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## Torah Way to Enlightenment - 010 Bonding & Meditating With The Creator Through Thought

ספר דע את נשמתך - פרק יד - קשר בין נברא לבורא - במחשבה

### **Introduction: Bonding With The Creator Through Thought - In All Five Layers of the Soul**

We have so far discussed the first step in *hisbodedus*: revealing the five parts of the soul [via our faculty of thought]. Now we shall continue, with the help of Hashem, to the second step in *hisbodedus*, via the faculty of thought: bonding with the Creator.

As in the previous chapters, we explained the stages throughout the five parts of our soul - our *Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah, Chayah* and *Yechidah*. These five levels are present throughout all stages of our *avodah* (spiritual task). Let us now explain what our inner work is in these five levels of the soul, in relation to our power of thought, when it comes to the stage in *hisbodedus* of bonding with the Creator.

### **1. Bonding With The Creator Through Thought - In The “Nefesh” Level of the Soul**

We have explained that the “*Nefesh*” level is our actual grasp of reality. With regards to our bond with the Creator, this will mean that we simply become aware of the reality of our bond with the Creator. As the Rambam states in the beginning of *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*, we are all found within the truth of His existence.

The bond between man and the Creator is based upon an actual grasp of reality: the very fact that we are found within the truth of His existence; the fact that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* everything. Our bond with the Creator stems from the fact that our very reality is part of the Creator's. Thus, the **“Nefesh” level of bonding with the Creator [in our power of thought] is when one thinks of the bond between him and the Creator.** Our very bond with the Creator is defined by this fact that we are found within His reality.

Maybe a person will ask: “Perhaps that was only true when man was first created by Hashem, but now, a man is found within his own independent reality.” But we know from the words of our Sages, as is explained in *sefarim hakedoshim*, that “He renews in His goodness every day constantly the act of Creation.” The reality of the entire Creation in general, as well as the reality of man specifically, is being renewed every moment. When Hashem constantly “fashions light and creates darkness”, He is

renewing man with this – every moment.

Therefore, our bond with the Creator is based on the fact that our existence is powered by the Creator; the fact that we are found within the truth of His reality is our constant bond with the Creator, every moment. When one recognizes this, he bonds with the Creator [in his thoughts] through the “*Nefesh*” level of the soul.

## **2. Bonding With The Creator Through Thought - In The “*Ruach*” Level of the Soul**

The “*Ruach*” level of the soul, when it comes to bonding with the Creator [through the power of thought], divides into two categories.

### **2) “*Ruach*” - Belief In Divine Providence**

We defined the “*Nefesh*” level of the soul as the grasp of reality that is based on our faith that we are the creations of Hashem. The “*Ruach*” level of the soul is when we believe that the Creator is also conducting all of the Creations. It is to believe in Divine Providence – the fact that Hashem runs the world both in the collective sense, as well as in the individual sense. The *sefarim hakedoshim* have gone to great lengths in explaining this concept, that we have the *emunah* that Hashem oversees all of the Creation, as well as each individual person, without exception.

When one thinks of this – the fact that all of Creation as a whole, as well as each person individually, is being watched by Hashem – this is also a kind of bond with Him.

### **3) “*Ruach*” - The World of Emotion**

A considerable amount of our classical *sefarim*, especially the *sefarim* of *Chassidus* (specifically, the *Chassidic* teachings in Poland), deal with the role of emotions in the bond between man and the Creator.

There are two general roots of the emotions: The line of *ahavah*, love, and the line of *yirah*, awe. When we go further into the roots, there are seven primary emotions: *ahavah* (love), *yirah* (fear), *hispaarus* (pride), *nitzuach* (victory), *hodayah* (gratitude), *hiskashrus* (connection), and *shiflus* (lowliness). The emotions play a part in man’s bond with the Creator: man’s love for the Creator, man’s fear of the Creator, etc.

