

דע את מנוחתך

INTERNET EDITION

SEARCH FOR SERENITY

THE GATEWAY TO DEVELOPING INNER PEACE

Adapted From The Hebrew Shiurim Of "Da Es Menuchasecha"
BY THE AUTHOR OF "BILVAVI MISHKAN EVNEH"

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Editor's Preface

This *sefer* is a companion volume to the *Da Es* books, which have been released in English as *Getting To Know Your Self*, *Getting To Know Your Soul*, *Getting To Know Your Home*.

These books, based on the holy writings of *Chazal*, explain our soul and how we can develop its potential. There are vast truths contained within these pages based on the timeless wisdom of the Torah are an alternative to modern psychology.

The author's previous books deal with how we can develop our soul's sense of self-esteem and potential. In addition, a person must make sure that he stays calm and content. For this reason, it is helpful to learn this *sefer*, which deals with the subject of *menuchas hanefesh* – peace of mind. This book can be read alongside any of the books in the series – it is a “companion” volume.

The Hebrew version of this *sefer*, *Da Es Menuchasecha*, consisted of 16 chapters published for native Hebrew speakers. In the English adaptation of this *sefer*, we have switched the order from the original *sefer* for the sake of simplicity, beginning with the more practical aspects of *menuchas hanefesh* and then continuing with the deeper aspects of *menuchas hanefesh*.

Everything in this book is translated from the original *Da Es Menuchasecha*, except for the chapters “Dealing With Problems in Our Life”, “Hearing the Voice of Hashem”, “Accessing Your Menuchas Hanefesh” and “Learning How To Detach”, which were all *derashos* that the author gave at different times and have all been added to complete the flow of this *sefer*.

Part One, Building a Calm Lifestyle, explains the concept of *menuchas hanefesh*, “inner peace”, how to experience it in our physical, daily lives, and how to deepen the experience within our souls through the use of silence.

Part Two, *Menuchas Hanefesh* and Learning Torah, focuses on how learning Torah brings us *peace of mind* in the most powerful way.

Part Three, A Deeper Look into *Menuchas Hanefesh*, lists the levels of *serenity* that exist, dividing them into “roots” and “branches”. This is specifically for readers who enjoy more esoteric topics.

Part Four, Putting *Menuchas Hanefesh* into Practice, summarizes the different practical ways to climb the ladder to the final and most perfect *peace of mind*.

It is our hope that this book will help the reader understand our *neshamah* with more clarity and, as a result, enable us to serve Hashem with tranquility.

PART ONE

BUILDING A CALM LIFESTYLE

Author's Introduction

Menuchas HaNefesh is necessary in order to build one's soul. In the Yeshiva of Kelm, *inner peace* was of utmost importance and perhaps the most important matter in all of a person's *avodas Hashem*.

In our generation, the lifestyle of people is completely the opposite of *tranquility*. New things are invented daily that take away our *inner peace*. Although everything has pros and cons to it, most of these new, highly publicized "inventions" are the antithesis of a serene kind of life.

Our *Avos* lived lives of solitude, learning in tents far away from the world of materialism. This was what enabled them to have *inner peace* and to truly develop their souls.

This *sefer* is written to facilitate our generation to draw closer to the lives of our *Avos* and teachers. It attempts to depict a life of *serenity*, both in our internal world of the soul, as well as in the physical world we live in.

Chapter One
A Life of Menuchas Hanefesh

The Practical Way to Arrive At Inner Peace

The Sure Path

There is a sure path for one to attain deep peace and *tranquility* which is through *emunah*, a firm faith in Hashem. There is no greater *serenity* than complete *emunah* in Hashem.

However, in our present time, this isn't always practical, since our *emunah* isn't strong enough. Only deep, powerful *emunah* can give us *serenity*. Therefore, in our generation, we must take a different route to find *tranquility*, by accessing *peace of mind* in our soul.

Three Steps to Menuchas Hanefesh

What are the steps we should take in order to achieve *inner peace* nowadays?

There are a few steps. The first step is to figure out what bothers us. The second step, after we figure out all the things that bother us, is to attempt to quell our anxieties, beginning with our major problems. The third and final step is to begin to quell even our smallest nuances.

Sleep is Not Menuchah

At the start, we must clarify one point; "*menuchas hanefesh*", often understood as "rest", does not mean to "sleep". "Rest" and "sleep" aren't the same thing. A person can go to sleep often, yet that will not bring him *tranquility*. In fact, if a person sleeps when he has problems, not only will *serenity* evade him, but, he will become even more anxious about his problems. Going to sleep isn't "inner" peace. Only *menuchas hanefesh* is inner peace.

Once a person tastes true *peace of mind*, he will strive to experience it constantly. One, who has never experienced true *inner peace*, isn't interested in attaining it. In fact, if someone tells him that he needs *tranquility*, it will be like trying to describe color to a blind man.

Without comprehending the need for *peace of mind*, one might understand the need to relax and research how to have the best vacation, but this does not translate into searching for *peace of mind*. He is not looking for an inner kind of peace. He simply desires some good sleep and the ultimate vacation. These are just outer activities that miss the opportunity for inner peace.

Menuchas Hanefesh is Found in Consistency and Not in Renewal

We know that we have been given Shabbos and Yom Tov in this physical world, we must also realize that these are abilities in our soul as well. There is a power in our soul called “Shabbos” and a power called “Yom Tov”. Shabbos is the *serenity* in our soul, while Yom Tov is the *simcha* (happiness) in our soul.

What is the difference between Shabbos, which is *menuchah*, and Yom Tov, which is *simcha*?

Simcha is a feeling of renewal. The emotion of happiness renews us. This ability of renewal and *simcha* comes from Yom Tov and paralleling this outer *simcha* is this same power in our soul, happiness and renewal. On the other hand, *Menuchah* is a relaxed feeling with no renewal involved. The rest on Shabbos, a deep kind of rest, is a respite that we need, to give us *menuchah*.

Menuchas Hanefesh Removes One's Annoyances

Once experienced, *serenity* becomes a feeling one will try to maintain since fewer things will bother him. As soon as he feels something trying to take away his *tranquility*, he will naturally ignore the problem. He realizes the value of *serenity* and won't want to focus on anything that attempts to lure him away from it.

For example, when the phone rings and one is trying to sleep, he won't answer it, because he values his rest more. He'd rather have *menuchah*. If one allows his sleep to be disturbed often, it is a sign that he doesn't value *peace of mind*. A person who has tasted *tranquility* will no longer want to do things that are a bother, because he understands how important it is for him not to become anxious. He realizes how this takes away *peace of mind*.

There are no concrete rules in this, and we cannot advise a person how to avoid every possible bothersome situation. Every situation is different, and what bothers one person might not bother another person.

One shouldn't say, “I won't do anything anymore, because anything I do takes away my *menuchas hanefesh*”. That is not the point. Although *peace of mind* is important, we are not saying that a person should become extreme with this and never start to do something in case it will affect his *menuchas hanefesh*. The only reason why a person shouldn't do something is if he knows it will totally drive him away from *serenity*, unless, of course, it's a life-threatening situation, or if he will insult someone if he doesn't do it.

Exciting Projects Can Ruin Menuchah

Often taking on exciting new projects when they are beyond one's abilities can ruin one's peace of mind. For example, I knew an *avreich* once who was a big *masmid*, and he wanted to become a big *baal chesed* as well. What did he do? He opened up a *gemach* that took up most of the day. Soon, he was getting a lot of phone calls and was busy trying to be both a great *masmid* and *baal chesed*. His wife got dragged into his "*chesed*" as well, and she became anxious trying to juggle her family's needs together with the *gemach*.

Of course doing *chesed* is wonderful, but this couple was simply doing things that were beyond their capabilities. They were being "*moiser nefesh*" for other people, at the expense of their own peace of mind.

Mesirus Nefesh vs. Menuchas Hanefesh

Many people run to bake *matzos* before Pesach which a beautiful *minhag*. A matzah factory isn't a place that epitomizes *peace of mind* to say the least. There is a lot of yelling and impatience.

I once went to a matzah bakery to bake matzos. While I was there, I noticed a problem and began to yell, "*chometz!!*"

My brother was with me and he asked me, "What's more important – the *matzos*, or you...?"

Is it worth it to destroy one's self in order to have *mesirus nefesh*?

Of course it is important to bake *matzos*, but what is more important, the *matzah* or *tranquility*?

One is not required to sacrifice his peace of mind just because he knows that he has to be "*moiser nefesh*" (sacrificing for Hashem). Having *mesirus nefesh* is a very important thing, but *mesirus nefesh* will not make one into a better person if he stops being a "person" to begin with. When one doesn't have any *peace of mind*, he ruins his peace of mind, and he destroys his very self.

Know What Makes You Anxious

In order to know what we should and should not be doing, we need to be aware of what makes us feel anxious and what doesn't. If one feels like he is becoming anxious over anything, it's a sign that he is acting above his level. This can take away all of his *serenity*. When one has *inner peace*, he will find himself opening up to an entirely new world.

The Source Of Menuchas Hanefesh: Focus On Your Existence

Where can we derive *peace of mind* from?

We draw it from our souls. This is achieved through focusing on our existence. Think of the mere fact, “I exist!” One should forget about what he “does” and his talents and accomplishments a bit and simply remind himself and focus on the fact that he exists.

Most people think of themselves as their feelings. Others think that they are their thoughts and still others think they are their personality. Very few people ever focus on their own existence, or the simple fact that they even exist.

If a person thinks that he is defined by what he feels or thinks, then he views himself the same way that others do! Just like others only know us from our external appearance, such people only know they exist based on externalities. This is a very shallow way of recognizing oneself. It can be compared to knowing we exist because we are not a non-Jew. This is a shallow way of recognizing who we are. We are much more than simply not being a non-Jew. One is himself, his very existence! A person gets his vitality from knowing that he exists. Without *menuchas hanefesh*, one cannot feel his inner vitality.

Tolerating Others' Faults

When one gets vitality from simply knowing that he exists, he will find that he can more easily deal with others' faults. Since he views others as existing people, not as mere personalities or feelings and thoughts, they become more than a collection of various faults and virtues. They become existing people with an inner essence in his eyes. He can then acknowledge that their faults are not who they are.

When we see someone lose his temper, the natural reaction of a person is to think that such a person is “an angry person”, or that he’s “not a good person”. This is really a superficial awareness to another’s existence.

If we have *peace of mind*, we are aware that we are a soul, but that we are also covered with a body and other “garments” that aren’t very fitting. We will be able to view the person’s temper simply as a garment upon who he really is. For example, when we see someone who overeats, we won’t view him as a glutton who can’t control himself, but as a pure soul, whose eating habit is simply a spoiled garment on top of his pure soul.

Two Forms Of Recognition

We mentioned that there are two ways for a person to know that he exists. One is a superficial way, and the other is the real way. The superficial way is through feeling emotional amazement. The second way allows us to feel *inner peace*. It’s the realization of who we truly are, not shallow self-recognition. When a person receives vitality from this very recognition, he has attained *peace of mind*.

These two types of recognition also apply to one's relationship with Hashem which has two layers. The external layer is to recognize Hashem based on the wonders of Creation, but that is not yet the purpose. The purpose is to come to the inner kind of recognition of Hashem, which is to be aware of the simple fact that He exists.

Menuchah And Simcha – Two Forces Of The Soul

Many people look forward to Yom Tov, since it is an exciting, festive time. However, Yom Tov can merely help one improve the external part of a person. The inner essence of a person can only be improved through *peace of mind*, which Yom Tov cannot provide.

The only way to have *serenity* is by retrieving it from our soul, which is our very essence— not from our thoughts, feelings, or personality, but from the very “I”. This can only be achieved through focusing on the mere fact; “I exist” – identifying with our innermost layer, our soul.

Every person has two abilities: the power of renewal, which allows us to be amazed in an emotional way and the power of consistency, which is unchanging. The outer layers of our soul are what we use to renew ourselves, while the inner layers of our soul, our intrinsic existence, are constant and unmoving.

First, a person needs to recognize these two abilities exist within him and become aware of them. Then, he should figure out which one is most applicable to him. Does he feel that he exists because of the fact that he has excitement and renewal? Or does he feel that he exists because he is aware of his simple existence regardless of how he feels emotionally?

A clue is if a person only knows that others exist based on how excited his reactions are toward them. This shows that he is choosy about who he likes. He is impressed by a nice person, but may recoil in disgust from an unrefined person. However, if one recognizes others as an intrinsic existence, then he is able to overlook others' faults.

This is essentially the *middah* of “*ayin tovah*”, having a “good eye.” This type of person has the ability to sense his own and others' intrinsic existence.

Chapter Two
Drawing Menuchas Hanefesh From Consistency

Don't Wait For Yom Tov

When Yom Tov comes many people feel *chiyus* (vitality) from it which they do not usually feel during the rest of the year. A person looks forward to Yom Tov so he can feel more alive from it, while the rest of the year seems boring; our *sefarim hakedoshim* call the winter (when there is no Yom Tov) a “time for sleep”.

It is nice to look forward to Yom Tov, but we must realize that there is a different attitude we can have. There is a way for us to derive even more vitality from the ordinary days of the year than from Yom Tov!

Of course, Yom Tov is the holiest time of the year, both from a halachic viewpoint and from an emotional viewpoint. Yet, there is a rule, which our *sefarim hakedoshim* teach, that states everything is contained in its opposite. This means that if Yom Tov is holier than the rest of the year, then there is way to see how the rest of the year can be holier than Yom Tov.

If a person only feels vitality from Yom Tov, he is full of vitality sometimes. He feels elated on Shabbos and Yom Tov, but daily life is boring to him. However, if a person learns how to derive vitality from the rest of the year, he can always feel alive.

After Yom Tov Ends

There is a concept that a person can extend the holiness of Yom Tov to the rest of the year. This is what we ask for in the Yom Tov prayer, “*and lift us up, Hashem our G-d, with the blessings of Your festivals.*” We are asking that Hashem should prolong the holiness of Yom Tov into the rest of the year. However, the reality is that most people do not succeed in doing this except for a short amount of time.

The holiness of Yom Tov can actually be an impediment to one's growth in his *avodas Hashem*. All changes, even changes for the good, are somewhat harmful. Even when a person becomes more spiritual, he is in danger, because he has gone through a change. All changes are dangerous to a person!

For example, the sons of Yaakov were afraid that if their father found out that Yosef was still alive he would die from the good news. Why were they afraid of this? Could anything have

been better for their father to hear? It is because an extreme emotion is harmful, even if it is about something good.

When Yom Tov comes, a non-feeling person doesn't feel any changes from the Yom Tov, whereas, a person who takes Yom Tov seriously and prepares for it, receives vitality and elation from it. When Yom Tov is over, he is apt to fall from his plateau.

If a person falls from a chair, it hurts. If a person falls from a table, it hurts even more, and if he falls from a higher place than this, the pain increases. The same goes for spirituality. When a person reaches a spiritual high, his fall will be more painful. Although Yom Tov is holy, a person's soul cannot always handle the holiness and he falls soon after.

If we want to gain from Yom Tov, we first need to feel alive from the ordinary days of the year and see what is contained in them. Then, we will be able to receive the holiness of Yom Tov without losing it afterwards.

Two Different Abilities In The Soul

Every person's soul has two abilities: the ability to become inspired and grow, and the ability to stabilize and remain still. These are two opposite forces in one's soul. Usually, when a person uses one of these abilities he loses the other. For example, when a person feels spiritual growth, he is apt to lose his inner peace. Whereas, when a person feels at peace with himself, he becomes complacent and doesn't strive for growth.

What should a person do – strive for more growth, or stay still?

It's a challenge. When a person has growth, he often loses his calmness. He might be happy, but he isn't calm. On the other hand, if a person feels calm, he often becomes lethargic and doesn't seek to improve himself.

A person has the power of inner calm, but if it doesn't come from a deep place in his soul, this power just makes him sleepy and lethargic. (If one doesn't know how to calm himself down, there are solutions for this such as thinking about the ocean waves or something else relaxing).

There is a story about Rav Shmuel Vosner shlit"א, that depicts calmness. One time he went to the Chazon Ish to ask him something. When he came, he found the Chazon Ish with closed eyes. He seemed to be sleeping.

Rav Vosner stood there and waited. Suddenly, the Chazon Ish opened his eyes and asked, "Why didn't you ask your question?"

Rav Vosner responded, “I saw the Rov was sleeping...”

The Chazon Ish answered, “No. I was not sleeping”.

Why did the Chazon Ish look like he was sleeping?

The Chazon Ish seemed to be sleeping because of the great connection he felt with Hashem. However, a simpler understanding of his behavior is that his soul was very calm and this did not make him sleepy.

The Calm Place In The Soul

When a person is only calm in a superficial way, he becomes lethargic. From a superficial perspective, a person is able to fall asleep when he is less busy, thus calmer. The inner perspective of this power is that a person is calm when he reaches an inner silence. Just like all of creation was silent during the giving of the Torah, so also a person has the power to experience this deep place in his own soul. This is not describing fatigue, but a quietness that calms down one’s excitement.

Usually, one is only excited by something he doesn’t often have. When a person sees a new kind of food he has never tasted before, he gets excited. If he is a more materialistic kind of person, he is even more excited. Yet, if he eats it again and again, he loses passion for it. When one has something on a constant basis, he doesn’t get excited from it. If we have something pleasurable consistently, we wouldn’t need new things to get us excited.

Consistency And Renewal

Hashem is unchanging. He “was, is, and will be”. He is constant. Hashem renews creation every day, but He Himself is never renewed. We need to learn how to connect to a power in our soul that is constantly in existence and doesn’t require us to change. The depth of life is to live in a silence that stays the same and doesn’t get renewed.

A more internal kind of person knows how to derive vitality from the regular days of the year, no less than what he gets from Yom Tov. It’s like eating and drinking; we need both in order to survive. Our soul needs Yom Tov and it also needs the rest of the year.

There are people who misuse this power of the soul and become lethargic. However, others know how to connect to this power from an inner silence in their soul.

We have two forces in our soul. One is the ability to find renewal. The other force is the ability to live without renewal. If a person only gets his vitality from renewal, he needs new things to

feel alive. He feels alive from Yom Tov and from buying new clothes, because now he has something he didn't have yesterday— vitality. There is, however, another source of vitality a person can have. This foundation is Hashem, who is unchanging – the very source of life.

