A king wears his crown above his head; from all of the royal clothing that a king wears, only the crown is above him. This is not by chance; it is on purpose. That is the whole concept of a crown – something worn on top of the head. It is distinct from all of the other royal clothes in that way. The crown that a king wears is the main symbol of royalty – it represents his very kingship. A king is above his nation, and the crown is above the king, thus, the crown represents his entire kingship.

This parable can help us perceive the innermost point within us. The innermost point of the soul, which is who we really are, is not really ‘inside’ us – it is rather **above** us. It is called the innermost point, but it is also called the highest point, the point that is **above** the self – like a crown atop the king.

Inside and Above At Once

Where is our essence? Is it deep inside us, or is it above us? The Rambam says that the deepest pleasure is found in our own heart. That seems to imply that the innermost point is inside us, not above us.

But we need to understand the following. The innermost point is not to be understood as “inside” us in the physical sense, like when something is “inside” a certain place. It is not the regular concept of “place” that we are used to. The *Nefesh HaChaim* says that a place, which is called *makom*, comes from word *kiyum* (existence). The real definition of a “place” is something that exists. Hashem is called *makom*, because He keeps the world existing. Thus, the true meaning of *makom*, a place, is not necessarily a place that we can find. It is rather a plane that exists which we can connect ourselves.

For example, something physical is called *artzi*, “earthy”, because it is on this earth, while something spiritual is called *shameimi*, heavenly. Does that mean that something spiritual is in Heaven and not in this earth? Clearly, not. We call it “heavenly”, not because it is found in Heaven, but because it is above this physical earth. Something heavenly is not connected to this earth, so it is connected to above the physical realm.

The *Yechidah* is either described as the “innermost point” or as the “above” point. These are not two different ways to describe where it is, but rather two ways how to approach it. The *Yechidah* is found everywhere, because it is all-inclusive. The *Ein Sof* of Hashem, which fills everything, is not limited to any place. “There is no place that is empty from Him.” So the *Yechidah* is not in any “place”, thus, we must not think that it is found in a certain “place” that we are trying to get to.

There are people who feel and experience all kinds of experiences and they try to find it in themselves, where it is found. People go through an experience and claim that they can feel it in a certain place in the body. But the experience of our *Yechidah* is not felt in any one place. It is found everywhere, because it is all-inclusive.

To illustrate, the *Beis HaMikdash* had many vessels, which all had certain measurements. In the *Kodesh Kodashim*, there was the Aron, with the *Luchos* inside. The Sages state that the Aron had “no measurements”. In other words, our *Yechidah*, which is our personal *Kodesh Kodashim* inside our heart¹³, has no place it can be found it, because by essence, it is everywhere.

What do we mean by this? How can something not have a place? Even our soul has a place that it is in, because it resides within our body. So why should the innermost point of the soul be different?

¹³ *Sefer Nefesh HaChaim (Shaar Aleph)* describes the concept of a “Kodesh Kodashim within the heart.”

Why doesn't it have a place it's in? When people hear about this concept, that the *Yechidah* has no specific place, they think it means that it is unimportant, as if it has "no place" in our life....

The answer is: since it is above us, it has no place. If it would have a place, it would not be the *Yechidah*. The outer layers of our soul do have a place. Our emotions of the soul have a place they can be reached in, but the feelings of our *Yechidah* have no place.

The View From Your Garments and The View From Your Essence

Let's try to explain further what this means, that the *Yechidah* has no place. It is a very deep concept.

When a person gets married, he has a certain place. If he has a happy marriage, he has a happy home. Even if he has fights with his spouse, his marriage still has a place in his life. It is still a marriage. A person has children; his children have a place in his life. Let's go deeper. A person has ambitions and pleasures, things that he likes and hates, and a desire to live well and have a good life – all of these feelings have a place in the soul where they can be found and located. But the essence of the soul, the *Yechidah* – our actual self - has no place where it can be located.

Although we worry about ourselves and we have an ego (except for certain rare individuals who never think about themselves at all), our actual essence has no place. We think our ego has a place only from the perspective of the outer layers of our soul, which are the garments over our actual "I." When you view your family or your children, or when you want something, it's all coming from a garment over your "I".

You Are Not Your Will

Not only are your feelings not who you are, but your will (*ratzon*) is not either who you are. Your will should be viewed as a garment, a *levush*, over your actual self.

All of the abilities in our soul are all garments on top of the soul itself, and they have a place in the soul. But our actual essence, which is the very soul itself – the *Yechidah* - is not contained in any place whatsoever. What we are mainly experiencing

in our life is our *ratzon*/will. We are perceiving our self through our will, but our will is not the actual self.

To prove this, we can nullify our will, because we have the power of free will to choose between what we want (*bechirah*). We can uproot our desires for evil. We can train ourselves to want something or to not want something. In addition, sometimes we want something and after some time we lose interest in it; so it can't be that our *ratzon* is who we are. Our actual "I" is deeper than the will itself.

Your "I" can want something, or it can nullify what it wants, thus, your will is not your actual "I". If you would be what you want, then it wouldn't be possible to ever give up anything you want, because that would mean erasing your existence, which is impossible. Our *ratzon* can go away, but our "I" always remains. Our *ratzon* changes as our life goes on, while our "I" remains the same, until our last dying day, and beyond that, whereas our *retzonos* are subject to change.

Is a person ever experiencing his actual self, or he is only experiencing his *ratzon*? Most people are never experiencing their actual self, and spend their whole life from the prism of the *ratzon*.

Our *ratzon* has a place in our soul, and there are all kinds of *retzonos*, but our "I" itself has no place it can be found in.

"Kayin" and "Hevel" in the Soul

I will try to explain this concept better. People are spending their whole life trying to get rid of the things that aren't comfortable. How much time are people spending on trying to bring in any real content into their whole life...?

This leads us to the following concept. There are two kinds of *avodah* in our soul: there is an *avodah* we have called "Kayin", and an *avodah* called "Hevel". All souls are rooted in Adam, and after Adam this divided into two roots: Kayin and Hevel. Thus, all souls are rooted as well in Kayin and Hevel (according to the *Arizal*). We thus need to understand what the soul root of "Kayin" is, and what the soul root of "Hevel" is, because we all come from them. We don't mean to learn about who Kayin was and who Hevel was; rather we need to see how Kayin and Hevel manifest in our own soul.

The word “Kayin” comes from the word *kinyan*, which means to “acquire”. When a person acquires something, he gets something more. Hevel is the opposite of this concept; “*hevel*” means “nothing”, to nullify something. These are essentially two different abilities in the soul: one ability that we have is to want more things, and the other ability is to be satisfied and not need anything.

Our actual essence, the real “I” deep within us, lacks nothing. Our soul has everything, because at its root, it is deeply connected to the Creator, where it comes from. This is the power of “*Hevel*” in us – the ability to feel content with our existence. Our essence has no *ratzon*, but it is already connected with Hashem; it’s already there. But because our connection to Hashem isn’t complete, due to our various desires in life, which exist on the outer layers of our soul – we also have “*Kayin*” in us. What we need to do is get through to the “*Hevel*” deep within us. How can we do this? By giving up the various desires.

Nullifying The Will

“Moshe” has the same *gematria* (numerical value in Hebrew) as the word *ratzon* (will). Moshe is also root of *ratzon*. He had only one desire: to come to the Holy Land. Hashem refused his request. Why didn’t Moshe merit his wish? The simple answer is because of the sin at the Waters of *Merivah*. But the inner understanding of this is because of that one minor sin he did, in some way he wasn’t totally nullified to Hashem, and for this he lost out on coming to the Holy Land.

There is a deep statement from one of the Chassidic Rebbes, who said, “If Hashem would come to me and ask me if I want to become Avraham *Avinu*, I would refuse.” Why? Who wouldn’t want to be Avraham *Avinu*? He explained, “What would Hashem gain from this? If there would be two Avraham *Avinu*’s now in the world, then Hashem would gain from this. But if I am merely switching places with Avraham *Avinu*, then what does Hashem gain this? There will still be only one Avraham *Avinu* in the world, so Hashem gains nothing from this.”

The natural response of most people would be: “To become Avraham *Avinu*? Of course! I would gain such a lofty soul and become so close to Hashem and always do His will and reveal Him on the world! I would be able to return everyone to *teshuvah*!”

Imagine if Hashem would come to a person and ask him if he is willing to become an animal, or a plant, or a rock. Would anyone be willing to do this? Most people would not, and the reason for this is, because people are not willing to become nullified to Hashem. People have a desire to acquire, but there is no interest in nullifying oneself.

Having a desire for spiritual levels does not mean that a person is simply willing to do something for Hashem. There are people who want to sin or pursue base desires, while others channel their desires in a holy direction; they want high spiritual levels, Gan Eden, lofty comprehensions, etc. They would not either be able to become a rock if Hashem would ask them to do this. People might understand that they need to nullify their physical desires, but to nullify their spiritual desires?! No one would be willing to do this.

But the truth is, if Hashem would wish for a person to become a wall, that is what he should really do! Most people would react that they are not on the level to do this. But that is what we really should do, if we were even given such a test.

People want and want. All of the layers of the soul are gates to enter more inward into the soul, which we need to open up and get past, so we can get closer and closer to the soul's essence itself. The *ratzon* is the gate that leads straight to the essence of the soul, because it is directly in front of the soul's essence. If a person is willing to give up his *retzonos* for Hashem, he gets past the gate of his *ratzon* and enters more inward into his soul, and there, he will find the "I."

Why aren't people getting to their "I"? Why indeed is it so hard? It is because people do not know how to get past their *ratzon*.

To take this even further, the *ratzon* to get to the "I" might even be what is holding back a person from getting to the "I"! People want to get to their true self and they have a strong will for this, but that itself can be detrimental. The stronger the will is – even if it is the loftiest kind of will possible – the thicker of a wall it creates to really get to the "I".

Here we come to a very subtle and deep *avodah*, and it is how we penetrate to the *Yechidah*: to nullify the will.

If a person misunderstands this concept and he simply lets go of his entire power of *ratzon*, deciding that he will no longer want anything, then *chas v'shalom*, he won't want to keep Torah and *mitzvos*; he will destroy himself. If he goes in the other direction and he develops the *ratzon* more and more, then he will reveal the *ratzon*, but he is still being held back from reaching the "I", as we explained. So what should we do? Which way do we turn?

Expanding and Contracting The Will

Here we come to the concept that we began to mention. It is called "expansion and contraction" [which was first mentioned in *Getting To Know Your Self*]. We will now apply the concept of expansion and contraction with regards to how we expand and contract our *ratzon*/will. We can take our will and either expand it or contract it.

Let's say that a person is informed that there are a thousand people in a certain place whom he can be *mekareiv* (draw closer to Judaism). He travels there for 10 hours and when he arrives, there is no one there. He asks around, "Where is everyone?" They tell him, "People were here yesterday, but they all left." He realized that he miscalculated by a day. How would he react?

It is, naturally, disappointing. "I traveled here for nothing and wasted so much time", he probably thinks. If he is more spiritual, he would think, "Hashem considers it as if I did it. I meant well, and Hashem will take this into account and consider it as if I was *mekareiv* them". Indeed, *Chazal* say that Hashem considers a thought for a *mitzvah* to be considered actualized, as long as a person tried to fulfill it and was held back due to circumstances beyond his control.

But the true reaction should be based on the following: The *Gemara* says that Rabbi Akiva expounded the meaning of every word "*es*" in the Torah, until he came to one place where he couldn't expound. He said, "Just as I received reward for explaining, so will I receive reward for abstaining."

The person in the above story is trying to console himself with all kinds of thoughts: "Hashem didn't want" or "Hashem will count it as if I did it," etc. All kinds of answers. But the deeper and truer way to react is, that part of our life is about building our will (*binyan haratzon*) and another part of our life involves nullifying our will (*bittul haratzon*). Sometimes, we have to "not" want. Our *ratzon* is a garment

(*levush*) in our soul that wraps around our essence. A garment is something you wear and remove. You can wear it, but you have to be able to remove it also.

Even our Tefillin, which is called a “sign” between Hashem and the Jewish people, we do not always wear. We don’t wear it on Shabbos or at night. Tefillin is a very important *mitzvah*, but Hashem tells us that sometimes, you don’t wear it.

A *mitzvah* is never constant. Some mitzvos are at night and some are at day. The inner reason behind this is, because the mitzvos are also our garments, which we sometimes have to do, and sometimes we don’t do them, because now is not the time.

There is a sin called *bal tosif*, not to add onto the Torah. What is the depth of this sin? It is to train us that although we must want the mitzvos, sometimes we need to not want something. We must treasure the mitzvos, of course, but there is no *mitzvah* which we can always do, and the reason for this is, because we cannot always be revealing our *ratzon* for holiness. Even the greatest *mitzvah*, learning Torah, which is by day or night, is sometimes forbidden, like on Tisha B’Av. We are not allowed to think Torah thoughts in certain places.

If someone has a *ratzon* for holiness and never limits it, what will happen? He might wish to wear Tefillin on Shabbos or wish to sit in a sukkah for more than 7 days, which is forbidden; it is *bal tosif*. He has a desire for holiness, but he does not know how to limit it, and he is doing something forbidden.

So there are boundaries for everything we must follow, even in *retzonos* for holiness, as we see from the *mitzvos*. We need to open our *ratzon* for holiness, but we must also know how to remove it sometimes when the situation calls for it.

Dealing With Disappointment - Through Nullifying The Will

I met someone who traveled somewhere for a business opportunity which would help him expand his business. He was met with disappointment; it did not help him. He was very bothered at his failure. I asked him, “Why are you so upset?” He told me, “Because I didn’t succeed.” I asked him, “Did you not succeed because you didn’t try hard enough?” He said, “No, I tried as much as I could. But I didn’t succeed even though I tried so hard.”

Why indeed does Hashem place us in such situations, that we try our hardest yet we still fail? It is to give us an opportunity to get used to the concept that just because we try, that doesn't mean we will succeed. Of course, that doesn't mean, that we shouldn't try. We need to always try our best, but when we do fail, we must tell ourselves: "Let go. Stop *wanting*."

Once there was a shortage of *esrogim* in *Eretz Yisrael*, because the country wasn't allowing business with other countries at that time, and no one had *esrogim* that year. Someone came to the Brisker Rov *zt"l* and told him that he may be able to secure an *esrog* from Morocco. The Brisker Rov encouraged him to make all the efforts to get the *esrog*, and the messenger succeeded. The next year, again there was a shortage. A messenger came to the Brisker Rov and said, "I can get a letter from the government that will allow me to order an *esrog* from another country. Should I try to do it?" The Brisker Rov complied. The messenger came back, though, empty-handed. He was crestfallen. "I tried all I could. But in the end, I wasn't able to get an *esrog*."

The Brisker Rov then started to beam with joy. The messenger was stunned. Everyone knew that the Brisker Rov was very careful with observing the mitzvos, and that he would go to great lengths and sacrifices in order to observe any *mitzvah*. "Rebbi", the messenger said. "Please teach me what is going on over here. How can the Rebbi not be sad that there is no *esrog* this year?"

The Rov responded, "What did Hashem want from me? He wanted me to try all that I could to do His *mitzvah*. I did all I could. Hashem obviously did not want. If Hashem didn't want the *mitzvah* of *esrog* this year, then why should I want? This year, Hashem wants me not to want." And he said these words with great joy on his face.

This is the reaction of a great person. Why was he so great? Because in one moment, he was able to remove his *ratzon*. He had a powerful *ratzon* for the *esrog*, to do the *mitzvah*, more than anyone else. But as soon as he realized that his *ratzon* couldn't be actualized, he let go of it.

He was aware that his *ratzon* was a garment, which is sometimes worn, and sometimes it is removed.

Dealing With Tragedy

Sometimes there is a tragedy that takes place – it can happen that a couple loses a child. The parents can be inconsolable at this, and they feel like there is no one to talk to about this who will be able to console them. But if a person knows how to nullify his *ratzon*, he is able to speak to others about it and get comfort.

How? Is it because such parents are apathetic and they didn't really love their child? *Chas v'shalom*. The parents certainly loved their child. Love is a kind of *ratzon*, so it can be nullified. If a person was used to nullifying his *ratzon* already from beforehand, then if he ever goes through a more difficult situation, such as the loss of a child, he will be able to nullify his *ratzon* even in this kind of situation as well, even though love is a very deep *ratzon*.

If a person never learned how to let go of *ratzon*, then he will not be able to survive a difficult time, because he will feel like something has been unjustly taken away from him, and he will not be able to deal with this.

Getting Used To Nullifying The Will

If we want to reach our *Yechidah*, our deepest part of our self, we must realize this concept of getting used to nullifying our *ratzon* more often.

There was someone who came from Haifa to these classes here, and then something came up that he had to go back home. Imagine what he feels as he's going back home. It can be so disappointing; he traveled all the way from Haifa to get here, for nothing. If a person never learned how to nullify his *ratzon*, then he will feel disappointed and that he has traveled for nothing. But if he is already used to the concept of nullifying the *ratzon*, then he will use this as a learning experience – that he has learned how to actually nullify his *ratzon*! That's what he gained! So he didn't really waste his time!

Every day, all the time, we are going through unfulfilled *retzonos*. The question is how we react to these situations. A person needs money now, so he goes to the bank and he finds that it's closed. It can be very disappointing. These are everyday occurrences, and all kinds of these situations keep happening throughout the day. How do we deal with situations like this?

We can realize that even our constructive *retzonos* don't have to become actualized. This is the key to penetrating into our essence.

This doesn't mean that we shouldn't ever want anything. It means, that when the things you want don't happen, you should agree to let go of your *ratzon*. By getting used to this, we have the key to entering our innermost point.

Let's say a person wanted to have a happy Yom Tov, and for some reason, it didn't happen. Not only that, but he's sad from it, because he is disappointed that he didn't get to rejoice. The truer way to react is, "If I didn't merit to rejoice on Yom Tov, I can accept that it is the will of Hashem that I did not reach joy from Yom Tov". Reacting will this will actually help you reach true joy, because you will enter inward into your soul.

How much disappointment do we go through in life! How much difficulty we go through! How do we deal with it?

Once I came to a place where I was supposed to give a *shiur*. When I came, there was no one there, except for me and the person who invited me. The other person was getting anxious; he said to me, "Oh no, people aren't coming..." I said to him, "Okay, so no else will come. What's so bad?" He said to me, "Are you sure?? Will it be okay for you?" I said, "If people come, fine. If they don't, I'll go back home, and it is not a problem."

We need to be able to deal with disappointing situations. Without knowing how to let go of our *ratzon*, life is full of pain. We yearn for things and want things, and many of the things don't become actualized. It is very painful, if we never learn how to let go of what we want. The *ratzon* is the strongest power of our soul, but it is not our soul itself. If we can penetrate it, then we have overcome the strongest barrier in our soul that is preventing us from reaching our essence. If we can't get past our *ratzon*, then even if all our *retzonos* are spiritual, those *retzonos* will be holding us back from getting to our essence.

Moshe Rabbeinu – The Root of Ratzon

No one knows where Moshe is buried. This always bothered me. How could it be that we have no place where we can visit the grave of Moshe Rabbeinu, who gave us

the Torah? It's so disappointing. Moshe broke the *Luchos*. How could he do this? Break the *Luchos*, which he had worked so hard to get? Moshe also led the people for 40 years in the desert, gave us the Torah, and went through much difficulty to lead the people. The entire generation died in the desert, when he had gone through so much to lead them, and the purpose of all the 40 years was because Hashem had told him to lead the people into *Eretz Yisrael*, and in the end it didn't happen. How disappointing! It seems that his life was one big disappointment. How could he deal with this?

The answer is: we know that Moshe is the root of the power of *ratzon* [as we mentioned earlier]. He was able to nullify his *ratzon*. If Hashem didn't want the generation to enter *Eretz Yisrael*, so be it. If Hashem doesn't let me enter *Eretz Yisrael*, so be it. That was Moshe's greatness – his ability to let go of his *ratzon*. That is why he embodies *ratzon*.

The Yechidah – Deep Within, and Above

We began this chapter by explaining that the *Yechidah* is within us and it is also above us. What does this essentially mean?

It is “in” us because we need to penetrate deeply into ourselves in order to reach it, to get past all the layers until we get to the innermost point. But it is also called “above” us, because the innermost point of the soul, the “Moshe Rabbeinu” within, is our power to really use the power of *ratzon* – and the depth of using our *ratzon* is to go above our will, to “not” want. This is why the *Yechidah* is called *keser*, crown, because the crown is above the king's head – it represents the power to go above the will.

It represents the ability to remove the will – to be able to want and not want, to wear our *ratzon* and be able to remove it.

The Menuchah of Shabbos - In The Soul

Deep in our soul, when we reach this point of accepting to let go of our *ratzon* at times, when we get used to this concept, then we reach what is called *menuchah* (inner serenity).

On Shabbos, *menuchah* (rest) comes to the world. This shows us that rest can only come after there is action, which is represented by the six days of the week that involve activity. In our own soul, there is “action” and “rest” as well.

If all we do is want, then we are only involved in activity, and our soul has no “rest”. Only after nullifying our will can our soul feel serene.

It is not only on Shabbos that we have *menuchah*. During the six days of the week as well we can have *menuchah* – in our own soul. This is when we let go our *ratzon* when it doesn’t happen. It makes us serene. Getting what we want doesn’t make us serene, because if we wouldn’t get it, we would be upset. The only way to be serene is, by being prepared to accept the disappointment of not getting your *ratzon*.

The six days of the week and the day of Shabbos represent two kinds of *ratzon* we can access. The six days of the week represent our *ratzon* for holiness, and Shabbos represents the deeper *ratzon*:

I have a *ratzon*, but even if I don’t get it, I accept it – and I am prepared to give it up in one moment. [This is true regarding both physical *retzonos* as well as spiritual *retzonos*].

It is not only in the future Shabbos that we will get our *Yechidah*. We can reach it even now – if we are prepared to immediately give up our will when the situation calls for it. If we develop this ability, then we will be serene even within our own *retzonos*, because our *retzonos* then will not make us anxious.