Understandably, there are levels within love and fear. Within love, there can be conditional love and unconditional love. Within fear, there is fear of punishment, awe of G-d, fear of sin, and self-nullification. This *sefer* is not the place to discuss all of the details of all the branching emotions that stem from either *ahavah* and *yirah*. But what we need to know regarding the current stage we are discussing, which refers to the *middos* and the emotions which are expressed in man’s bond with the Creator, it refers to bonding to the Creator through love, or through fear, or through any of the other emotions of the soul.

Thus, the “*Ruach*” level in bonding with the Creator is when one connects to Him from these natural emotions of the soul.

## **3. Bonding With The Creator Through Thought - In The “*Neshamah*” Level of the Soul**

The bond between man and the Creator, in the “*Neshamah*” level of the soul, also divides into two categories.

3a) “*Neshamah*” - My Existence Is A Revelation of The Glory of Hashem

Hashem created the world and He is leading it, which reveals His glory (*kavod*) in the Creation. When one reflects and he sees how his existence reveals the glory of Hashem and how he is a part of this glory, this is a bond with the Creator through the “*Neshamah*” level of the soul.

This does not simply mean to recognize simply what “glory of Hashem” is – that is a separate reflection to make. It is rather the recognition that my very existence has a part in the glory of Hashem that is revealed on this world. This is how man bonds with the Creator through the [power of thought in his] *Neshamah* level of the soul.

### **3b) “Neshamah” - Resembling Hashem’s Thoughts In Our Own Thoughts.**

An additional path of connecting oneself to the Creator through the “*Neshamah*” level of the soul is when one has the understanding that his own thoughts are part of the [Creator’s] world of thought. In the teachings of *Chassidus*, this is explained in terms of how man must be aware that his own thoughts really have their source in a higher world of thought. Meaning, part of this “higher world of thought” is accessed by his own mind.

Let us explain this. Naturally, whenever a person thinks a thought, it appears to him that his thoughts are his own. When he is thinking of going someplace, he thinks, “I am thinking of how to go someplace”, and when he thinks of setting out on a journey, he is thinking, “I am thinking of setting out on a journey”, and so forth. He identifies his thinking as a part of his “I”. But the truth is that all of our inner abilities are part of a greater whole. There are individuals within Creation, which includes all of us individually, and there is also our collective whole – the Jewish nation. After that, the collective whole expands to include all of the creations as well.

Our bond with the Creator [through our power of thought which corresponds to the “*Neshamah*” level of the soul] is contained in the concept of “*B’tzalmeinu, K’demuseinu*” – “In our image, and in our likeness.”<sup>[1]</sup> Every one of us has a *tzelem* (image) and a *demus* (likeness) – each person on his own level (depending on how much one has protected himself from losing his “*tzelem elokim*” (his trait of “resemblance to G-d”, so to speak) which leaves a person through sin). The *tzelem* (Heavenly “image”) and the *demus* (Heavenly “likeness”) that is present in each person is a resemblance to the *tzelem* and *demus* above. Thus, each person is like a “shadow” of this *tzelem* and *demus* above.

The purpose of Creation is that the very design of this Creation should become a tool that connects man to the higher root of his existence. If man’s *demus* (“likeness” of Heaven would not be similar to the *demus* (“likeness” that is above, his bond with the Creator would be deficient. Since the will of the Creator is that the creations on this lower realm should become connected with the Heavenly – all the way up until the point of the Infinite (which has no *demus* likeness, but which can be reached through the *Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah, and Chayah* levels of the soul) – the Creator has therefore designed a human being with a resemblance of Above. Since the lower worlds (and the lower levels of the soul) bear some resemblance to Above, man has a way to connecting his lower dimension to his higher dimension.

The Sages taught us that the work of man is to become attached to the Creator, to be “*domeh lo*” – to become “similar to Him.” Through becoming “similar” to Hashem, you can come to have *d’veykus* (attachment) with Him. This inner point, of “becoming similar to Above”, is a view from our lower dimension which can extend all the way until the highest point of the upper dimension. Meaning, from our own lower perception, from our own design which is a resemblance of the heavenly dimension – for we are created *b’tzelem elokim*, in G-d’s image – we can bond with the Creator.