The Need for Renewal Comes From Being Superficial

A superficial person constantly seeks new things. There are people who are always exchanging their items for a new one, because they need new things to live. If a person is only connected to renewal, this shows a lack of connection to Hashem, Who is consistent and never changes.

The Jewish people are compared to the moon, which renews itself every thirty days. However, this was a curse that came to the moon after it was created. Before Creation, the plan was for the moon to remain consistently of equal size to the sun. When a person derives vitality from consistency, and doesn't need renewal to survive, he is connected to the state that existed before Creation, which is the more desirable state to be in.

The Dangers to Both Ways

Each Yom Tov, a person derives new vitality. However, there is another source of vitality. When a person feels vitality from consistency it does not involve anything new. Without this kind of vitality, a person might gain from Yom Tov, only to fall from his level after Yom Tov is over; in between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, he grows spiritually, but after Yom Kippur, he stops growing.

However, when one accesses the inner silence in his soul, he is able to derive vitality from the consistent reality of Hashem. Yom Tov becomes another kind of vitality to him, but he doesn't depend on it, because he already has vitality. This person feels alive during the year, so he doesn't need Yom Tov to revive him. Whereas, when someone doesn't feel alive during the year, but feels kind of dead, he needs Yom Tov to bring him back to life.

Yet, there is also a danger to someone who gets his vitality from consistency. When Yom Tov comes it is possible that he might derive so much vitality from the renewed feeling of Yom Tov that he will lose his vitality from consistency. Therefore, a person must learn how to balance these two abilities which takes a lot of wisdom.

Feeling The Constant Changes

Practically speaking, we always live with renewal. Every person goes through changes in life, some big and some small. The entire Creation is moving every second as well. We are always changing to some extent. All of Creation is like one big tumult.

If a person doesn't know how to connect to the power of consistency, he will suffer from changes. This can be compared to a tree that gets blown by the wind. If there is a firm root, the tree will be able to withstand strong winds. If we have consistency and we don't need renewal in order to live, we are connected to a firm root that can withstand changes.

We usually only feel changes when something extreme occurs, for instance a happy or sad occasion. When a person gets vitality from changes, his life becomes extreme. These types of people aren't satisfied with just having food. Rather, they need something exotic in their food and they need new things to make them feel alive. Such people seek changes that become more and more extreme, because the regular things that they are used to become boring. They seek new things and look for a change in their routine. The more they look for vitality, the more extreme the things become that they seek.

Others have the opposite problem: they are too grounded. They never seek anything new, not because they feel alive from a consistent lifestyle, but because they are lethargic and devoid of life. If one is balanced, he derives vitality from consistency and from changes that are small or big. A person can only derive vitality from changes when he mainly derives his vitality from the ordinary days of the year, which are without renewal. A person, who isn't balanced and never derives vitality from changes, has lost his sense of feeling alive. He slowly begins to become lethargic and disconnected from everything around him.

Sometimes one may become so lethargic that he begins to feel an inner emptiness and he is filled with all kinds of terrible thoughts that he can't escape. He might try to find himself by traveling to strange places in the world. This is all because he doesn't understand how life works. As soon as he encounters a problem, he is full of inner turmoil.

See Life As One Continuous Path

One needs to be aware that life is one continuous path! If he falls asleep in middle of a *shiur* that he cannot understand, it is because he doesn't see how all the details connect. A person can't wake up in the middle of his life and try to understand where he went wrong. One needs to see how every experience in his life up until this very moment is all part of a big picture.

If one would know himself and understand that all his experiences in life are all part of one big picture, many of his problems would be avoided. For example, there are people who complain that their children misbehave. Such people think that if not for this problem, everything else is good. But when you think about it, a child who misbehaves is not simply having a behavior problem. If the parent looks deeper, he will see that there is more behind the problem. The problem isn't that the child is misbehaving. That's a small part of the picture.

Since he doesn't know what causes the child to want to misbehave, he cannot solve his child's misbehavior. A person needs to become aware of what's going around him in his life in order to deal with any problem. He needs to look what happened before the problem and see what caused it. Otherwise, he will be very shocked every time he has a problem.

In order to understand life, one needs to see how life is one continuous path. To do this, he needs to pay attention to what's happening. One can only pay attention to his life when he is living life, when he is experiencing it. A waiter pays attention to those seated at the table, because his job depends on this. If a person realizes that his life depends on this, he will pay attention to what's going on.

When one experiences life and pays attention to everything that's going on, he won't fall apart as soon as he encounters a problem, because he will know how to deal with it. If one isn't paying attention to what's going on his life, he will never know how to deal with problems. He needs to remember that there is a larger picture, and that every part of life is interconnected.

Chapter Three

Calming Your Actions

Introduction

Actions, feelings and thoughts are the three parts that enable self-expression. Experiencing *Menuchah* means to have *menuchah* in all three – calm actions, calm feelings and calm thoughts.

Regarding *avodas Hashem*, our actions are expressed by performing *mitzvos*. Our feelings are expressed by love and fear of Hashem, and our thoughts are expressed in learning the Torah. There must be *tranquility* in all of these. Only then can our actions, feelings and thoughts become a tool to acquire *peace of mind*.

In our actions and *mitzvos*, we need to have *peace of mind*. The classic example of not having *menuchah* in actions is Reuven, who is criticized by Yaakov Avinu for being *pachaz kimayim*, “too quick, like water”, when he hastily moved his father’s bed out of the tent into his mother’s tent. By contrast, Noach is called a “man of *menucha*” and Sholomo HaMelech is also called a “man of *menucha*”.

What is the difference between a calm action and an action that is not calm?

Simply speaking, a calm action is usually done more patiently and slowly. Usually a person who acts quickly is rushed and lacks calmness. This is a true definition of what it means to have actions of *menuchah*. A deeper definition is that actions of *menuchah* are actions that emanate from our soul.

We will now discuss the basics to attaining *menuchah* in our actions.

Don't Do Something Quickly

The main thing is to do actions that emanate from our soul, while not neglecting the importance of externals of our actions. Even if one does an action that comes from his soul, he should not act rushed or do two things at once. For example, acting patiently greatly affects one’s *menuchas hanefesh* in an action, as does doing one thing at a time.

Finish What You Start

A person has *menuchah* when he completes something, so one should make sure to finish what he starts. If a person starts to do something and doesn’t finish it, he lacks *peace of mind*.

Take Breaks In Between

Chazal say that Hashem gave the Torah with breaks in between. From here we see that a person needs to take breaks, at times, from what he's doing. Furthermore, when a person finishes doing one thing, he shouldn't immediately begin to do the next thing. If a person doesn't take breaks, he traps his soul with his actions, and his soul feels confined in a prison.

This kind of *menuchas hanefesh* is called *hedair*, "nothingness". Sometimes a person needs to do nothing in order to have *serenity*, just like on Shabbos when we have *menuchah* by not doing work.

When a person acts and moves his soul has to be left alone. The soul by nature is non-moving and calm; the problem is when people jolt their soul and move it around by being constantly involved in action.

How can we give our soul *peace of mind*?

One has to be aware when he is doing something. He has to be aware that he is not what he does. He has to be aware that he is a soul, and that he has garments on top of his soul -- these are his body and his actions. A person should never think he "is" what he "does". If a person identifies himself based on what he does, he traps his soul into his actions, and deep down, his soul is sub-consciously bothered by this. He can't have *peace of mind* in this way. One needs to remember that his actions are comparable to a garment that he wears.

Usually, walking fast jolts the soul and takes away one's *peace of mind*, while those who walk slower are calmer. Walking is movement, which can give the soul some anxiety, because, by nature, the soul doesn't move. Chazal say that although Aharon HaKohen lit the *Menorah*, he still didn't change from his level. The lesson here is that he made sure not to become too overwhelmed by what he did and he remained calm.

This doesn't mean that one should act thoughtlessly. We simply mean that a person shouldn't get too excited when he does something and rather act with more depth. We must make sure that we are above our actions, not inside them.

This is a very subtle and refined point in our soul. Whatever we do, we should not be totally engrossed in it. We need to stop at a certain point. It's hard to say exactly when, but the point is, don't be so involved in something that it becomes too hard to stop. Make sure to be a little 'above' the act.

Don't Do "Avodas Perach"

Another thing that deters *menuchas hanefesh* is *avodas perech*, “cruel labor”. When the Jews were enslaved in Egypt, the labor that they were enslaved with was particularly cruel, in that the men were given women’s labor and the women were given men’s labor which is an example of *avodas perach*. The aim of the Egyptians was to take away one’s *peace of mind*, by making people do things that were not meant for them.

There are actually two kinds of cruel labor. The first kind of *avodas perach* is when people work too hard. If a person knows that he can only work ten hours a day and he pushes himself to work twelve hours a day, he hurts his soul in the process and ruins his *peace of mind* – just like an overused machine.

The second kind of *avodas perach* is when a person does something that isn’t really for him. If a person sings well and he uses his singing talents, then he is doing what he is supposed to do. However, if a person can’t sing and he becomes a singer, he’s doing *avodas perach*. If this latter person sings, it won’t come from his essence, but it will be some kind of superficial action. Our actions need to come from our *pnimiyus*, our essence. Even actions that come from our *pnimiyus* need to be used properly.

To summarize, there are five things we need for *tranquility* in our actions. Do one thing at a time, go in order, finish what one starts, take breaks, and do what comes from one’s *pnimiyus*. All of these enable us to view our actions as mere garments, and not as who we actually are. It helps us become aware that our soul is above what we do.

The Solution To Fearing Death

This can help a person solve another issue that many people have – being morbid about death. With the above attitude on life, a person can calm himself down when he becomes terrified at the thought of death. If a person thinks that he “is” what he “does”, he will fear death, because he thinks that death is the end of him. After all, the body disintegrates into the earth. However, when a person knows that he is a soul, and his body is simply a garment, he will not fear death, and he can instead be aware that death is like stepping out of a garment. This is the meaning of Chazal, who say that death is like “walking from one room to another”.

Let’s say one’s hand got amputated, G-d forbid. If the person identifies himself as a body, he feels like part of him has been removed. Whereas, if he knows he’s a soul, he looks at it like an outside layer of him has been removed – but none of his essence has been harmed.

If one thinks that he is what he does, and that when he dies, his actions will die with him – he will fear death, because he fears the thought of ceasing to exist. But when one knows he is a soul and that his actions are only like the garments he wears, he has no reason to fear death.

Chapter Four *Calming Your Feelings*

Extreme Emotions Remove Menuchas Hanefesh

When do our feelings and emotions destroy our *serenity*?

The answer is, whenever they are extreme. This is not only true when we experience extreme emotions for evil, such as getting excited to do a sin, but even getting excited over a *mitzvah* can be extreme, thereby, destroying one's *peace of mind*.

A Person's Main Positive Quality Can Be a Source of Anxiety

One way that extreme “good” emotions are really bad for *serenity* is when a person has a particular quality that is more extreme than his other qualities. Everyone has a major positive quality that others do not have, as well as a major weakness that others do not have. Both contribute to a lack of *tranquility* because they are both extreme.

For example, it is a very good quality to be a caring person, but very often this good quality is a person's downfall. When one is “extremely” caring, he thinks all day about others – and as a result, he doesn't have any *inner peace* of his own. It's nice to care about others, but such a person can overdo his caring and destroy his own *inner peace*.

The Gemara says that an overly caring person's life is not a life. He is being extreme, and anything extreme destroys *peace of mind*. An overly caring person will feel an inner anxiety in spite of all his spiritual gains.

Becoming Too Emotional Causes Anxiety

Another example of extreme behavior is when a person has too many emotions at once. This can be, for example, when a person becomes overly emotional in different situations. Some people never get emotional and they will never have this problem. However, others can become very emotional, becoming very confused. Our discussion here is for those who have a very emotional world, not for those who don't know what it means to be an overly feeling person.

People who feel deeply suffer a lot internally from being so emotional. The Kotzker Rebbe said that our feelings and emotions are a great source of pain for us, but that we also can't live without them, because we derive vitality from them.

Only someone who is emotional can understand the pain that emotional people go through. A very intellectual person who lacks emotion doesn't understand what an emotional and more feeling person experiences. If a person gets too emotional and wants to find help for himself, he cannot learn about his feelings from the outside, such as by reading a book. Nor can he go to a psychologist who isn't a feeling person, who only knows about the emotional world because he has read books about it. A non-feeling person doesn't understand emotions, because he doesn't experience them, so he can't help an emotional person.

Many times, a person who is in emotional pain goes to a psychologist or a friend for help, and he is told, "What's the big deal? Just don't feel that way". His feelings are not acknowledged. A non-feeling person views feeling people as being disillusioned and overly imaginative. This answer will not work for an emotional person, who cannot simply disconnect from his emotional world and become a non-feeling person.

What can an emotional person do to help himself find *menuchas hanefesh*?

A person needs to achieve an inner balance in spite of all his various emotions. He should identify his main dominant emotion. There are seven root emotions, and a person should figure out which emotion is most dominant in his life. When he discovers what his main emotion is, he can then see how everything else stems from its branches.

By finding out what his main emotion is, he becomes more self-aware and he won't consider himself a bag of emotions. This will give him *peace of mind* from his feelings, because he has arranged all his feelings by becoming aware of his main emotion, which is the root of all the emotional problems. Through this process, he will discover that all of his other feelings are the results of his root emotion.

Sudden Fears That Paralyze A Person

Another deterrent to inner peace with one's emotions are sudden fears. Fears can paralyze a person and destroy his *menuchas hanefesh*. Sometimes, these fears come from one's soul, and it is a sign that one needs to do *teshuvah*. But many times, these are deeply rooted fears that we need to remove. These fears, until they are removed, cause a lot of anxiety.

What is the solution?

If it's a fear that comes very suddenly and quickly, a person should try to remember what he was thinking before he got these scary thoughts. One needs to become aware of his thoughts. Once he checks his previous thoughts, he may discover that he was just imagining something, and that is what caused him to think of something scary.

However, some fears, like we mentioned, come from one's very soul. This is when our soul sees something and for some reason, it grows afraid. If this is the case, there is no way to deal with this fear other than to be prepared to give up one's soul to sanctify Hashem's Name. Once a person does this, he will find that his soul will be calmed.

Thoughts Balance The Feelings

There are three kinds of people – people that are mainly action people, people that are mainly feeling people and people that are mainly thinking people.

We are discussing those who are mainly feeling people. This type of person is sensitive to emotions. A very feeling person can tell when someone hates him or is jealous of him, because he is sensitive to emotions. Mainly feeling people can achieve *peace of mind* and become more stable with their emotions through the power of thought. Thought can stabilize emotions.

Some people live so deeply attached to their feelings that they go insane from all their anguish. Others close themselves off from their emotions and suppress themselves, as a response to all their emotional anxiety. As we said, there is a way for a very feeling person to live a more emotionally healthy life, through the use of the power of thought.

Thoughts are stronger than feelings. We see that a person can restrain himself from an improper impulse if he uses his mind– for instance, if he starts thinking about the consequences. Through connecting to our thinking process we leave our emotional world and become more thinking, intellectual. We become more stable thinkers.

This is really the meaning of, “*If not for the Torah, my desire, I would get lost in my pain*”. The Torah is the ultimate way to use our thinking minds. Dovid Hamelech is saying, if not for our thinking process, we would go crazy from our unstable emotions! Thinking stabilizes the emotions.

Don't Think Too Much

On the other hand, it is also detrimental for a person if he thinks too much. When a person only thinks and he doesn't have emotions, he closes off his emotions, which is very unhealthy. A person shouldn't think all the time. Thinking too much is extreme and leads to instability. There must be a balance between how much a person feels and how much a person thinks.

What we are suggesting is that when a person feels his emotions overtaking him, he should get busy with his mind, permitting his thoughts to overpower the emotions. **WHAT DOES IT MEAN GET BUSY WITH HIS MIND?**

Our Gedolim

Our Gedolim listen every day to everyone's problems. They live with others' pain. How do our Gedolim avoid going insane from all the anxiety they hear about on a daily basis? Whenever our Gedolim feel that they can't handle the emotional anxiety anymore, they leave their feelings and enter into a higher mode of themselves, the thoughts of Torah. The true world of thought is the Torah.

Chapter Five *Calming Your Thoughts*

Get Used To Thinking More

Using the mind to think is the best way to stabilize emotions, but the problem is that for most people, it's difficult to maintain concentration. One's thoughts wander and ruin one's concentration, which ruins a person's *tranquility*. For someone already connected to the world of thought, it's easy to concentrate. However, for one who isn't connected to the world of thought, it's challenging to focus.

Rav Chaim Friedlander zt"l suggested that a person should get used to concentrating on one single thought for just five minutes a day, as this will get one used to thinking more and leaving his myriad emotions.

Weakening The Imagination

Another solution that can stabilize one's thoughts is to weaken one's imagination. Usually a person imagines things and this holds him back from concentrating. The solution is to weaken the [negative] imagination.

[How To Become More Aware

If a person wants to really enter *avodas Hashem*, he should take two minutes a day and see where his thoughts wander to. He should see what led him to think about one thing to another; he should wonder, "How did I get into thinking about B when I was just thinking about A?"

The more a person does this, he will discover something he was never aware of until now: often, our imagination takes something and compares it with another thing, tricking you into thinking that two different things are the same.

What happens when you notice your imagination? Use your *seichel* and see how your imagination has led you to compare things that are different and make them appear the same – and you will see how your comparisons were totally off-base. It was your imagination which led you to make an inaccurate comparison.

Fighting The Yetzer Hora Before It Attacks

This is essentially the battle a person has with his *Yetzer hora*. The *Yetzer hora*, during the actual time of difficulty, makes a person forget about his *Yetzer Tov*. So how does a person fight the *Yetzer hora*? The battle starts before the difficulty. The battle takes place between one's thoughts and one's imagination. We must fight the *Yetzer hora* before it attacks – not when it attacks. We need to uproot its power when we are calm and thinking; it is then that we can separate our thoughts from the imagination.

Take some quiet time and review your thoughts: how did you get from A to B, and how are the two thoughts similar? The more you do this, the more you see how your imagination misled you to think how things are the same, and you will slowly weaken your imagination more and more if you practice this.

The inner way to prepare to accept the Torah is to check our thoughts and wonder: are we weakening our imagination?]

Hesech HaDaas

Conversely, many times a person just can't stay focused, and it has nothing to do with imagination. What, then, is the solution for those who can't focus?