A Difficult Task Indeed!

This concept is a way to go through life properly, and these are not just mere words or intellectual definitions. It is a way to live life, and it is a difficult concept to acquire.

It’s easier to talk about this than to actualize it. When I speak about this concept, I am talking to myself as well; if I would have come here to this *shiur* room and the door would be locked on me, would I have been able to handle that, and to accept this calmly? No, it would not be easy for me. It would take hard work on my part. But I know that it’s a lot more difficult for me if I don’t know how to accept disappointing situations. That is a much more difficult life to live.

You can live a life in which your *retzonos* don't take away your *menuchah*. It is impossible to always stifle our reactions. It is normal and expected to get angry, upset, and frustrated; even Moshe Rabbeinu got angry once. So we cannot attain this perfectly. But the issue is: How much are we trying to draw closer to the point of nullifying our *retzonos*?

The words here will apply differently to each person who hears these words, and the concepts here are also not for everyone to work on, because not everyone has the inner fortification to work on this. But what all of us have in common is that we can all try to let go of our *retzonos* sometimes, and that will give us a path to reach our *Yechidah* – the innermost point is us that is attached with Hashem.

08 | *Awareness and Experience Of Reality*

The Chayah and The Yechidah: The “Surrounding Lights”

We have so far tried to learn about what our inner point is, our *Yechidah*. It is an attempt to try to learn about the truth inside us, about the innermost point *havayah* (existence) that is in us.

We have given a few angles to reflect about which can help us recognize and feel what the inner essence of the soul is. Now we will add another on angle to the discussion. As is known, there are five layers to the soul, as we mentioned. The outer three layers – *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, and *Neshamah* -- are found inside the body. The *Nefesh* is in the liver, the *Ruach* is in the heart, and the *Neshamah* is in the brain, while the deeper two layers, *Chayah* and *Yechidah*, are outside the body and surround it.

The Arizal explained that the way the *Chayah* surrounds a person is not in the same way that the *Yechidah* surrounds a person. The *Chayah* surrounds a person either through his prism of the *Nefesh* or the *Ruach* or the *Neshamah*, but it is not powerful enough to surround all of them at once. It surrounds either the *Nefesh*, or the *Ruach*, or the *Neshamah*, depending on the level that a person has uncovered (whether he is at the level of his *Nefesh*, *Ruach* or *Neshamah*).

So the *Chayah* is either used to view your *Nefesh*, your *Ruach*, or your *Neshamah*, but it cannot view all of them at once. The *Yechidah*'s light, however is more powerful and it can surround them all at once. [We will explain the view from the *Yechidah* later, and for now we will explain the view from the *Chayah*].

We will try here to explain what this is and recognize it somewhat in ourselves. This is not about intellectual understanding, and it is rather so we can learn how to recognize how our soul works.

The Chayah: Viewing Yourself From ‘Above’ Yourself

The *Nefesh* is identified as our actions, the *Ruach* is our feelings, and the *Neshamah* is our thoughts. Why do they need to be surrounded by the *Chayah* and the *Yechidah*?

Why are our actions, feelings, and thoughts ‘surrounded’ by another force? What is all this ‘surrounding’ about?

The concept of being ‘surrounded’ by the light of the *Chayah* and the *Yechidah* is, essentially, that a person can view himself from above the body’s viewpoint. *Chayah* and *Yechidah* are essentially ways to see oneself. Through the view from these deeper parts of our soul, we can see our actions, feelings and thoughts from outside of our self, so to speak.

This is because it is not enough to “know” about our actions, feelings and thoughts; we need to become *aware* of them. In modern-day language, it is called “self-awareness” (in Hebrew, “*mu-da-ut atzmis*”).

In order to become aware of our actions, feelings, and thoughts, we need to view them from above. That gives us a better view of what’s going on in them. We can’t be aware of our actions from just the prism of our actions. We can’t view our feelings accurately when we view them just through the prism of the feelings. And we can’t really view our thoughts from within our thoughts. We need to step outside of them, so that we can view the actions/feelings/thoughts from above, and that view will give us a better view of what they are.

This does not mean to imply that you should cease from all your actions and feelings and thoughts and attempt to view them from the outside. This would hamper your focus and it is detrimental.

Rather, it means that *as* you’re performing an action, you can have a view from above yourself and watch your action unfolding; when you’re experiencing a feeling, you are able to step out of the feeling at the same time you’re experiencing it, and view it from above; and when you’re thinking of something, you can step outside of it, even as you’re in middle of the thought, and view the thought from above it, which will give you a deeper understanding into the thought.

To illustrate this concept, there are some people who have experienced a temporary departure of their souls from their body. There are many reports in which people remember that they were floating on top of their body and seeing it below. [This is called “N.D.E.” – Near Death Experience]. This illustrates what we are describing here: a view from above the body!

Chazal say, “Die before you die.” The depth of this is that you can leave your body even as you’re alive – you can leave the body’s viewpoint [at times]. Even as you’re alive and your soul is still inside your body, part of your soul is outside of you, and this does not just mean that part of your soul is simply “outside” of you. It refers to something deeper: that you can have a *deeper view of yourself*, when you *view yourself* from the parts of the soul that are outside the body.

If a person lives through the prism of his *Nefesh*, he lives the actions that he does. If he lives through his *Ruach*, he lives his feelings, and if he lives through his *Neshamah*, he lives his thoughts. But when a person lives through his *Chayah*, he is seeing [either] his actions, feelings and thoughts from a higher view. He is viewing himself from outside of himself.

There is also a way to view oneself from inside himself, and this is the more elementary level of self-awareness towards our actions, feelings, and thoughts. But the view from the outside the self is a deeper kind of view than the basic level of self-awareness viewed from the inside. The deeper awareness towards one’s actions, feelings, and thoughts, the view from the *Chayah*, is a view from *outside* and *above* oneself.

If a person never reaches his *Chayah*, he will only be aware of his actions after he has done them. He will only become aware of his feelings after he feels them, whereupon he looks back at them later and reflects. He becomes aware of his thoughts only after he has had the thoughts. All he can do is look back at the past.

But if a person reaches the view from his *Chayah*, he can be aware of what he’s doing/feeling/thinking even at the very same moment that he is actually doing/feeling/thinking something – he is able to *listen to himself* as he is doing/feeling/thinking.

A person is able to step outside of himself and see himself, and make himself into an onlooker, as if he is another person looking into himself. Understandably, most people do not use this ability, because most people are self-absorbed and stuck inside themselves. They don’t know how to view themselves as if they would be an outsider. That is why most people do not have proper self-awareness.

But there is a deeper problem as well that results from this lack of self-awareness: if we only view ourselves from inside ourselves, then we limit our soul to our body, and

we never access the higher roots of the soul, which are outside of the body. When you listen to yourself, you are using the higher part of your soul, which enables you to connect higher, past the body's perspective and higher into the soul. Without revealing the *Chayah*, a person is stuck inside his body's viewpoint, even if he does actions that are spiritual and he does all the *mitzvos*.

Chazal say, "I have seen those who ascend, but they are few."¹⁴ The Baal Shem Tov said, those who "ascend" are those who reside above, like in the attic of a house, and they come down sometimes to take care of something. Some people live below, on the "first floor" of the house, and sometimes go above to their "attic", but they mainly consider live on the first floor, and they do not reside in the attic. Some people live "above", in their "attic" – and they sometimes come down to the "first floor" when they have to get things done. The truly spiritually aspiring person, the *ben aliyah*, is someone who resides "above" himself. Someone who lives mainly "below" the above point is someone who lives entirely within either his actions or feelings or thoughts, and he has no higher source that he is connected to.

Someone who lives "above" is someone who is always looking at the below from the above. For example, he does an action and sees himself doing it. He has a feeling and sees himself having the feeling. He has a thought and sees the thought; with thoughts, it is two thoughts at once – he is having a thought, and he is having another thought at the same time: he sees himself thinking.

Changing The Orientation

If someone has never felt this concept, it sounds absurd. After all, how can a person have two thoughts at once? Isn't this impossible?

But let's analyze the following. We see that a person can talk and think at the same time. He's thinking about what he's saying. If he would be too absorbed in his thoughts, he wouldn't be able to talk. When people think as they are talking, their thoughts are flying around from one to another, in the blink of an eye. The truth is that the thought process happens very quickly; one thought comes after another very quickly.

¹⁴ *Bava Metziah 45a*

We all do this, and this is not a novel concept. We can all have a thought and then quickly think of another thought, just, we don't process that it is taking place. It is a very simple act that all of us do. But it is really a spiritual power being used for a lower purpose. When people multi-task, they are doing one thing and thinking about another thing; they are using the ability to have two thoughts at once, but they are not aware of it. People are doing actions and having other thoughts at the same time, thus, this spiritual power of being able to think two thoughts at once is often being used solely in the realm of action, and it's a kind of disconnection. It is a lack of focus.

What we need to do is try to focus our thoughts on what we do, at least on a minimal level, and this will open us up to using the power of the *Chayah* to become aware of our actions/feelings/thoughts even as we are experiencing them. This takes our ability of thinking two thoughts at once and channels it in the right direction which we need to use it for, and it gives inner order to our thoughts.

Thus, all of our actions have two factors to them – the action, and the thought. We experience part of our actions in our brain, because we need to think about what we have to do in order to get something done; and part of the action we do can be experienced outside our brain. Don't try to think two thoughts at once in order to achieve this; the aim here is not to learn how to think two thoughts at once. All that would do is ruin your focus. Most people would like to achieve that, but it is not what we need to achieve.

Instead, the way to access your thoughts from the outside [of the *Chayah*] is, that as you are thinking a thought, some if it need to be experienced from inside your body, which is when you simply think [either about the thought you are having or about the action you need to get done], and some of the thought needs to be left outside of the body. In other words: a part of your thinking should be used to simply focus on whatever you are doing/feeling/thinking, and the other part of the thoughts should be used as your awareness to what you are doing/feeling/thinking.

Example: Speech

If many people would pay attention to what they are saying as they have a conversation, they would cut out a lot of words. People often contradict themselves in the very same conversations. This happens because a person was talking and was

thinking of something else as he spoke the words, therefore, it never registered in his mind that he spoke those words. Later in the conversation he will say something else, and he is not aware that he contradicted his previous words. This goes on every day.

“*Daas ganuz b’pumei*” - “The *daas* (mind) is contained in the mouth.” A person’s words reveal what is really going on his mind. A person might be aware of himself talking as he is talking, but he can be thinking of something else as he’s talking, so he isn’t focused on what he is saying. Even as I’m talking now, I’m also thinking of other things as I’m talking – all the time, and not just sometimes. We all live like this.

The question is how to channel this ability in the right direction, where it can be turned from a lack of self-awareness into a deep ability.

Sifting Out Your Thought Process As You Think

There are two kinds of thoughts we are experiencing all the time; we are basically focused in our thoughts, and we are also thinking about something else at the same time. These two thoughts are often mixed together, alternating between each other very quickly, and it is because initially, we have not yet learned how to separate them and isolate them. Our thought process needs to become sorted out.

We need to identify thoughts that are needed in order to simply perform an act/feeling/thought, and we need to identify another kind of thought that takes place at the same time – the power to be aware of the act/feeling/thought, which is a thought that comes from our *Chayah*. We need to identify them as they occur, or else they remain mixed together in a jumble and we will never be able to have them both simultaneously without losing focus.

If we identify the two different kinds of thoughts as we are in middle of experiencing a thought, then we can begin to separate them from each other and identify them as being two distinct kinds of thoughts, and that will give us the true self-awareness, which is the view from our *Chayah*.

In this way, we can have practical focus on our actions/feelings/thoughts as they happen, and at the same time have an awareness towards them going on in the background, two thoughts at once which don’t impede on each other and do not fracture our focus.

One kind of thought takes place inside us [experienced by our brain] and the other kind of thought is the view from the outside [a thought coming from the *Chayah*]. To better understand it, imagine someone who is standing and looking into something from outside of it. What we need to understand is that we can do that within ourselves – we have the power to step outside of ourselves, at the very same time that we are looking from inside ourselves, and view ourselves as if we are looking at ourselves from the outside, like an outsider.

The basic power of thought in a person is rooted in the *Neshamah*, which is inside the brain. These are the thoughts we use for basic focus on what we do/feel/think. Part of the *Neshamah* are thoughts that are outside the brain, and they are not viewed by our regular thinking process. They are viewed from the *Chayah* which is above the *Neshamah*'s thoughts and sees into them.

The first part of our job here is that we need to first have thought in what we do. The second part of our job is to reveal a deeper kind of thought, which is a kind of thought in which we think from the outside of ourselves. This is the power of thought that is rooted in our *Chayah*. It is the ability in a person to see himself from the side and watch himself like an onlooker.

We need to make use of both kinds of thoughts – the basic thoughts, and the deeper thoughts.

Catching Yourself

To give an example of how to do this, a person gets angry; this is an everyday occurrence in our life. A person might not even be aware of his anger even as he is angry. The next day, when he calms down, he remembers that he got angry yesterday. Yesterday, when he was actually angry, what was going through his mind? Did he not know he was angry? He was busy thinking of how he has been wronged. He was too busy raging to even register that he is experiencing what is called anger.

Such a person, even if he tries to get advice on how to fix the trait of anger, will not be able to fix the anger. He is missing preliminary state of getting rid of anger, because he's not even aware when he gets angry! He's busy with who he's angry at, and he's totally unaware that he is experiencing anger. If he's not aware of his anger while he's

angry, he will not be able to implement any advice on stopping his anger, because he is not even aware of it at all when it was happening.

What should he do? The next time he gets angry, if he has revealed his *Chayah*, then he can become aware that he is angry. He can catch himself in the act. This doesn't mean he will attain total self-control over his anger. It means that he will become aware of his anger, and now he has the key to fixing his anger, because he has become aware, and now he can embark on ways on how to weaken it as he's angry.

The Sages state, "The mind controls the heart".¹⁵ When the mind is involved with the heart even as the heart's emotions are dominant, such as when a person is raging in anger, he has the mind involved which he can use to control himself!

A person who accesses his *Chayah* is aware of his emotions as he's actually experiencing them, and not because he remembers about the experience later. He is aware of his anger as he's angry. He is aware of love as he is feeling loving towards another. He is connected to his happiness when he experiences happiness.

There are people who dance at a wedding and are joyous, but they aren't aware that they are experiencing the emotion of joy. They wish a "Mazal Tov" and never pay attention to the reality of the joy at hand. They are unaware of the happiness they are feeling as they dance.

There is a higher level in which a person can be above his own consciousness, but we are not speaking of this level. We are speaking of a more basic level, in which a person can consciously be happy, and he can be aware that he's happy at the very same time.

This applies to thoughts as well – you can have a thought, and be aware of the thought at the same time, seeing it from outside of the thought.

This is the view from your *Chayah*, the view from the outside, which sees the thoughts of the *Neshamah* from outside of the *Neshamah*. You can use the view from your *Chayah* to surround the thoughts of the *Neshamah* of the brain and see it from the outside.

¹⁵ Tanya. In the name of the Zohar

The Power To Experience

There is a very deep point we will now discuss. We need it to get to our *Yechidah*, but we will start to explain how we reach the *Chayah*, which we first need to get to.

All people are looking for exciting experiences. Who doesn't? We all want to "experience". The truth is that we are always having experiences. We are always experiencing either pain or joy. But most people are not aware of what they are feeling, thus, they don't experience what they are experiencing!

A person gets up in the morning and goes about his day, going off to his job, and he feels no vitality from what he does. He will feel vitality hearing words of Torah over the phone, but not from what he does during the day. Why? It is because people do not know how to really experience anything. People are doing, feeling, and thinking, but they aren't experiencing it!

There are people who are "pathological liars". They have the bad habit of lying all the time. They really have a deeper problem. They lie all the time because they have no self-awareness. They aren't paying attention to the words coming out of their mouth.

For example, a person tells a customer that the order will be ready in two days, and the customer comes back in two days and it's not ready. The problem here is not the owner is dishonest. The root behind this behavior is because owner wasn't even aware as he was talking – that is why he didn't keep to his word. He said words, words of conviction, but it never registered in his head that he is taking upon himself a responsibility, because he was thinking of something else as he was saying those words.

The root of all our problems is a lack of self-awareness - when we are not aware of our actions, feelings, and thoughts. The root of our problems is not that we lie to ourselves. The problem is that we have no inner experiences. We feel what we feel, but we don't experience what we feel, and we think that we have experienced it.

Here is a simple example. A person is eating and enjoying his food. Most people are not even fully tasting their food, because their mind is preoccupied as they eat. Taste is actually a power that is developed in your soul. In order to really experience taste, you have to know what taste in the soul is, which is to remain focused on a taste as you taste it. Most people are not focused as they eat and are thinking about other

things as they eat, and they think that they are experiencing the taste of what they eat, while in reality, they are not really experiencing it!

A Lack of Experience Creates A Lack of Vitality

Because most people are not really experiencing their own experiences, what this results in is a lack of real vitality (*chiyus*) in life. People are missing vitality.

Almost no one has any real vitality in their life. This world is like one big graveyard.

A Jew can do all the mitzvos – he wears *tefillin* and *tzitzis*, lights the menorah, he learns Torah – but still does not feel alive from any of this! He can be like a rock with no life in himself, even though he does all the *mitzvos*! He tries to feel the vitality in lighting the menorah yet he doesn't feel anything special going on. Why? It is because his feelings are already deadened! Why are his feelings deadened? Because he has made himself already into a robot!

If a person isn't aware of his experiences as he goes through them, he doesn't know how to experience. Chavah desired the fruit of the *Eitz HaDaas* and “*saw that it was good*”. A *taavah* – a desire - can either be a totally sensual experience, which is evil, or it can be used for good: the power to fully experience something good.

It is written, “*My soul leaves when I speak.*” Do we feel our soul leaving us as we talk? If we would experience our talking, we would feel our soul leaving us as we talk! There are people who talk and talk; do they feel their souls leaving them as they talk? Who feels this? You go onto a plane and people are talking and talking (especially women) on no end, yet they don't feel their energy getting used up from this; why not? It is because they are not experiencing their speech. The Chazon Ish said that speaking makes him feel exhausted afterwards. He experienced what he was saying, therefore, it took more energy out of him – “*My soul leaves when I speak.*” When you live and experience what you do or say, it takes up more energy.

We go through countless thoughts each day. If a person isn't aware what he does, when he isn't aware of what he feels or what he thinks, he is missing the revelation of his *Chayah*, and that is why he derives no vitality from anything he does.

For example, a person buys things in the supermarket for his family. Does he experience this? Why is he doing it? He is doing it because he loves his family. But he doesn't feel that love as he goes shopping for them. Rather, he feels forced, as if he must do it. He never experiences the real reason why he goes shopping for them, which is love. So he never derives vitality from shopping for his family, because his not really experiencing what he's really doing when he goes shopping for them.

If a person never sees himself from the outside, he has no *Chayah*, and then he has no *chaim* (life), because *chayah* comes from the word *chiyus* (vitality in life). Without revealing the *Chayah*, a person is devoid of vitality.

We are not speaking about ideas. We are speaking about the soul, which is called a *nishmas chayim*, a soul of life. It is what we all yearn for. You can hear a million shiurim and read a million sefarim, but none of it will help you, because without the basis, nothing will be developed. It's like trying to go around collecting money and having no feet to walk around with.

We are all amazed when we meet someone who seems alive, who looks like he is experiencing life. But how do we get to that? The way is: to be able to see yourself from outside of yourself. How do you do it? You can practically work on this by getting used to being an onlooker. It's very simple.

We are already used to observing all the time. In the house, the kids are playing. Take a few minutes and observe the house as if you are an outsider. You can do this with yourself as well. Take a pen and write down what you are saying. This will open you up to listening to yourself.

A good example of this is to watch a video of your Bar Mitzvah. This is how you can see yourself from outside of yourself. The point is not to watch your Bar Mitzvah. The point is to focus on seeing yourself act from outside of yourself. It gets you used to the concept of observing yourself.

The more a person sees himself, the more he will feel himself, and the more he will live himself. He will then be able to experience his life. After that, he is able to properly engage in self-improvement. When he does self-accounting on his actions, words, feelings and thoughts. He will experience what he does. He can be aware to himself as he is acting.

It is hard to express this anymore with my mouth. But these words are life itself. They are about our very life! The Chayah is about what our life is! So we need to get used to observing ourselves from outside of ourselves.

Yechidah: The Power To Constantly Experience

What we have described until now is how to view ourselves from our *Chayah*, which surrounds the *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, or *Neshamah*, depending on the situation. It is the power to see either our actions, feelings, or thoughts.

After we have passed this stage – and I stress “after” because it can take months to acquire, for it is a very deep avodah – only after that, should a person progress to the next stage, which is to try to get the inner point, the *Yechidah*.

The *Yechidah* is the truly inner experience. It is the way to very experience your *Chayah* – the experience within the experience. It is a constant experience. We are always either acting or feeling or thinking, and we cannot disconnect from them. When we begin to experience all the time, we have the true experience (*chavayah*). It is one of the most precious things we can acquire. We have actions, feelings, and thoughts. But the root of all of them all is the power to constantly experience. It is a way to experience either your actions or feelings or thoughts, but it’s all the same power to experience.

The actions, feelings and thoughts are the garments of the soul. The *Chayah* experiences only the garments of the soul, so it can only experience the actions, feelings, or thoughts. After you have revealed it, don’t just use it to experience the garments. Now is the time to deepen your power of inner experiences – now you can experience an even deeper reality. You can experience the very purity of your soul!

The power in the soul to experience can be used to experience either your actions, words or thoughts; you see them from above and experience them and that is how you become aware of them. But that’s all seeing the garments. You can use it to experience your “I” – the *Yechidah*.

If a person hasn’t acquired the power to have constant experience, he will not be able to experience the *Yechidah*.