Going further, we can also apply this to our character traits and understand that we need to get our character traits to resemble the traits of Hashem, so to speak. “Just as He is compassionate, so should

you be compassionate. Just as He is graceful, so should You be graceful.”

Our speech as well is a resemblance of the speech of Above, for in the language of *Chassidus*, our speech emanates from the “world of speech” Above. Therefore, our speech is not our own, and that is why we must guard our tongue from forbidden speech. (This is the depth behind the prohibition not to speak *lashon hora*.) Hashem created the world with ten expressions, and for each day of Creation, Hashem said, “It was good”, so if a person wants to connect himself with the ten expressions, he must make sure that his speech is proper, so that he can connect to this “good”.

When it comes to our area of thought as well, we also have the inner task of getting our thoughts to resemble the thoughts of Hashem, so to speak. This is the subject of the current stage we are explaining.

### **“Resembling Hashem” Through the “Nefesh”, “Ruach”, and “Neshamah” levels of the soul**

We have so far defined that our bond with the Creator through the “Nefesh” level of the soul is to recognize the simple reality that we, His creations, are a part of His reality, and our bond with the Creator through the “Ruach” level of the soul is through the feelings of love and fear of the Creator. In the current stage we are discussing – man’s bond with the Creator through the “Neshamah” level of the soul – the definition is, that one must get his thoughts to resemble the thoughts of his Creator, so to speak.

Firstly we should understand that the *avodah* to “resemble Hashem” adds an additional depth to the *Nefesh* and *Ruach* levels of bonding with the Creator. Meaning, not only is there a Creator and we are His creations, and not only must we love and fear the Creator, but there is also a task to “be similar to Him”, and there is way to do this through each of the layers in the soul, as will be explained.

Nefesh - Our *avodah* to resemble Hashem in our “Nefesh” level of the soul is that since we are His creations, He created us “in His image.” Therefore, our very makeup is already a resemblance of Him.

Ruach - In the “Ruach” level of the soul, which corresponds to the feelings of the soul that include *ahavah*, *yirah*, *hispaarus*, etc. – this is not simply to be defined as a bond to the Creator because “I love the Creator” or “I fear the Creator”, but the definition is rather that I am a resemblance of Above, through these character traits.

Just as He loves me, so can I love Him, and just as He “fears” for His children (as is explained in the *sefarim* of *Chassidus*, that Hashem “fears” for his children that they should not sin, so that they will not become distanced from Him. He has given free will to man, which enables man to act against His will, and Hashem fears that the person will choose evil), so can I fear Him. And just as Hashem is “proud” of His children (“*Yisrael, in you I am glorified*”<sup>[2]</sup> [2]), so do we take “pride” in Hashem.

Thus, our bond with the Creator is not only in the external sense of recognizing that we are His creations and recognizing our spiritual feelings towards Him, but more so, to recognize that our inner makeup is a resemblance of Him. When I love and fear the Creator, my bond with the Creator is not the actual bond. Rather, our traits a reflection of the Creator’s – as in the verse, “*Just as water reflects a face to a face, so does the heart of man to man*”<sup>[3]</sup> [3]. Our own fear and love of the Creator is a “reflection”, so to speak, of the Creator’s love and fear for us, and it is the same with all the other character traits.

Neshamah - Bonding with the Creator through the “Neshamah” level of the soul is, firstly, as we explained earlier, to recognize that our existence is a part in revealing Hashem’s glory onto the world. But there is a deeper aspect as well: bonding with Hashem through our thoughts. Man has the *avodah* to align his thoughts with the thoughts of his Creator.

This is, in essence, the entire secret depth that is behind **studying the holy Torah**.