There is a solution that people try to make use of, known as "*Hesech haDaas*". This is achieved when one takes his mind off of what is distracting him in order to stay focused.

This solution is not always practical because the person may be very involved in what he is thinking. Therefore, it becomes extremely difficult to pull oneself from those thoughts to focus on something else.

Choosing Your Thoughts

There is a deeper solution, which is to give up one's will to think the unwanted thoughts. The only way one is able to think other thoughts and not concentrate is because he really wants to think those thoughts. By uprooting the problem from its root, by nullifying his will to think those thoughts, he no longer wants to think other distracting thoughts. However, only a few individuals are able to give up what they want. This can be very difficult for certain people to implement, while relatively simple for others to do.

How can a person achieve this practice of giving up a thought? He should think, "Yes, I want to think these thoughts, but I know that I really shouldn't want to think them. Therefore, I *want* to stop thinking these thoughts". This can only work for one who is practiced in self-control. It is a very good solution, but can be very tough to implement, as we said.

Thinking Torah Thoughts

The most practical solution is to become connected to thinking. How can a person connect to his thinking?

The best way is through thinking thoughts of Torah – "thinking in learning." Wherever a person goes, he should train himself to think in learning.

When a person lacks *serenity*, not only does he lack *menuchas hanefesh*, he's also not connected to the Torah. He's not connected to a world of thought. If he would have *menuchas hanefesh*, he would naturally be thinking in learning all the time.

Women will need a different solution to get *inner peace* (which we will soon mention). The solution here is only for men, who learn Torah. Men have to become more connected to thinking Torah thoughts if they want to have *peace of mind* in their thoughts.

Each person needs to learn what's appropriate for his own unique style in learning. It doesn't depend on which yeshiva one learned in or what one is used to learning. One should learn Torah with an original approach that fits his style.

The General Solution For Everyone – Original Thought

A general solution that applies to both men and women for attaining *menuchas hanefesh* in our thoughts is through learning different systems of thought.

Anyone who has learned the *mussar sefarim* and other works of thought can see how each author had his own system of thought. The Ramchal, throughout all his *sefarim*, forms certain concepts that he adheres to. The Maharal, Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, Rav Yisrael Salanter, and all the Chassidic masters have their own unique system of thought.

It's not only thinking "in Torah" that one should be aware that there are different ways to think. Each person needs to have his own way of how he thinks and views a situation in life. He shouldn't get his thinking from reading newspaper or magazine articles. Rather, he should develop his own way to think.

The Deeper Solution – Think One Thought A Whole Day

There is another solution that is deeper than this. A person has an ability to think about just one thing for an entire day! At first this seems like something that only an angel is capable of, but really anyone can do it.

We each can take one thought and experiment with focusing on it the whole day – from when we wake, until we go to sleep. It can be a Torah thought, and if this is too hard, it can be something that has to do with one's house, or one's job. The point is to keep one thought throughout the day and focus on it. Continuously return to this thought.

It shouldn't be any random thought, but a thought that personifies one's essence. When a person keeps returning to this thought during the day, he will feel *serenity*, because it feels like he is arriving home.

Balance Between Action And Thought

Being amongst people usually takes away our *tranquility*, because we lose our thoughts and instead become immersed in others. However, when a person attains *menuchas hanefesh* in his thoughts, he can be among people yet still deep in concentration. Rav Elya Lopian zt"l said that when he is amongst people, he doesn't even see them, because he is thinking so deeply.

One must be careful with this, since there is a danger of becoming self-absorbed with this method. One should help others when they need help, at the same time remembering not to give up one's life for others. This requires balance between one's actions and one's thoughts.

In these last three chapters, we have explained how we attain *peace of mind* through the three layers of our soul – action, feeling and thought. The perfect kind of action a person can do is when there is balance of feeling and thought present in the action. These are actions that are done with both, feelings and thoughts, together.

Chapter Six
What Holds Back Menuchas Hanefesh?

Understanding Ourselves

The world is a continuous path. Its history is an intentional order of events. Each event in history has its roots. A person who reads about the Egyptian exile and wonders why there had to be this type of an exile has obviously not learned anything about the events that happened before it. If one looks back a few *parshios* in the Torah before the exile, he would see that the reason for the exile was because Avraham Avinu asked Hashem for a sign. Then he will discover the root of the exile. He will see how history was shaped. When a person studies the holy *sefarim* which explain that all the exiles resulted from Adam's sin, he sees that there are even more roots to the exile.

One may know various details about his soul, but he doesn't see what the roots are and he doesn't see how they all connect. He might encounter major details about his soul, but he still has many emotional difficulties. The fact that he knows here and there about his soul doesn't help him enough. However, when a person sees each part of his soul, step-by-step, he will discover what the sources of his soul's forces are. In order to see in this way, one needs to have a certain feeling for it.

Two Kinds of Vision

There are two ways to see. One way is with a superficial vision and the other way is with an inner vision. It is written, "A person sees with his eyes, and Hashem sees with His Heart." This is a hint to the two different kinds of vision a person can use.

With a person's physical eyes, he can only see what's on the outside, but when a person uses his inner vision, the vision of his soul, he can see the inner layer of something. In fact, even the outer layers of the soul have an external and inner layer. When a person sees something, either he can see the outer part of it, or he can see the inner part of it.

What does it mean to see the outer part of something external or the inner part of something external? When a person uses his emotional amazement to understand something, he only sees the external; but when a person uses the quiet place in his soul to understand something, he can then see the internal in the external and he can really understand what is going on.

As we said, the person who only sees the outside of something, doesn't really know what's going on inside. He thinks he understands it, and he is aware that sometimes he succeeds in answering his questions about something, and that sometimes he doesn't. But he doesn't see what's really going on.

This shows us another reason why many people feel a lot of stress, besides everything we have said until now. People don't see the big picture of themselves, only a part of themselves. What many people do see within, is actually only their outside! They have not reached their inside yet. Thus, they have an incomplete picture of themselves, so they cannot fix their own problems.

Most people will not even be helped if they read many psychology books that explain the human soul, because they haven't worked hard to discover what's going on deep down inside themselves. Although one can learn about different problems that people have, this only teaches him about the external part of a problem. One needs a more inner kind of vision in order to truly see what's going inside the soul.

Seeing the Inside From The Outside

In order to understand the human soul, a person requires two things. He has to really know information about it and he needs to see how it works. If he is a non-feeling person, he will not know the information about the soul, and as a result he will not know how to treat the soul. And furthermore, even if he knows how to treat the soul, it will only be for superficial solutions. He doesn't really know what's going on in the soul, just like one who sees a car but has no idea how to drive it.

To understand this idea, we will quote the *Mesilas Yesharim*, "To what can this be compared; to a garden-maze. This is the type of garden that is planted for amusement, and is popular among nobles. The plantings are arranged as many walls, and between them there are many confusing and interconnecting paths, all of them resembling another, and the goal of these paths is to reach the single pavilion in the middle. Some of these paths are correct and lead to the middle, while some paths take him further away. The one walking in the maze cannot see or know at all whether he is on the correct path or a false one, because they all appear the same with no difference to the eye that sees them. He cannot know the correct path unless his is familiar with them...one who is already standing on the pavilion at the middle has a vantage point from above, and see all the paths spread out before him, and see which paths are correct and incorrect. He can call out to the traveler and warn them which paths are incorrect. One who wants to trust him will follow his directions and reach the middle of the maze, but one who doesn't feel like trusting him will just follow his eyes and he will certainly remain lost, and he will not find the middle of the maze".

Someone who is still in the garden-maze only sees part of the picture. Someone who has already been through it sees it all from above. The lesson from this is that there are two ways to see something. First, there is a superficial way of seeing something, which is only a partial view. The second way to see something is to use an inner kind of vision, which sees the whole picture from above.

When a person is amazed, he only sees from one part of his soul, and his understanding of something is superficial and partial. Whereas, when a person lives with an inner silence, he can see everything, without getting overly amazed. He sees all the details and doesn't get caught up in details.

In order to see what's going on inside of something, one needs to see it from the outside. Someone who stands on the inside of something can see outside of where he is, and someone on the outside can look into the inside. When we go above the soul, we can see into it, but if we are still inside it, we can only see what's outside, and not within it.

One Must Be Calm

In order to see the inside of something, one needs calm and quiet. When a person has this quiet, he can move in and out of his view when he wants without becoming overly attached to what he sees.

When a person becomes very amazed at his discoveries, he's too connected to what he sees. He is pulled after his sheer amazement and gets caught up in something interesting. This causes him to divert his attention and become mesmerized by a particular detail.

However, when one has an inner calmness, he isn't pulled after something interesting and he is able to stand tranquilly, taking in the full view of what is before him. He is then able to probe into the depths of a matter.

We can compare this to someone who looks at the surface of the ocean to see what's under the water. When the water is wavy, he can't see what's underneath. Only when the water is still and calm can a person see what's underneath.

If a person never reached his inner silence, he cannot comprehend how something stays the same. He needs something new to keep his interest. However, when one lives with inner silence, he is not moved emotionally as easily, because he is in control and serene. Even if he does get excited sometimes, he immediately returns to his calm and unexcited state.

A person who always gets excited has a soul that feels imprisoned. Everything he encounters captures him. This can be compared to a person who needs his job for his livelihood. He will be very obedient to his boss because he has no other way for a livelihood. Someone who needs excitement for vitality will never want anything other than what excites him because he only feels alive when he's excited.

On the other hand, one who gets his vitality from a more consistent kind of life, that doesn't involve excitement, can move back and forth from what's exciting and what isn't, with ease. One who doesn't require an exciting occurrence to feel alive has the ability to see things in greater depth. He can see all the details, both in the Torah and in the human soul. This gives a person an entirely new experience of life that is above the many confusions of life.

Leaving the Confusion

Life in this world is very confusing. When a person is a child, he has no idea how to make sense of what's happening in his life. As one matures, he notices more and life becomes further confusing.

How can we leave all the confusion?

Chazal say, "A prisoner cannot release himself from his cell". A prisoner, even if he is the greatest person, cannot free himself from his jail. When a person lives his life based on excitement, it's as if he's in a jail, because he is being controlled by his emotions and gets pulled after them. He can't help himself. The only way for him to be saved is to be helped by another person who isn't a prisoner, who can release him. Even if the helper doesn't know everything, he is at least not trapped under his emotions. Therefore, he can help others and himself.

Seeing Yourself From Above

When one learns how to separate from his emotional excitement, he is able to see from above. He can see his own soul, as well as the souls of others. He can see his soul from above, as well as his problems. He can view himself in the same way someone who is outside of a room looks into the room.

There is a way for a person to see above himself, to view himself through his very soul. We know of near-death-experiences in which people have reported what it's like for their souls to leave their bodies after being announced clinically dead. They have described viewing their body from above. So too, we can see ourselves from above, in our own lifetime, through our soul. (The holy *sefarim* also mention this as "*chalish*", or "*ingid*".)

Chazal reported that one of the Sages had this type of experience and came back saying, "I saw a clear world." When a person sees from this deep place in his soul, he can see everything from above, with total clarity. He can understand the soul and how it works without getting fazed by its many complex details, and he can experience the soul in a calm and unmoving manner.

Why Therapy Doesn't Always Help

Most people who try to learn about the soul don't succeed in understanding the soul because they themselves are stuck inside their own souls. A therapist can't always help someone, because he has his own problems. Although a therapist is able to view a person's problems from the outside, which is a better view from the person's inside (who can't see himself at all), he still doesn't really know what's going on inside of the person who comes to him for help and he doesn't see the total picture. The therapist usually doesn't succeed in truly understanding the person who comes to him for help unless he has a lot of *ahavas Yisrael*.

The only way for one to know about the soul is not from within inside of himself, so to speak, but to see himself from above. A person can reach into a deep, quiet place in his soul in which he can go above himself and see himself from a higher view. Then he will be able to see how his emotions, thoughts, and experiences are simply his garments, not who he actually is. In the same way that one can see an x-ray of his body, so too, it is possible for a person to get a picture of his soul, when he learns how to view himself from above.

All problems, physical or spiritual, are really because people don't understand their souls. A lack of information about the human soul causes a lot of inner contradictions and frustration. However, Hashem wants us to have problems and He hides knowledge about our soul, so that we will have to work hard in our *avodas Hashem*.

In the future, though, there will be total clarity. Chazal say, "Today is for action, and tomorrow is for the reward". In today's times we have no clarity and we have to work very hard at our *avodas Hashem*. In the future, we will have clarity in our *avodas Hashem* and we won't have to work hard.

In the future Redemption, we will all see the big picture. Ramchal wrote that the purpose of the world is to reveal Hashem's ways and this will be when Hashem shows us the big picture of everything. Just like there is a general redemption that will take place in the future, so too, there is a personal redemption that a person can experience in his soul now.

When one succeeds in knowing his soul, he will experience a personal redemption. The secret to all of *avodas Hashem* is inner silence. Through an inner silence, we can reveal our soul. In order for a person to do this, he needs to have utter calm and quiet.

The problem is that most people don't have this inner silence. There are generally six common causes why a person may lack this inner silence.

The First Cause: Our Shortcomings (Or Our Talents)

All of us have shortcomings— areas where we are not strong. All of us have a particular weak element, whether it is earth, fire, water, or wind, depending on each person. Our weakest element is always our downfall. Our weaknesses don't let us have *menuchas hanefesh*.

For example, if one has a problem of overeating, not only does he have a problem of overeating, which is very unhealthy, he also doesn't have *serenity*. Why? Every time he overeats, he becomes anxious and impulsive. Up until the moment he sees food, he is calm. The moment he sees the food, he is driven out of his calm state to fulfill his desires, and loses all of his *inner peace*.

Not only does a person's main weak area destroy his *peace of mind*, even a person's main good quality can be his downfall. I knew someone who was a great spiritual personality. He had excellent talents, a great personality, and was very influential on others when he spoke in public. Yet, because he was on such a higher plane than others, he couldn't relate to them in simple, mundane matters. It was "beneath him" to talk to his congregants with daily chatter. Therefore, he wasn't able to influence them the way he could have. He was too lofty to relate to others in practical, daily life. Here we see an example of how someone's positive qualities can also be detrimental to him.

The Second Cause: Desires

Another deterrent to *tranquility* is when we want things. When we have a whole list of things we want, it doesn't let us have any *menuchas hanefesh*. To want something comes from word *ratzon*, which comes from the word *ratz*, to run. When we want something, it's like running outside of our minds! We need to quiet our desires in order to feel at peace inside.

Even what we want in spiritual matters can ruin our *menuchas hanefesh*. When we want to grow so much in our spirituality, it can create a lack of balance in our soul, destroying our *serenity*.

The Third Cause: Rapid Actions

Another cause for a lack of *menuchas hanefesh* is working fast. Fast actions can have an effect on the soul. We become anxious when we constantly do things very quickly, and we cannot be calm, which takes away from our *peace of mind*.

The Fourth Cause: Amazement

Many people express *hispaalus*, amazement or wonder, at a new idea that comes to mind, and it actually takes a person out of his *inner peace*. Many people are very earnest in their *avodas Hashem* but they lack *tranquility*, because even though they are continuously involved in how to best serve Hashem, they are always feeling amazed at so many things, causing a certain disconnection. This is a lack of inner calm.

The Fifth Cause: Too Many Roles

A person cannot have *peace of mind* when he does too many things, even if they are all for good causes.

A very wonderful, earnest and G-d fearing individual asked me how he can really grow and serve Hashem as best as possible. I asked him what he does. He told me that in the morning he is a *Rebbi*, in the afternoon he is a *Mashgiach*, and at night he is a *Rov*. In addition to this, he is involved with his *shul* during Friday and Shabbos so he can answer all their *halachic* queries. I told him, “How do you not go crazy? You are doing too much!”

Not only can doing too much destroy your *menuchas hanefesh*, but thinking too much can also destroy your *peace of mind*. Thinking too much can drive you insane. No one would think of teaching *kaballah* to his child, because he knows it would strain the child’s brain to understand these matters and thereby make the child go insane.

Many people are exerting themselves in learning Torah. However, this exertion has to be an exertion that causes us to feel at peace inside, not to feel anxiety in our studies.

The Sixth Cause: Noise

Finally, it should be noted that noise could remove our *serenity*. Loud noises don’t let us think calmly and make us anxious. Even being around someone who isn’t calm can make us anxious and does not allow us to have *inner peace*.

In fact, simply talking to someone who is very nervous and not calm can take away our *serenity*. Talking is a form of connection. When a person talks to an anxious person who has no *tranquility*, he connects to him and receives all of the lack of calmness that prevents *peace of mind*.

Find Out What Is Destroying Your Inner Peace

Most people lack *menuchas hanefesh* because of the first two reasons mentioned. Either they have major weaknesses that pull them away from doing what is right and good, or they have many things they want.

Some people aren’t calm, though, because they keep feeling “amazed” during their *avodas* Hashem, and they are suffering from an imbalance and a disconnection.

One must take the time to reflect on which one is destroying one's inner calm.

Chapter Seven
Dealing With Our Problems in Life

Different Reactions to Problems

The world has hospitals that are full of sick people who are suffering tremendously. There are different kinds of reactions a person can have to their problems. Some people despair and say, “That’s it – it’s the end”. Others don’t think about it and say, “It will be okay”. They take their mind off it such as by spending all their time on their mobile phone with friends.

How do we deal with our life?

As we get older and more mature, we realize that life is not a bed of roses. Life is full of difficulties. Some people are happy in spite of their problems, but it’s not because they’re on a high level; it’s usually because they’re a more carefree kind of person. They are superficial and living in denial. The real way to deal with life is to actually *deal* with it.

Deal with It

The Ramban writes that to live in denial is like denying Hashem. Nothing happens by chance, and Hashem has a specific reason why He sends us each problem.

When we are in a tough situation, we have to try and think about what has caused this happen. Who has brought it? It didn’t just happen by itself.

Life is very precious. We can’t disregard it and assume everything will be okay. There is a purpose to our life and to our problems. We need guidance in how to deal with our problems.

All of us are busy, whether in our jobs, taking care of our family or worrying about our health. When we encounter a problem, we are likely to despair right away and say, “I can’t do it – I can’t succeed. Others are better and more successful than me, but I can’t”.

If we act like this, we will definitely never be successful. A person can live his whole life without changing. His attitude as his life progresses is to complain more and more about increasing difficulties. It’s hard to make a living, he has to marry off his kids, his marriage is challenging...

There is a way to deal with each problem. We need to learn how to deal with our difficulties in life.