We explained that the first four layers of the soul are parts of the soul, while the *Yechidah* has the perspective that it is all-inclusive. The partial view, which comes from the first four layers of the soul, is sometimes active, and sometimes not active. Sometimes you are aware of the actions, feelings, and thoughts, and sometimes you are not. But the view from your *Yechidah*, once accessed, is always experiencing.

The *Yechidah* is above the *Chayah* - which means that it is above our life itself. It is the point connected to the above. It is the tool to get to the *Ein Sof* of Hashem.

Our desire is to feel Hashem all the time. All we live for is this. The purpose of life is to always feel Hashem. Feeling Hashem is like “a constant fire that burns on the Altar”. How do we reach this? By reaching our *Yechidah*, we have the power to constantly experience. But we need to reveal this power.

Most people only know of the power to “experience” only by weddings, trips, and food. Once you attain the power of constant experience, you will find that you won’t even get pleasure from these outside stimuli. The Rambam says that all pleasure is found in the soul; it is referring to the ability to constantly experience the reality of Hashem, Who is eternal and constant.

So first we need to reveal the power to experience, and then we need to reveal the power to constantly experience. First we need to view our actions, feelings, and thoughts from the outside, which leads to experiencing them.

To illustrate, a child is happy when he walks, but we observe him from the outside and have a deeper kind of joy when we watch him. We experience the child as we watch him from the outside and rejoice in his walking. After we experience our actions feelings and thoughts, we can then enter more inward, into the “I”, and after that, to feel the Creator.

Feeling Reality

These are not words or definitions. It is reality.

The power to experience life and to penetrate deep within ourselves is not intellect, it is not philosophy, it is not inspiration, and it is not even about feelings. It is about grasping reality as it is.

Who feels reality? Man is called *adam* from the word *dimayon*, imagination, because man is drawn after his imagination. Nine out of every ten people feel imagination, not reality. Imagination is fleeting. Thoughts, feelings and actions are always fleeting. The past is always gone. People are feeling their imagination all the time, not reality itself.

We need to feel reality. What is reality? There is only one absolute reality: the reality of Hashem. This is the deepest experience – the ever-constant reality of Hashem’s Presence. It is not an experience that is fleeting; it is to feel a constant reality. When a person learns how to constantly experience, he can feel that reality. He can then reveal what reality is. The fact that there is a Creator – it’s in our brain. But 99% of people do not feel that reality.

Who feels reality? Only one who feels the reality of Hashem. Everything else is imagination. All other experiences are a tool to get us to the innermost experience – reality itself, which is Hashem’s existence.

It is very rare to find a person who constantly experiences. The *Gemara* says that the world stands on 36 *tzaddikim* who greet the *Shechinah* each day. These people feel the reality. If they wouldn’t recognize reality, the world cannot exist.

Our *avodah* – all of us without exception – is to realize Hashem’s existence. In the future all will point their finger at Hashem and say “*This* is my G-d that I hoped for.” Only someone who really recognized the reality of Hashem on this world will be able to realize, with conviction – “*This* is my G-d, that I hoped for.”

The *avodah* of our life is to feel the reality itself, the reality of Hashem – first to experience, then to experience constantly, and then to experience the truth of reality, which is the Creator.

09 | *Choosing Emunah*

The Yechidah Sees No Other Possibilities

We have explained in previous chapters how we can slowly begin to recognize our *Yechidah*.

Yechidah comes from the word “*yachid*”, “individual”. The very concept of the *Yechidah* is the opposite of having “many” things, because the whole idea of the *Yechidah* is to have one, single view on things.

In order to reveal our *Yechidah*, which is a viewpoint that sees only one possible option, we need to understand what the opposite of this would entail. There is a rule that in order to understand a concept, you need to understand the opposite of the concept.

The opposite of the *Yechidah*'s viewpoint is the power of *bechirah* (free will). The *Yechidah* in us sees only one option, while our power of *bechirah* tells us that we have a few options to choose from, and we know that we are supposed to choose good or evil.

Bechirah/free will, by definition, is the power to have many possible options in front of you, and then you choose between them. Mankind was created in order to choose good over evil, as the Ramchal writes in *Derech Hashem*. Man's very essence is to choose between the many possibilities (and hopefully, he will choose good). All of the time, we are choosing. We choose to get up in the morning and we choose to have a conversation with someone else or to be quiet. We keep making use of our *bechirah*.

The entire concept of *bechirah* is the opposite of the *Yechidah*'s view, for the *Yechidah* sees only one option.

We need to dig deep into ourselves to reveal the *Yechidah*, because it is very deep within. However, not only is it very deep to reach – it seems impossible, because our very *bechirah* contradicts the view of our *Yechidah*. As long as we live, we have *bechirah*; our *bechirah* only goes away at death. So how do we access our *Yechidah*'s view, which sees only one possibility, when our whole life revolves around *bechirah* –

which chooses between “many” views? How do we reach the *Yechidah*, when our whole essence is that of free will?!

When you really recognize your power of free will, you know that you do everything because you choose so. As an example, you came here to this *shiur* because you chose to come.

When you think deeply, you can see how you are a massive contradiction. On one hand, we have *bechirah* - we choose our thoughts, our words, and what we want. Yet, we are also supposed to subjugate our will to Hashem’s will – to reach a state of oneness (*echad*) with Hashem. Husband and wife are meant to become “*echad*,” one, and the lesson of this is that man must reach the state of “*echad*” with Hashem.

One has to reach the inner point of “*echad*” in himself. With two options always in front of you, how do you get to “*echad*”?

Beyond The Point of Free Will

We need to reveal a deeper layer in ourselves that is beyond our layer of *bechirah*/free will.

Our power of free will tells us that there are several options, while there is a deeper layer in us that sees only one option. That deeper layer is essentially the view of the *Yechidah*. We need to cross over from the point of *bechirah* in our soul into the *Yechidah* in our soul. We need to reach our inner oneness, our inner place of *echad* inside ourselves, and then we can reach Hashem, who is *echad*.

Let us try to explain how we can get to this place of *echad* inside ourselves.

Free Will Is The Power of Amalek/Doubts

Free will means that there are two options that oppose each other, and that we choose between them.

There is a rule that for everything that Hashem created that is good, He created something equally powerful that is evil, in order to allow free will. For example, there is the Jewish people on the side of holiness, and on the other side of evil, there is

Amalek. If there would only be the Jewish people and no Amalek, there would be no free will.

Amalek is in the soul as well; the numerical value in Hebrew of “Amalek” is “*safek*”, doubt, because Amalek is the power of doubt, to be at a quandary between two options. The root of all doubts in Creation is when a person is not sure to choose between good and evil. Our *bechirah* is to either connect ourselves to the good, represented by the Jewish people, or to the viewpoint of Amalek, *chas v’shalom*.

This is all in order to allow free will in the world; if Hashem would have only created a powerful amount of good in the world and nothing equally powerful enough that is evil, then there would be no free will, because the good would just overpower the evil.

The power of good in the world is represented by the Jewish nation, while the power of evil in the world is represented by a nation equally powerful in its evil – Amalek. The Jewish nation is called the “first” nation, but so is Amalek.

Amalek bears a striking resemblance to our power of free will. If you think about it, the whole power of free will has a lot to do with Amalek! Amalek is the evil ability of doubt, a power in the soul. There is “*Amalek*” in the soul – the power to have doubts about our faith. Doubt is essentially when a person has many possibilities to choose from. Free will is also when a person has many possibilities to choose from. If so, Amalek, which is doubt, is synonymous with the power of free will in our soul.

How do you erase the ‘Amalek’ in the soul – the doubts inside us?

Faith Opposes Free Will

We need to ‘erase’ Amalek, our perspective of doubt/free will, by introducing its opposite – the power of *emunah* (faith). When I have *emunah*, that means that I have no other choice except the option that is right. When there is *emunah*, when I believe only in doing Hashem’s will, there does not exist a possibility for me to choose evil, because I am following the deeper understanding of *emunah*.

Emunah is the opposite perspective of *bechirah*/free will. When I am going with my free will, even if I choose good or evil, I am still saying that there is a possibility to be

evil. But if I reveal the power of *emunah*, I am saying there can only be one option: the right and good thing to do, Hashem's will.

The power of *emunah*/faith is what is able to destroy the power of *Amalek* in the soul. By revealing our *emunah*, we get rid of the evil power to doubt.

Bringing Emunah Into Daily Decisions

For example, a person walks into the store and he is in doubt about what to buy. How do we decide what to buy?

We all have doubts. Some people are in doubts the whole day and are emotionally ill from this. But we all have some degree of doubts every day. How do we answer our doubts we are filled with all day? How do we escape doubt?

Let's say you decide to buy something, then you come home and you realize that you overlooked a detail, and it's not fit for your house. You were sure when you bought it that it was the right thing to buy for your house, and now you discover that you are wrong. How should you view this situation?

Before you buy something, while you buy something, and after you buy something, you can be aware of the following inner understanding. You have a *Yechidah* in you, which sees only one option – that everything you will have is decreed by Hashem.

When you buy a table or a chair in the store, it can be a way of revealing your *Yechidah*. What does this have to do with your *Yechidah*? Doubts about what to decide seem are an ordinary part of our day that seems meaningless, but actually, this is an opportunity for us to work on getting rid of our doubts, thus, it can be a tool for a person to reach his *Yechidah*. When you feel a doubt about something, you have an opportunity now to erase the doubt and thus reach your innermost point of the soul, the *Yechidah*.

So even when you go to buy a table or a chair, it is a time to get in touch with the understanding of the *Yechidah*. Why did Hashem place the doubt in you about what to buy? It is because you can remind yourself now that there is a deep part in you, a *Yechidah*, which can be revealed through the simple act of buying a table.

Our *bechirah* says, “There are two options – choose.” The *Yechidah* in us says, “Have *emunah* - Hashem has already chosen what is good for you. You can’t get it if it’s not coming to you. Everything you will get was already coming to you.”

Practically speaking, as you’re about to buy the table, think to yourself: “I can only get this table if Hashem wanted me to have it.”

The Vilna Gaon said that even a robber, before he steals, prays to Hashem and believes that he will get it. Why? Because the truth is, whatever a person gets is supposed to come to him. The robber has chosen to get it through evil, through stealing, but in essence, the item will come to him as long as Hashem allows it to.

If a chair breaks in the house, we can give all kinds of reasons why it broke, but the truth is: it was decided by Hashem that it would break. There are no two possible reasons why it broke – there is only one reason why it broke: Hashem wanted it to break.

When one is aware of this, he accesses his *Yechidah’s* understanding, through an ordinary occurrence of a chair breaking in his house. And when a person goes to the store to buy something, if he is aware that there is only one reason that he will be able to get the item – namely, that he can only get an item which Hashem decreed that he will get – he reveals *emunah*, the perspective of the *Yechidah*, in this ordinary act.

This does not mean that one should only consider the understanding of *emunah/Yechidah* and ignore your logical thinking process. If you buy something in the house and you see it wasn’t good, don’t buy it again! In this way, you can be aware of both *emunah* as well as the outer layers of your soul at the same time. You cannot only live in your *emunah*, because the *emunah/Yechidah* is one of your five soul layers, and you have other layers in your soul as well which need to be taken into account.

Thus, your decisions must involve both your *emunah* aspect that comes from your *Yechidah’s* viewpoint, as well as your logical aspect that comes from the outer layers of the soul. This is the properly balanced way to live life and go about all that we do.¹⁶

¹⁶ During the shiur, in response to a question, the Rov also clarified: “Free will is essentially for a person to connect what he knows in his head, with his heart. The whole idea of free will is essentially a question of, “Will I connect my heart to what I know in my

Revealing A New Kind of Free Will

How, then, should we utilize our power of free will? What is the proper way to go about it?

Our natural movements are always choosing. We choose if we will buy something in the store or not. This is a constant kind of choosing we do, and it doesn't involve any thought; it is made subconsciously. This illustrates the solution which we are trying to get at: we need to uncover a kind of choosing in which we choose to do the right thing, but not because we put any thinking into it. We have to just do what's good and not see the other possibilities. Our decisions to do good should also be in this way.

This is a power in the soul to make decisions, but it is a more inner kind of decision. This is a kind of decision in which the person decides to do good, but not because he had any doubts whatsoever. It is to decide to do good because you only see one option – you don't see any other option, because *emunah* tells you that there is only one option: that all is decreed from Hashem.

This is a way for how a person can get to the *Yechidah*, the power of “*echad*” (“one”) in the soul. A person reaches it by seeing only “one” possibility – what the right and good thing to do is. A person has this ability: to only see one option, because he has no other doubts.

How can a person actually reveal this power? When a person makes a decision, there are two attitudes he can have. One attitude is the skeptical one, which doesn't reveal the *Yechidah*. The other attitude is the correct one to have, which can reveal the *Yechidah*.

If a person buys the item with the attitude that there is no other possibility that exists other than this item he is buying – because whatever Hashem wants him to have is coming to him anyway - such a person truly believes that there is only one

mind, or not?” So bechirah is not about changing my will. It is about connecting my heart with what I know in my mind about emunah in Hashem. Many people have emunah in their minds but their lifestyle doesn't match their emunah. It is because they do not use their bechirah to connect their heart with their mind's knowledge about emunah.”

possibility. He doesn't doubt Hashem for one second, because he knew from the start that it was decreed on him what he will have. He decides to buy it with such an attitude, and such a decision comes from his *emunah*. This person reveals his *Yechidah* when he decides to buy the item.

Our physical mind decides by seeing two options and then deciding. Our *Yechidah* also decides, but it doesn't see two options, because it only sees one option – the understanding of *emunah*. So for example, before you go into the store, tell yourself that it's already decreed by Hashem what you are getting.

Emunah is a new path to take in how to deal with all issues of life, not just when it comes to making decisions in a store.

Emotions/Desires, Rational Intellect, and Emunah

Some people don't use either their *emunah* or even their *seichel*/intellect – they decide entirely based on their desires. They live based on their emotions. The *yetzer hora* is our evil desires, and it is “evil from a man's youth”; when a person is ruled by emotions, he is essentially being ruled by his *yetzer hora*. At this stage, one must learn to use his rational intellect and make decisions in this way.

A person whose “mind is in control of his heart” lives life sensibly, and makes decisions through his *seichel*/intellect. But he still doesn't yet have *emunah* affecting his decisions.

A third, higher stage is to go above the intellect – to reach one's *emunah*. Our intellect (*seichel*) decides using our power of *daas* (specifically, *daas d'hachraah*)¹⁷. But our *emunah* is the “G-dly light” in us, which has no doubts - just as Hashem has no doubts.

Amalek creates doubt in Creation. The “Amalek” within the soul causes doubts in our soul, to doubt *emunah*, using our power of free will. How do we erase the “Amalek” within? The Torah records that by the war with Amalek, when Moshe's hands were lifted, Amalek grew weaker; in other words, when there is *emunah* in Hashem, when we have no doubts, the power of evil doubt falls away as a result.

¹⁷ See *Utilizing Your Daas #01 – Deciding*.

In Conclusion

If we want to get to our *Yechidah*, don't think that that it's way too far from you. There are methods of deep meditation and inner silence that can help a person reach the *Yechidah*, but here we have described how mundane activities in ordinary life can be an opportunity to reach your *Yechidah*. The decisions and doubts we go through every day are a tool to reveal our *Yechidah*, because we can use these opportunities to reveal *emunah*. This can transform ordinary, daily life into a deep way of living.

We have been brief about this, but the concept here describes a way to live life. These are no ideas, but a deep way to live life.

When we get up in the morning, what do we think – that we are just getting up and doing mundane actions, or that we are looking to reveal our *Yechidah* through the various actions we perform? If we live with conscious awareness that we are trying to reveal our *Yechidah*, then even our mundane actions will be transformed into a way to reveal the *Yechidah*.

May we merit from Hashem to yearn to reveal our inner point and the ways of how to reach it, until we reach the highest point of all, which is to be totally connected with Hashem.

10 | Utilizing The Power of Peace

Viewing The Imminent Festival As A Continuation Of Our Avodah

In the previous chapters, we discussed at length the ways of how to reveal the *Yechidah* in the soul.

It is the nature of most of us that when a Jewish festival approaches, we like to learn about the nature of the upcoming festival, but we tend to put aside our current *avodah* in favor of learning about the festival at hand.

But we can compare this to one who owns a horse for 20 years and he wishes to give it as a wedding present to his son. The wedding day of his son arrives, and he gets very busy with the wedding preparations, and what happens? He doesn't watch his horse, and the horse runs away.

The lesson from this parable is very clear. If we put our *avodah* on hold because we need to learn about the festival, then our *avodah* will be ignored in favor of learning about the festival, and then we lose the previous gains of our *avodah* until now.

However, the other option is not either good: if a person ignores the festival and only focuses on his *avodah*, then this too is detrimental, because if Hashem gives us a festival, obviously it is His will that we involve ourselves in it.

When a Jewish festival comes our way as we are in middle of explaining a certain *avodah*, we thus need to see it as a continuation of our own current *avodah*, rather than just see it as a coincidence that happens to fall out in middle of our *avodah*. Therefore, the current festival that is approaching [in our case, Chanukah] must be viewed by us as a continuation of our current *avodah* of revealing our "*Yechidah*".

What, essentially, is a Jewish festival all about? The *Yomim Tovim* (Jewish festivals) are really windows that help us see into the inner world of spirituality. The inner world is covered over, but it is not completely covered over; there are windows which we can use to see into it. Each festival offers us the opportunity to access a new window that gives us new perspectives about the inner world.

If we look into a house through many of its windows and we see the same room, we are seeing the same room each time, just through different windows. The festivals are each different windows that look at the same room. Chanukah is one window, and Purim is another window, and Pesach is another window. But they are all windows to the same view. We aren't revealing new realities through each of the festivals – rather, we can keep learning to see the same reality that exists through different angles, with each festival that we go through.

The Lesson of Chanukah – Another Way To Access The View of the Yechidah

The festival approaching us now is Chanukah, and if we are currently learning about how to reveal our *Yechidah*, this is not a coincidence. It must be that Chanukah adds on another important dimension to this avodah of trying to uncover our *Yechidah*.

Chanukah is therefore another way for us to learn about how we can view the inner world. Let us reflect, therefore, into how we can reveal our *Yechidah* through understanding about Chanukah.

Real Victory

On Chanukah, there was a war between the Greeks and the *Chashmonaim* (Jews who descended from royalty). This was a miracle that defied nature; the Greek were very mighty, but a handful of Jews slew them all in a miraculous defeat. How did they succeed in overcoming nature? We will try to explain this with an inner perspective.

When we are in war, how can we win? How do we overcome the opposition? A simple war, like we see from the world, is when two sides are warring with each other, and might is pitted against might. There were many such wars in history.

However, the Ramban writes that the ideal situation to fight a war is to first try to make peace with the other side. If peace isn't achieved, the side who is trying to make peace may then go to war with the other side. It sounds simply that the problem of war can be solved with placating the other side, such as if we offer the other side a lot of money. But there is a deeper reason. It is because when there is fighting, we need to access the power of *shalom* (peace) in the soul.

Logic dictates the opposite: logic says that if you remain peaceful and docile, the other side will fight you. How can peace win our wars for us?! Why does the Ramban say that we should first try peace in order to win the war?!

If a person is deeply connected to the power of peace in the soul, this affects his outside as well; therefore, inner peace can cause peace upon the world. That is more understandable. But if one hasn't reached his inner peace, how can behaving with peace be a possible way to win a war?!

The truth is that real peace will only be in the future. It is written of the future, "*The wolf and the lamb shall walk together.*" Then there will be no more wars, because we will all become one unit. It really doesn't make sense that peace should win our wars. Only in the future will this concept make sense, because the future will be the revelation of the innermost point of the soul, the all-inclusive point, which does not allow for any contradictions, oppositions, or war. The fact that there will be peace in the future will not be a coincidence. The future peace will be the revelation of our essence. It will be revealed that there are no oppositions. Thus, it automatically follows that there will be no wars.

War is only possible when there is a concept of separation and disparity in the world; currently, we look at ourselves as having many divided "parts" to our self, which reflects the concept that in the current era, there is disparity. In the future, when the all-inclusive point of the *Yechidah* will be revealed to all, the entire of notion of ever being divided will not exist, thus it will follow that there cannot be war, because there will be no more concept of opposition.

Thus, if we really want to win a war, we need to awaken a point in ourselves which cannot be destroyed. The outer parts of our soul can be destroyed, but the *Yechidah* in us is the all-inclusive point; everything is in it - therefore, it cannot be destroyed.

This is the deep meaning behind the victory of the Chashmonaim, the handful of Jews that won against the Greeks.

The Chashmonaim revealed their own inner power of the soul, the non-destructive point contained deep in the soul - and that was why the Greeks couldn't destroy them.

In the future, it is written, *“Esav will be like straw, and Yosef will be like fire that burns up the straw.”* This will be a deep kind of victory. When fire and water meet, they battle each other, and it takes a long time until one of the elements can overpower the other.

But when fire is set upon straw, it takes only a few moments until all of the straw is destroyed; there is no opposition. So too, in the future, there will be no opposition, because it will be revealed how all is one, for Hashem’s Name will be one. Oneness will be revealed – the all-inclusive point will be revealed, therefore, there will be no concept of division.

The Depth of Humility

Chanukah was a war of a few Jews against many Greeks. Simply, this was a miracle, but the depth of it was, that “they made themselves small in their eyes”, as the Rabbis write.

This sounds simply that they had humility, when one makes himself small in his eyes. People think that humility means to focus on your shortcomings, and that it is arrogance to focus on your qualities. After all, it is true that the power of imagination can cause one to ignore reality, which in turn makes him ignores his shortcomings, while a person who is very aware of reality has humility, because he recognizes his shortcomings.

It seems that humility is simply for a person to be aware of reality, thus he is aware of his shortcomings, in the same way that a person has to be realistic when he writes out a check and make sure that he still has money in his bank account.

But there is a deeper understanding of humility: when one recognizes the greater reality, which is the “all-inclusive point” in the soul, he sees how he is not nothing, for he is part of a greater whole; he is part of a collective essence. And that humbles him as a result.