### ***[Sevara Yeshara (Upright Thinking) - Developing A Torah-Thinking Mind]***

There is a well-known letter which Rav Chaim of Volozhin wrote to his grandson: “The *Rishonim* (the Talmudic scholars of the 10<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> centuries) are praised entirely due to their **sevara yeshara**, upright thinking.” (Understandably, they also possessed great depth to their hearts, but here we will focus on their mental precision, which is what we are currently discussing.)

Certainly, the simple meaning of this is true, that upright thinking is a good thing and crooked thinking is not good. But there is a far deeper point contained here, which we shall explain. There is a term we often quote, which is called “**Daas Torah**” (the view of Torah). It is said of Hashem, “He and His wisdom are one”, as the Rambam and many others have said. The task of man, in studying Torah, is essentially to align his own mind with the “G-dly way of thinking”.

Shlomo HaMelech said, “G-d made man upright, and they seek many calculations.”<sup>[4]</sup> <sup>[4]</sup> What is wrong when people seek these “many calculations” (*cheshbonos rabim*)? There is much to say about this matter, but for the purposes of our discussion, it means when a person becomes distanced from *yashrus* (uprightness) and instead he involves himself with the *cheshbonos rabim* (“many calculations”) and his thoughts do not resemble the thoughts of the Creator, so to speak.

The thoughts of Hashem are *yoshev*, they are upright, and that is why the Jewish people are called *Yisrael*, from the words *Yashar Kel* (an upright G-d), for that is how the Creator has made them to be: “G-d made man upright”. But when their thoughts deviate from this original upright way of thinking that man is created with, and instead they seek “many calculations”, their thoughts do not resemble the thoughts of the Creator, and then their bond with Him is lacking. For the entire bond of man with his Creator is based on resembling Him – to resemble Him in how we act, in our character, and in our thinking.

Man can work to improve himself and cause his actions, character, and thoughts to resemble that of the Creator. The more a person nullifies his own thinking to *daas Torah* – to the Torah’s thinking – the more the light of the holy Torah becomes revealed to him. The Sages praise those who are “naked in their knowledge, and placing themselves like animals”<sup>[5]</sup> <sup>[5]</sup> in order to submit their minds to the thinking of the Torah. The more one submits his thinking to the Creator’s thinking, the more he joins with the Creator, for “He and His wisdom are one.” The thoughts of a person then become *sevara yesharah*, upright thinking, and then the thoughts of a person resemble the Creator’s thoughts, so to speak.

As long as a person does not straighten out his thinking to become more aligned with the Torah’s thinking, it is said of him that “The thinking of laymen is the antithesis to the thinking of Torah”<sup>[6]</sup> <sup>[6]</sup>, for the person’s mind is distant from the G-dly way of thinking.

### ***Acquiring The Ability of Upright Thinking***

Based upon the above, we can now understand the depth of our *mitzvah* to study the holy Torah. There is certainly more depth to this matter than what we are explaining here, but we will deal here with how it applies on our own level, and for the purposes of this particular discussion.

In essence, the task of man is to acquire an ability of upright thinking (*sevara yeshara*), which means to learn how to see things from the perspective of the Creator, so to speak.

How do we acquire such thinking? Understandably, there are many steps involved. The simplest and most basic step in order to acquire this ability is through sitting and learning Torah. The more a

person learns Torah, his mind slowly becomes aligned with the Creator's thoughts. This, however, is only the basic step.

The more inner level is that a person must learn how to avoid "mental bribery", to be wary of anything in his thinking that is causing him to think a certain way. Just as the Torah forbids a judge from taking a monetary bribe, because the bribe will sway his mind and corrupt his thinking, so must a person avoid "bribery" in his mind, which will sway his ability of upright thinking. The mental bribery which sways the mind is whenever a person has various personal motivations that are influencing his mind to think in a certain way and form certain conclusions, to his own benefit. One must learn how to erase these self-serving motivations.