Realizing We Are Not Living A Normal Life

A person gets up in the morning, he *davens* quickly in *shul* or in his house. Sometimes he doesn't complete the *davening*, and at best manages to put on *Tefillin*. Then he goes to work. He knows that he is not organized. He knows that rushing through *davening* because he has to get to work or *davening* alone in his house is not right. Really, this is not a way to live!

Set Aside Some Time Every Day to Think

What can we do about this?

The Ramchal answers and unequivocally states that without a little bit of time alone daily, it's not possible to survive life. We are busy all day, but we also have plenty of free time on our hands.

For five minutes a day, we can take the time to think a little.

One might learn Torah each day and he knows in his head what he is supposed to do. Yet, he never thinks about it. He thinks, "I know this already – what do I need this for"?

We need to set aside time to think. Without some time to think, we have nothing in our life. Although we learn Torah, do *mitzvos* and support our family, it's all nothing if we don't have time to think. Although Torah is important and we need it, without some *emunah* in Hashem, we remain with nothing in our life. Without *emunah* in Hashem, the Torah we learn doesn't really affect us so much, and when we learn the Torah's advice for life, we think we know it already and wonder why we have to learn it.

The Lies in Our Life

The world we are living in is full of falsity. It's not only government politics that is full of lies! Even in our own life, even in the *Beis Midrash*, we are living a life of *sheker* falsehood!

A simple example of this is that a person can donate a *Beis Midrash* in his own name, all for his own honor, so that everyone should see his name. The people learning in the *Beis Midrash* see his name and also think that this donor is going to *Gan Eden* for this, and are in awe from this person's kindness – who really did it all for his own honor, so that everyone should see his name plastered on the wall.

A life without *emunah* is a life of falsity. Our whole life is a lie if we never have *emunah*, if we never stop to think! Only living a life of *emunah* in Hashem will enable our Torah and mitzvos to affect us. The problem is that no one has time to think. People are busy all day and there is no time to think about life.

Find Five Minutes A Day To Think

The Mishnah in Avos states, “Remember where you come from, and to where you are going, and to Whom you will have to give a self-accounting to”. We should always keep this in mind, that one day we will have to give a self-accounting to Hashem for our life. Take just five minutes a day each day to think about this and your life will change completely.

One time I was by a funeral and the person who was giving a eulogy said, “I don’t want to take up any more of your time”. I thought to myself, what a shame! People finally have a few minutes to think about what the purpose of life is, and now they’re being rushed through it, missing the opportunity. Of course, we shouldn’t look forward to funerals for this opportunity, but once we are at a funeral, why not use the opportunity and think a little about our life!

If we think about what the purpose of life is for five minutes a day, there is hope to deal with our problems. A life without any thinking is hopeless. It’s an entirely different kind of life when we know that the goal is to eventually give a self-accounting to Hashem.

Don’t wait until age seventy to do this – do it every day, for five minutes a day. We don’t mean to learn *mussar* for these five minutes a day. We mean simply to just think. Everyone can do this. When we do this every day, we will begin to breathe our life with Hashem.

Yes, we still have to eat and sleep and stay normal, but along with this we need to think for five minutes a day about why we are alive. This will help us deal with our problems.

Chapter Eight
Coping With Suffering and Illness

A Person Is Made Up of Body and Soul

The Torah compares Yissocher, the tribe who merited Torah scholars as descendants, to a donkey. Just like a donkey endures its load and rests wherever it is, so too, Yissocher's descendants have these two attributes. They have true rest, *menuchah*, and they have *savlonus*, the patience and ability to endure pain.

How can we have peace of mind while enduring pain?

A person has a body and a soul, and the body and the soul want different things. When only the soul gets its needs met, the body suffers in the process, and when only the body gets its needs met, the soul suffers with this. Their needs contradict each other. For example, if a person sleeps a lot, his body enjoys it, but his soul doesn't. When a person pushes himself to do a *mitzvah*, his soul enjoys it, but his body doesn't.

When one experiences *menuchah*, his soul is at peace, but the body endures some pain. It is being denied certain comforts so that the soul can have enjoyment, and the body endures this.

Two Different Reactions To Suffering

If a person is suffering, there are two ways to deal with it. One way to deal with pain is to kick and scream throughout the entire ordeal. The other way is with *savlonus*, to endure it by embracing it.

In the first way, a person's body and soul are at odds with one another. The soul wants to suffer physically, because it knows that this will purify it more, but the body is kicking and screaming at the pain. However, with the second way, *savlonus*, the body and soul come together in harmony. The soul enjoys it, and the body, while not enjoying it, is able to endure the pain. In this way, a person achieves *peace of mind*, even as he's suffering.

The Soul's Suffering

When a person suffers physically, there are two parts to the pain. There is the actual pain and there is the change of routine in a person's life. For instance, when a person gets sick, his schedule has changed and he isn't living his regular life anymore, which is a mental type of suffering.

This second part of the suffering is much more painful than the actual physical pain. The soul suffers from this, because it has been taken out of its routine. This is known as *yissurei nefesh*, suffering of the soul.

Silence Relieves The Pain

A sick person isn't only suffering physically. His very soul is suffering from the change of routine in his life. How can one comfort his suffering soul?

The answer is, through the use of silence. When a person is suffering in his soul, this naturally causes a person to want to talk about his pain. The Gemara says, however, that one should accept pain with silence.

It seems that a person should just embrace the pain, but it is really more than that. Upon analysis, we can find that talking about one's pain is what increases it. The less one complains, the less painful it is.

At first, if a person does this, he will find it very hard not to talk about his pain. But after some time, his silence will give him *menuchas hanefesh*.

This is the real reason why, on Shabbos, we are refrain from talking about weekday matters because we must learn how to be silent about our problems. Talking spreads a person's soul too thin. **It is written, "My soul leaves when I speak with him".**

Silence Unifies The Soul

The Vilna Gaon wrote that a person has seventy forces in his soul. How can a person have *peace of mind*, if he has seventy different forces going on inside?

The answer is through silence, which can unify all of them together. Silence is the power that brings peace between differences. Creation was silent at the giving of the Torah. The power of silence is what unifies everything. Silence joins the body and soul together and also unifies the soul itself.

Chapter Nine
Hearing the Voice of Hashem

Knowing What Hashem Wants From Us

When Hashem gave us the Torah at Har Sinai, we all heard Hashem talking to us. Is it possible to hear the voice of Hashem today? Can we hear Hashem talking to us on a personal level?

All of our souls were there at Har Sinai. We all heard Hashem talking to us. Many years have passed since then. Even so, there is still a way to connect to that time when Hashem spoke to us.

There are two ways a person can know what Hashem wants from him. One way is by learning Torah, or to ask a Rov and find out what the *halacha* is when one is in doubt about what to do. Another way is to discern with one's heart what is true and what isn't. These are gray areas in life that aren't clear-cut and a person is able to use his heart to know what the right thing is. Every person has the ability to know in his heart that "this is just not the right thing".

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

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

Feeling When Something Is Right

There are things we do which take away our peace of mind like doing something that is the wrong thing to do. If we do something and it doesn't disturb our peace of mind, it is a sign that we have done the right thing.

Every time we do something, we should ask ourselves: Would our Avos and Imahos do this? Would the Avos and Imahos live a similar lifestyle to ours? Imagine if the Avos and Imahos lived in our community. How would they feel about everything we do?

If we feel that something in our life is something that our Avos and Imahos wouldn't do, then it can't be the right thing. Most people do not have peace of mind and aren't calm. This is because people are doing things that they know are really not the right thing. A person only has *menuchas hanefesh* when his heart is in line with the things he does. Anyone who does things, which he knows in his heart are improper, cannot have *peace of mind*.

Nobody is perfect, but if a person lives his life according to what he feels is true, he will be calm and live a sincere life. When a person's actions match what is in his heart, he is a truly happy person. We should ask ourselves if the way we are living is right or not. Are there any parts of our life that we know are not the right way to live?

Listening To Your Heart

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

Put aside time every day to listen to Hashem's voice. He speaks to us from within our own hearts. We have to set aside time for this; if we don't, it's like a beautiful disc, which we have never listened to because we did not make the time for it. Every day the voice of Hashem is playing in our heart. It tells us what is right, if we set aside time every day to listen to our heart.

If we listen to our heart every day and what it is telling us, we will find true happiness. The **Rambam (FOOTNOTE??)** says that all happiness does not come from anything outside of a person, but from the person himself. All happiness is contained in our selves, in our heart.

Analyzing the American Lifestyle We Are Living

We must choose the correct path in our life, the truth, which our heart is telling us. The lifestyle in America is very materialistic. A Jew is able to feel his heart telling him that the American lifestyle is not a true kind of life. We know that there are many things that are inappropriate.

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

It is to live constantly with the truth. Of course, people have to make a living, even in the old days. But they lived with the knowledge that they were a *neshamah* inside a body, and they knew that there is a clear difference between a Jew and a non-Jew.

Today, a Jew's lifestyle is very similar to a non-Jewish lifestyle, except for the fact that Jews have Shabbos and non-Jews have Sundays off. Jews only eat kosher and gentiles do not, etc. A Jew's *neshamah* doesn't want any of the non-Jewish lifestyle. We know we all have a *neshamah*. Have we given up our *neshamah* to these thoughts; "We don't have a choice... We live in America... There's nothing we can do about it".

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

Chazal say, "Every person must ask; when will I reach the actions of my forefathers". We can picture in our mind how our forefathers/mothers would speak and act if they would live in our community, and we can connect to that and emulate that. We are not speaking of something that is out of our reach. Anyone can do this.

Chapter Ten
Finding Silence in our Life

Holiness Is Found In Silence

It is written, “*Hashem is not found in noise or in wind, but in a soft, subtle voice*”. If a person wants to find Hashem, if he wants *menuchah*, he needs to find a quiet place, a place where there is a *kol demamah dakah*, a “soft, subtle voice”. If one wants to live an internal kind of life, he needs to find quiet. A more external kind of person likes noise, but the more spiritual a person is, the more he lives a quieter life, and the closer he is to *tranquility*.

Our Avos, as well as Moshe Rabbeinu and Dovid HaMelech, were all shepherds who lived far away from civilization. *Sefer HaMaspik L'Ovdei Hashem* (written by the son of the Rambam) writes that this was intentional, because the Avos wanted to live lives of solitude. They chose to settle in quiet places and take care of animals, which is a peaceful life.

When a person leaves the noise and finds a connection to the silence in himself, then his inner world expands. If one is accustomed to noise and needs a lot of noise in his life, then even when he has peace and quiet, he seeks noise. On the contrary, when one lives a life of peace and quiet, he will run away from noise as soon as he encounters it.

Silence Is A Tool For Inner Peace

One must leave his connection to noise and connect to silence. When a person craves silence, he has a strong tool to find *menuchah*. Besides for having actual quiet, he achieves an inner kind of silence as well.

There are several things that allow for quiet:

- If a person is choosing where to live, he should live in a more quiet kind of neighborhood, not a loud one.
- Avoid gadgets that take away quiet such as cellphones, which we often take with us wherever we go. They are a big deterrent to *tranquility*. It's possible for one's inner peace to get ruined by simply holding it, how much more so when it actually rings.
- If one works, he should work in a quiet kind of job and in a quiet atmosphere.

- One associate with friends who have a quieter kind of life, and not with friends who love noise and action. When a person encounters someone who is loud, this an ruin his *peace of mind*. Make sure to go to places that will not take away one's *serenity*.
- One should not buy "loud" items [WHAT DOES THIS MEAN] for his house. In addition, his house should be designed in a way that will allow him to have some peace and quiet and not hear all the noise from the street.

The *Tiferes Yisrael* writes that a person should even learn Torah in a quiet place, because a person's mind is more receptive to remembering things in a quiet environment. Although there is a benefit to study with more people, since "The glory of the king is among the majority of people", usually, however, being around people doesn't allow for *inner peace*, because it's noisy.

It is very important to have actual silence, even physical quiet. A person should always seek the quieter route.

Set Aside Time for Quiet

Besides for physical quiet, one should get used to having times set aside every day for quiet. We are not speaking about doing *teshuvah*, nor are we speaking about *hisbodedus* with Hashem. This is something else entirely.

There must be times every day in which a person simply calms himself. In the Yeshiva of Radin, the yeshiva students would take a walk every day for a half hour in the gardens outside the city. This was not *hisbodedus* – it was merely the time for quiet.

Each person has their own actions, speech, feelings, and thoughts. All of them need to be calmed. One needs to experience silent times in which he does nothing in order to silence his feelings and thoughts. It is not possible to silence them completely, but a person should quiet them as much as possible.

What should a person do during this quiet time?

He should think light and calm thoughts, nothing stressful. Sometimes a person will have to use his imagination for this and picture something that's relaxing. At the same time, one has to be careful that he doesn't get carried away with his imagination. There is a very fine line between positive imagination and negative imagination.

Silence is not simply another detail, but a very basic attitude in life. One shouldn't get involved in "something" if he doesn't have to, and even when he has to be involved, he should seek the quieter option.

Silence Helps A Person Reveal Himself

When one chooses to live a quieter life and craves peace and silence, he begins to reveal who he is. We can compare this to the contrast between a rushing river and a calm pond. When there is a rushing river, one can't see what's underneath the water, whereas, in a still pond the water is clear and one can see all the way to the bottom.

If a person likes noise, he doesn't experience himself. Rather, he experiences what is outside of himself. Once a person leaves all the noise and enters a more quiet kind of life, he can reveal his true self.

There are people who are afraid of discovering who they really are, so they seek noise and are uncomfortable with silence. On the other hand, if one truly seeks the purpose of life, he desires true peace of mind and craves silence.

Tzadikim Draw All Their Inner Peace from Silence

This silence can give a person the opportunity to live a new kind of life. It enables a person to derive vitality from his inner silence, similar to how the entire earth was quiet at the giving of the Torah at Har Sinai.

Silence should become the way a person leads his life. When a person considers silence to be a tool to reach his self and doesn't see how it can shape his life, he still gains some vitality from it. On the other hand, when a person makes silence the basis of his life, he avoids noise and leads a life of vitality. It could even be that when he is in a noisy atmosphere he feels his self to be in great danger.

A *tzaddik* lives completely in this silence. He gets his vitality from a quiet place inside himself. When he has to enter a loud place, he feels as if part of him is being removed, like a fish being taken out of water.

Two Purposes of Silence

There are two ways silence can give one *serenity*. The first way is feeling the inner peace that one has from silence. When a person derives vitality from this silence, he finds *serenity*. He feels that his real place is in this silence, and he finds peace there. He finds his roots in silence, and this

gives him *inner peace*. The second way is through the clarity and orderliness in his life that comes with the silence. Without being organized, a person can't have *tranquility*.

In the Yeshiva of Kelm, a lot of importance was placed on acquiring *peace of mind*, and thus, they were very strict when it came to keeping their *seder* (study sessions) and punctuality in general. External orderliness contributes a lot to *tranquility*. If one isn't orderly, their thoughts are also disorganized. When a person enjoys silence in their life their thoughts naturally become more organized.

Revealing Hashem From The Silence

When one is in a quiet place he can find himself. If he is more spiritual, he can even reveal Hashem there; "*Hashem is not found in noise, but in a soft, subtle voice*". This is an inner kind of stillness, more than an ordinary silence, where a person derives vitality directly from Hashem.

It is not the Jewish way to enjoy silence, without trying to reveal Hashem from this silence. The correct approach is to use silence as a tool to reach Hashem, not for the sake of silence alone.

There can be a few possibilities why someone does not feel closer to Hashem even if he is trying to access his inner silence. Either his sins are getting in the way and aren't allowing him to experience this silence, in which case he has to examine his deeds. Or, possibly, he is leading a materialistic kind of lifestyle that is blocking him from feeling closer to Hashem. Or, perhaps, he has bad *middos* he needs to work on seriously since they are hampering his ability to feel Hashem through the silence.

Balancing Our Noisy Life

Silence is only one side of the coin. Just like Hashem wants us to experience silence, so does He also want us to live in this "noisy" world. It is not the way of the Torah to only live with silence and never experience any noise. A Jew has to balance both noise and silence in his life.

Hashem doesn't want us to become loners. A person has to be connected to others and daven with a *minyan* every day, enduring all the noise that comes with this. However, we need to balance all this noise with silence. We need to realize that the main source of vitality in our life is our silence, while the noise we experience is only an outer "garment" that we have to "put on" ourselves. We need to make sure that the noise in our life isn't taking away our connection to silence – the source of our *serenity*.

Chapter Eleven
Menuchah From Feeling Emptiness

The Other Kind Of Menuchas Hanefesh

The type of *peace of mind* that was discussed in the previous chapters, delineates how we can gain something – calm actions, calm feelings and calm thoughts. Now we will describe a quieter kind of *serenity*. This is calmness that one can experience when he doesn't do anything at all. This kind of *tranquility* draws inner peace from a deep place in the soul and gives one's soul the ability to feel "empty".

An Empty Place In The Soul

There is a space in our soul called "*chalal*". Chazal mention this as "*chalal shel olam*", the space of the world. Avraham Avinu was taken there. In terms of the human soul, it is an empty place in our soul, essentially the inner silence of one's soul.

There are non-Jewish methods to achieve this type of inner peace. Non-Jews use this part of the soul in order to reach a deep silence and become calm. However, they only want to feel this emptiness for the purpose of feeling empty. They don't do anything constructive with this emptiness. They are simply trying to experience what it's like to detach from their physical existence and feel nothing. On the other hand, a Jewish soul has the ability to take this emptiness and create something with it. A Jew uses both this and the active kinds of inner peace in order to achieve *peace of mind*.

Feeling The Emptiness Of This World

What exactly is the *chalal* in the soul?

Chazal say that when Hashem created the world, He first created a space in order to make room for it and then He filled it. At first, Hashem filled the entire existence. Then, in order to create the universe, He left some empty space, which He made Himself not fill, so to speak. This empty space was then filled up by Hashem to eventually become the universe. Although all this took place at the beginning of creation, there is an ability in our soul to feel this empty space. This is essentially the power of inner silence which we have described earlier.

When one contemplates the emptiness of the world, he will, subsequently, feel that emptiness. Although this is a power in our soul, we have to be aware that there is a danger to it. Rebbi Nachman of Breslov said that if a person enters this part of his soul and isn't ready to experience this emptiness, he can fall to the lowest level in the world, which is to deny Hashem altogether,

chas v'shalom. When a person enters this part of himself and knows what to do with this feeling, he can then use it as a way to experience complete *menuchas hanefesh*.