But how did the small amount of Jews win the Greeks? It is something deeper: that they made themselves “small.” Because “they made themselves small in their own eyes” – because they had true humility - by recognizing the all-inclusive reality – that was how they were able to win the Greeks.

Humility is really to see yourself as part of a greater whole. It is to lessen the “I”, not by weakening it and ignoring your self-worth, but by realizing how your “I” is part of a greater whole. The Chashmonaim nullified their own essence, by having this deep humility, of seeing themselves as part of the greater whole, as part of the reality that is all-inclusive, as opposed to the ‘divided’ kind of reality.¹⁸

(There are people who don’t realize their self-worth. They don’t give enough value to their actual self, because they focus on their many shortcomings. They view themselves as lowly, and they see themselves as just scattered parts inside themselves. But this is not the true meaning of humility. Humility is not to dismiss reality – it is really to recognize your true self-worth of a Jew. The proper outlook for one to have is that although one shouldn’t pride himself too much about his qualities, he must never lessen his actual “I”. He can be aware of his shortcomings, but he doesn’t have to lessen the value of his essence. A person must always remain with his self-worth.)

Thus, the deep way to win a war is not through fighting a war. It is through revealing the power of *netzach*, eternity – to reveal the all-inclusive point in the soul, the non-destructive point of the soul. When one reveals his non-destructive essence, he indeed cannot be destroyed. And if one tries to destroy it, he is destroying himself.

Connecting To The Oneness of Hashem

This power of deep unity with the world, known as “*echad*” (oneness), which will be fully revealed in the future, still exists deep in the soul, and is the deepest power of the soul. Hashem in “One”, and when one is connected with Hashem, he is connected to His oneness, and then the disparity in front of him ceases.

18 In middle of this shiur, with regards to this aspect, the Rav clarified to a questioner that in the current reality we live in, we live in a divided reality, not in the all-inclusive reality; only in the future will we all live in an all-inclusive reality. For this reason, our body is obligated in the mitzvos, and there are different parts of our body which require different mitzvos. Our body represents divisions and disparity, because in the physical dimension, there is no concept of oneness. Only in the spiritual dimension there is oneness. In the future this will be fully revealed, and currently, we can have access to that spiritual dimension of the future when we access the deep part of our soul, the Yechidah. The Rav is explaining here how we can access the all-inclusive reality that is contained in our Yechidah.

How did Dovid *HaMelech* defeat Golyas? With one rock. The depth of this is that he defeated him with the power of “one”, not simply that he managed to kill him with a small rock.

The war with the Greeks could not be won physically. It wasn't possible. The only way was through revealing *echad* in their souls – they connected to Hashem, to His oneness; thus they had Hashem's protection, and no one can fight Hashem. “*And they will see that the name of Hashem is upon you, and they will fear you.*” (Although Hashem is called “man of war”, this is a metaphor).

If two people are having a game with each other, it is not a fight. Although they are against each other, this is not viewed as a fight, but as a game. When one wins the other, it's not that he has won the fight, because it's just a game; afterwards, they laugh with each other. So too, when one is connected to Hashem, he is protected by Him, and no one can fight Hashem – trying to fight Hashem is a joke. There is no opposition, because any human who tries to oppose Hashem does not oppose Hashem. If it's not a fight, it can only be a game.

When one approaches a fight with the perspective that he is against the other based on his human strengths, this will indeed be an opposition.

Victory Is Not Achieved Through Fighting

Is there anyone who doesn't have any fights with others? It is not possible. The Talmud says that if there is a Rav in a city who is never opposed at all, he is not a real Rav, because he's probably being bribed.

(By the way, even before I came to deliver these *shiurim*, I already prepared myself for opposition. I knew that there were will be those who will fight with me about what I'm saying!)

We all need opposition. There is no person who does not have opposition. For everything good there is, Hashem created something else in evil that can oppose the good. There is only one whom there is no opposition to – Hashem, Who is One.

The war with the Greeks could have just been like any other war, where the two sides oppose each other. We all have wars. We have internal wars as well, inside

ourselves, as well as in our homes, small and big fights. But we all have fights. How can we get out of all these fights?

It is by acquiring the deep perspective that winning the war is not through fighting the other side. That was the miracle of Chanukah – you can only win a war with a miracle, and that ‘miracle’ is for one to realize this deep perspective.

Accessing Peace In The Soul: Nullifying Yourself To Hashem

Now we will make this concept more practical in our daily life.

How can we win our daily wars and fights with others that we all have? I am asking a very practical question, not a theoretical one.

People fight their fights either with their various physical strengths, or with their intellectual abilities. (There is a saying, “If you can’t fight with *koach* (strength), fight with *moach* (brains).” But there is a third [deeper] way to fight, and it has nothing to do with strength or with brains.

The Kotzker *zt”l* said that if you can’t win with strength, keep telling yourself that you do have strength, until you eventually win. That was one view. Another view was to use your intellectual abilities. A third way to win a war is through the power of prayer.

There is a point in our soul in which there are no wars, challenges, or oppositions. *Chazal* say, “Nullify your will to His will.” In other words, when you have no desires of your own, because you are nullified to Hashem, then the name of Hashem comes upon you. And then all those who think of opposing you won’t be able to oppose you, because you are connected to the oneness of Hashem.

It is brought in our *sefarim* that *Moshiach* will come with “weapons of war” and win over the entire world. People interpret this to mean that *Moshiach* will reveal how good prevails over evil. Will he throw a bomb on the world? Iran can do that too. How would that bring peace to the world?! How will he ‘win’ over the entire world?

He will be connected to the oneness of Hashem, thus, he will connect to all of Creation in his enormous love. *Moshiach* will win not through the conventional means

of fighting, but because he will be utterly connected to oneness of Hashem, and nothing can oppose the oneness of Hashem.

Avraham *Avinu* was thrown into a fire and was untouched. The depth of this was because he was so connected to the oneness of Hashem that nothing could harm him. It wasn't just a miracle. It was because he lived in a world where there was no opposition, because he was connected to the oneness of Hashem. Thus, he was totally nullified to Hashem, and therefore nothing could harm him. Of course, people fought him. He had wars. But in his soul, he was at peace with others, and that is why he could not be hurt by anyone.

Access To Your Inner Peace

The *Yechidah* in us can provide us with entirely new feelings/emotions altogether.

Our body and soul are in contradiction with each other. Our soul lives in complete oneness, while our body cannot come to terms with oneness. We cannot live in the state of complete oneness with others, because the peace of the future is not here yet. The view of our soul, this unity with the world, is not yet manifest in the physical world, for the time being. But we can still have some access to the deep peace that is in the soul and make use of it sometimes.

One can learn how to be amongst people who are saying things against him, but in his soul, he is living with inner peace. He hears what they are saying, but it doesn't bother him, because he lives in place of no opposition.

People tend to be either realistic or delusional. Either people are realistic and they do not believe in any inner realities, or they go in the opposite direction and believe in spirituality, but they become delusional and ignore the external, physical dimension of our world. Both perspectives are wrong.

We are really a contradiction; our body tells us one viewpoint, while our soul tells us one viewpoint, and we can't live with one of them alone. We need to fuse them together and handle the contradicting perspectives. There are different layers in us that have different perspectives towards reality. Just as there many opinions amongst people, so are there many opinions within our own selves.

This sounds like we are unstable! But we can be very stable, even though we have different viewpoints going on inside ourselves.¹⁹

Chazal say that one must speak the “truth that is on his heart” (“*doiver emes b’levovo*”) – his mouth and heart should be in line with each other (*piv v’libo shavin*). The level of the heart can change each day, therefore, a person’s perspective changes each day. We have five parts in our soul – the *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, *Chayah* and *Yechidah*. There are times when we are on high level and times when we are lower. When we speak out what’s on our heart, it changes according to the level we are at.

If someone doesn’t speak from his soul, he is talking from his dry intellect. But if one speaks from his heart because he has opened his soul, then he can feel this in himself that he has different opinions towards the same subject, depending on the day, because the level of his soul fluctuates each day.

Thus, the victory over the Greeks was because they revealed their *Yechidah*, the point in the soul where is no oppositions, and that was how they won, because nothing can oppose the all-inclusive point in the soul.

How To Win Over All Oppositions

Let’s apply this now to our own lives. We all have oppositions with others – how do we fight properly when those inevitable fights come?

If we just try to win, we won’t win. We will just have fights, We won’t reach real victory.

I am not saying that peace can win everything and that you can sit back and relax that everything will just work out. This isn’t feasible at all, because we do have fights. The Torah speaks about fighting wars, either as an obligation or as a choice, but there are always wars and fights with others in our life.

19 On an interesting note, the Rav responded to a questioner in middle of this shiur that often a person will go to a psychologist and try to sort out his contradicting goals he has in his life, and he will be told by the psychologist that he is delusional and a living contradiction. In reality, though, we are all full of contradicting desires – desires of the body and desires of the soul, and there is nothing wrong with this at all, because our soul is structured that way....

How should we go about our fights, when those inevitable fights come? We need to fight not from fighting, but from using our power of inner peace, to reveal the point in us which has no wars, which is the *Yechidah*. Of course, you can't see this reality in the physical world; it is an inner reality that is deep within the soul.

You can solve a fight in just half a minute, if you make sure to always access this deep power of the soul [when you yearn for peace]. When one accesses this inner peace in himself, his enemies disappear, and people will not fight him!

I am not saying that this will drive away all people who fight you, because the Greeks were certainly trying to fight the Chashmonaim even though the Chashmonaim had reached their inner peace, and in addition, we currently live in a world in which the "50th Gate of Impurity" surrounds us, which is very difficult to send off. But the point is that when you access the inner peace of the soul, the enemies around you won't be able to win against you, because the fight will lose its zenith, for the entire fight is being fueled by the fact that there each of the two side is warring against each other.

Once one of the sides reaches a place inside himself in which there is no war, the entire war loses its fuel, and thus the war will cease on its own.

There are two ways to get rid of an enemy. Either you can fight with him and try to drive him away, or you can make peace with him, by uncovering your own ability of inner peace. When you uncover a peace in your own soul, your opposition will feel somewhat that you want peace, and when he feels your wish for peace, he will stop fighting you.

There will be no place for a fight. Your opposition might not be aware why he is losing interest in fighting you, but he will still feel somewhat that there is no place now for a fight.

I will repeat and emphasize again that this inner solution does not work 100%. If it would, then our body would cease, and we would only be souls with no body. This is not possible in the current situation in the world, where we are not yet in the future. But if you make use of this point of the soul, it will greatly affect even your physical situation and radiate some of its light.

Living With An Inner Contradiction

When we reveal our *Yechidah* of the soul, we gain a new perspective on reality, and the old reality has no bearing on us anymore.

Of Shabbos, *Chazal* say that you should consider it “as if all your work is done”. What does that mean? To pretend that your situation at work is fine just because it’s Shabbos? We all know good and well that Sundays can be stressful and full of problems we have to deal with. But it’s because there is a part in our soul which has the ability to view all our work “as if” it is done. The *Yechidah* is the point inside us which tells us that all is finished and done, that there are no problems,

If a person doesn’t want to accept that there can be inside him this deep perspective on reality, then indeed, he will have no way of relating to this concept. He might feel that he is a realistic person who faces the facts of reality and that the view of the *Yechidah* is an escape from reality, so why fool yourself with it. After all, when a person hears about the *Yechidah*’s view on reality and he tells it over to others, what kind of reaction does he usually get from others? He will be told that he is being delusional, that he is trying to run away from life, that he can’t deal with reality, that he is too idealistic in his aspirations, that he’s not being realistic...

But in the future, it will be a day that is entirely Shabbos, and there will be peace and serenity for the entire world; nowadays, that reality hasn’t been realized yet, but we still can have some access to it and touch it. Therefore, while we certainly have to be realistic in our life and not pretend that we have no problems or challenges, there is a point in our soul in which there exists *no challenges*.

Of course, we cannot live entirely in that place in our soul, because that is running away from the external layer of reality. We do not mean at all for one to become delusional and run away into himself and escape reality. Rather, what we mean is to believe that there is such a power in yourself, and when you believe in this feeling, you will feel the reality that is behind that feeling.

When you feel that reality, you will discover a contradiction. On one hand, you have a point in yourself which is telling you that there are no problems, but at the same time, you see problems in front of you in the world that you live in. You can learn how to live with contradiction, however.

There are some days in which we feel completely serene and that we have no problems, and the next day, we feel like our entire world has come crashing down. What is the inner reason for this? It is because there are some days in which we live very internally, and our perspective on our life is then coming from our deep place in the soul that feels how there are no problems.

So I am not saying that you should run away into yourself all the time. I am merely trying to tell you that there does exist a place in yourself in which you can return to every here and there to draw vitality from, and that will give you the strength to go back into your problems and deal with them with renewed vigor.

If a person only knows of the problems in his life, and he has no inner place of refuge in himself, he will have no vitality at all in his life. He only lives within his problems, and problems do not provide us with vitality. A person has to know how to escape the stress of life to a place in himself where he can draw forth vitality [when he accesses the calmness in his soul], and then when he returns to his problems, he will be able to feel alive even amidst his problems; he will not get drained from his problems and lose his vitality.

When you access your inner peace in the soul, you get used to the concept of a world in which there are no problems, and then when you return to the problems, you will know how to deal with them properly, even as you are amidst a problem. As you are going through the problem, you will be able to be above it.

In Conclusion

The Greeks were defeated because the Chashmonaim accessed this deep power, of recognizing that there is only one reality, in which there are no oppositions. They “made themselves small”, in other words, they nullified their existence and did not see themselves as apart from others, therefore, they arrived at the deep perspective that there is a place in which there are no wars. Because they reached this place in which there are no wars, nothing could oppose them, and that was how they achieved victory.

May we merit to be granted by Hashem the power to connect deeply into our souls and from that we will be able to escape all our wars, and from that, we will merit the complete revelation of the days of *Moshiach*.

11 | *Non-Movement*

Identifying With the Concept of Non-Movement

We will try here to learn more about the *Yechidah*. Our *Yechidah* is the innermost point of our soul, and in order to reach it, we first need to recognize it. Here, we will explain a particular point about the *Yechidah*.

All of Creation is moving, every moment. All that is in the galaxy revolves, and time as well is always moving. Creation, in essence, is a constant movement. Only Hashem doesn't move – “He was, He is, and He always will be.” Hashem is not found in movement, but in non-movement.

We are familiar with the concept of movement, but we are not used to the concept of non-movement. Do we see anything that doesn't move? Our eyes always see things that move. We know that even the planets and stars, which appear to be still, are really always moving, because they are all in orbit.

Does our soul as contain a non-moving point? Our emotions and thoughts are always moving, because we keep going through hundreds and thousands of emotions and thoughts. But deeper in the soul, there is a place in the soul that doesn't move at all.

We can't see this non-movement, though. We see the street when it not moving with cars, but we can't see the point of non-movement in our soul, at least with our physical eyes.

Why must we seek the power of non-movement? What is to be gained from it?

Non-Movement: Resembling Hashem

Recognizing the non-moving point in the soul is a part of how we connect ourselves to Hashem. In order to connect to Hashem, we are supposed to resemble Him; *Chazal* state that in order to cleave to Hashem, “*Hevay domeh lo*”, “You shall resemble Him”. The non-moving part of the soul is called “*doimem*” (still, or silent),

from the word “*domeh*”. We begin to “resemble” Hashem’s ways by reaching our ability within ourselves to be “non-moving”. That is how we can, so to speak, “resemble” Hashem and cleave to Him. When we reveal that, we will have the power to cleave to Him.

There is another reason, an external reason, of why we need to make use of the power of non-movement. When we are impulsive and we have little control over our movements, this causes us to have emotional suffering. So we can recognize that there is a need to still our movements, so that we can learn how to be less impulsive. It teaches us self-control.

The popular way of acquiring non-movement (or becoming calm) is through learning how to weakening the movements. But there is another way, an inner way, of how to acquire it. When a person wishes to free himself from impulsivity or from negative movements (in his emotions or thoughts) that are bothering him, he can leave the mode of “movement” altogether and enter into a mode of “non-movement” in his soul. This will in turn silence all his various “movements” as a direct result.

To illustrate, when a person is being swept by a wave, either he can try to fight the wave, or he can stay underwater, and the wave will not take him in, because he has ducked it.

When one is in the midst of some kind of emotional turmoil – each to his own – one method which people try is to weaken the movement somehow, to slow it down. But there is another way: to leave the mode of “movement” in his soul and enter into “non-movement”, and this in turn will silence any movements as a result.

This is because the entire movement is being fueled by the movement. Once one leaves his inner movements, the movement loses its power to function, so the unwanted movement will cease on its own.

In the past, we have defined how the entire work of man on this world is to learn the art of balancing his inner movements. Our entire problem is when we have extreme movements that are unbalanced, thus our main task is to learn how to balance our movements. This we addressed in *Da Es Atzmechal/Getting To Know Your Self*.

In this series, however, we are speaking about the deeper part of our soul, the *Yechidah*, and it requires a whole different kind of inner calm. In order to gain the

inner calm that is required to reach your individual *Yechidah*, you need to reach a point of non-movement in yourself, and this in turn will silence your various movements in your soul.

Thus, there are two reasons why we need to gain the power of non-movement. The inner reason why we need it, the purpose, is because non-movement is what helps us “resemble” Hashem, Who is non-moving, which is how we cleave to Him.

The second reason of why we need it, which is the external use of this power, is to learn how to still our movements so that we can know how to leave the mode of movement. After we learn how to balance our movements, we must progress to the higher stage, which is to leave movement altogether.

This is not just about silencing anger or other intense emotions. It can silence negative emotions, but that’s all a result. It’s all coming from the power of non-movement. When one reaches non-movement in his soul, it follows automatically that his negative emotions will be silenced. It can help a person calm down from his anger, or let go of a desire he wants badly, etc.

The Sage Hilel never got angry at anyone, because he felt nullified to others. How did he do this? He nullified himself by entering non-movement, thus it was and to get him angry. It was not simply that he reached inner calm. He reached humility, a power that is deeper than inner calm – a power in which there is no movement at all.

Non-Movement: The Inner Method of How To Calm Down

To apply this concept, let’s say a person is in midst of getting angry. How can he calm himself?

There are many methods that can work. One method is to take your mind off your problems by thinking about something else (*hesech hadaas*). Another method is to think positive thoughts about people, or to judge others favorably. Another method is to have *emunah* that all is decreed upon me by Hashem. These are all true methods that can work.

But it can be solved with another way – as long as you have access to it: through reaching the power of non-movement, all these problems go away on their own.

Let us try to explore this concept more deeply.

When the Jewish people left Egypt and went to the desert, they essentially entered non-movement. They came to the sea, and they could not move. It seemed like the worse situation. What did they do? They didn't move. They stayed where they were and connected themselves with Hashem, and that was the inner reason why the Egyptians couldn't attack them. The depth of this is that non-movement is the power that can protect a person from any harmful 'movements' coming his way.

People wonder what is there to be gained from non-movement. When a person hears about trying not to move for a few minutes so he can get calm, what often happens? A person sits on a chair, doesn't do anything, and after a few minutes, he's already going crazy. People do not go for non-movement. They feel like they are trapped in the plague of darkness which the Egyptians were hit with. Why? It is because we are mostly getting all our vitality in life from various movements, so we can relate only to movement, and we are not used to gaining any sense of vitality from non-movement.

But the truth is that movement is only one side of the coin in life. The other side of the coin in our life is non-movement. We need to uncover this power. We need to look into our daily life and see if we ever get vitality from non-vitality.

Vitality From Non-Movement

If you reflect, we can see that we do. We have six days of the week, and we have Shabbos. The six days of the week are for action, for movement. Shabbos is for non-movement, because Shabbos is the day of rest, the day where we cease from our movements. From where do we mainly get our vitality from? It is clear to all of us that Shabbos gives us more vitality than the weekdays. Thus, our main vitality needs to be coming from non-movement, not from movement.

We must learn how to derive vitality from both modes of our live – our movement, and our non-movement. Shabbos is called “source of blessing”, so it is our main source of vitality. Just as we gain vitality from actions, so can we gain vitality from non-action. However, non-action only gives you vitality when you access the point of non-movement in the soul.

Do we see non-movement as another source of vitality to us? If “yes”, then we have both sources of vitality, movement and non-movement, and we will have both the six days of the week and Shabbos in our soul, which are both needed. If a person only gets vitality from movement, then all he will have is the “six days of work” in his soul, and he will have no Shabbos in his soul.

During the week, we mainly live from non-movement, and on Shabbos we live from movement. But in our soul, it is possible for us to live all the time from both movement and non-movement. If a person doesn’t know how to gain vitality from non-movement, he will find non-movement to be taxing, because he will grow anxious when he doesn’t move. Therefore, a person should get used to non-movement when he’s calm, and not wait to acquire it when he’s anxious, so that he can give himself the strength to easily enter into non-movement when the time calls for it.

So must one first identify that there is a place in himself in which he derives vitality from non-movement. As an example, we have 248 positive *mitzvos* and 365 negative commandments; both give us vitality. Just as doing a *mitzvah* makes us feel more alive, so does not committing a sin provide us with vitality.

The Yechidah: The Non-Moving Point of the Soul

Our *Yechidah* is the place of non-movement in the soul. The outer four parts of the soul – our *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, and *Chayah*, are all in movement. The *Yechidah* is where we can derive vitality from non-action; it is the “Shabbos” in the soul. The other four parts of the soul are like the six days of the week that are in the soul.

Thus, our actions help us reveal the outer parts of the soul, while “non-action” helps one reach the *Yechidah*. This awareness to the concept of non-movement is the key to accessing the *Yechidah*.

The Gains of Non-Movement

The concept of non-movement seems to go against our logic. If you’re trying to open a door, don’t you need to do something to get into it? How does ‘not’ doing anything help you get into something?

But if we reflect, we can see that most of our success comes from not doing something, not from doing something. First we need to see this concept from our own physical world, so that we can relate to the inner world we are describing. (There is always a rule that you need to be able to first identify with a concept from this physical world in order to understand anything about the spiritual world).