The Deepest *Menuchah* In Our Soul

In addition to this feeling of “*chalal*”, a person’s soul can feel even deeper – a clear, inner recognition of Hashem’s existence. This higher power has greater depth than the ability to feel emptiness. The soul can sense how Hashem’s existence fills all that there is and that there is nothing besides Him. In this, a person can find total and complete *peace of mind*. When a person utilizes this part of his soul correctly, he experiences what is called “*Ain Od Milvado*” – “There is Nothing Besides Hashem”.

“*Ain Od Milvado*” is the desired kind of nothingness which a person can experience. One can realize that there is truly nothing in the universe except for Hashem. This is also known as having *menuchah* in the blessed *Ein Sof* (endlessness) of Hashem.

If a person only has the basic kind of *menuchas hanefesh* as described in the earlier chapters of calm actions, feelings and thoughts, his *tranquility* is incomplete. He is missing the other two more refined levels of *serenity*: to feel the *menuchah* that comes from the *chalal* in one’s soul, as well as the *menuchah* which comes from the *Ein Sof* of Hashem.

Alternatively, one who only attains *menuchah* from the *chalal* in his soul will know how to experience emptiness, but if he doesn’t do anything with the inner silence, he is actually living an impure kind of existence that is a result of non-Jewish meditation.

In addition, it clearly is not the "ultimate" to reach the exalted level of feeling the *Ein Sof*. If one only focuses on achieving this deep calm feeling of Hashem’s absolute existence, but doesn’t try to attain a bit of silence in life or lacks calmness in his actions, feelings or thoughts, then he is missing the other two kinds of *inner peace*. A person needs to all have three aspects of *menuchas hanefesh* if he wants to have complete *peace of mind*.

The Three Kinds Of Menuchas Hanefesh

In summary, there are altogether three kinds of *menuchah*. There is *menuchah* we can have amidst people, which is found when we calm our actions, feelings and thoughts. There is *menuchah* that comes from the empty space in our soul, which is the power of inner silence and finally, there is *menuchah* in the *Ein Sof* of Hashem, which is the power to to feel *Ain Od Milvado*.

The first two kinds of *menuchah* are different with each person. Each person has a different way to achieve a calm lifestyle and how to achieve silence. The third kind of *menuchah*, in the *Ein*

Sof, is accomplished in the same way by each person. Each person can point to Hashem and feel that he has only one Father in Heaven – the Creator.

Shabbos Contains All Three Kinds Of Menucha

Shabbos contains all of the above three kinds of *menuchah*. Shabbos is a day of physical rest, the first kind of *menuchah*. It is also the *menuchah* in emptiness, because we don't do anything on Shabbos. Additionally, it contains the third kind of *menuchah* in the *Ein Sof*, because Shabbos is called "the Name of Hashem". We say in the *tefillah* of *Shabbos Minchah*, "And from You comes their rest".

The first two kinds of *menuchah* are not yet the total *menuchah* a person can reach, because they involve some movement. Anything that has movement cannot be considered total *peace of mind*, because being calm means you're not moving. It is *menuchah* to some degree, but it is not total, since it involves some kind of movement.

For example, when a person has calm actions, feelings and thoughts, he has calm movements. Even drawing *menuchah* from the *chahal* in one's soul has movement, because one needs to create a space within oneself in order to have it. This is a type of movement, albeit subtle. The third kind of *menuchah* in the *Ein Sof*, though, is the perfect kind of *menuchah*, because it comes from the deepest, unmoving place in one's soul – the ability to utterly feel Hashem's existence.

Shabbos of Today and Shabbos In The Future

The Shabbos of today is called *mein olam habah*, a "mini" World to Come. It is similar to the World to Come, but it is not yet the actual World to Come.

The current status of the world is that of movement. Hashem does not want us to have total *menuchah* yet. However, the Shabbos of future will be a day of eternal rest, a "day that is entirely Shabbos, an eternal rest". This will be the perfect *menuchah*, a world in which we never have to move at all, because tranquility will be complete and totally sublime.

Just as the goal of the week proceeds to Shabbos, so too, the goal of our soul leads to *peace of mind*, and on its deepest level, *menuchas hanefesh* in sensing the *Ein Sof*. *Menuchas hanefesh* is the basis of our soul's *avodah*, and it is the ultimate goal we aspire to in all of our inner work.

Chapter Twelve
Menuchah Throughout The Five Layers Of The Soul

The soul is made up of five parts: the *nefesh*, the *ruach*, the *neshamah*, the *chayah*, and the *yechidah*. Each of these five parts of the soul provides us with a unique kind of *peace of mind*.

Menuchah of the Nefesh: Being Ready For New Levels

The most simple and basic kind of *menuchah* is the *menuchah* of our *nefesh*. The word *nefesh* is associated with rest, like we say on Shabbos, “*Vayenafash*” – “And He rested.” Shabbos is the rest from the six days of the week, which are days of action. On Shabbos we rest from action.

Chazal say, “Anyone whose wisdom is greater than his actions, his wisdom will not last”. When a person’s wisdom matches his actions, his wisdom fits with his personality. He then has the tools to receive the Torah. Whereas, if a person’s wisdom isn’t the same as his actions, he cannot be at peace with his *nefesh*, because he doesn’t have the tools to be able to hold the light of his Torah learning.

There are people who know a lot of Torah, but they don’t experience *serenity* because they don’t have the tools to receive new levels. This *menuchas ha“nefesh”* is when one has the tools to receive spiritual growth. One would know clearly they are ready for the next step in *serenity* when they feel it in their thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Menuchah of the Ruach: Being Above Our Actions

The *menuchah* that a person has in his *ruach* is experienced when he does an action and makes sure to be above the action. Whenever a person does something, he shouldn’t be too involved in it. *Ruach* means wind, which moves. Normally when a person moves, he can’t have *menuchah*, but if he makes sure not to become too involved in what he does, he can have *menuchah* even in his movements.

Throughout Chazal, *ruach* is also identified with speech. When one speaks, he is using his *ruach*. “The heart is not revealed to the mouth”. Chazal say that one is not supposed to reveal everything that’s in his heart. Some matters are meant to remain hidden inside of the heart. This shows us that we shouldn’t tell others everything that we are thinking. If one makes sure not to say everything on his mind, he can retain his *menuchah*, and thus, experience *menuchah* in his *ruach*.

Menuchah of our *ruach* is achieved when we leave some space and keep some of our movements (actions and speech) for ourselves. If we use up all of our energy when we do something, we

won't leave a space for ourselves in our actions, and as a result, we will lose our *menuchah*. [what does it mean here by using the word space???]

Menuchah In The Neshamah: Reflection

The *menuchah* that comes from one's *neshamah* is a more profound kind of *menuchah*. It is only for someone who has *menuchah* on a constant basis from the last two types discussed, and not for someone who only experiences it temporarily.

This is achieved when a person reflects with calmness. Reflection is *hisbonenus*, which comes from the word *banyan* – to build. This is achieved through reflecting on questions such as, “Where do I come from, and where am I going?” A person deepens his thinking capabilities in this way.

The *menuchah* of the *neshamah* is achieved when a person deepens his thinking, utilizing the ability of *hisbonenus* which develops one's thinking. Shlomo Hamelech is called “*ish menuchah*”, and that is why he was able to build the *Beis Hamikdash*.

Without *menuchah*, one cannot build. In order to build, the builder has to connect things together. When he builds a house, he connects the bricks to the ground. The beginning of building is by connecting things together to its source.

How does one develop his thinking?

The purpose of reflection is to connect many details to a root, which is the source of the information. This is not because a person simply wants to gather all the details together into one piece, but because he wants to connect them all to their source. This is *hisbonenus*, the power that gives a person *peace of mind* from his *neshamah*.

Torah scholars are called “builders” since they know how to build their minds in this way. Torah scholars have this quality of *menuchah*. For example, if a person is thinking while he is learning Torah and has a question that he is trying to answer, is he simply seeking an answer, or is he trying to develop something from that?

Let's say a person has seven questions on the Rambam, and he is looking for one answer that will answer all of them at once. If he comes up with one answer that takes care of all seven questions, then he hasn't really connected them, because in his mind, he has dealt with seven different problems and is not searching to build on that. A person who thinks in this way hasn't used *hisbonenus*, because he's not trying to connect all the information back to its root. He has split up the information.

However, if he is trying to come up with an answer because he wants to take that and build upon that, he has unified all the information into one. This method is *hisbonenus*, because he is taking all the details and connecting it to their root.

One has to be at the right level in order to experience *hisbonenus*. Not everyone can think in this way. *Hisbonenus* is when a person knows how to connect all the information and build upon it. A person who thinks more superficially has a “first take” (*hashkafah rishona*) on what he learns, and then tries to connect all the details with one particular *yesod* (basic principle), satisfied without knowing the root to the answer.

Hisbonenus is also called *binah* and the superficial method of thinking is called *tevunah*. Most people have not yet revealed their *neshamah*, so they don't have *hisbonenus*. They would rather first see all the details when they learn and only after that come up with a fundamental concept that will connect them all. They want to add onto their knowledge more and more, but they don't know how to build upon their knowledge.

The *neshamah* is accessed when we use our *seichel* (intellect). This is not the regular human intellect that even a non-Jew has. It is a holy intellect, *binah*. This is when a person knows of a concept, sees the details and then connects all the details to the root in order to explain the concept. It is like a magnet that pulls everything toward it. A magnet is one single piece, but it takes many things and connects them to itself. It is not simply gathering many things together. Instead, the many things that pass it connect to it. This is also known as *mochin d'gadlus* (expanded consciousness).

Menuchah In The Chayah: Accessing Our Inner Flow Of Information

There is also *menuchah* that comes from the *chayah* in our soul. The *chayah* is the place where the rest of our soul gets its flow of information.

The *chayah* of our soul seemingly restrains a person from having *tranquility*, because it is a constant flowing source of information. With a constant influx of information, it seems impossible to experience any *menuchah*.

For example, there are people who have a natural ability to always come up with ideas. Such people do not have *peace of mind*, because the constant ideas doesn't allow them to have any inner calm. They always have ideas, but nothing ever comes out of their ideas since they never come to fruition.

However, this is only if a person's flow of information comes from his *nefesh*, as opposed to his *chayah*. The *nefesh* supplies basic sources of ideas in a person, such as the idea that people have

to help one another, or even the idea to become close to Hashem. These types of ideas can take away a person's inner calm.

The *chayah* is a deeper flow of ideas in a person. It is an inner flow in the soul that won't remove one's inner calm. Chazal call this "*maayan shel chochmah*", a "wellspring of wisdom", in each person. Chazal also say that one who learns Torah with pure motives (*lishmah*) merits to become a *maayan hamisgaber*, a "mighty wellspring".

It is written, "*Wisdom is found from nothingness (ayin)*". There is *chochmah* (wisdom) that you "find" in other parts of the soul. However, the actual source of this wisdom is called "*ayin*" ("nothingness"). This is wisdom that comes from a person's power of *ayin* ("nothingness") in the soul, an inner flow of information, which is derived from the blessed *Ein Sof* of Hashem. A person can access this part of his soul when he is focused on the *ayin* in himself, not on the wisdom he is trying to uncover.

In other words, when a person attains the level of *bittul* (self-nullification), he nullifies himself to the information. When a person does so, he reaches his inner flow of information, which gives him *inner peace* in spite of all the new information he is receiving.

Menuchah In The Yechidah: Ain Od Milvado

The perfect kind of *menuchah* is in a person's soul, called *yechidah*. The ultimate kind of *menuchah* possible is when a person realizes "*Ain Od Milvado*", "there is nothing besides Hashem".

One may wonder how it is possible that there is nothing besides Hashem, as we clearly see that the world exists and is full of people. This is the same question people have about the power of free will; If Hashem knows everything, then how does a person have free will? Or, if we have free will, then how could it be that Hashem doesn't know something?

The answer to this is *emunah*. When a person has *emunah*, he can see how these two concepts do not contradict each other. When a person has *emunah*, he believes that there is nothing besides Hashem and he reaches the greatest *menuchah* possible. A person is at peace when he knows that there is nothing besides Hashem.

The *yechidah* in our soul is what enables us to believe in *Ain Od Milvado*. This is not an intellectual understanding, since the *yechidah* of our soul is above any intellectual comprehension. It is essentially the power of *emunah* in our soul – to experience palpable faith in the Creator. When a person has *emunah*, he is able to believe that there is nothing besides Hashem which does not contradict the fact that there are also people in the world. It is a

perception of reality not based on one's intellect. Through the lens of *emunah* we can perceive a whole different reality than what we are used to.

When a person reaches this deep ability in his soul to have the *emunah* of *Ain Od Milvado*, there is no *menuchah* greater than this. This is what we say in the *Shemoneh Esrei* of *Shabbos Mincha*, "For from You comes their rest."

This kind of *menuchah* is called *Olam Haba*, the World to Come, a "day that is entirely Shabbos and eternal rest". A person who lives with this deep understanding truly lives the renewal of creation, in which Hashem constantly renews the world. He is living in the reality of *Ain Od Milvado* in which there was nothing besides Hashem before the creation of this world,. He can actually feel the constant cycle of creation as it goes from the weekday to Shabbos. It is the most perfect kind of *menuchah* that a Jew's soul can reach.

PART TWO:
TORAH AND MENCHAS HANEFESH

Chapter Thirteen
Desires Hold Back Menuchas Hanefesh:
Purifying Our Heart

“We Desire To See Our King”

When the Jewish people stood at Har Sinai, we received two things. Firstly, we received the Torah. Secondly, Hashem revealed Himself to us. The *menuchah* we experienced at the giving of the Torah contained these two aspects; the Torah, and the revelation of Hashem. These two aspects represent Torah and *tefillah*. The giving of the Torah is our Torah and the revelation of Hashem to us at Har Sinai represents *tefillah*, as we stand before Hashem in prayer.

At Har Sinai, we uttered, “It is our will to see our King”. We desired to see Hashem, and indeed we merited this at Har Sinai.

“It is our will to see our King”; What does this mean? Is this just another deep desire that a person has, along with his many desires? Certainly not!

If a person has any desire other than to see Hashem, he cannot “see” Hashem. In order to see Hashem, a person needs a *lev tahor* – a pure heart. The heart of a person needs to be purified from any extraneous desires if a person wants to see Hashem. This is what we had at Har Sinai. Chazal say that when we stood at Har Sinai to receive the Torah, the spirit of impurity that came from Adam’s sin left us, enabling us to have a pure heart.

A pure heart has only one desire: “We desire to do Your will”. The essence of the Jewish people really desires only to do the will of Hashem and nothing else. It is only the “yeast in the dough that holds us back” (a reference to the *sitra achra*, the evil inclination). At Har Sinai, the evil inclination was erased, and fifty days later we reached the state of “We only have one heart, to our Father in Heaven”, and we experienced extraordinary levels.

Just as a person’s feet can run, his heart can also run. When a person runs with his feet, his body is running. When a person’s heart runs, it is his soul that is making him run. What does it mean to “run” with one’s heart?

The heart of a person runs when it desires something. Desire, which is *ratzon*, comes from the word *ratz*, to run (as we explained in previous chapters). When a person has a desire, he runs out of his inner essence to his outer desires.

Purifying Our Heart From Its Many Desires

Chazal state that the world was created with fifty gates of *binah* (understanding). This means that the heart has many levels of understanding. Every person has fifty rooms in his heart and each room has its own gate.

How can a person access the rooms inside his heart?

If a person has a pure heart – if he only has one desire, to do Hashem’s will – he will be in the innermost chamber of his heart. Whereas, the more desires a person has, the more he leaves the inner rooms in his heart and remains in the outer rooms.

It is written, “*And I will dwell amongst them*”. Hashem is found in every person. It is written, “*The rock of my heart and my portion, G-d*”. Hashem is found in the innermost chamber of our heart. If a person accesses his innermost chamber in his heart, he will find Hashem there. However, if a person has other desires, he runs away from Hashem in his heart!

When Hashem revealed Himself to us at Har Sinai, He entered the innermost chamber in our hearts, because our hearts only had one desire, to do Hashem’s will. This is what enabled us to receive the Torah.

Why We Can't Concentrate During Davening

When one davens, he stands in front of Hashem, and the only way to stand in front of Hashem is to enter the innermost chamber of his heart. A person often finds it hard to concentrate during davening because there are fifty rooms in a person’s heart and each room has its many desires which tempt him. He has to pass by all the rooms in order to get to the innermost room which is where Hashem is.

If a person has *menuchas hanefesh*, he can easily get past all these rooms in his heart when he davens. He knows how to take his mind off worldly matters and connect to his innermost point, where he can find Hashem. However, without *peace of mind*, his thoughts wander from place to place. Then he is all mixed up and he can’t focus.

We need to clean out our heart, just like a person cleans up his house. Dovid HaMelech said , “*My heart is empty within me*”. He also said, “*I place Hashem opposite me always.*” The first forty-nine rooms in his heart were emptied out completely in order to get to the fiftieth room which is where Hashem is.

The Rema writes, in the beginning of *Shulchan Aruch*, that a person must always see himself as if he’s sitting in the King’s palace. When a person brings things into his house, it becomes more noisy and cramped. The same can be said of a person’s desires. The more desires a person has,

which have nothing to do with wanting to do what Hashem wants, the more cramped his heart will become.

When you stuff a car with too much luggage, it doesn't move as fast, because it is too heavy. The more desires a person has, the heavier his heart is, and he cannot be dedicated to Hashem. We need to empty out our heart from its many desires so that we can attain a *libo lishamayim*, a "heart directed toward the heavens."

A person is able to feel this. When a person has many extra desires, his heart feels heavy, and the more a person eliminates these extra desires, the lighter his heart feels allowing him to connect to the Creator. When a person has all sorts of desires in life, he is constantly running away from the innermost point in his heart. He runs away from his *serenity*.

Remembering Har Sinai

What does "remember history" actually mean in a practical sense?

One of the six constant *mitzvos* we have is to always remember the day we stood at Har Sinai. It is not just to remember but it is also to feel as if we are actually there today. Just like we have to remember leaving Egypt as if it's actually happening now, so must we remember when we stood at Har Sinai, as if it's happening now.