There are people who are very action-oriented, and as soon as they get up in the morning, they ask themselves, “What needs to be done today?” Others are less action-oriented, and they focus more on what to avoid that day. In the world of business, you can make money either by taking action – and sometimes, by not taking action. Or, you get a phone call asking you to invest some money in something, and you realize that it’s a scam, so you don’t react to the caller. This is not just because of *hashgacha peratis* (Divine Providence), even though it is true that all is run by Hashem’s Divine Providence. The deeper reason is because knowing how to *not* move is often what saves us from danger. There are many more examples of the concept as well.

Often, you gain precisely when you *don’t* do anything. It is the things that we don’t *do* which help us much more than the things that we *do*.

When Laziness Is Good And When It Is Evil

“Non-action” (or non-movement) is referred to as the “holy laziness”. The Sages praised the women for being lazy not to sin with the Golden Calf, which teaches us that there can be a holy kind of laziness. What is holy laziness? It is when one knows how to use the power of non-movement in its proper place.

Normally, laziness is detrimental, and this is when laziness stems from any of the outer four layers of the soul. But when one discovers the power of holy non-movement, such laziness is constructive and holy. It is when one knows how to *not* act.

The concept of *menuchah*, to have serenity [on Shabbos], does not come from laziness. If a person keeps Shabbos because he’s lazy and he doesn’t feel like working, is that called the *menuchah* of Shabbos? Clearly, not. One who would like to work, but he silences those movements because it is Shabbos – this is called the *menuchah* of Shabbos. Such a person is resting from work. *Menuchah* is a holy power. *Savlanus*,

patience, is also a holy power. Laziness, also, can be holy – when it is used in a situation that calls for non-movement.

When one longs for Shabbos and he wishes it wouldn't end, it is because he is enjoying his *menuchah*. This is not laziness. If a person is lazy because he doesn't want to work, that is laziness. But when a person has reached *menuchah* and he is craving it, it is because he has reached the vitality of non-movement, thus, he wishes it could remain Shabbos and not have to go back to work.

Without recognizing the gains of non-movement, he won't be able to reach the *Yechidah* either, and his laziness is evil too. A person needs to learn how to gain vitality from non-movement.

There are people who wait all year for the winter so that they will see the snow, and they gain vitality from this. But this is not what it means to gain vitality from non-movement. We are referring to a deep source of vitality from non-movement that is inside the soul of a person. It cannot be described in words, just like we cannot describe what vitality from actions feels like. You need to enjoy non-movement no less than how you enjoy movement.

As we said before, we have both *mitzvos* and negative commandments, and we have both the six days of the week and Shabbos, because we need both for our vitality. Our actions alone which we do will not bring us to our purpose. If we only desist from movement, this will also not bring us to our purpose. We must combine our actions together with the power of non-movement, and these two abilities together will bring us to our purpose, just as we need both the six days of the week and Shabbos. Shabbos is the situation of the Next World, but in order to merit it, the Sages say that “One who toils on Erev Shabbos, will eat on Shabbos.”

Examining Our Source of Vitality In Our Actions

Earlier, I asked you if you ever derive vitality from non-movement. Now I will ask you an opposite question: You are already assuming that you gain vitality from the positive actions you do, such as when you do a *mitzvah*. What exactly is giving you vitality when you do a *mitzvah*?

Before we learn how to gain vitality from non-action, let us first ask ourselves if the actions we are gaining vitality from are coming from a good source or not. If we are gaining vitality from negative kinds of actions, than we are drawing vitality from a negative source, which harms us.

If a person runs after an improper desire, he is gaining vitality from a negative kind of action, and he is drawing vitality from a negative source.

There are also actions we do in which it is not clear if we are really gaining positive vitality or not from the act. For example, if a person is kind to others and he gains honor from this, is he getting vitality from the fact that he is bestowing others, or because he gets honor? It is very subtle discerning that one needs to make. Just as need to know where our vitality is coming from in our actions, so must we discern even in our holy actions where exactly where we are getting vitality from.

The Kamarna Rebbe said that he suspected himself of gaining vitality from the honor he feels in doing *mitzvos*, and not from the actual *mitzvos* he is doing. A person might be enjoying doing a *mitzvah*, but it's really his ego that he is enjoying. The concept is that one has to know if his vitality from even his positive actions if it is coming from the good deed, or from the ego in the act.

Thus, the question of where we are deriving vitality from applies to both the areas of our actions as well as non-action.

Incorporating Non-Action Within Action

We are slowly understanding that non-movement comes from a deeper part of ourselves, and how it can be a source of vitality for us, just as much as movement makes us feel more alive.

Now we will describe a deeper point about this.

The *Mishna in Avos* states, “It is not upon you to complete the task, nor are you exempt from it.” This describes the concept here. Every action needs to be completed by a non-movement. Part of an action is what I do (“you are not exempt from it”), and after I do it, I must realize that I did not complete it (“it is not upon you to complete”). So in every action, there is a part that I do, and a part that I do not do.

Why must all actions be comprised of these two factors? There are a few reasons. With regards to our current discussion, when a person does any action, either from his *Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah, Chayah* - must the *Yechidah* be absent? Even in the actions you perform, there can be a revelation of *Yechidah*. When you do something, you can gain vitality even from the aspect of non-action in the action.

Take a look at our daily life. We do many actions – do we ever complete any of them? We can all recognize that nothing ever gets finished. We are really never to get anything done. It is to show us that we need to let go of action, even amidst our actions.

Hashem created us so that we can reach perfection, thus we must perfect ourselves. But if we cannot be perfect ourselves anyway, for what purpose did Hashem create us for? If Hashem wants us to reach perfection, why didn't He just create us perfect? The answer is: perfection is not just reached through what I do, but also through what I *don't* do.

This is essentially when is **aware** as he does something that he can also have non-movement at the same time, and he gains vitality as well from the non-movement.

One who does not perform is lazy. One who only acts has no revelation of *Yechidah*. How then must we act? To sometimes act and sometimes not act?! The correct way is that when you act, you can also be aware of non-action, and to receive vitality even from the part in the act that you are not doing. This is how you gain vitality from both the action as well as the non-action.

We gain vitality from our *mitzvos*, but we can also gain vitality when we don't sin – when we are aware that we can also gain vitality from non-action. To illustrate further, it is forbidden for one to add onto the *mitzvos* of the Torah; one may not wear five compartments in his *Tefillin*, since the requirement is only to wear four. This shows us that just like we receive vitality from doing *mitzvos*, so do we receive vitality from not doing something.

Daily Opportunities To Access Non-Movement

If we look at our daily life we can see many opportunities in which we can do this. For example, you are trying to cross the street, and it's taking time. Most people get

impatient when they are waiting to cross the street. But it is not just a time for us to practice patience. It can be a deeper exercise for you: you can learn how to stop your movements and enjoy non-movement.

This is a way for you to gain vitality when you act/expand and don't act/contract. It doesn't just mean to pause your movements and not do anything. Just like a person feels more alive when he expands his soul and does action, so can a person feel more alive sometimes by contracting and not doing anything. Shabbos is about non-action, but it is preceded with six days of the week, because we need both.

We have many times a day in which we can pause our movements; there are extreme movements as well as small movements that we can halt. For example, if you wanted to give something to your child and he didn't want it, like if you wanted to give him a kiss and he doesn't want one, instead of feeling suffering at this, you can derive vitality from it, because your movement has been silenced.

I am not saying that you should deliberately silence all your movements! Rather, when the situation comes your way in which you aren't able to perform the movement you wanted to do, you can derive vitality from this.

In Conclusion

So as we gain vitality from our actions, which come from the outer four layers of the soul, we also need to learn how to gain vitality from non-action, which helps us recognize what our *Yechidah* is. When we gain vitality from non-action, this gives us the power to learn how to feel nullified to Hashem, and then we will merit to resemble Him and to cleave to Him completely.

12 | *Faith Vs. Free Will*

The Concepts of Bechirah (Free Will) and Yediah (Higher Knowledge)

We will try here with the help of Hashem to explain another perspective about the *Yechidah* in our soul.

One of the well-known questions – and perhaps we can say that it is the question of all questions – is the issue of “*bechirah*” (free will) vs. “*yediah*” (“the knowledge”, the fact that G-d knows everything).

Chazal (in *Pirkei Avos*) state that everything is known to Hashem already before a person is born; “All is seen from above” (*hakol tzafuy m'lamaaloh*). All is known to Hashem – everything. Hashem knows what every person will ever do, even before the person has done it. On the other hand, *Chazal* also state that man has the power of free will (*bechirah*) to choose to do an action or to hold back.

It's a contradiction. If Hashem knows what a person will do, then there is no free will! And if there is free will, how can Hashem know what the person will do, when he hasn't chosen yet?

This question is actually found in *Tikkunei HaZohar*, and there is an answer there. There is also another answer in the writings of the Ramban. There are tens of answers to this question. But there is another answer, and it pertains directly to our discussion, which is about the *Yechidah* of our soul.

The Baal Shem Tov says that Torah is from the word *horaah* because everything in the Torah teaches us something. Therefore, even if one feels that this question doesn't pertain to him, it still has some relevance. We will reflect on how this matter has relevance to each of us.

Bechirah - Free Will To Choose

Free will is called *bechirah*, and the concept that Hashem knows all is called *yediah*. The two concepts contradict each other. However, there is a rule that whenever there

are two points, there is always a third point between them that serves as the connecting point in between them. In other words, there is a way to reconcile the two contradicting concepts when we discover the third, middle area between them, which will harmonize them together. There must be a point between them which answers the contradiction, which we will try to discover.

First we will analyze what *bechirah* is, what *yediah* is, and how the two concepts can merge harmoniously. Then we will be able to see how this matter is relevant to us with regards to learning about our *Yechidah* of the soul.

Free will is a basic fundamental we all have. Hashem created the world in order to bestow good upon us, and we would be embarrassed to take from Him without having to work hard for it. It would be “bread of shame”, as the *Talmud Yerushalmi* states. For this reason, Hashem gave us free will, so that we will choose good on our own, by working hard; in this way, when we are eventually rewarded, we can enjoy our reward, feeling that we have deserved it, as opposed to taking it undeservedly [and thus shamefully], which would ruin our joy of reward.

So it is clear to us why there must be a rule of free will. There are many other reasons as well why there must be free will, but this is the main reason. If someone denies that there is free will, he is basically denying the whole design of Creation, as was explained.

Yediah – Hashem Knows Everything That Will Happen

Hashem knows everything. Why does Hashem need to know everything? Hashem is all-knowing, so this is not a question. Rather, our question is: Why did the Sages reveal to us that He knows everything? Why was it necessary for the Sages to let us know this fact? It was so that we should know that since Hashem knows all that we will do even before we do it, that reveals to us how Hashem is present in our very action.

The purpose of Creation is to recognize Hashem, and this revelation has to be felt in our minds and hearts. Therefore, if one has the mindset that his actions are due to his own power, his actions do not reveal Hashem. But if one realizes that all his actions are being enabled by Hashem, even though it is person who chose according

to his own free accord to perform the action, then this reveals to the doer Who is behind the action: Hashem.

That is why it is important for us to know that Hashem knows all that we will do; it is part of our *emunah*. So when I attribute my actions to my own power, I am missing a recognition of Hashem in the act; therefore, it is necessary for me to know that Hashem knows all that I will do, and in this way, the act that I do reveals Hashem.

The Question of Yediah Vs. Bechirah

We have explained what *bechirah* is, what *yediah* is, and why both are needed. The question we still remain with, though, is: How are these two concepts not a contradiction? If Hashem knows everything that a person will do, then how do people have free will? For example, you *davened* in the morning. Who enabled this – you, or Hashem? If you chose to do it, then who let it happen - you, or Hashem? Perhaps the answer is that when you choose to do an action, it is being enabled by you, and when you don't choose, Hashem is enabling it to happen. If that is true, then the understanding is that sometimes we act upon *bechirah* and sometimes we act upon *yediah*.

However, this cannot be the answer. If the purpose of Creation is that Hashem be revealed in all of man's actions, then He must be revealed in *all* of a person's actions, not just in some of them. So this is our question: If I choose how I will act, then how is Hashem revealed through all of my actions (*yediah*)? And if the answer is instead that Hashem is enabling all of my actions, even when I choose, then where is my *bechirah*/free will? There are all kinds of answers, as we said earlier; there are more than 20 answers found to this question. But I am not coming here to tell you all those answers. In relevance to us, the answer has to do with our *Yechidah* of the soul, which is our discussion.

We Are A "Double Existence"

The deep answer is that we are able to live a "double" kind of life, as we will explain.

The outer four layers of our soul (*Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah* and *Chayah*) experience *bechirah*, while the inner layer of our soul, the *Yechidah*, is the part in us which is at the view of *yediah*.

Earlier, we explained this concept in several angles: that since man is comprised of layers, there are two views going on in us at once: the view of our body, and the view of our inner being, our soul. We applied this concept to different areas. One example was that even as one does a physical action, he can still be above the action he is performing; he can be calm even as he's amidst movement. This was also the concept behind the topic of Chapter Ten, in which we explained the inner perspective of how one can fight his opposition yet still be at peace with them.

We see from these above two examples that a person experiences two contradictory layers in himself at once – we are able to view the same exact situation with two opposite perspectives: the perspective that comes from our body, and the inner perspective on reality, which comes from our soul.

If we only live with the outer layers of the soul – otherwise known as our power of *bechirah* - than we cannot handle how we are both a body and a soul, and we won't be able to go beyond the “either or” way of thinking. “Are we a soul, or a body? Either, or.” We won't be able to understand that we really contain in ourselves two different perspectives towards the same situation.

But the deep understanding, as we have explained in the previous chapters, is that Hashem created us a “double” kind of existence, which includes a body (otherwise known as the four outer layers of the soul) and a soul (or the innermost layer of the soul, which is the *Yechidah*), and therefore, we have in ourselves two completely different views at once towards the same reality.

The *Midrash* recounts that when Rivkah *Imeinu* was pregnant with Yaakov *Avinu* and Esav and she did not know that she was expecting twins, when she would walk by a *beis midrash* Yaakov would try to come out, and when she walked by the idol houses Esav wanted to come out. She was confused: Is the baby going to be righteous, or wicked? She did not know the meaning of this, so she went to the leaders Shem and Ever to ask them what kind of child she was having. They told her that there were two nations growing inside her, and then she understood. We see from here that it is hard for us to accept that we can have two perspectives at once.

We tend to think that we are “either, or”, but that we can’t be both. In reality, though, we are a multi-layered existence, so there exists two completely different views inside us.

The Ability To Deal With Paradox

If we just view ourselves as exclusively a *Yechidah* and with no other outer layers in our soul, then we cannot either deal with the contradiction and paradox that we are. Instead, we must view ourselves with the awareness that there are really two completely different dimensions going on inside at us at once, and then it will be easier for us to accept the inner contradiction inside us.

To illustrate how we deal with a contradiction, when a person is informed of his father’s death, the *halacha* is that he must make the blessing of *Baruch Dayan HaEmes* (Blessed Is The Truthful Judge), but he must also make a blessing of *Shehechyanu* if he is receiving an inheritance. This is a total contradiction - at the very same time that one must express his sadness, he must also make a blessing over his happiness at receiving an inheritance. He is experiencing contradictory emotions - and both of them are valid.

If one makes a *bris* for his son on *Tisha B’Av*, there is a festive meal at night. And at every *bris*, although the baby is in pain and therefore we don’t prolong the blessings, we still recite a *Shehechyanu* blessing, which expresses happiness that we have reached such a time. A *bris* on *Tisha B’Av* also requires a *Shehechyanu* blessing. How can that be? How can we express joy during a time of sadness? The answer is: A Jew has the power to live with contradictions. If one cannot deal with contradictory concepts going on at the same time, he spends his entire life in a closed corridor.

Hashem made a separation between day and night. Day and night are called “one day”, because together, they comprise the day. With regards to our soul, there is also a mix of darkness and light as well in our own soul. It is a contradiction, but there is nothing wrong with this. It is how we recognize ourselves. If one denies the fact that he is a contradiction, because he cannot come to terms with it, he is denying that he is human, and he thinks he is like an angel. (On a deeper note, an angel also has contradictions, but we won’t get into that now).

If we can deal with the fact that we are a contradiction, the fact that we are a paradoxical kind of existence, then we will be able to better understand ourselves.

So there is a part in our soul which has the view of *bechirah*, and another part of our soul that has the view of *yediah*. Just like a person's mood can change depending on what time of the day it is, and therefore a person has different perspectives on a situation depending on what his mood and age is, so too does our soul have different perspectives at once, because it has layers.

There is a layer in our soul which lives in *bechirah*, and a layer which lives in *yediah*. We need to identify which part of us is the view of *bechirah* and which is the view of *yechidah*, without mixing them up.

Only The Yechidah Can Totally Reveal Hashem

In the earlier chapters, we explained that the outer layers of our soul feel a divided kind of reality (*cheilek*), while the inner layer of our soul, the *Yechidah*, has a view of an all-inclusive reality (*kol*). The purpose of Creation is that Hashem be revealed in everything. If He is only revealed partially in Creation, He is not revealed in the entire Creation, because a divided piece cannot reveal something that is all-inclusive. Only something all-inclusive can reveal Hashem entirely.

Now that we have explained the above, we can understand the following: The outer layers of our soul, which are divided parts - thus they are not all-inclusive – can only reveal a “partial” revelation of *emunah*.

For example, using the *Nefesh* part of the soul can reveal a “partial” level of *emunah*. From the viewpoint of the *Nefesh*, it is up to me to act properly, and I must also believe that all is up to Hashem, but this does not permit me to refrain from acting. Although Hashem is always revealed in one's actions, He is not revealed *completely* in the action - from the view of the *Nefesh*.

The same is true with the view from our *Ruach*, *Neshamah* and *Chayah*. The *emunah* in Hashem, through these outer layers of the soul, is only partial *emunah*, not complete *emunah*; therefore, the *emunah* that we reach through these outer layers of the soul does not allow us to withhold *bechirah*.

The *Yechidah*, however, is not another division in the soul; it is an entirely different point in the soul which contains an all-inclusive and undivided reality, a reality in which complete *emunah* in Hashem is revealed and realized. It reveals Hashem completely, and that is indeed the purpose of the *Yechidah*.

As long as the *Yechidah* hasn't been revealed in the world, the complete revelation of Hashem will not either be revealed on the world.²⁰ Thus, the *Yechidah* in our soul is the point of complete *emunah* in Hashem [or *yediah*], and its very essence does not allow for *bechirah*. If it would allow for *bechirah*, there would still be an "I" present, and the "I" would prevent the revelation of Hashem.

Now we can see where *yediah* and *bechirah* are located in our soul. *Yediah* is in our *Yechidah*, not in the outer layers of our soul. *Bechirah* can only exist on the outer four layers of the soul, and not in the *Yechidah*.

We Are A Multi-Layered Existence

We have seen how we are a multi-layered existence.

However, we still remain with the question that we began this chapter with: Which is the true view on reality – *yediah*, or *bechirah*?

If a person would be made up of just one soul layer, the answer would be simple. But we are made up of five soul layers, so the answer is therefore complicating. *Yediah* is the view from our inner layer of the soul, and *bechirah* is the view we see through the outer four layers of our soul.

Maybe a person will still ask: "In the end of the day, does Hashem know everything that man will do, or not?" The answer is, though, that Hashem is endless, so He is beyond our understanding. If so, why are we trying to know if He knows everything or not? It is not to tell ourselves that Hashem knows everything. It is so that we can tell ourselves how we should live, according to this concept.

²⁰ See *Sukkos #009 – A Jew's Inner Seal*.

Thus, we have learned that we are a double kind of existence. Our soul is not one piece – it is multi-layered. Compare this to a person riding a horse has to whip the horse so it will run, and he also has a rope to pull back the horse.

So too, we have different parts in our soul, and each part needs to be fed in a different way. The *Yechidah* is fed through the *emunah* in the concept of *yediah*, that Hashem knows everything; and the other four layers of the soul are fed through making use of our power of *bechirah*, to know that you are responsible for your actions and thus choose to act properly – as one of the Sage said, “The matter is dependent on me.”

Misconceptions

However, normally, what happens? People usually think they are just one piece, viewing themselves in terms of “either, or”, not realizing that the soul is multi-layered.

As a result, we usually find two kinds of people in the world: one kind of person places all his emphasis on the power of *bechirah*/choosing and ignore *emunah/yediah*/faith in Hashem, and another kind of person will emphasize only *emunah/yediah* but he will dismiss his *bechirah*.

One type of person thinks that *bechirah* is everything; he considers himself to be in charge of all his choices. When he succeeds, he attributes success to himself, and he becomes haughty with his successes. If he has failures, he also attributes it to himself (And as for when *others* fail him, in his eyes, that’s a different problem...) The haughtier his nature is, the more he will blame others and not himself, and the less haughty he is, the more he will be inclined to blame himself. If he’s somewhere in between, he’s not sure about who is at fault – himself, or others. In either case, such a person only knows of his *bechirah*, and he never accesses *emunah*. He attributes everything to himself, his own decisions, etc.

We can definitely say that there is a gain to this, because when one utilizes *bechirah* properly, he is choosing to keep the Torah and mitzvos. This is the meaning of the possuk, “*And you shall choose life.*” Such a person is accepting responsibility upon himself, which is good. [However, he is only making use of one side of himself.]

The other kind of person goes in the opposite direction. He learns in the holy sefarim about *emunah*, that Hashem is in charge of everything, and he goes overboard with this, deciding that he will let faith rule him, never feeling responsible for his actions. What will happen? He will become a living contradiction. When a person thinks that Hashem will do everything for him, he throws off all his responsibilities, even the entire yoke of Torah and mitzvos, G-d forbid – and it's all in the name of "*emunah*."

As an example, if a person accidentally hurts someone else, normally, he will feel bad about it, and try to work on himself to make sure that such a thing shouldn't happen again. But there are some people who won't even feel bad after hurting others – their thinking is, "I am not responsible. Hashem wanted this person to get hurt."

Going overboard with *emunah* can make a person uproot the entire Torah, *chas v'shalom!* One way how a person uproots the entire Torah is through denying it, but another way is through misguided *emunah!* *Emunah* as well is used for evil – when a person uses *emunah* to deny his responsibilities. There are times when it is actually forbidden to use *emunah*.

Reb Zusha of Anipoli said that there are times in which a person can use the power of denial for holiness: there are times in which one has to deny even his own *emunah*. *Emunah* is evil when a person doesn't want to give to others in need, like if a pauper comes to his door and he refuses to help him, because after all, he has *emunah* that Hashem will help the pauper. Here, the person must believe that if he doesn't give to the person in need, it is he who is responsible for the pauper's suffering, not Hashem.

What usually happens in the way that most people live their life? Interestingly, we switch around the rules of *emunah* and *bechirah* and misuse them. When it comes to helping others, people like to choose *emunah* and not be responsible for others, instead "having faith in Hashem" that Hashem controls everything. And when it comes to our successes, a person tends to attribute success to himself, and not to Hashem.

The correct way to live is exactly the opposite! With others, we are mainly supposed to use *bechirah*, and realize that we are responsible for others, even though it is true that Hashem runs the world and can do anything He wants. And with ourselves, we are supposed to mainly make use of *emunah*. There are more details to every situation, of course, which also need to be deeply examined.

When one lives only with *emunah*, he won't do *mitzvos*, because he says to himself, "If Hashem wants me to put on *tefillin*, then I'll wear it; If I didn't put on *tefillin* today, it must that Hashem didn't want me to wear *tefillin*..."

When To Use Bechirah And When To Use Emunah

One of the Sages said, "The matter is not dependent except on me." This describes the part in yourself which must feel responsible for your actions. Hashem created us with layers; we have inner and outer layers. Our outer layers (our *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah* and *Chayah*) are choosing what we do, and thus we are responsible for our actions. The inner layer of our soul, the *Yechidah*, is the power of *emunah*, to believe that all is from Hashem.

When should we make use of the outer layers, which is *bechirah*, and when should we make use of the inner layer, which is *emunah/yediah*? Before you do any action, your task is to realize that you are responsible to choose correctly, to use your *bechirah* sensibly. After you do your action, however, now is the time to use your *emunah* and believe that everything is from Hashem, that Hashem enabled you to act.

There is also a part in ourselves which knows of *emunah* in Hashem, and this is the inner layer. This is also a difficult concept to live with.

Living With The Inner Contradiction

Thus, we are always living amidst an inner contradiction. On one hand, we are always responsible for our actions, so we must choose properly. At the same time, we also have to know that everything is from Hashem. We live a double life. We choose, we are responsible, but at the same time, we must also know that everything is from Hashem. So before we act, we need to use our *bechirah*; after we act, we need to access our *emunah*.

People find it hard to live with this contradiction, and they find it hard to accept this truth. But the reason for this, as we have explained in the past, is because people are usually living extreme. But there is a middle, balanced path in which a person can harmonize both extremes together.

Without revealing the *Yechidah*, one's *emunah* is superficial, and it doesn't emanate from within himself. We must believe that all is from Hashem, but at the very same time, we must choose the right choices, every day, all the time.

Practically Applying This Concept

Look at the following example. If a pauper comes to your door, you have a *mitzvah* of giving *tzedakah*. You must make use your *bechirah*, make the right choice, and give him *tzedakah*. After he leaves, though, you must now tell yourself that it is not you who supports him, but Hashem, for Hashem is the One who is providing for everyone.

What will happen, though, if I only make use of either *bechirah* or *emunah*? If I only have the viewpoint of *bechirah* and I don't make use of *emunah*, then the act of giving *tzedakah* is solely because "I chose", and while I certainly made the correct decision in giving to him, but, with the more "I" give *tzedakah*, "I" will only inflate my ego; it will not be an act that brings me closer to Hashem. But if I go in the other extreme and I only have the viewpoint of *emunah*, then I won't give to others and I will justify this with *emunah*, that Hashem is running the world anyway.

Practically speaking, before you do any action, realize that you are responsible. After you do it, realize that only Hashem enabled it to happen, and leave it up to Hashem.

(However, this is all a very subtle matter, because a person might use this concept as well after he commits a sin, and then say to himself, "It was all from Hashem." This is clearly a misconception. If a person wouldn't be responsible for his actions, there would be no *mitzvah* to do *teshuvah* for his sins. The fact that we are required to do *teshuvah* shows that we are responsible for our actions. And you can't just repent in your heart – if someone steals, he has to give the money back, or else it is not *teshuvah*.)

Emunah Alone Will Not Work

We must get used to living with a double perspective. We are responsible in how we act, and after we act, we must feel that the outer layers of our soul feel that we

chose to act, and that the inner layer of our soul knows that Hashem enabled it to happen.

If a person only lives with the inner perspective of the *Yechidah*, then he might come to uproot the entire Torah and mitzvos, *chas v'shalom*. Besides for that, he has a misconception about himself: he denies the reality in front of him. Such a person, if would go into his house and find a robber there – will he act so content and just have *emunah*? And if he wouldn't do anything against the robber, would he just remain calm...?

Here is another example. If a person were to write entire volumes explaining that we really don't need to eat in order to survive, practically speaking, there is still no way for him to deny his need to eat. Even if every scholar in the world approves of his book and agrees that his conclusions make sense, still, the author will still need to eat. Reality cannot be denied.

So too, the concept of *emunah*, although it is true, does not change the fact that Hashem designed certain natures that we live with on this world, which we inevitably face and we must deal with. If we would only have been created with a *Yechidah* and with no other outer layers in the soul, we would feel only *emunah*. But the fact is, that we have other layers in our soul as well, which cannot survive on just *emunah*. And we have a physical body that needs to eat.

Another example: If a person has bad *middos* and he denies it, he is denying his nature. He is denying the reality in front of him. One must know his nature, to realize that he chooses, that he is responsible. This is because we have outer layers in our soul, and we are not living with just our *Yechidah*.

Every moment of our life is really a multi-layered experience of our soul. If we want to understand ourselves, we need to know what our soul layers are, and what each of them needs, and then, our daily life must reflect that awareness to our double existence.

Seeing Yourself From Outside/Above Yourself

Earlier, we mentioned the concept that a person can see things from inside himself as well as from outside of himself. The question on this is obvious: How, exactly, can

one do this? How do you see from outside of yourself, when you are clearly inside yourself?

If a person lives only through *bechirah*, he only knows how to live from inside himself and have a view from inside himself. One must instead use his very “I”, which tends to think inside itself, and instead to think from *outside* of himself. So how does one view himself from outside himself? It is that as you are doing something, you can be aware that you are not doing it, for everything is enabled by Hashem.

To illustrate, just as you look at a friend doing something and you have the view of an outsider, so can you look at yourself like an outsider.

This is the meaning of the statement of our Sages, “All can be seen (*tzafuy*) from above.” Even as you are in the action, you can be above it, when you are aware that it is not you who is doing it, but that it’s all being enabled by Hashem.

In Conclusion

As we explained earlier, we are discussing many angles of how to understand our *Yechidah*. The purpose of these chapters is not coming to explain how we get by layer after layer in the *Yechidah*. Rather, we are explaining one perspective the entire time, just through different angles. We are not penetrating further and further into it – rather, we keep circling it, through the different angles that were explained, in each of the previous ten chapters (Chapters 3-12). Each of the previous ten chapters are interconnected, because each of these concepts directly fuel each other.

May Hashem help us to merit to realize that we have opposing views inside our soul, and that we merit to give each soul layer what it needs, without mixing up what their needs are; and that we reach connection with the Creator through a properly balanced soul.

13 | “Nothing Stands In The Way of The Will”

The Five Parts of the Soul Are Always Present In An Action

There is a well-known statement: “Nothing stands in the way of the will.”²¹ We will try to understand the root of this concept. The *Yechidah* in our soul, which we have begun to describe, is really the deeper aspect that takes place in all our actions we do. Either we act from our *Nefesh*, or our *Ruach*, or our *Neshamah*, or our *Chayah*, or our *Yechidah*. In addition to this, in every act we do, we can find these five aspects of the soul.

If every act contains the five parts of the soul, what is the difference between each act? The difference is which part of the soul is being revealed more openly in the act. All of the parts of the soul are present in every action, and the only question is which part of the soul is more revealed in the act.

To illustrate, we know about our conscious and our subconscious. In every act we do, we are consciously aware of certain things, and there are parts that we aren't experiencing consciously, but our subconscious knows.

Therefore, every act has in it the *Yechidah* somehow. Not only are there are certain actions we do which emanate from our *Yechidah*, but in every act, there is also a degree of *Yechidah*. Thus, we can reveal the *Yechidah* in anything we do, not just in certain actions.

Anything we do can be an expression of the *Yechidah*. The only question is how much the *Yechidah* is revealed. It is always functioning, but if it's not consciously revealed, we don't access it. If we become consciously aware of the *Yechidah* in our actions, we access it.

21 Editor's Note: This statement of our Sages does not appear in the words of the Talmud. It is first brought in one of the works of our Rishonim (early commentators who spanned the 10th-15th centuries).

Many Angles Of One Concept

Let's see situations in which the *Yechidah* is more revealed, and where it is usually hidden.

In our *sefarim hakedoshim* we can find that some of our earlier Rabbis did not speak from their *Yechidah*, while there are others who would speak from their *Yechidah*.

One of those who spoke from his *Yechidah* was Reb Nachman of Breslev. There were actually those who opposed him because of this. You can see his revelation of *Yechidah* apparent from many of his statements.

One of the statements which Reb Nachman of Breslev said was, "There is no such thing as despair in the world." This is not because he held that you have to always be happy. Rather, such a statement was uttered from his *Yechidah* – he had a revelation of *Yechidah* in his words. Since he had the *Yechidah* revealed in how he spoke, it follows that there is no such thing as despair in the world, and it follows then that "nothing stands in the way of the will." This follows with another statement he said: "The eternity of Yisrael does not lie." He also said, "A Jew, even if he sins, is still a Jew."

Are these all a bunch of random statements? They are all different angles of the same concept. They are all saying: There is a point in the Jew's soul which is never destroyed. "Nothing stands in the way of the will" – the inner will of a Jew's soul never ceases. "There is no despair in the world" – a Jew never ceases. "A Jew, even when he sins is still a Jew." A Jew is always a Jew and that point never ceases. "The eternity of a Jew does not lie". All of these statements are connected through the *Yechidah*. They are all saying how there is a point in us that cannot be destroyed.

If the *Yechidah* remains concealed within our actions and it doesn't become openly revealed from its hidden state, then a person in this state will exist, but he places himself in a state that eventually ceases. However, if a person reveals the *Yechidah* in his actions, he is living in a state in which he cannot cease.

The revelation of the *Yechidah* gives a person a point that is constant and unceasing.

Unfulfilled Wants

“Nothing stands in the way of the will.” This is very hard to understand. Don’t we have many desires which don’t get fulfilled?

Some people answer to this that if a person wanted something and he didn’t get it, then that shows he didn’t really want it. That makes sense, though, is he had a weak desire for something, but what is there to say if a person really wanted something very much, and he didn’t get what he wanted?

A similar answer to our question is as the *Ibn Ezra* says, that “the pauper is never jealous of marrying the princess”. He has no dream for such a thing because he knows it’s impossible. Some people have dreams of becoming a millionaire. Why don’t these people ever become millionaires? Don’t they really want to be? What happened to the rule of “Nothing stands in the way of the will”? Why don’t all our dreams happen? Maybe it’s because they really don’t want it, because deep down, a person knows that it’s unrealistic, so that means he doesn’t really want it, even though he says that he does.

If so, however, why don’t people just increase their *ratzon* for it, and then it will happen? Why don’t we train people to develop their *ratzon* and then everyone will become millionaires?

There is one simple reason why this doesn’t happen. It is because the rule of “Nothing stands in the way of the will” doesn’t apply to every kind of *ratzon*. Most people’s *retzonos* do not become fulfilled, so obviously, there are things that can prevent our *ratzon*.

We must know how to apply this statement of “Nothing stands in the way of the will”. It is only referring to a will coming from our *Yechidah*. (The inner point of the *Yechidah* is above *ratzon*, while the outer layer of the *Yechidah* is the *ratzon*). The things which we usually want are only coming from the outside layers of the soul; when our *ratzon* is coming from the other four parts of the soul, such a *ratzon* doesn’t necessarily get fulfilled. There are things which can get in the way of such a *ratzon* and prevent us from getting what we want.

But if the *ratzon* a person has is coming from his *Yechidah*, such a *ratzon* will always get fulfilled. Only of such a *ratzon* is it true that “Nothing stands in the way of the

will”, because the *Yechidah* is the point that cannot cease, and therefore nothing can get in the way of this *ratzon*.

So when a person only lives through the prism of the other four parts of his soul (*Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah, or Chayah*), his willpower isn't necessarily going to last. His will weakens over time. But when one lives with his *Yechidah*, he lives an everlasting kind of existence, and thus his *ratzon* will never cease.

Yechidah – The Power of Consistency

If we reveal the *Yechidah*, we reveal an everlasting *ratzon* which nothing can stop. If it remains unrevealed, then this *ratzon* can get prevented. (If our material *retzonos* don't happen, this is good – the world would be a better place if all these *retzonos* wouldn't happen. But we are referring to a *ratzon* for holiness). Without revealing the *Yechidah*, then even if we have a *ratzon* for something holy, the *ratzon* can get prevented.

Every person has times in which they experience holiness, holy thoughts, and a will for holiness. But with one little fall, a person can lose all his holiness in one second. How can we come to a state in which we always have a *ratzon* for the holiness? How can we keep ourselves inspired forever?

The Chazon Ish said that “The secret to holiness is consistency.” That describes the *Yechidah* – it is the power of consistency in the soul, the ability to be constant. When a person reveals his *Yechidah*, he will have a will for constant holiness.

“The eternity of Yisrael does not lie.” The Jewish people are eternal and unceasing, while the nation of Amalek is called *mikreh*, happenstance, because Amalek is not eternal. “*Mikreh*” happens and sometimes doesn't happen. The opposite of *mikreh* is *yetzivus*, stability. The Jew has a point in his soul which is eternal.

Amalek will be destroyed in the future, when *Moshiach* comes. Why can't he be destroyed now? It is because nowadays, we do not have our own power of eternity revealed. But in the future, our inner point of the soul will be revealed in all of us, and it will counter all the *mikreh* in the world. Holiness will be constant, something that is stable and not happenstance, and this will destroy all *mikreh*. Not only will this destroy the *kelipah* (evil forces) on the world, but it will affect each of our own souls.

When a person forgets something, that shows he only has it temporarily. When a person remembers something, that shows that he has it always. Of Amalek we are commanded to never forget what they did to us. The depth of this is because if a person forgets about Amalek, that gives strength to Amalek! Amalek thrives on our forgetfulness, when we forget about remembering what they did to us. It thrives on our lack of consistency.

The power of good in us is forever, and it cannot cease. The power of evil in us is only temporary, and it will one day be destroyed. That is what we need to realize.

Rav Nachman of Breslev said that forgetfulness was created so that we can forget about our troubles, so that we can remind ourselves that evil can go away.

There are actually two abilities in our soul – the power to feel eternal, and the power to feel temporary. The *Yechidah* is our eternal point, while the outer four layers of our soul can cease.

Evil Consistency

However, the *Yechidah* is not all that we need to make use of. The power of eternity/consistency [the *Yechidah*] needs to be used in the right place, and the power of forgetfulness/temporariness [which exists in the outer four layers of the soul] also needs to be used in its right place.

For example, *Chazal* say that there are four kinds of anger. One kind of anger is when a person doesn't get angry so fast and is easy to appease; another kind of person angers easily and is hard to appease. Is there anyone who never gets angry at all? No, there is no such person. Even Moshe *Rabbeinu* got angry once. We all get angry, but the question is how much. If someone is getting angry on a constant basis, though, he is using the power of consistency for evil.

There are also people who will use this power of eternity for evil, by bearing a grudge forever against someone, and they will never forgive, no matter what. There have been stories of brothers who did not get along well, and at the funeral of one of the brothers, the other one is still seething and cursing. Such a person might go to the burial and throw stones at the coffin they are lowering the body into the grave! He wants one last act of revenge. People act like this at times - they won't forgive, no

matter what. A person who does this is really taking this power of eternity and using it for evil: to be “eternally” unforgiving.

For everything good that Hashem created, something else that is evil was created to challenge it. Just like there is a power of eternity in the soul which is good, so is there a power of eternity in the soul that is evil, and this is called “*yechidah d’kelipah*” (the *Yechidah* on the side of evil).

If someone is always getting angry and hating people and he never forgives, this comes from the evil side of his *Yechidah*. Such a person takes the power of eternity and brings it down to the lowest possible level.

By contrast, when someone is angry but he forgives, he uses the power of *mikreh* for good. He looks at the insult as *mikreh*, and this is the holy way to use the power of *mikreh*.

Knowing How To Use Eternity and Forgetfulness

We must know how to use our power of consistency/eternity and our power of *mikreh*/happenstance.

Many people have aspirations to grow spiritually, but they don’t fulfill their aspirations. Why don’t their aspirations become realized? It is because their willpower doesn’t come from the deeper part of their soul. Their willpower comes from the outer four layers of the soul, which can cease. If their willpower would be coming from the power of eternity in the soul, such willpower would never cease, and they would be able to fulfill what they want.

The Mishnah in *Avos* says that “jealousy, honor and desire remove a person from the world.” Simply, this is because when a person is running after honor, he suffers from this desire, and he can’t take it when he doesn’t receive honor. But the depth to this matter is because the desire for honor is a constant desire that never ceases. It comes from the evil side of the *Yechidah*; it a power of eternity that is evil. Such a person uses a G-dly power in the wrong place. If it’s a desire he happens to have, it’s not so bad, but if he desires it eternally, this takes him out of the world.

Some people feel that they cannot uproot a certain nature. “This is how I am”, the person feels. He’s really using the power of eternity of evil.

The power of eternity in us is the essential “I”. “I” cannot cease; “I” am forever. But we also have another ability in us, which is the ability to feel “temporary”. How should we use it? The evil in us is temporary, thus, it can be destroyed. But if a person feels that his “I” as his four outer layers in the soul, he places his “I” in that place - and then his “I” can indeed be destroyed. When a person realizes that he is good in his essence and all evil is happenstance, then his “I” is constant and eternal.

So we must realize these two abilities in our soul. Our *Yechidah* is constant and intrinsic, while everything else in our soul is *mikreh* and it can cease.

Identifying Yourself As Eternally Good

The words here are not ideas or definitions. First think about them intellectually and then internalize them with your soul, and if you do this, you can uproot all evil in yourself.

The worst evil in a person is when a person feels that he cannot change. As long as a person believes he can change, he has hope.

Reb Nachman of Breslev said “There is no such thing as despair in the world.” Why? It is because you must realize what you are made out of. If you would really know what you are, you would never give up. Realize who you are – that you are intrinsically good. You need to awaken this from within yourself, and it is not enough to be told about it.

The more you believe in something, the more you access it. “There is no despair in the world” – do we believe this because we have *emunah* in the *tzaddik* who said it? This would be nice, but what is the depth of what he was saying? He must have been coming from somewhere in the Torah, which we need to know. How are we to understand this?

Would we be able to understand these words if Rav Nachman of Breslev wouldn’t have said it? You can understand the concept when you reveal the “I”, and then you will understand this concept from within yourself.

Becoming Aware of the Source of Your Desires

So one must know he identifies himself and become aware of where his *ratzon* is coming from, if it is an eternal kind of *ratzon* or a temporary *ratzon*.

For example, a person wants to eat pizza. Why does a person have a *ratzon* to eat pizza?

Materialistic desires is one of the three things that take a person out of the world. If a person never thinks while he's eating his pizza, then he isn't aware that such desires take you out of the world. But if a person does think, he is aware that his desire to eat pizza really comes from a spiritual kind of desire, just it's a temporary kind of desire, because it's fleeting. (Some people think that the desire for pizza is forever). He is aware of the desire, but he knows it's not his real desire. He knows that such a desire doesn't come from his true essence.

When a person thinks about this more, he can uproot his desire to eat the pizza. Identify the *ratzon* as being non-eternal, and now you have uprooted the root of the desire. When a person feels that his desire is forever, it takes him out of the world. When a person realizes that it is not forever, he has uprooted the desire at its root. It helps a person become consciously aware as he's eating the pizza.

At first a person just thinks about this, and then he identifies the *ratzon* as being non-eternal, and his awareness to this deepens on a more conscious level. First, realize that your *ratzon* for pizza is not coming from your innermost desire; it is not "you." You now have the key to carrying over this awareness more and more into your consciousness.

Your Evil Desires Are Not Your Essence

So there is a part in us that is eternal and a part in us that ceases. When we identify our "I" as being eternally good, and that all evil in us is *mikreh*/happenstance and not a part of sins - even sins, as the *Maharal* said - this is the root of fixing our entire soul.

This is the depth of the words of the *Nefesh HaChaim* that after the sin, evil entered man. Before the sin, evil was considered to be on our outside. After the sin, evil entered man, in other words, now man thinks he is evil: "I" am a glutton, "I" am an

ill-tempered person, etc. Our *avodah* is to change our initial perspective and instead identify our “I” as completely good.

Everything in the Creation is a mixture of good and evil. This came as a result from the sin of eating from the *eitz hadaas*, which was a mix of good and evil. In our soul as well, there is a mixture of good and evil. What can we do about this?

We are a mixture. Therefore, we must sift out the good in us from the evil in us, just like filtering a sink from dirty water. We must believe that any evil which we notice in ourselves is just happenstance, and it is not part of your actual “I”. This is by giving inner order to all the points in the soul – how to use each power correctly. This can fix most of the evil that you see in yourself – most of it, but not all of it. If a person would believe in this, he would fix most of the evil in his soul.