At Har Sinai, Hashem spoke to us and we all heard His voice. It was a "*great voice, which did not stop*". Chazal state that the voice of Hashem can be heard every day! Chazal also say that every day a *bas kol* (voice of Heaven) comes from Har Sinai and says, "Woe to the people who disgrace the Torah; return, wayward children".

What is exactly is this voice of Hashem that we can hear every day?

The Baal Shem Tov said that this *bas kol* exorts people to have thoughts of *teshuvah* and feel the disgrace of the Torah. The heart of a person is able to hear this *bas kol*, as well as to hear the actual voice of Hashem – if he really wants to hear it.

Hashem actually resides in our hearts and tells us each what to do, but we just need to listen to our heart and hear what He is telling us. Only a person with a pure heart can hear Hashem's voice in his heart.

How To Hear Hashem's Voice

How can we merit receiving the Torah and hearing Hashem talking to us from the innermost chamber of our heart?

The Ramban writes that when a person is in doubt about something and he wants to know how the Torah views his situation, he should nullify his desires and see two options in front of him. When a person reaches the innermost point in his heart and sees the two options in front of him, he sees clearly the light of the Torah and knows what the Torah wants of him. If a person really wants to know what Hashem wants, he needs to water down his issues until he arrives at just two options in front of him.

Our *sefarim hakedoshim* also revealed another way to clarify a doubt. When a person has a question and he has no one to ask, he should check his thoughts. He should see what his original thoughts were and then do the opposite. Why?

One's initial thoughts are always from the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination), while the second thoughts are from a person's *yetzer tov* (good inclination). This is because a person's *yetzer hora* was in him since the time he was born, while the *yetzer tov* comes later, when he is thirteen. Since a person's *yetzer hora* has been around longer, he usually thinks more like his *yetzer hora*, so his first thoughts about something are usually the wrong thing to do. In order for a person to know what's right, he has to access the innermost point in himself – a place that is above his first thoughts, which come from his *yetzer hora*.

Returning To Our Pure State

How can we reach this innermost point?

All of us learned Torah and did not have a *yetzer hora* when we were in our mother's womb before we were born. We need to return to the time when we were being taught Torah by an angel in our mother's womb. How does one return to his mother's womb?

If one lives only in this world, he only has worldly interests. But when a person lived inside his mother before he was born, all he had was the one desire for holiness. Once a person entered this world he has the desires that come from his *yetzer hora* and the Torah he learns is amidst all these various desires. A person needs to return to the state when he was inside his mother. In other words, he has to be prepared to give up all worldly desires.

Be Prepared To Give Up All Worldly Desires

Let us ask ourselves a question. If Hashem would give us the choice to stay inside our mother's womb and remain with all our Torah knowledge – or to be born and experience this world with all its desires – what would we choose?

If a person isn't ready to give up this world's desires, he really wants this world. He'd rather have this world and its pleasures than to be in his mother's womb and know the whole Torah. The fact that a person wants this world's lifestyle is what holds a person back from reaching the innermost point in his heart. The only way for a person to really have the Torah is if he doesn't want this world's desires.

There were Gedolim who had great wealth, such as Rebbi, who always had the finest foods on his table. Yet the same Rebbi proclaimed that he did not enjoy anything of this world. Rebbi was not connected to this world's pleasures. All he wanted was Torah.

Chazal say that when the Torah was being given, our souls left us with the giving of each commandment. After the first commandment, why did the Jewish people agree to hear the rest, when they knew that their souls would leave them each time? Even though, they knew that their souls would leave them, this did not hold them back from wanting the Torah.

If Hashem would come to us today and tell us that in two minutes we will receive the Torah, but that our souls will leave us, would we want it?

If a person is ready for this, this shows that he is eligible to receive the Torah, but if he isn't ready, he won't receive the Torah. If a person really wants to embrace the Torah, if he really wants to have true *tranquility*, he must be prepared to give up all worldly desires in order to become connected to the truth: Hashem and His Torah.

There are people who will read this and think that this is too harsh and that these words are beyond us, but they should know better than to be discouraged. We, the souls of the Jewish people stood at Har Sinai and reached a point in time when we wanted only what Hashem wants. Now we have a *yetzer hora*, which gets in the way of what we really want. Hence, most people think that they really don't want the Torah.

When a person has so many things he wants, he is scattered, and he cannot have *menuchas hanefesh*. If a person has only one desire, which is the desire to want what Hashem wants, he will then have *peace of mind*.

Chapter Fourteen
How Learning Torah Gives A Person
Menuchas HaNefesh

Torah Gives A Person Stability

The Gemara relates how a person noticed Rava sitting and learning so immersed in his learning that he didn't realize his fingers were bleeding. The person made fun of Rava, saying, "You are an impulsive nation. When Hashem asked you if you want the Torah, you said, "*Naaseh*" ("We will do") before you said "*Nishmah*" ("We will hear").

Rava answered him, "It was not done out of impulsiveness, but out of love for Hashem".

The outsider who saw Rava learning with such concentration thought Rava must lack *inner peace*, but really the opposite was true. Learning the Torah comes from *peace of mind*. We accepted the Torah because we trusted in Hashem that the Torah is good.

Chazal state that before the Torah was given, the world was not stable. After the Torah came into the world and we accepted it peacefully, the world became a more stable place. Chazal also state that the Torah was given on Shabbos, because Shabbos is the day of *menuchah*.

The Elements That Bring Menuchah – Earth And Water

The world is made up of four elements: fire, wind, water and earth. The elements of fire and wind cannot bring *menuchah*. Fire constantly seeks to rise. The emotion of anger, which is rooted in fire, is the antithesis of being calm. The element of wind also cannot bring *menuchah*, because wind moves.

The elements, which bring *menuchah* to a person, are water and earth. Water by nature is calm (unless wind comes and arouses it). Earth is even calmer and provides a person with stable ground to stand on, unlike water, which cannot hold something.

However, earth can also be an evil kind of calmness. If a person is too connected to his element of earth, he is sleepy and lethargic. A person in jail is quite stabilized, but this type of stability does not cause *serenity*.

The element of earth stabilizes only the body, not the soul. A soul that is too attached to its earth becomes sleep-like and lethargic. Water, on the other hand, has an advantage. It brings growth, by giving nutrients to the earth. Water takes the earth and lifts it up by giving it growth.

A person is made up of a body and a soul. The soul is called a *nishmas chaim*, a soul of life. The body was taken from the earth. *Serenity* comes from the element of water, while *menuchah* of the body comes from earth. When a person dies, his body is buried in the earth, where his body finds *menuchah*. Water gives *menuchah* to the soul and makes the soul grow. Earth gives the wrong kind of *menuchah*, which is sleepiness – a sixtieth of death.

Thus, the element of water is what mainly brings calmness to a person stimulating spiritual growth.

Emunah Balances Stability With Growth

The Torah is above a person, and also existed before Creation; “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world”. The *peace of mind* that came to the world when the Torah was given did not come from the elements of fire, wind, earth, or even water. It was a new kind of *menuchah*, and it is above the four elements. This new kind of *menuchah* came from our *emunah* in Hashem when He gave us the Torah which is the true source of *peace of mind*.

If a person only draws his stability from the element of water, he is not totally stable. If a person gets stability from earth, he might have stability and *menuchah*, but he lacks growth. The Torah is called “*Toras Chaim*”, a living Torah. It involves growth. The Torah is a fusion of stability and growth. A person can only be absolutely stable when he has something to lean on, when he trusts in Hashem, when he has *emunah*.

Connection To The Torah

When we said *naaseh* (we will do) and *nishmah* (we will obey) we received the ability to grow and the ability to be stable. Before the Torah was given, the earth was not stable. After the Torah was given, the earth became stable since we had something to lean on.

Not only did the Torah bring stability to the world, but it also provided the world with possibilities for endless growth. If not for the Torah, people would have been limited to this finite world alone. However, now that a person’s growth is connected to the Torah, a person can reach the blessed *Ein Sof* of Hashem, Who is the source of the Torah. This is similar to the elements of earth and water combined– stability together with growth. However, in the deepest sense, it is only possible through an element above the four elements – *emunah*.

Chazal say that, “All paths are considered dangerous”. The Kotzker Rebbe zt”l said that this applies as well to *avodas Hashem*. All ways in *avodas Hashem* can make a person grow, but they are all dangerous except for the path of learning Torah, of which it is written, “*Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peaceful*”. The only way to really grow, that isn’t dangerous for a person, is through learning Torah. It is the safest path to take in *avodas Hashem*.

We Need Menuchas Hanefesh In Order To Learn Torah

Now we can really understand why Rava didn't notice that his fingers were bleeding while he was learning Torah. It wasn't because he wasn't paying attention. Rather, it was because he was utterly calm from learning Torah and he wasn't bothered that his fingers were bleeding.

We can compare this to a groom standing under his wedding canopy. Imagine if the groom under his wedding canopy gets a cut and is bleeding. Will he interrupt the ceremony to go run out and get a bandage? He certainly will not. Since he is immersed in his joy, he doesn't care that he is bleeding.

Rava had genuine inner peace when he learned. Even though he felt his fingers bleeding, it didn't bother him, because he had reached *peace of mind*.

Stabilizing Our Growth

When the Torah was given to us, we were also given the *tranquility* to learn it. If Hashem would have given the Torah to us without *serenity*, we wouldn't have been able to learn it. The *peace of mind* we received at that time is what enables us to learn the Torah ever since. Without it, we could not have received the Torah, and thus without *tranquility*, we cannot learn the Torah since then.

Chazal say that in order to learn Gemara, one needs a clear mind. A person gets a clear mind through learning Torah. Had the Torah been given during the six days of the week, we wouldn't have this clarity when we learn it. However, since it was given on Shabbos, the day of *menuchah*, it gives us a clear mind when we learn Torah.

Only Torah Can Stabilize Us

All of us go through shaky times in our life. In order to survive these times, we need something to hold on to and keep us stable.

When a child is playing and gets hit by another child, he runs to his father or mother for a hug. When a person gets shaken up, he runs to his source of *menuchah*. A child identifies his source of *menuchah* as his parents, so he runs to them for stability when he's shaken up.

As a person matures, he finds *menuchah* in his thoughts and feelings. He no longer runs to his parents, who provided him with protecting his physical wellbeing. Now, he needs more emotional fortification, which his parents do not provide him with.

If a person goes through a relatively easy difficulty, he can calm himself down. What should a person do when he goes through a very stressful time? Where can a person run?

There is no way for a person to deny his need for *menuchah*. Hashem created the world with six days and then a seventh day for rest. Creation is designed in a way that we need *menuchah* in order to continue. Just like we need *menuchah* in certain times of our life, so too, we need *menuchah* in our souls. Where can we find a source of *menuchah* for our souls?

Some people hold on to their community for emotional support and in this way they have stability when they need it. Although this provides a person with stability, it restrains a person's personal growth.

Decide To Be Connected To The Torah

What is the way for a person to be stable, yet at the same time be able to grow limitlessly?

In the physical world, there is no such place. However, there is one power which Hashem created that is constant and forever: the Torah which existed for two thousand years before Creation and is eternal. True stability is found only through connecting to the Torah. This is not a bland kind of stability, but a stability that can give a person unlimited growth.

Usually we find that when something grows, it may lack stability; for example, a tree grows high, only to become bent over. However, Koheles says about a person, "*G-d made man upright.*" Hashem makes a person upright through the Torah.

The Torah, in its purity, provides a person with both stability and growth. We see that a true, inner connection to Torah gives a person the ability to withstand the stormy difficulties of life. This is only if a person derives his vitality in life from the Torah.

In Tehillim, Dovid HaMelech writes that he is "*like an infant nursing from his mother.*" Chazal explain that just like an infant doesn't feel himself traveling when his mother travels, because he feels at peace in his mother's arms, so also Dovid HaMelech felt stable and secure with Hashem, like a baby in his mother's arms.

The Torah provides a person with stability to survive life's troubles, but we need to connect ourselves to this stability. The fact that the Torah is stable doesn't mean we are connected to it – we have to actually do something in order to connect to it.

If a person really wants a strong connection to the Torah, it's not enough to sit and learn all day. To be connected to the Torah means that one has a very deep connection to the Torah from the

depths of his soul. A person needs to decide to forge a *bris* (covenant) with the Torah so that he will be truly dedicated to it.

A person can make a *bris* with the Torah when it is clear that the only thing that enables this [finite] world to survive is the Torah not just as an intellectual fact, but internalized in his heart. The moment a person makes a *bris* with the Torah, he forges a connection to it. From that moment on, a person will have a definite source of stability in his life which will give him *menuchah*.

If one hasn't yet made a *bris* with the Torah, his own soul isn't stable and he doesn't have any inner peace. This *bris* that a person has to make with the Torah is not dependent if his friends know about it or not. It can be a private connection that he forges with the Torah. Every person has the choice to do this, and it is between him and his Creator. It is not a matter between a man and his friend.

A person must thus decide: "Am I connected to the Torah forever, or only some of the time"?

Many people want to have fun and look for all kinds of pleasure in this world. People are looking for something new that stimulates their senses "to add" to their enjoyment in life. If only they would be aware how mistaken they are! A true connection to learning Torah gives a person *menuchah* which is actually the greatest quality one can reach.

Connecting to Shabbos

There is another way to reach this *menuchah*, which is by connecting to Shabbos. Chazal say, "When Shabbos comes, *menuchah* comes to the world."

Shabbos, which is called *menuchah*, is also called *oneg* (pleasure). The true pleasure is found in *menuchah*, not in new things.

If anyone has felt the sheer pleasure of true *menuchah* even once in his life, he is someone who is able to forge a commitment to learning the Torah and to find his *menuchah* in it.

Chapter Fifteen
Menuchah In Learning Torah
and Menuchah At Work

Standing At Har Sinai Today

One of the six constant *mitzvos* that we are instructed to fulfill every day is to remember when we stood at Har Sinai. This *mitzvah* is to feel that we are actually standing there – that we never left Har Sinai.

How can we always feel as if we are standing at Har Sinai?

It is written, “*By the word of Hashem they journeyed, and by the word of Hashem they rested*”. When a person lives his life based upon Hashem’s words, it is considered as if he is still there at Har Sinai, as if he never left it.

The Torah was given at Har Sinai. Every year we can return and receive the Torah again. Our Sages teach that everything that happens in a place, also happens in time itself, as well as in our very soul. Just as the Torah was given at Har Sinai, it was also given to our soul every year on the festival of Shavuos.

The giving of the Torah still transpires in our souls. The time of the giving of the Torah takes place every year on Shavuos. The place where this happens is at Har Sinai, which we continue to remember every day. The fact that we remember standing at Har Sinai every day is what enables us to have *menuchah* which we need in order to learn Torah.

Living By The Word Of Hashem

Chazal say that learning Torah needs a clear mind. This is only when a person lives with, “*By the word of Hashem they journeyed, and by the word of Hashem they rested*”. If a person wants to have a clear mind to learn Torah, he needs to always live with Hashem in every part of his life.

The Baal Shem Tov said that just like the Jewish people went through forty-two encampments, so does every person go through forty-two encampments in his own life. The only difference between our generation and the previous generations is that the previous generations lived “*By the word of Hashem*”, while in today’s times we have not revealed this ability.

Today, we are being tested with, “*Follow Me into the desert, in a land that is unsown*”. We are being tested to see if we will live by, and follow, Hashem’s words.

Exert The Body, Not The Soul

We are not the generation of the desert. We don't have the Manna, the Well of Miriam, or the Clouds of Glory. Instead we are bombarded with the challenges of life, [with the invasive power of mass communications] and with making a living.

How are we supposed to have *peace of mind*? Our very life takes us away from *peace of mind*! What are we supposed to do about this?

We can dig deep inside ourselves to find *peace of mind* and realize that our difficulties in life don't have to ruin our peace of mind. Life is physically challenging, but this doesn't have to affect our souls.

The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes that although man was cursed with having to work by the sweat of his brow, a person's livelihood still doesn't depend on his efforts. Most people think that their efforts are what bring their *parnossa* livelihood, because Hashem decreed that people have to work to make a living. Therefore, one may think, more work brings more *parnossa* from Hashem. This is not true. The fact that man was cursed with having to work is a penalty placed on mankind, and it has nothing to do with bringing a person his livelihood. One's *parnossa* is determined by Hashem, regardless of his efforts.

Mesillas Yesharim can be understood in depth to mean that when a person exerts himself to earn a living, it is only his body undergoing exertion, not his soul. A person's soul is calm and knows that nothing depends on the body's efforts. If one doesn't have this mindset, even though he exerts his soul as well, then he will never attain *menuchas hanefesh*, and he will not understand the Torah.

We can compare this to someone dancing at a wedding. When a person dances very enthusiastically, he is exerting his body, not his soul. The fact that a person doesn't stress his soul when he dances is actually what enables him to have strength to dance.

So too, the same attitude can be applied to how a person views his efforts to earn a livelihood. If a person believes that whatever he is supposed to earn is from Hashem and not from his efforts, he is only exerting his body, not his soul, and he will be able to achieve *menuchas hanefesh*.

After the sin of Adam, we lost the ability to have body based *menuchah*. Anyone who thinks that he can live a steady "life of comfort" is living in a dream-like state. The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes, "this physical world was not given for relaxation, but to toil and work hard".

However, just because a person has to strain his body in this world does not mean that he must strain his soul. When a person is happy to do something, he can strain his body to get it, but his

soul should stay relaxed. When a person does something he doesn't like to do, he is straining both his body and soul.

Menuchas Hanefesh At Work

If one works to make a living because he understands that going to work is a penalty placed on mankind because of Adam's sin, he has *serenity*, and is also able to learn Torah properly. If a person works without *emunah*, then he strains his soul in the process and will never have *menuchah*.

This world was not created for physical relaxation. Nevertheless, we should strive for serenity of our soul. If our soul isn't relaxed, we cannot have *peace of mind* and we will not be able to learn Torah properly.

Exertion In Learning Should Not Stress The Soul

In the same way that one exerts his body and not his soul while earning a livelihood, so one should also learn Torah.

Although we must have *ameilus* (exertion) in learning, "A person must "kill" himself in the tents of Torah", we must know what this means. We must not strain our soul when we learn Torah, nor must we "kill" our soul in the process. Rather, we need to "kill" our body with exertion, so that we can reveal our soul. The way to learn Torah is by using our whole body in learning. Torah can only be acquired by losing sleep over it and cutting back on eating. Although we need to work very hard to understand the Torah, if a person's exertion removes his *peace of mind*, he will not be able to learn Torah. Why? Simply put, we can only learn Torah with *peace of mind*.

The Vilna Gaon wrote that a person shouldn't pressure his child to learn Torah. Instead, he should push his child lightly to learn in order to acquire Torah. This is the same Vilna Gaon whose exertion in learning was unparalleled. He himself stated that Torah is only acquired when it is with *nachas*, a light push to learn.

How can this be?

A person needs to physically exert himself in learning, but must remain with *peace of mind*. If a person learns Torah, but strains his soul in the process, he isn't happy when he learns, and he cannot really receive the Torah. If one learns Torah when his soul is relaxed "as happy as they were when they were given at Sinai," then he is really receiving the Torah.

[Of course, a person needs to have exertion in learning! But that is only physical exertion. The body has to be exerted in learning – and that is the first stage we must go through in our life and work on. But then comes another stage in life – exertion of the soul. The Vilna Gaon says that every person is on this world to break a certain bad *middah*, and if he doesn't reach this goal, there is no point in living. This is how we exert our souls – to break our bad *middos*. After working on this (of course, we cannot be perfect in this, but after working on our *middos* to a certain extent, we can proceed further) comes a third step, and that is to “break our desires.” The way we can break our desires is through a living a life of calmness, in the way have been describing. This is also takes a lot of exertion of the soul; it is a true kind of exertion. These are three kinds of exertion – we need to exert ourselves physically in the Torah, we need to exert ourselves by working on our *middos*, and we need to exert ourselves in order to arrive at inner calmness. We need all three kinds of exertion. Anyone who thinks that *inner peace* doesn't take hard work is only having imaginary calmness; it takes hard work! But it is a more inner kind of hard work; it is an exertion of our soul. We will have to exert our souls in order to get *peace of mind* – we have to work hard at it, with the goal of arriving at *peace of mind*.]

PART THREE:
A DEEPER LOOK INTO
MENCHAS HANEFESH

Chapter Sixteen
MENUCHAH IN FINDING
YOUR ROOTS AND YOUR BRANCHES

The Higher Kinds of Menuchas Hanefesh

Menuchas Hanefesh – peace of mind – is a concept mentioned in the Torah: “*And he saw that menuchah (rest) was good*”. *Menuchah* does not mean laziness or sleepiness; it is when one finds his roots. A person is only at peace when he finds his roots.

There are three inner kinds of *peace of mind* that the soul can experience. The highest kind is the *menuchah* is to experience the blessed *Ein Sof* (endlessness) of Hashem. The second highest kind *menuchah* is finding *menuchah* in the *Shechinah* (Hashem’s Holy Presence). The third highest kind of *menuchah* is finding one’s *shoresh haneshamah* (soul root).

The most perfect kind of *peace of mind* a person can find is *menuchah* in the *Ein Sof* of Hashem. This world is a place of movement, but Hashem is above the world’s movements. He is non-moving. A human being is in a world of movement, and this restrains his *menuchah* somewhat. But if a person connects to the *Ein Sof*, he has a connection to non-movement, and this is a *menuchah* that is beyond this world.

The second to highest form of *menuchah*, but lower than the *menuchah* one can have in the *Ein Sof*, is when a person connects to the root of all souls, which is the *Shechinah*.

These two very deep kinds of *menuchah* are above the world as we know it, and they are very sublime. It is possible to a certain extent to have a connection to these levels.

The third to highest form of *menuchah*, also an inner kind of *menuchah*, is found within the bounds of creation; it is also a deep *menuchah*, but it is not as lofty as the two previously mentioned levels. This is when a person finds his *shoresh haneshamah*. This is mentioned in the possuk, “*And each woman shall find her husband.*” In a marriage, one finds his soul root and achieves this kind of *menuchah*.

The Lower Kinds Of Menuchas Henefesh

Lower than the three listed above, are other kinds of *menuchah*, which have to do with the physical body. These are alluded to in the three types of *chein* (graciousness) mentioned in the Talmud : “The *chein* of a wife to her husband, the *chein* of one’s hometown, and the *chein* of a purchased item”. [In addition, there is a fourth type of *chein* that will be discussed at the end of this chapter].

Why do these three things have *chein* to a person?

The Maharal explains that all of these things involve connection. *Chein* is when a person connects to something, because there is a connection between the owner and what he buys, he wants to buy it. Another example; because a husband and wife want to become connected, they are able to get married. *Chein* is what connects two things together.

Chein and *menuchah* have the same root letters (*ches* and *nun*). *Chein* is essentially *menuchah* that is experienced in a person's body. Just like the soul can have *menuchah* when it finds its root, so also the body can have *menuchah*, when it finds its root.

Finding Your Roots

The first kind of *chein* is a person's residence. A person is connected to where he comes from because it's his root. Eretz Yisrael also has *chein* for every Jew. If not for the *chein* of Eretz Yisrael, people would be very unhappy with their allotted portions of its land. Thus, a person has *menuchah* in his home location, as well as from Eretz Yisrael, which is every Jew's home.

Filling What You Are Missing

The second kind of *chein* is the beauty of a wife to her husband. Not only does a wife experience *menuchah* when she finds her husband, but also a husband experiences *menuchah* when he finds his wife. Since she reveals her *chein* to him, he finds *menuchah* with her. When a person completes what he is missing *menuchah* is revealed.

When a man and woman unite in marriage, their bodies find *menuchah* by being completed by the other. When a person is missing something and he seeks to fulfill it, he doesn't have *menuchah*. Whereas, when a person fulfills what he needs, he is content and has *menuchah*.

Shabbos is the prime example of such *menuchah*. On Shabbos, "the day of *menucha*", we have *menuchah* because "all our work is done". We fulfill what we are missing on Shabbos.

Now we have seen two kinds of *menuchah*. The first kind of *menuchah* is a person's home, which gives *menuchah* because his roots are there. The second kind of *menuchah*, which is the *chein* of a wife to her husband, gives *menuchah* because he finds what he's missing.

Gathering Together Your Parts

The third kind of *chein* is that of a purchased item to its owner. Why is there *chein* between the buyer and his item?

When man was created, he was created perfect. After the sin, man's soul spread out all over the earth. Our holy *sefarim* write that a person's financial assets contain parts of his soul. In every generation there are a few righteous individuals who merit having their money in one place. Most people, however, do not merit this, and their money is scattered.

The money of a person is actually part of his soul. If someone steals from someone else, it is considered as if he stole the person's soul. This is really why a purchased item has *chein* to its buyer – because when a person buys something, his assets have become concentrated in one place.

It seems that this kind of *menuchah* is the same as the first kind of *menuchah*, because when a person buys something his assets are gathered together and have found their root. In actuality, though, it is a different kind of *menuchah*. In the first kind of *menuchah*, a person has his roots (i.e. a home) come to him. Whereas, when a person buys something, it's not that his assets have come to him, but that his parts have become gathered together. Even when the branches haven't yet found their root, the fact that they are concentrated is a kind of *menuchah*.

An example of this kind of *menuchah* can be found when the Jewish people were enslaved in the exiles of Egypt and Bavel; they were all gathered together. They had not yet found their place, but they were all together.

If a person is an exceptional *tzaddik*, he merits having his roots come to him. However, most people have to go out and gather their parts and then sort them all out.

If a person's parts are scattered, he is like a person who puts his dining room table in the restroom! One can have a lot of things, but he needs to put them all in their proper place. When each part of a person is in its proper place, he has *menuchah*.

Peace

We have explained this third kind of *menuchah* according to the Maharal, but there is another explanation from the Alter of Kelm who explains that this *menuchah* is known as *shalom* (peace).

When a person is scattered and his “branches” have no “root”, he has no peace. When everything in a person's life is separate and nothing unifies them, he has no peace. Peace is only achieved when a person has a root that unifies all his many aspects.

The future Redemption will be when we totally find our “roots”. Yet, even before the Redemption we can have some degree of *menuchah* – even in this world, and even with *menuchah* of our physical body. This is when we have peace, when we gather together all the parts of our life, although we haven't yet found our root.

A classic example of this kind of peace is Beis Hillel and Beis Shamai, who constantly disagreed, yet always respected each other. Beis Hillel always quoted Beis Shamai first before arguing on them.

Another example of peace is what the Talmud says about a father and son, or teacher and student, who learn with each other and debate with each other. They begin as "enemies", but eventually come to love each other. Each person is allowed to keep his own opinion, yet still be at peace with his opponent. This is the idea of peace.

Another classic example of peace is Aharon HaKohen, who would make peace between two people who were fighting. Instead of disproving each person, he let each person remain with his opinion, yet be at peace with each other. Peace doesn't come and negate each person's view. Rather, each person remains with his opinion, without ruining the peace between each other.

Peace is called a "vessel that contains blessing". Peace is only a vessel, not a root, yet it can be a tool for bringing things together. When something is unified through peace, it can be considered "peace", even though it hasn't been connected to its root.

Shabbos vs. The Six Days Of The Week

There are essentially two different kinds of *menuchah*. The first one is finding one's root. The second type is making peace between one's "branches," even when there is no "root".

This also represents the difference between the six days of the week and Shabbos which is a day of *menuchah* for the entire world. The reason for this is because Shabbos is the root of all creation. Shabbos is the source of blessing for all that is in Creation, and therefore the six days of the week are branches of its root – Shabbos. The week waits for its root, and on Shabbos, it finds its root and has *menuchah* in it.

The six days of the week can only have *menuchah* in itself when there is peace. The six days of the week represent the six different directions (north, south, east, west, up, and down) and are essentially six different "branches" with no "root". The only *menuchah* to be found in the weekday is when there is peace.

Shabbos is essentially when a person finds his root. This is similar to the *menuchah* that one has in connection to his physical home, which is his root. If a person hasn't merited discovering his soul's root, he can only have *menuchah* as the six days of the week can, by having peace. This is the same kind of *menuchah* a person has when he buys an item.

Practical Menuchas Hanefesh

Now that we have explained how a person can have *menuchah* when he gathers himself together, we can apply this to our practical life.

There are many forces in our soul. When a person knows how to use each ability of his soul properly, even if he hasn't yet revealed his *shoresh haneshamah* (soul's root) and he only knows of his soul's branches, he is still able to have a degree of *menuchah*.

However, if a person doesn't know how to use his soul's abilities, he lives with inner contradictions. One part of his soul opposes a different part of his soul, and this causes a person to feel an inner turmoil.

A classic example of one who lacks *peace of mind* is someone whose thoughts often digress to either the past or the future. A person really needs to "be here now", but if he is thinking about the future, he is mixing the future with the present moment. When a person spaces out like this, there are inner forces in his soul that are contradicting each other. This holds him back from having *serenity* and it doesn't allow him to reach inner peace. When a person spaces out from the present moment and he is thinking either about his past or future, this is detrimental to him, since it removes his *peace of mind*. The person is here, but his thoughts are somewhere else, and this obviously does not allow one's soul to be at peace.

Another lack of *peace of mind* is when one's soul has contradictory emotions. This also ruins one's inner peace. In the soul, there are many forces that oppose each other. A person's soul has feelings that expand, such as the feeling of happiness and enthusiasm, and feelings that contract, such as sadness and laziness. Each emotion has a rightful time when it should be used, and that is how it should be. Even the seemingly "evil" emotions of laziness, haughtiness and desire have times when they are holy. For example, a person has to be haughty when it comes to believing that he can reach high levels of *avodas Hashem*, and a person can use desire to have a desire for Hashem. All emotions have their proper place and time.

When a person uses the wrong emotion in the wrong time or place, this creates an inner turmoil, because the various forces of the soul are clashing with each other. This inner turmoil, which is created from misusing one's emotions, doesn't allow a person to feel at peace inside.

The first kind of problem we discussed described a person who doesn't live in the present. He is either remembering the past or imagining the future. It is easy to understand why this is a lack of *tranquility*. Any person with a clear mind can catch his thoughts and realize that he isn't focusing on the present moment.

However, the second kind of problem we discussed is hard to notice. It is difficult to be aware of what's going on inside one's soul, because the soul is indeed very hidden within us. This is a

more subtle form of lacking *peace of mind*. When a person doesn't understand his soul's abilities, he misuses them which restrains his *peace of mind*.

Being Content With Your Current Situation

There is actually a fourth kind of *chein*, which shows us another kind of *menuchah*. Yosef, who found *chein*, even though he was imprisoned by Potifar since he was above the influence of the evil eye. This shows us that a person can have *menuchah* even when he is in prison. When a person is released from prison, that is another kind of *menuchah*.

How can one find *menuchah* while he is in prison?

Chazal say that a bear has no *menuchah* – even if it lives in its own den, it still wanders around and is never content. From here we can see that a person can find *menuchah* right where he is – as long as he is content with his situation.

Yosef had *chein* -- and *menuchah* – even when he was in prison, because he was content wherever he was. When a person is in a tough situation and wants to escape it, he will not have *menuchah*. However, if he is content even though he's in this tough situation he will have *menuchah*.

There were two kinds of *menuchah* which the Jewish people felt: firstly, when we left Egypt to receive the Torah and settle in Eretz Yisrael; and secondly when we were still in Egypt and Hashem revealed Himself with the tenth plague. The death of the firstborn was a certain kind of *menuchah* which stemmed from the clarity that Hashem is here right now.

We know Hashem wants us to be liberated from this exile and we are actually obligated to yearn daily for Moshiach's arrival. "Although he tarries, I still wait for him". It seems contradictory to feel *menuchah* today, while we are longing for the future Redemption. It seems impossible for us to have *menuchah*, because we are trying to escape our pitiful situation. But our soul contains two kinds of *menuchah*. There is the *menuchah* of the perfect Shabbos, which is to find our soul's root, the *Ein Sof* of Hashem. In addition, there is another kind of *menuchah* which, although it is not as sublime as this, can still give us some *menuchah*, even in today's times! This is the *menuchah* of the "six days of the week" – a *menuchah* we can have in spite of our current exile.

This is when we somehow find the strength and solace to be satisfied with where Hashem has placed us, in spite of the fact that we want to get out of our situation already. It is similar to a person's contentment in prison by accepting that this is where Hashem wants him to be right now. When we are content with our situation, we can have *menuchah* in spite of our exile. If a

person accepts that it is the will of Hashem that he must be exiled – whether it's in Persia, Bavel or Edom – and he accepts this situation with *emunah*, then he experiences a degree of *menuchah*.

These two kinds of *menuchah* are deep inner abilities in our soul. We have an ability to get out of our situation and desire a more perfect one, but at the same time, we also have an ability to be content in whatever situation we are in, knowing that Hashem has put us into the situation for a purpose.

This kind of *menuchah*, to be content in your situation, has three levels. The highest manifestation is when we are connected to the *Ein Sof* of Hashem. This complete *emunah* will only be achieved fully in the future. The middle level is an ability that every person should have to be content with your situation, because this is what Hashem wants – for now. The lowest manifestation, which is evil, is when a person is lethargic, because he becomes too complacent. [He is using *inner peace* for the wrong reason.]

PART FOUR:
PUTTING MENUCHAS HANEFESH INTO PRACTICE

Chapter Seventeen
Accessing Your Inner Peace

Introduction

The *Mesillas Yescharim* states that a person has to be above a maze in order to easily navigate through it. One of the important fundamentals taught in Kelm was *menuchas hanefesh*, “inner peace”, as a way to navigate through the maze of life.

There is a story that is told about the Alter of Kelm’s daughter. Once, she required medical help. Her doctor told her that the remedy to her sickness was to experience *serenity*. She repeated this to her father, who remarked, “And did the doctor tell you *how* to experience *menuchas hanefesh*”?

Menuchas Hanefesh – Inner Peace From Reaching The Soul

We must understand that although *peace of mind* is the ultimate perfection we can reach in our *avodas Hashem*, and perfection comes at the end, we can also experience a little at the start. *Serenity* is our end goal, but “the end of an action is first in the thoughts” so we must practice *peace of mind* in the beginning of our journey as well.

Tranquility should always be part of our *avodah*. On a deeper level, none of our *avodah* is authentic unless it is done with *tranquility*.

A person’s true self (his pure *neshamah*) is his actual essence – his true “I”. On top his true “I”, one has many garments that cover his essence (thoughts, feelings, and actions). *Inner peace* occurs when one actually touches his pristine self. *Menuchas hanefesh* is the actual “I” of a person, and in its most perfected form, it is the absolute calm recognition of Hashem’s existence.

All the forces of the soul – faith, pleasure, will, etc. – are garments of the soul, but they are not the soul itself. They are movements of the soul. On the other hand, *peace of mind* (in its highest form) is the unmoving part of one’s existence. All of our *avodas Hashem* must be based on a form of *serenity* so that one’s soul will be satisfied.

The View From Above

The forces of the soul are movements of the soul and these movements cannot give a person a view of what is within himself. These movements offer an outer kind of view, like a person who sees something from outside of it. Only one who is on top of a garden-maze can have the real view, because he sees from above. This is when one sees from his very essence. Such a person is able to see all his soul’s movements from a calm, unmoving place in the soul.

This inner view of reality is when one reaches his very essence. When a person sees from the viewpoint of a calm place in his soul, he can have this view. But if a person hasn't yet reached *menuchah*, he sees through the movements of his soul, not the real view. This person looks at himself as one with many movements, because he only sees himself from the view of movement. He doesn't see reality as it is, doesn't have *menuchah*, and has inaccurate vision.

Menuchas hanefesh is the secret to all of our *avodas Hashem*. With *it*, a person sees a different world. One of the Sages said, "I see a clear world." This is the kind of view that comes from *menuchas hanefesh*. If a person is trapped in the garden-maze, his view is unclear. However, when a person sees from above the maze, i.e., from a calm inner space, he has a clear view.

A person has a better view when he can see things from outside himself, as opposed to when he's still stuck inside himself and his soul's movements. When a person has *peace of mind*, he has begun to reach his deeper self, and has the view from above, which shows him an outer view of himself. On the other hand, a person without *menuchah*, who identifies with the movements in his soul, views reality through these moving parts which is a distorted view. He is still stuck inside himself.

To illustrate the concept, Chazal say that Avraham Avinu learned Torah from the kidneys which Chazal refer to as "the two advisors." They advised him how to keep the Torah. The depth of this matter is that a person has a better view of reality when he can see from outside himself.

As shown in the above example, when a person has real *tranquility*, wisdom opens up to him. Without serenity, one may have an intense desire to serve Hashem, but lacks calmness and therefore, is missing the clarity of how to serve Hashem.