The root of problems stems from a lack of proper identification. If I identify my “I” with the outer layers of my soul, then my “I” can cease, for it awakens that perspective. If I am aware that “I” am eternally good and that all evil is only happenstance, and not my essence, I awaken that perspective and shine it more and more onto my soul.

So we need to realize that evil is a garment; it is *mikreh*/temporary and happenstance – and that is the root of how we destroy it. Along with this, we need to also realize that our “I” is good and eternal, and that is how we reveal it.

Separating Ourselves From Evil

People think that *tzaddikim* are stronger in their souls and that is why they can always overcome evil. But this is a superficial outlook. The real reason why *tzaddikim* succeed is because they believe in their essence, in their *Yechidah*. Most people do not identify their *Yechidah* and that is why they fall and fall further into despair, unable to rise from their spiritual failures.

Reb Nachman of Breslev said something very deep: that even if he were to commit the worst sin, *chas v'shalom*, he would not be able to disconnect from his essence.

The average person, after he sins, feels impure when he tries to do *teshuvah*; He feels a blockage on his heart (*timtum halev*) and he can't feel the depth of his sin. He despairs and feels closed up inside.

What is the correct approach a person should take when he wants to do *teshuvah*? The Slominer Rebbe *zt"l* said (in *Toras Avos*) that if a person can't daven for the *amud* because he feels bad that he sinned, he has never begun *Chassidus*.

This does not mean *chas v'shalom* that a person shouldn't do *teshuvah*, nor does it mean *chas v'shalom* that a person should feel indifferent after he sins and be conceited. Rather, it means that a person must feel bitter over his sins, but he must not identify the bitterness with his actual essence.

We must certainly do *teshuvah* for our sins, but we must remember that our actual essence, the "I" itself, is pure. We cannot come to the King with dirty "garments" on us, so we must certainly remove them – but at the same time, we must not attribute evil with our very essence, or else we are taking the point of eternity in our soul and destroying it.

This is how we can open up the power to constantly connect to the Creator and remove ourselves from evil. May we merit that all of Creation see this in its full revelation.

14 | *Focusing On One Goal*

Focusing On One Thought

We will try to learn a little more about the *Yechidah* and add on another path which we can use to reveal the inner point.

One of the fundamentals which the Baal Shem Tov taught is that a person throughout his life, in his service to the Creator, needs to learn how to use just one thought at a time.

It's possible that a person is involved in serving Hashem, and is always involved in doing good things; he is always growing spiritually, but he has a problem - his service is built on all kinds of good things which he is doing, and this will just confuse him. Man is like Jacob's ladder, and he grows step-by-step in his ladder of growth, but along the way, there can be things which throw him off; or it could be that his beginning was based entirely on something that can throw him off.

For example, all of us experience the bad *middah* of anger sometimes, and we would like to uproot this. We also have other bad *middos* which we want to get rid of very badly, as well as a certain good *middos* which we want to acquire, such as having a good heart, etc. We are looking to acquire many good *middos*; either we really want to get rid of our bad *middos*, or we are building up good *middos*. What happens with many people? People work on too many things at once: overcoming anger, acquiring patience, acquiring happiness, acquiring zeal...as a result, people take on too much than their abilities are capable of.

All of these matters are important to work on, but if a person works on too many things at once, he goes into overdrive. Whatever gains a person has through this, he still harms his soul in the process. He places his soul in stress. Just like our body can get stress, so can our soul get stressed, when we give it too many things to work on.

The inner attitude to have is that a person should involve himself in only one thing at a time. The simple way to begin this is to make sure not to do two things at once. No more multi-tasking. People think they save time when they multi-task. But it causes more harm than good, because it harms the soul, by fracturing one's focus.

So this is the first step: do one thing at a time. If you're talking, don't do something at the same time. If you're doing something, don't talk at the same time.

How many thoughts does a person go through since the time he gets up until he goes to sleep? An endless amount. People have all kinds of thoughts and fantasies in one day. In one day alone there are thousands of thoughts we go through. But the true kind of life to live is totally the opposite of this! The truer way to live is that a person should just let one specific thought fill him the whole day, and that will get you closer to the inner point of the soul.

The *Yechidah* comes from the word *yachid*, from the word *echad* (one), because it is reached through focusing on one thing alone.

Practical Focus and Deeper Awareness

This does not mean, of course, that a person should wash the dishes one day and do nothing else, and that the next day he should only do the laundry, and that the next day he should only eat and the next day to drink. Life is full of many actions we need to do. When you go shopping, you should buy everything the house needs not limit yourself to buying one thing alone. We do not mean for this at all.

Rather, the inner point as is as follows. When we think, we have two kinds of thoughts. We think about what we have to do or if we shouldn't do it. The other kind of thought comes from our soul.

To illustrate, when you wash the dishes and you are thinking, you are using the first kind of thought. You are thinking about what has to get done. But when a person wants to get married, he might think about this all day and lose sleep over it. This is a deeper kind of thought than your usual thought. It is a thought coming from the soul, and it makes you involved with it all day.

Rav Hutner *zt"l* once remarked that a person is saying *Slach Lanu* and all he is thinking of getting a *shidduch*. He wants to be forgiven for sins, but solely as a means to get his *shidduch*, because all he thinks about is his *shidduch*. The only thing that bothers him is that he find a *shidduch*.

Similarly, a person all day might worry about paying his debts. He thinks all day about money, not because he lusts after money, but because he is nervous about repaying his debts, and that is why he thinks about money all day.

This is actually an ability that comes from the innermost point of the soul: the ability to be focused. But to our chagrin, it is not revealed in our spiritual matters, and it is instead only used when it comes to material matters, or in our stressful problems of life that bother us. We are very focused on the day we marry off a child, but on a normal day, our thoughts are scattered and unfocused. Our thoughts are usually not coming from the soul – they lack inner vitality to them.

Focusing On A Thought of the Soul

Thus, a person should get used to thinking one thought during the entire day about a certain spiritual point that is important. This thought should be about something which is within your level, not about a point which your soul has no connection to.

A *chosson* thinks all day about his wedding because it has relevance to him; his soul is thinking about his marriage, thus he thinks about it all day. The more a person is involved with something, the more can think about all the time.

Examining What We Want

We need to learn how to think all the time about a thought that our soul is already thinking about. Most people are unfocused in their thoughts because their soul isn't connected to their thoughts. Therefore, if we want to learn how to think of one thought all the time, it needs to be the kind of thought in which our soul is already there. We can all identify thoughts that our soul feels connected to and thoughts that our soul doesn't feel connected to.

A person has many things which he wants: children, a *shidduch*, source of living, health, etc. Make a list of what you want and which one you want more than the other. Whatever we want the most is what we think about the most, and the less we want something, the less we think about it.

So a person needs to identify what he wants the most. When you identify what you want the most, you will be able to think about it all the time.

If a person, let's say, wants children more than anything else, now what? Should he go running around to doctors and think all day about wishing to have children? All he will do is become frustrated. So what kind of desires are we referring to that a person should discover? We are not talking about desires that are outside of us. Our outer desires are endless, and there is nothing we can do to get them. So you can't focus your thoughts on any desire that comes from outside of yourself, because all it would do is scatter your thoughts even more, making you anxious and frustrated.

If a person wants children more than anything else, and he would be told that he will need his feet amputated and then he will get children – and he refuses – that shows that his deepest wish is not children. He values his health more than his children, because he is not willing to give up his health for his children. When he's healthy, he'll say he wants children more than anything else, but deep down, he wants his health more than having children. So although he claims that his greatest desire in life is to have children, it is not the innermost desire a person can have. Even his health is not his innermost desire, because the soul wants things even more badly than the things that our body wants.

There are thousands of desires that each person has. A person has to look into himself and ask himself what his deepest desire is, and then, he needs to identify if it is an outer desire, or an inner desire of the soul.

Wanting Vs. Really Wanting

Let's say a person says that he wants to acquire patience more than anything else. How can we tell if he really wants this or not? How much time all day does he think about it? When was the last time he thought about this – two weeks ago? He might claim that he wants patience more than anything else, but he doesn't live with this as a conscious awareness. He gets caught up with other things in life. He says that he wants this more than anything, but he doesn't think about it and doesn't try to get it – which shows that it is not what he wants most.

When a person does discover what he wants more than anything, he needs to schedule his day around trying to get it. Without getting into details of how to do

this, the point is that a person's schedule should be mainly centered around this goal. After you see how much time you are willing to spend on it, make it into the goal of your daily life.

A person might say that the main thing in his life is to learn Torah. After all, that's what *Chazal* say. But does his daily life reflect that? Another person says that the main goal of his life is kindness. How much time of the day does he practice kindness with others? He usually gets caught up with his family and job. If it would be the main goal of his life, he would try to actualize it every day in his life.

If a person who has no goals in life at all, that's another problem. But even when someone does have value for certain things, he also doesn't always pursue what he values. People tend to give excuses why they don't pursue their goals. But excuses do not build you in life.

The Chofetz Chaim said that Torah and mitzvos are called "garments" (*levushim*), as the Zohar says; they are like our clothing. A person might come up to Heaven after he dies and claim that he didn't learn enough Torah and do the mitzvos and he can have the best excuses, but they will tell him, "You have very good excuses. But the fact is that you don't have any clothing on you." If a person is walking through Tel Aviv and he is not wearing his clothing, he might give the best excuses in the world, but the fact is, he's not wearing clothing. It's inexcusable, no matter how many excuses he gives and no matter how much he claim that it wasn't his fault.

Excuses cannot build our life. If a person says that his life is about a certain goal but he does not pursue it, he will not develop in his life. The daily schedule of a person has to reflect what a person values. Otherwise, a person will never reach what he values.

This is not philosophy. It is to live, practically speaking, about what you value – and to schedule your day around trying to get it. Don't do this because I'm telling you so. Let this decision come from yourself – you need to decide, personally, what you really want of our life, and to let your goal carry over into your daily life.

This is how you work on focusing on one thought. It is by knowing about what you mainly want, and then by trying to get it on a daily basis, with conscious awareness that you're trying to get it.

Centeredness

For example, let's say a person feels that the main thing he needs to work on in his life is acquiring a *lev tov*, a "good heart." If that is what he feels is the most important quality to have in life, then he should take this seriously and let it become his constant thought throughout the day.

Such a person should live by his ideals and greet each person with "Good morning" – he should greet every person, with no exaggeration. We all say "Good Morning" to each other, but it is often without awareness. If you consider *lev tov* to be your main focus, then when you say "Good Morning", say it with intention that the person should really have a good day.

The Alter of Slobodka would work on this. Once he was seen practicing saying "Good morning" to himself when no one was around. When asked why, he said that it was because he was trying to acquire a *lev tov* and put himself in that positive frame of mind. His main focus of the day was on acquiring a *lev tov*.

From morning until night, be focused on one point. You do many things in between, but as long as you are focused on one point, your entire day will be connected through this one 'string' that holds it all together.

When a person builds a house, it has to be built sensibly. The bricks must be stacked in a certain way. They must be connected properly. There are people who do many wonderful things throughout the day, but their actions don't connect. There is no structure in their life, nothing connecting together all the good actions they do.

How can a person think only one thought the whole day? Isn't this impossible? How does our life allow this when we have so many things to do?

It means for a person to do each thing he does with an awareness: "I am doing this because of one reason alone [fill in the goal that you are aiming for]". It can be about a goal you consider the most important, or it could be about the desire to reveal your *Yechidah*. But in whatever you do, you must do each action with awareness that you are trying to get to your goal.

To give an example, let's say a person is working on improving his patience. How can a person think all day about patience? It means as follows. He gets up in the morning slowly and calmly, and he walks slowly and calmly. (Most people, unless they

are very lazy, run). When he eats, he should do so calmly, and when he thinks, he thinks calmly. He does everything in this calm way, slowly getting used to the *middah* of patience. (This is a very high level to be on.) The whole day by him should be all about patience.

The same goes for a person who feels that the most important thing is to doing things enthusiastically. All of his actions throughout the day should be about improving this area. He should do things quickly. All day, he should view his actions as being a means of getting himself to move quickly.

It is hard for a person to know where to improve on first, for any normal person who looks deeply into himself and makes a self-accounting.

Many people want to grow spiritually, but they don't reach their goals. Why not? It is because they don't think about what their most important priority is that they want to grow in. They don't clarify how much they should really work to acquire a certain point. They just take one point in spirituality and work on it, seeking to grow in it – but they don't work on this point throughout the day.

In order to improve, it has to be a point which is very important to you which you consider to be priority. It's not enough that you consider it important; it has to be what you consider to be the main thing you want to work on. It has to be thought about throughout the whole day. You can rest of course; you are allowed to rest between all the goal-oriented actions. But don't try to work on other areas except for the main point you are working on, and make sure that you return to focusing on that goal after you get up from taking a break.

When people don't focus on what they really want to work on, they start working on a bunch of areas of self-improvement all at once, and they aren't focused on what they really want to work on; and this leads to giving up on ever growing at all in anything.

Improving Our Actions and Thoughts

So we need to focus throughout the day on what we do, and on what we think.

When it comes to our actions, a person shouldn't do two things at once. Be focused on what you do right now. Do one thing the whole day and be focused on it. Of course, the house is noisy and can hamper your focus. I can't solve this problem. But you should still strive for this goal.

When a person isn't focused on what he's doing at the moment, it seems that it's just a lack of paying attention to what he does, but really it is a much bigger problem – it makes him lose his soul.

A person should improve his thoughts by only doing actions that are done with thought. He should do every action throughout the day with the same awareness. The point is to do something, then stop, and then continue to do it. It helps you become consciously aware throughout the day of why you live. Most people are not actually trying to get to the goal of life, even though they can know what it is.

In Conclusion

So when you get up in the morning, the first thought in your head should be about the goal of the day. This should be clarified to yourself before you get up.

This is how we access the *Yechidah*: by doing one thing alone. Man was created "individual", to show that he must involve himself with one thing alone – that all of his actions should be directed to one goal alone. It is a conscious awareness throughout the day of what goal we live for.

When you live this way, there is almost no need to make a self-accounting at the end of the day, because you will already be living with a conscious awareness and you will be well-aware of your successes and failures as they happen.

So you have to figure out which area in spirituality you consider to be the most important to work on, and then upon discovering what it is, you should focus on that area the whole day. When you get used to thinking like this, and when you concentrate on one point throughout the day, you will be able to reveal what you truly want. This is the thought you need to think about when you get up in the morning, and throughout the rest of the day as well.

We really all have one will - the desire to become attached to Hashem. Why is it, then, that we feel like we want other things? It is only because we are unfocused! Once we develop the power of inner focus and we remain focused on one goal throughout the day that we want to acquire, we will draw ourselves closer and closer to be able to want the innermost desire of the soul, which is the desire to do Hashem's Will.

15 | Conclusion: Hisbodedus In Your Schedule

Reaching The Deepest Part of the Soul: Now What?

In the previous chapters, we have described the ladder of steps in how we can grow higher in our spiritual task. If a person gets to the top of ladder and he “falls”, though - he will have a very hard fall – may Hashem have mercy upon him in such a situation.

The innermost point of the soul, because it is so lofty, can cause a person to have a very dangerous fall if he does not know how to use it properly. We have described here the inner point in our soul as being a point of complete tranquility within. The danger of it, though, is that if a person is too immersed in his inner tranquility, he simply will stay there and he won't move; he won't act.

If we ask a person why reaching his inner point of the soul is not causing him to act better in life, he might give all kinds of excuses. He might claim that his inner voice is telling him that he should just have “*Bitachon*” (faith) and trust in Hashem without having to act upon his depth; or he might claim that his inner voice is telling him that he doesn't have to do anything. Sometimes, it is indeed very possible that the inner voice in a person is telling a person that he doesn't have to act properly!

However, even if his claim is true, and his inner voice is indeed telling him so [that he doesn't have to do the *mitzvos*], we can't tell a person to simply ignore the inner voice, because the inner voice is indeed there. Rather, it just shows that the person hasn't really yet connected to his inner point [even though he is aware of it], and therefore, what the person needs to do is to truly connect himself to his innermost point of the soul, whereupon he will hear the right messages and discover how to act properly.

Inner Serenity Vs. Lethargy

When a person identifies his innermost point of the soul, which is really his point of *menuchah* – inner serenity - this will manifest with how he acts on the holy Shabbos, which is the time in which we reveal our *menuchah*. Shabbos is when we

return to our root, to our source. Most people, though, think that Shabbos is about finding *menuchah* from the action of the weekday. It is true that Shabbos is the time to rest from the weekday, but, that's not all there is to Shabbos.

How do people understand the *menuchah* of Shabbos? By many people, it is: to get up late on Shabbos morning, to eat *cholent*, and to rest on Shabbos afternoon, and when Shabbos ends, the person says, "Ah, Shabbos is over."

What is the *menuchah* of Shabbos? How are we experiencing it? Do we feel on Shabbos how it connects us to our root? Or do we just feel our body taking it easy because it wants some physical rest from the week?

Yissocher is compared in the Torah to a donkey, which bears a heavy burden and then finds rest. *Chazal* say that this is referring to bearing the yoke of Torah – because the tribe of Yissocher is known to bear the yoke of Torah, therefore, he finds *menuchah*. When a person is really connected to the *Yechidah* of his soul, upon that he will have the true *menuchah*. How can we know if it's real *menuchah*? If his exertion is matching up to his *menuchah*.

We have two parts to our soul. Our *Yechidah* is our inner point, the point of deep serenity, while the outer part of our soul is the actions that we do. If we do too much action and we don't try to attain serenity, we will lose our inner serenity. That is one problem. But if we become too calm, we won't act at all, and this is evil.

True *menuchah* is when a person is willing to bear the burden of the Torah's actions that the Torah requires, and it is only then that it can be applied, "*And he saw that menuchah (rest) was good*" - because a person is willing to bear the yoke of Torah, only then does the Torah consider his *menuchah* "good" when he seeks it.

If a person's *menuchah* is causing him to refrain from having any action in his life, part of this is stemming from his *menuchah*, but part of this is stemming from the evil trait of *laziness*, which is rooted in the element of earth, the element in the soul that is known to weigh a person down and prevent him from spiritual progress.

In order to have true *menuchah*/inner serenity, a person's actions must match the amount of serenity he has. If one reaches his point of deep *menuchah*, he needs to match it with actions that are equal in strength to the depth of the *menuchah* that he

has reached, or else all the *menuchah* becomes translated into laziness, and thus it is not real *menuchah*.

We see something amazing. Moshe would go out from Pharaoh's palace and saw the people suffering, to see their pain; he involved himself with actions towards them. Then he had to run away to Midyan, where he lived a life of being a quiet shepherd. What did Hashem tell him after that? "Go back to Egypt" - lead the people. First he did actions, then he went into calmness, and from there, he was able to go back to action with a renewed perspective. When he reached his calmness, he became worthy of prophecy. But it didn't end there. Hashem made him go back to Egypt and lead the people, and the depth behind this was, that Hashem was really telling him: "If you have reached such *menuchah*, then you need to act upon it. Therefore, you need to go back and lead."

He needed the *menuchah*, but after that, he has to build upon that and be able to act properly from all that he achieved from his *menuchah*. Here we see that *menuchah* is only worthy when a person is able to act afterwards upon it.

Hisbodedus: Finding Time For Solitude With Hashem

After a person reaches high levels, he is apt to lose his spiritual gains. In Kelm, they would have self-introspection for every ten days after Yom Kippur and check themselves to see if they were still keeping to their resolutions. This custom was called "Asirei Kodesh". We see from here that when a person reaches very high levels, he has to make sure afterwards that he is acting upon that depth he has reached.

The *sefer Chareidim* writes that if a person wants to purify himself and to do *teshuvah*, he should meditate once a week, in solitude (*hisbodedus*) and connect himself to Hashem. He writes that a person should have one day a week in which you are cut off from the world so you can connect with Hashem.

Hisbodedus In The 21st Century

This *hisbodedus* should be done only once a week, though, and not every day of the week.

If *hisbodedus* is so crucial, why can't we spend the whole week in *hisbodedus*? There is a simple, practical reason. We all have a family to take care of; it's impossible to live a life of total serenity and solitude. If a man were to spend his entire week in *hisbodedus*, his wife would want a divorce; he has children to support, and he has a job that he can't just leave.

But although these reasons all make sense, there is also a deeper reason why such behavior would be evil. We can't spend so much time being alone, because we were not created in order to separate ourselves from society and become alone. *Chazal* say that one has to be *daato me'ureves im ha'beriyos* (his mind should be pleasantly mixed with others – that he should get along with others). In addition, we see that Moshe Rabbeinu had to leave the camp in order to receive prophecy, but he did not pitch his tent outside the camp. Moshe Rabbeinu dwelled in society, and he had times in which he entered into solitude in order to reach his high levels, but he did not remain all the time in his solitude.

People who live in deserts are acting incorrectly, because they are misunderstanding the concept of serenity. On the other hand, people who only live in civilization and never get away to spend some time alone are also missing the purpose of life. Hashem created quiet places, such as deserts and forests, and He also created cities and towns; why? It is to show that part of our life needs to be spent around people, and part of our life needs to also be spent alone. This is because serenity needs to be balanced with a life of action, and our actions need to be balanced with serenity.

And what does a person need to reflect about when he indeed has quiet time? He has to check himself and see if he is acting properly in his life, so that his actions are just as prominent in his life as the *menuchah* that he has reached; he has to become aware if he is acting balanced in his life, or if perhaps he is being extreme with either the 'action' side to his life or the 'serenity' side to his life.

Yaakov *Avinu* had already been secluded already for 14 years, in the yeshivah of Shem and Ever, before he went to Charan to build his family. We see from this that only after reaching his inner serenity did he acquire the strength to build his great family. After that, he was able to fight with an angel "alone". We learn from this that the point of acquiring serenity is so that one will be able to carry out his responsibilities in a truer and deeper way, and from that, his power of "alone" becomes deepened as

well, whereupon the person keeps repeating the cycle: Alone, back to society, alone, etc.

The true way to live life is to live a life of *rotzoh v'shov*, “running and retreating”, a cycle of progressing and pulling back from progress, back and forth. We are ideally meant to live in society, then leave it temporarily so we can get back our serenity, and then return to society, and repeat the cycle.

There is a *sefer* written by Rav Moshe Kordovo called *Sefer Gerushin*, “The Book of Divorce.” No, it’s not a *sefer* about names of people who got divorced. It is the *chiddushim* (Torah thoughts) that he wrote when he was in seclusion and away from society, in which he was temporarily “divorced” from the world. The serenity that he reached there enabled him to write his *chiddushim*. However, he didn’t stay there. He came back to town and continued on with normal life, because the purpose was not to leave society. The purpose was to gain serenity from the seclusion and then return to society renewed with the serenity that he acquired.

Why is it that most people are not succeeding in life? It is because most people are too involved with their obligations they have to take care of in civilization: taking care of their families, visiting their parents and grandparents, working at their jobs...and they end their life at the “obligation” level.

There is also a minority of people who have the opposite problem - they are not involved at all with society. They don’t get married, and they wish to be like the Sage Ben Azai, who never got married because he was always learning Torah. These kinds of people love to be alone; there are even people who live in caves because they do not like to be in society. They don’t like to do anything at all and would prefer to spend all their time in solitude. *Baruch Hashem* these people know of inner serenity, but...

Either of these lifestyles is not truthful. If someone is too involved with his life obligations and he never has time to himself, he has no time to reflect about truth, and he will definitely never grow in life. The other kind of person, who spends too much time alone, will also not get to the truth, because he is not doing Hashem’s will in life. Hashem wants a person to radiate himself outwards towards other people and give to others; if a person spends all his time alone, he never reaches the intended purpose in life that Hashem created the world for.

Shabbos – A Missed Opportunity

In the ideal state of life, when Hashem first created man, the plan was to enter Shabbos forever, where we would have had eternal rest. But look at how we spend Shabbos. People on Shabbos are busy with their families, with meals, and there is almost no time for anyone to think on Shabbos about priorities. And understandably, they surely don't attain any serenity as a result.

Someone once met me on a Sunday and told me he's been completely exhausted since Friday. I asked him, "You didn't get to rest at all over Shabbos?" He told me, "Shabbos? Shabbos is the hardest day of the week for me!"

People on Shabbos aren't arriving at any serenity, tied up with eating and conversation, and often they don't even get to rest. Even when people do get their rest on Shabbos, it's just sleep on their beds, and they don't reach a deep feeling of inner serenity. Shabbos is really the day in which we can find solitude and become totally serene in our soul. But in our generation, this is almost unheard of.

The Decision That Will Change Your Life

So what should we do? If we are not getting any serenity on our Shabbos, we will have to get it from somewhere. We need a practical way to get serenity.

We all have responsibilities during the week; there is no time to ourselves. We are either out shopping or taking care of family members. What we need to do is live in civilization and take care of our responsibilities, but we also need some time during the week to get away from civilization so that we have time to reflect with ourselves, alone.

Some people will counter that we don't need to get away from civilization in order to be serene, and that we can become serene in our house. This is a nice idea, but it doesn't really happen. There are always noises in the house, such as the telephone and the neighbors, which do not allow for serenity.

What it all boils down to is: If a person is willing to ***actually set aside some time in his life*** in which he can have some solitude, to be totally alone from society. The way of our earlier Rabbis, and before that, our prophets and our forefathers, was to spend

time in solitude. We need to go in their footsteps and also have solitude; once a week, find a day of solitude, in which you are totally separate from society. This advice is written about by the Ramchal in *sefer Derech Eretz Chaim*, where he writes that this is easy to follow advice that bears tremendous results.

Without doing this weekly *hisbodedus*, it is impossible to succeed in life nowadays. It is **impossible** to succeed in life without setting aside this time for *hisbodedus*! Life today is noisy and it bombards us. If we never try to get some serenity, the noise of life will prevent us until the end of our life from ever seeing success in our life.

There is no one to whom this doesn't apply; we are all very busy from life. If we are too busy from life, we won't succeed in life, so what is the solution? The answer is that you have to realize that all of our lives are filled with constant strain from all the hard work. Life is not easy; if we work hard and we have a livelihood, that means that we have a hard life from working hard, and if we don't work hard enough and thus we don't have enough livelihood, then our life isn't either easy. So either way, our life is not easy – whether we are making money, or not.

So what should we do about this? The curse of hard work is something we can all relate to. Because we are so bombarded with life, we have no time to ourselves. How do we get out of this 'Egyptian slavery' kind of life that we are forced into? It's simple: take a bus or a taxi and get away from this civilization [once a week]!

So the question is if we can have this incorporated to our daily schedule. I've never met anyone yet who is willing to give up his sleep and do *hisbodedus*; it's too hard to do this. It's way too pressurizing, and the person will end up skipping it altogether. However, you can definitely give up some of your sleep for it – you don't have to cut out an entire night's sleep. *Chazal* say that it is impossible to go three days without sleep, so we all need our sleep. The question is how much sleep one really needs, though. You can definitely give some of your sleep for *hisbodedus*.

What we need to do is incorporate some *hisbodedus* into our day, and then we can build upon that. That is the basis for everything.

If we don't have this basis, I can talk and talk and talk about spirituality, but all the words here will simply enter one ear and leave the other. It's like trying to put something into a cup with a hole at the bottom; everything you put in will simply fall

through the hole. There must be a basis to hold the contents of the cup together, or else everything will fall out through the bottom.

If a person makes sure to **set aside time, every day** during the week for *hisbodedus*, he has the firm basis which he can use to get to an inner kind of life. But if a person never has this time set aside, he might always be running after higher spiritual levels, trying to grab onto more and more spirituality, but spirituality cannot be grabbed. If a person really wants spirituality,

he needs to acquire it with patience, slowly, and with *yishuv hadaas* (a settled mind). In order to have that, a person needs to practically set aside time every day for *hisbodedus*.

Returning To Our Nature of Being “Alone”

Chazal say, “Man was created individual”. What is the meaning behind this concept? To show us that man has to reach his *Yechidah*, the “individual” aspect in his soul, his innermost point. When Adam was first created, there was no Chavah yet, no other person in the world to talk to, to show us that man has a point in himself which is alone and individual.

For a person to reach his *Yechidah*, he has to find a quiet place and attain total quiet there, and to be alone. In this place, he can quiet himself down more and more. When he reaches the inner silence – and there are many levels to this inner silence – he can begin to reach his inner point at least minimally, and from that, he will be able to build upon that and implement all of the knowledge that we have described until now.

When a person reaches his inner silence he can return to his inner state of “alone”, which is the natural state of man, since we were originally created individual. When Adam was alone, before Chavah, there was no one else to talk to; he was completely alone. That was his pure state, and thus there was no possibility to sin. The possibility of sin only began with the creation of Chavah, who spoke to Adam to eat the fruit. As soon as Chavah was created, there was no more a state of “alone”, thus the Snake was able to come speak with her and tempt her. The natural, pure state of mankind – our very nature – is to be alone.

However, as essential as it is to return to our state of “alone”, being “alone” is not the purpose. It can’t be, because if it were, then why did Hashem create Chavah? Obviously, Hashem intended that man to marry woman. So our life is a double-sided coin; there are two different facets to our life. There is a part of us which needs to relate with others and is responsible for others – and these are the side of our responsibilities in life, in which we deal with people - and there is a part in us which is “alone”, which we use for *hisbodedus*.

According to the Arizal, the *avodah* of Adam *HaRishon* was to attain the state of *Yechidah*; he already had the levels of *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, and *Chayah*. After the sin, he fell many levels.

How indeed does a person have the power to reach his *Yechidah*, in a generation like this, where we are so far from the pure state of Adam before the sin? It is because man was created alone, and therefore, it is our nature to be alone. All we have to do is get back to our nature, and then to some degree, we can return to our *Yechidah*. We not might be able to reach the “all-inclusive” level of *Yechidah*, but each of us will at least be able to reach our own “private” revelation of *Yechidah*.²²

We need to return to the root state of Creation, which was a pure world, unlike the world today. There was no “noise” then in the world. When we speak about *hisbodedus*, we can’t reach the total *hisbodedus* that Adam had, in which there was no “noise” at all, for there was no sin yet. We live in a very, very noisy world; it’s so noisy that people aren’t even aware how noisy it is, because we are so used to it. This world is like one giant alarm clock; constant noises that are saying “Go, go, go out into the world.”

As much as the noise is, we need to counter it all with a deep, inner silence.

If we have *hisbodedus* that counters the noise, the noise won’t be able to drag us down with it. And the kind of *hisbodedus* we need is no less of a need than air for the body.

²² *The Rov explains elsewhere that there are two levels to the Yechidah: There is a “private” Yechidah that each person can reach individually, and there is the collective Yechidah of the entire Jewish people, which will not be revealed until the future. See the shiurim of Sukkos #007, #008, and #009 (A Jew’s Inner Self, Parts 1-3).*

Internalizing What We've Learned In These Chapters

Baruch Hashem, everyone coming here to these classes has more or less grown in their spirituality. (We aren't giving out awards here; maybe in the near future we will.) But each person here has come to some inner understanding, each according to his own respective level.

If the words here would just be for the purpose of having a lecture, and not about really making them practically affect our life, then those who are interested in the lectures would come, and those who aren't interested in a lecture will not come. But I think that all of you came here not because you simply wanted to hear a lecture. I think that all of you are searching how to really grow from this series of lectures, and that is why you came here to hear these words.

But now that we are at the end, let's ask ourselves: What are we really coming out with over here? What are we practically walking away with from these lectures?

If you have a will to put these words into action, you can do it. If so, you need to think about how you can make all these words practical: How do we put this concept into practice? How do we actualize our *Yechidah*? How do we internalize these last 15 chapters and make them practical?

The 1st Condition: Review These Words & Understand Them From Within Yourself

The first thing you need to know - I think this part should come pretty simple to you - is that hearing these lectures just once in your life will not do anything for you. It will simply go into one ear and leave the other ear.

Chazal say that it takes four times to learn something. It is tried and proven that people hear new things the second time they review the same words, and they hear new things the third time. There are two reasons for this. People simply don't hear all the words the first time when they hear something, because it's hard to pay attention to every word. Even if you did hear every word here, you still need to hear it another two or three times simply for the sake of understanding these words.

After hearing this four times, the next step is to see all the ways brought here in how to reach the *Yechidah* and to really *think* about the words over to yourself, and

the reason why you need to do this is for the following reason. It is not enough to hear these words and know about them. They have been told to you from an outside force, thus you need to come to an understanding of these concepts from *within yourself*, after you have heard it. These concepts have to be experienced from within yourself, and not because it was told to you.

Compare this to a taxi driver who is told by his passengers to get to a certain destination. Does he know the way only because he's listening to the directions that the passengers are giving him, or because he is already familiar with the roads by now? He knows the way a lot better if he already knows how to get there, because he recognizes how to get there from within himself, rather than being told how to get there.

Thus, if you just hear and believe in these words because they are based on the words of our Sages, that's wonderful, and it shows that you have *emunah* in the words of the Sages. But it still won't be enough to really understand the concepts here. Of course, first you need to be told how to get there, but eventually, you need to understand the matters from within yourself. Compare this to a child, who first has to be taught things, but later at some point, he needs to recognize information from within himself, and it is then that he really understands the information we have taught him.

To illustrate, once a year on Sukkos, we read *Sefer Koheles*, which was written by Shlomo *HaMelech*, in which he writes that this entire world is futile. Reb Chatzkel Levenstein *zt"l* would say that each person needs to write his own *Sefer Koheles* – in other words, each person needs to write his own journal in which he recognizes how vain this world is, and he shouldn't just believe in Shlomo *HaMelech's* words. It's not enough for a person if he reflects once a year on Sukkos when he reads *Koheles* on how this world is futile. Rather, each person needs to understand that from the viewpoint within himself, from his own life experiences, and come to that understanding on his own.

Therefore, you need to take all these words of the last 15 classes and experience them for yourself, because in order to understand these matters, it's not enough if you just hear then and believe in them. If you don't try to make this experiential, then even if you try to do all the different ways of *avodah* described here on how to reach the *Yechidah*, it will be almost pointless.

First you need to **keep reviewing these words** so that you absorb them, and after that, you must **experience these concepts from within yourself**, to have an inner understanding of these matters. Your inner world can be reached only from understandings that you have reached within yourself - it cannot be reached through anything you have heard, which comes from outside of the self.

Many times I hear all kinds of questions from people about how to reach spirituality, but they are all the same kind of question: People want someone else to come and give them some spiritual light that will open up their inner world. I am very bothered by these kinds of questions, and therefore I don't like to answer questions of this sort. Why? Because you are a soul, and you need to experience yourself, who you actually are! It can't be told to you. You can only understand yourself from within yourself! Feel who you are, *realize who you are!* It's almost worthless to get any "spiritual illuminations" from outside of yourself.

Of course, *Chazal* tell us that a person needs to have a *Rebbi* (teacher) in order to be saved from doubt. But does that mean that the *Rebbi* has to live every aspect of the person's life? Must one ask a *Rebbi* about what time he needs to leave his house in the morning? We all understand that a person does not have to ask his *Rebbi* for every nitty-gritty issue.

Why? A question has to come from within yourself that you have thought about; the point is not that as soon as a person has a problem, he immediately calls his *Rebbi*. There must be questions, but they must be questions that are formulated from within yourself. To illustrate, children cannot cross the street by themselves. An adult, who is mature, can cross the street by himself, because he knows how to think for himself.

Thus, in order for a person to actualize the matters here, he has to first hear/study the words of these 15 classes **at least four times**, and then, he must seek to make this knowledge experiential, and the way he can know this is by seeing if he identifies with these concepts from within himself.

Who Can Gain From This Series, and Who Cannot

Therefore, if the reader isn't identifying the concepts of these chapters *within himself*, then the reader must seek a different path - a different *avodah*. If you feel that these words don't speak to you, if you don't feel that you are connecting with these

words after you have reviewed them, it shows that the path here is not meant for you to take. It could be that at this point in your life you are not meant to take this path; or it could mean that the paths delineated here are not meant for you at all to work with, no matter what stage you are at in life.

If you find yourself identifying with the words here, then you can succeed on implementing these concepts. If not, then forcing yourself to try to agree with these concepts will not work either, and it will be pointless to try any of the avodah that was said here.

The Second Condition: Times of Quiet Every Day

In addition to this, in order for a person to actualize these concepts, a person needs quiet time every day. Once a week, a person should set aside one day in which he spends even more time in *hisbodedus*.

During this time, realize that you are leaving the noise of the world. Besides for this, realize that this is the time of the day in which you can feel your inner point. You need *yishuv hadaas* in order to reach it, thus you must have quiet time every day.

It should be like when Yaakov left Beer Sheva and he went to Charan. He left for two reasons. He ran away from Esav, and he needed to find a wife. In other words: there is reason to leave the noisy world, and in addition, there is reason to enter inward. During this time, you enter your soul – and focus on this thought alone: ***remember that you exist!***

There are people who have forgotten that they exist; they live their life as if they are a leaf. They don't feel their existing self. Without time of *yishuv hadaas* every day, a person simply never sees himself at all! He doesn't see himself! Of course, he will still have emotions, but he doesn't feel himself as an existing reality. He is not aware of the true meaning of his existence; he doesn't feel it.

To illustrate, when a couple seeks help in how to have marital peace, many marriage counselors advise that couples need to spend time with each other. When they have quiet time, a lot can be accomplished.

Some couples spend too much time together and that's why they have so many problems, but with most couples, the problems are because they don't spend enough quiet time with each other; each spouse is immersed in his/her various activities, and that is the root of all their quarreling. When they have quiet time, they remember that they are married to a spouse, and they remind themselves that the other exists.

To put it sharply, many married people don't even remember they are married. Of course, everyone is aware that they are married; but the husband or wife can be so busy with taking care of the home and the kids that they forget about their own relationship with each other. They are so busy taking care of the home, but there is no home! But the problems started even before that. The spouses forget about their own existence. They won't remember that the other one exists either.

If you ask anyone if he knows he exists, the answer of course will be "yes". We will know we exist, but a person can still be forgetting that he exists, because he is so bombarded from life. If each of the spouses would begin to have quiet time to him/herself, they would be able to remember that the other one exists also, and then all of their problems would vanish.

If we really want to have an inner understanding of ourselves in a way that will practically affect us, we need to have times of quiet every day, and have one time a week in which you have a longer time of quiet. During this quiet time, **remind yourself that you exist**. Remember that you came onto this world so you can grow.

This is the basic starting point that everyone needs; from that, each person grows in his own individual way, but we will not discuss this now. The basis is: have times of quiet and silence your soul.

Reaching Our Essence

There are four lower parts to the soul – *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah* and *Chayah*. Those are the layers in our soul which involve action. The innermost point of our soul, the *Yechidah*, is your actual essence.

Our entire inner *avodah* can only come from our essence, and such *avodah* is considered to be the kind that is alive and full of *chiyus* (inner vitality). It will then be

emanating from a place of depth and truth in the soul. If our avodah is not coming from our essence, it's like having branches of a tree with no root.

So before we know how to act properly, we need to come to our essence, our place of deep inner silence, and all actions we do after that will then be coming from that deep and truthful place. The actions we then do will become full of inner vitality. Everything we do has to ultimately pass through all the layers of our soul. If we want to get to the lowest layer of our soul, which is action, we have to traverse our innermost point of the soul, our essence. This is reached by silencing the soul²³.

The Map

To conclude, we have described here in this series how to reach the *Yechidah*. The map of how to get there, though, differs with each person.

Most people have to go in the order of *Nefesh*, then to progress to *Ruach*, then to *Neshamah*, then *Chayah*, and then *Yechidah*. Therefore, this series, which explains the *Yechidah*, can only be actualized after a person has reached the four elementary layers of the soul – *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, and *Chayah*; these were explained in a previous series [*Da Es Atzmechal Getting To Know Your Self*].

Three Exceptions Who Can Start Their Avodah With “Yechidah”

However, there are some people who were born with natural inner strength to penetrate straight into their *Yechidah*, without having to traverse the first four layers of the soul; these people are able to absorb very clearly the ideas here, without having to work on the first four layers of the soul.

There are also people have entered very deep within themselves, but they used methods from impure sources that came from strange places of the world.²⁴

²³ To learn how to silence the soul, refer to the Rav's recent series on hisbodedus, *Preparation of Hisbodedus and Practice of Hisbodedus*.

²⁴ Refer to the Rav's derasha entitled “The Void”

There are also people who, although they were not born with great inner strength of their soul, they still were able to penetrate very far into their deeper self, because they went through certain experiences in life that uncovered great depth to themselves. Either they went through a very traumatic experience, or they went through a deeply joyous one, which enabled them to penetrate straight into the deepest layers of their existence.

These kinds of people cannot be told to ignore their inner point; they live with it as an existing reality. To tell them to ignore their inner point and to instead work with the lower parts of the soul would be like asking the person if he minds if his leg would be cut off. For such people, their *avodah* is to clarify more what their inner point is and to connect themselves in the proper way to it; these people can begin to enter their work with the soul by starting with this series, which explains the *Yechidah* of the soul.

As for most people, who are not any of the above three exceptions, they will need to start to understand their soul through the previous series, and **only after reaching their layers of *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, and *Chayah* can they attempt to do any of the *avodah* that was described in this series.**

We are emphasizing this so that you will be aware of this and save yourself from damage. If you are like most people (who are not of the above three exceptions we described), you need to make sure that you begin with working on your *Nefesh*, then with your *Ruach*, then with your *Neshamah*, then with your *Chayah*, and only after that should you begin to try to get to your *Yechidah*, as described in this series.

Having The End Goal In Mind

However, it is still beneficial for most people to at least hear the words of this series and be aware of these concepts, because even if you cannot absorb it fully at this point, it is still important to know the goal of where you are supposed to end up at.

When a person hears about concepts he needs to work on, the initial reaction is that he has to act upon them afterwards, but there is another way to hear: even though you will not be able to implement these matters right after hearing them [if you are not one of the three exceptions listed], you can still hear it just for the sake of building your soul, by absorbing these concepts. There is a purpose in just hearing concepts so

that you can build up your soul, even though you can't act upon these matters right away.

It is important for you to at least hear about these concepts, even if you can't work on actualizing them yet, because it is good for you to know what your eventual goal is. "*Sof maaseh b'machshavah techilah*" (The end of action if first preceded with thought). When you hear about the goal, that itself is constructive. First of all, it gives meaning to your current level of avodah, because you know where you want to end up at eventually, even though you're not there yet. In addition, it builds your aspirations.

There are people who only act with what is in front of them; they live for the moment, and they never try to develop themselves for the future. A deeper kind of person will build himself up each day with the goal in mind that he wants to form a certain path that will lead him to his goal. This does not mean that a person should become a dreamer, immersed in his fantasies of the future. A person needs to be involved with the here and now, but along with this, he also should expand his future, by building himself a path that will lead him into his future goal.

When a person hears a *shiur*/Torah lecture solely so that he can arrive at the practical conclusions from it, he is limiting himself in the process. It is detrimental to a person when he needs to know what has to be done as a result of what he has heard, and when he wants to know the practicality of it right now, immediately. Rather, the sensible approach is to hear about concepts even if they won't be immediately applicable in your life, so that you can at least absorb the end goal and be aware of the goal you will eventually head towards.

So if you have absorbed these concepts, even if you aren't yet at the level of actualizing them, that itself is a great accomplishment.

In Conclusion

In these 15 classes, we have tried to explain what the *Yechidah* is. The next classes will be about the depth of Shabbos Kodesh²⁵. They will be very deep classes, as in all areas of the Torah. The purpose of these classes is meant to give us greater depth of Shabbos Kodesh. May we all merit the future Shabbos, which will be eternal. Amen.

²⁵ See *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh: Shabbos Kodesh Anthology*.