Using Darkness To Experience Inner Silence

Now we will try to explain how we can make this concept more practical so we can access this place in our soul.

Hashem created light and dark. Light enables a person to work in the daytime, while the dark makes people come home. In terms of our soul, darkness is a time where we can access ourselves. Darkness was not just created for us to go to sleep, but to be able to silence everything that's going on around us.

The masters of *avodas Hashem* described this as the ability to "silence" everything. A quiet environment, such as a forest, can definitely help even tho is not the point. It is not about the type of place you are in. A person can be "alone" in his house and "alone" when he is amongst people. It is a power to be "alone."

This is essentially called the “removed” part of the soul (*makom mufshat*), and it is the innermost part of one’s self. This is when one divests himself of the outer layers of his soul, bypasses these layers, and touches his very self. Darkness is one of the things that can help a person reach this place. Through utilizing darkness, a person can divest the layers of his soul and access his true self, an inner part of the soul that is removed from all the other parts of the soul.

It is possible for a person to run away from “his real self.” A person can actually remove himself from this world by pursuing evil desires, honor, or jealousy. Even when a person runs to do a *mitzvah*, it’s possible that he’s really running out of his “self.” If he lacks *peace of mind* he won’t feel calm in his *avodas Hashem*.

As we have previously explained, the purpose of all *avodas Hashem* is to arrive at this deep place in our self. *Menuchas hanefesh* is our end goal. Yet, we also need to develop a calm place in our soul in the beginning of our *avodas Hashem*.

Having A Spark Of The End Goal

Chazal say, “*shelo lishmah* (ulterior motives) leads to *lishmah* (pure motives). Rav Chaim Volozhiner explained that one has to begin with at least a little spark of *shelo lishmah*. Similarly, by starting out with some *peace of mind*, we can attain the goal of perfected *serenity*.

People usually think that the end goal has nothing to do with the beginning. “If I get there, that’s wonderful, but right now what use is the end goal to me”? In actuality, the end goal has to be incorporated into the beginning. “The end of any action is first in the thoughts”.

The classic sefer *Mesillas Yesharim* lists a ladder of growth in serving Hashem. Ramchal’s first words state that a person should realize that the purpose of living in this world is to have *d’veykus* to Hashem.

Why does he begin the *sefer* with these words? If *d’veykus* to Hashem is the end goal, why must a person know this and clarify this in the beginning of his journey?

It is because the end goal has to be incorporated into the beginning stage. Although *d’veykus* is the end goal, it needs to be worked on somewhat even at the beginning of one’s spiritual path.

Setting Aside Time For Inner Silence

If a person doesn’t understand that he needs to have some *inner peace* even at the beginning stage of *avodas Hashem*, then he has no connection to the *avodas Hashem* that he is involved in. Eventually, he will lose his desire to grow in *avodas Hashem*.

When a person doesn't appreciate the importance of *menuchas hanefesh*, he will feel that it's *bittul Torah* (waste of learning time) or that generally speaking it's not as important as other matters in *avodas Hashem*. He might feel that it's more important to learn or *daven*. This is because he doesn't understand how important the search for serenity is. But when a person realizes that *peace of mind* must be practiced even in the beginning, he will be able to persevere and climb higher on the ladder of *avodas Hashem*.

This "spark" of reaching the end goal is hard to get. But, when people decide to skip *d'veykus* to Hashem at the beginning of their *avodas Hashem*, they never get to the end of *avodas Hashem* – which is *d'veykus*. This shows that the end has to be worked on at the beginning. In Kelm, they really worked on attaining *peace of mind*. They did not only speak about it as an end goal, but as an initial goal to work on.

In order for a person to reach this inner place in his soul, he needs to silence everything. A person cannot do this when he is involved in doing something else, like *davening* or doing *chessed*. There are times a person has to learn, *daven* and do *chessed*, and so too there must be a time for one to silence everything and reach his essence. [When a person sets aside time for accessing silence] he can have a spark of the end goal in the beginning stage of *avodas Hashem*.

Being In The Dark

Practically speaking, a person needs to be in the dark for this. This is hard to do, because a person naturally wants to do something when sitting in the dark. This is where the difficulty lies. The very desire to want to do anything shows that the desires haven't been silenced yet. One has to learn how to sit in the dark and restrain his anxiousness to immediately "do" something. He should not do anything and should ignore his desire to do something.

Reb Yisrael Salanter wrote that a person is initially trapped by his *middos*, and that his thoughts are constantly roaming unless he uproots this nature in himself. The *middos* of a person (*oneg*/pleasure, *ratzon*/desire, *chochmah*/wisdom, etc.) are garments of the soul. One needs to learn how to silence his *middos*.

How can a person control his desire for something? Desire is a *middah* and a person can silence a *middah*. He can learn how to restrain himself from giving in to the desire, as well as silencing the very thought of having the desire.

Menuchas Hanefesh Helps Us Approach Avodas Hashem Properly

The Vilna Gaon said that when a person is learning *gemara*, he shouldn't think about anything else other than the page of *gemara* in front of him. By the same token, a person can have *peace of mind* wherever he is by silencing everything that's going on, and reaching his essence.

When a person begins to access his inner silence, he begins to reach his very essence, and he feels what it means to experience *tranquility*. From there, he can approach any area of *avodas Hashem* from a truly calm place, and will be successful in *avodas Hashem* with this quality.

May we merit the help of Hashem to continue this further which is within our reach.

Chapter Eighteen *Learning How To Detach*

A Scattered Kind Of Life

We have begun to discuss how we can start to touch our very essence. A person has to divest himself from the outer layers of his soul and then reach his inner silence, which enables one to reach his essence and thus gain *serenity*.

In the previous chapter, we mentioned how we need to gain a clear view in *avodas Hashem*. Now we will elaborate on this point.

Hashem created a power in the Creation called "*echad*" – "one". We must learn how to tap into this power. When a person begins his *avodas Hashem*, everything seems scattered and separate. He finds himself in an *alma d'piruda*, a world of separation. The surroundings of a person only make one feel more scattered.

For example, we have five physical senses. We use them countless times throughout the day. Every time we do, an impression is left on us from what we experience. The more a person uses his senses, the harder it is for him to reach his essence, because he has become so muddled from all of these marks. Our senses bring us into the world of imagination and they take us away from the power of *echad*.

Our Essence Versus Our Garments

The inner kind of life we want to achieve is a whole different kind of life. A person has his very essence within. Covering that are other forces of his soul: *emunah* (faith), *taanug* (pleasure) and *ratzon* (will), etc.

There are two ways of “knowing” this concept of living from your essence. One way is a superficial way, to simply “know” about it and even absorb it well in your head. There is another way to know of it which is when you let it become the way you actually look at life- when it’s your attitude toward everything. If a person only views life from the forces of his soul and the senses of his soul, he sees his soul as separate forces. He lives in a “world of separation”. On the other hand, if a person has the viewpoint from his essence, he can unify everything into “one”. He lives in a world of “*echad*”.

Awareness Of The Inner Forces Of Our Soul

Let’s say a person gets up in the morning and recites *Modeh Ani*. When a person says *Modeh Ani*, what is he really doing? He is using the power of speech, which is an ability of the soul. If a person isn’t aware of what he’s doing when he says *Modeh Ani*, he is acting mechanically.

When a person acts mechanically throughout the day, everything he does has no connection. He is scattering his actions with nothing connecting them. Whereas, when one is aware of what is behind his actions, he observes the connectedness of his actions- he knows he is not acting randomly throughout the day.

When a person davens, how many feelings does he experience?

Usually, a person thinks that every tefillah he davens consists of endless types of feelings. Yet, if one has reached his essence, he sees the view of “*echad*”, and can see how it is all one feeling. When one is unaware of this, he knows that he has felt many feelings, but has scattered his soul in the process. He ends up experiencing his feelings being scattered.

How many feelings does a person feel each day?

It depends on which way one experiences life. If one has a superficial and undeveloped awareness, then he may go through “many” random, dispersed feelings.

Another example: When a person learns with a *chavrusa*, how many feelings and thoughts does he experience?

It seems like a lot is going on at once. With this superficial way of experiencing life, one’s life is full of scattered emotions and thoughts. When he goes through all these “movements” of his soul, he is scattered and mixed up.

The inner way to live is to be able to experience life from a clear viewpoint of what is "happening." With this viewpoint one is aware as he does something. He may ask himself, ‘is what I’m doing now a kind of *ta’anug*, a kind of *ratzon*, or some other force in my soul?’ He

sees everything he does in terms of his soul. When a person gets used to this, he will begin to feel *peace of mind*. Of course, there are levels to how much *menuchas hanefesh* one can experience.

The most inner kind of *menuchas hanefesh* one can come into contact with is when he reaches his essence, as we discussed previously. But now we are speaking of a different kind of *peace of mind*, calming the outer layers of one's soul. This is when one gets used to giving orderliness to all the forces of his soul. It is when a person clarifies what he does and realizes what the essence is. Which forces of my soul are being utilized right now? In this way, a person can begin to see how his soul is relating to his actions. He connects everything together and gives orderliness to everything he does.

A person, who grows accustomed to this way of thinking, will discover that he doesn't have to listen to everything or see everything that goes on in the world. He realizes that the more he uses his physical senses, the more of an impression the senses leave on him. He becomes a scattering of emotions and thoughts. He realizes that he can't handle all the information which unceasingly overwhelm him, and he would rather just detach from all of it.

Seeing What's Behind an Act

If the concept is really understood, one will find that one's whole view, on how one has lived life, has changed.

To give an example, when a person speaks, he can wonder to himself; 'am I speaking from my *emunah* (faith) in myself, or am I speaking from my *ta'anug* (pleasure) in talking, or am I speaking out of a *ratzon* (will) to talk?'

When a person hears someone else talk and the speaker is speaking with this kind of awareness, the listener can often sense that the speaker has purified his soul more and that he is speaking from a calm place in his soul.

When a person gets used to this, he will find that nothing is simple and everything consists of many factors. He will discover when he talks that it's not a superficial act of talking, and when he hears someone, he's not simply hearing words. He will find that there are many factors behind the act of talking or hearing.

The Chazon Ish said that he doesn't know of anything simple in the world, because everything is made up of many factors to consider. There is an endless amount of factors that make up every matter. Everything is really complex and nothing is simple.

When a person learns Torah and doesn't see any connection between the information he learns, this is a problem because then everything is scattered. A person has to see the connection between the information. The same goes for our soul. Our soul experiences many senses throughout the day, and without ordering everything that's going on, the soul feels scattered from all that it has experienced.

Differentiating Between Our Garments And Our Essence

Let us add another point to sharpen the discussion.

Without ordering what's going on in our actions, a person doesn't recognize that there is a difference between his essential self and the rest of his soul, which are only the garments of his soul. This makes a person experience everything in his life only through the garments of his soul, and never through his real self.

A person has to take all the "garments" of his soul – the forces of his soul, and the senses – and order them. To do this, a person needs to realize that he has an essential self, and that the outer layers of his soul and his senses are not who he actually is. This gives order to all the garments of his soul, each person according to his level. This makes a person aware of the garments of his soul, and that the garments of his soul are not his actual essence, but just garments. Then a person can begin to feel his own essence. Since he has differentiated between what his garments are and what his essence is, he is able to reach his essence, because now he can detach from his surroundings.

For example, if a person is learning and realizes that it's time to daven with the *minyan* that has just started, and quickly jumps into the davening, he has actually scattered his soul in the process. Why did his soul become dispersed?

There is a time to learn and a time to pray. The two cannot be mixed together. There must be a little bit of space that a person passes through between them. A person has to actually pass over from his learning into his davening.

Making The Transition From Movements Of The Soul To Stillness Within The Soul

When a person is davening and suddenly realizes that he is all muddled and can't concentrate, what can he do?

A superficial solution is to look for all kinds of ways to increase his *kavanah* (concentration). The inner solution, however, is to detach one's self in the way we have described. One can detach himself from his bothersome thoughts, enter into his feelings, and from there, he can concentrate.

This describes the life of someone who lives with a sense of orderliness in his soul. It can only be possible when one realizes that the garments of his soul are not his essence. Such a person will eventually know how to pass from the garments of his soul into the essence of his soul. The more a person grows accustomed to this, the more he increases his *inner peace*.

Editor's Epilogue

Da Es Menuchasecha, “The Search For Serenity”, is a companion volume to the popular Da Es Atzmecha (Getting To Know Your Self), Da Es Nafshecha (Getting To Know Your Soul) and Da Es Baisecha (Getting To Know Your Home), from the author of the widely acclaimed sefer, “Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh” (Building A Sanctuary In The Heart).

The author shows us that without menuchas hanefesh – serenity, or “inner peace” - our soul is scattered. When we aren't calm, our life is kind of dysfunctional, because of all the noise and running around. Not only that, but without some menuchas hanefesh, we cannot either serve the Creator properly. This leads to a soul that feels unhealthy, deterring us from reaching our true goals.

In this sefer, an English adaptation of sefer Da Es Menuchasecha, the author provides basic instructions for how to live a calm lifestyle – covering the full spectrum of the self: calm actions, calm feelings and calm thoughts. The importance of inner silence is explained, as well as the deeper aspects that complete our menuchas hanefesh, including the importance of learning Torah.

Those seeking a calmer lifestyle and organized manner of living will greatly benefit from studying this sefer. Most importantly, it will serve to deepen one's bond with the Creator.

Glossary

Ahavas Yisrael | love for the Jewish people

Ain Od Milvado | there is nothing besides for Hashem

Alter of Kelm | Rosh Yeshivah of the Yeshiva of Kelm
ameilus | exertion

ayin | spiritual plane of nothingness and beyond thought

alma d'piruda | world of separation and disparity

avodah | working on spiritual improvement

Avodas Hashem | service of G-d

avodas perach | cruel labor

Avos | Our forefathers Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov

avreich | young Kolem man

ayin tovah | good eye

baal chessed | kind person

Baal Shem Tov | founder of Chassidus

bas kol | Heavenly voice

cinah | higher power of deep reflection

Bittul | self-nullification

bittul Torah | wasting time of Torah study

bris | pact

chalal | the empty space in the soul

chalal shelo lam | space of the world

chassidus | The movement of the Chassidim to induce spiritual enthusiasm into Judaism

chavrusa | study partner

Chazal | the Sages of blessed memory

Chalish | term for an outer body experience

Chayah | The second to highest part of the soul

chein | charm

chinuch | Jewish education

chometz | bread, or bread crumbs

chessed | kindness

chiyus | vitality

Dovid HaMelech | King David

d'veykus | attachment to G-d

Echad | one

Ein Sof | Hashem, who is endless

emunah | faith in G-d, or the force of belief in the soul

Erev Rav | Mixed Multitude of Egyptians who escaped Egypt together with the Jews

gemach | charity organization

Gemara | The Talmud

Gedolim | Jewish leaders
 halachah | Torah law
 halachic | From the Torah law's perspective
 hedair | nothingness
 hesech hadaas | Taking your mind off something
 hisbodedus | solitude and meditation
 hisbonenus | deep reflection
 hispaalus | amazement or wonder
 Imahos | Our Matriarchs Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah
 Ingid | term for an outer body experience
 Kaballah | the hidden, mystical teachings of Judaism
 kavanah | concentration
 kibbud av | honoring your father
 kol demamah dakah | soft, subtle voice of Hashem
 libo lishamayim – a heart directed toward the heavens
 lishmah | For the sake of Heaven
 Maggid of Dubna | famous Chassidic leader who told many uplifting stories with parables
 Maharal | 16th century Jewish thinker
 maayan shel Chochmah | wellspring of wisdom
 makom mufshat | The “removed” part of the soul
 matzah | unleavened bread eaten on Passover
 mein olam haba | a resemblance of the world to come
 menuchah | Serenity, or inner peace, or peace of mind; see *menuchas hanefesh*
 menuchas hanefesh | “inner peace of the soul”
 Mesillas Yesharim | “Path of the Just” by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, a classical “mussar”
 work
 mesirus nefesh | self-sacrifice
 middos | character traits
 mincha | afternoon prayer
 minhag | tradition
 minyan | quorum of ten Jews
 mitzvah | Torah commandment
 Modeh Ani | first prayer upon waking up in the morning
 moiser nefesh | being self-sacrificing
 Moshiach | Messiah
 mussar | self-discipline
 nachas | lightly
 Naaseh | “We will do”
 Nefesh | the lowest part of the soul
 neshamah | the third to most innermost layer of the soul
 niftar | died

Nishmah | “We will hear”
 olam haba | the world to come
 oneg | pleasure
 pachaz k’mayim | too quick like water
 parshiyos | section of Torah
 pnimiyus | the inner reality
 ratz | to run
 Ramban | Nachmanodies
 ratzon | will
 Rav Chaim Friedlander | Mashgiach of Yeshivas Ponovezh & author of the “Sifsei Chaim” series
 Rav Elya Lopian | Recent teacher of mussar and author of “Lev Eliyahu”
 Reb Yisrael Salanter | the founder of mussar\self-discipline
 Rema | Great Halachic authority whose rulings appear within the text of the Code of Jewish Law
 Ruach | the part of the soul which is higher than the Nefesh
 savlonus | patience
 seder | orderliness, or study session in yeshiva
 seichel | intellect
 sefer | Jewish religious book
 sefarim | Jewish religious books
 Sefer HaMaspik | “Guide to Serving the Creator” by Rabbi Avraham ben HaRambam
 Shechinah | G-d’s Holy Presence
 shelo lishmah | not for the sake of Heaven
 shiur | Torah class
 Shlomo HaMelech | King Solomon
 shoresh | root
 shoresh haneshamah | soul root
 Shulchan Aruch | Code of Jewish Law
 simcha | happiness
 taanug | the force of pleasure in the soul
 tefillah | prayer
 tevunah | lower power of thinking
 Tiferes Yisrael | Commentary on the Mishnayos, noted for his esoteric interpretations
 Vilna Gaon | Rabbi Eliyahu Kramer (1720-97), a famed religious scholar and the leader of non-hasidic Jewry of the past few centuries.
 Yechidah | innermost point of the soul
 Yetzer Hora | evil inclination
 Yetzer Tov | Good inclination
 Yissocher | one of the twelve sons of Yaakov Avinu
 yissurei hanefesh | suffering of the soul
 Yom Tov | Jewish festival
 Yonah Motzoh | A Shabbos song