Let's explain what we mean. You can have a person who is a *Rav* or a *posek*, and he receives a *halachic* query, and before he has even begun to think, he may already be affected by various self-serving motivations (called *negios*) which he may not even be consciously aware of. He will reach a certain conclusion, because he really *wanted* to conclude that way, even before he had begun to think about it.

In the Torah, there are 49 ways to declare something pure, and 49 ways to declare it impure. Only when a person begins his thinking from a pure place can he reach a truthful conclusion; if one feels an affinity towards a certain option which makes it pure, he will find 49 ways to declare it as pure, or vice versa - if he feels an affinity to somehow make it impure, he will find 49 ways to declare it impure.

The same question can be sent to many different rabbis, worded in the same exact way, and if they disagree on the matter, each of them can find proofs to their words, beginning from the words of the Sages of the *Mishnah* down to the *Gemara*, the *Geonim*, the *Rishonim*, and the *Acharonim*, each with a lengthy response explaining their opinion. What, indeed, is the true understanding of a matter, if there are proofs that each opinion is correct? The *Gemara* says that Rebbi Meir had 150 reasons to declare a *sheretz* as ritually pure.<sup>[7]</sup> [7] This means that he had all the proof to declare it pure, and if he would have had any personal motivations to declare it pure, he could have found all of these reasons to do so, even if the *halachah* was contradictory to his opinion.

Therefore, in order for a person to arrive at an inner, upright way of thinking, one must be prepared to accept the truth, even if it contradicts his way of thinking. Deep in a person's soul, a person has certain opinions, beliefs and ways of thinking, when it comes to something he learns about in the Torah or when it comes to how he lives life. He must be prepared to submit his thinking, however, to the truth.

Each person needs to make this internal examination: "Am I ready to turn around my whole life, in one day, if I must?" A person is living in a certain community, amongst a certain sect of Jewry, and he thinks that his way of living is the truthful one. But every person must ask himself: "Would I be prepared to change over my entire way of living, in one moment, if I found out that the truth was elsewhere....?"

Of course, it is very possible that his way of living is indeed truthful, and that he does not have to switch his path for another one. The issue is if he finds out that there is a different way of living which is more truthful than the one he is currently living. What would he do? Is he prepared to leave it all behind, and live in the place which is more truthful? Practically speaking, it may take some time until he can sell his house and move everything to the new place. But the issue is: Is he ready to make a decision in his soul, to be prepared to leave behind everything and move to a new place that's more truthful?

If the answer is "No", that means that he does not either submit to a more truthful way of thinking in

his Torah learning. When he has certain ways of thinking which he will never budge from, he cannot arrive at the truth.

But if a person is prepared at any moment to accept that his thinking may be wrong, and he is ready to go along with the truth, and whatever that entails – for example, if he has already gone through four massive changes in his life which brought a total overhaul in his way of living, and he is now prepared for a fifth massive change to his life, if it is the truth – such a person's Torah learning stems from truth, for he is searching for the uprightness (*yashrus*) that is in the Torah.

Today there are much *chiddushei Torah*. Anyone with a discerning eye can tell if the person writing the *chiddushim* is really trying to get to the truth, or if he is just trying to come up with any answer. One kind of person writes *chiddushei Torah* because he is searching for truth, whereas another kind of person will write *chiddushei Torah* simply because he wants to be an author of *chiddushim*. There is a vast difference between these two kinds of *chiddushim*.

The ability in man of *seichel hayashar*, an upright intellect, is essentially an ability to see the true *yashrus* (uprightness) in each thing – the *yashrus* that is in the Torah, a view of *yashrus* towards the Jewish people, towards the rest of the nations, and towards the entirety of Creation. The more a person's thoughts become *yashar* upright, to that level, he is more attached with the Creator, for the Creator is, so to speak, *yashar*. The more we turn away from *cheshbonos rabim* and instead get our thinking to resemble the *yashrus* of the Creator, we are able to attach ourselves more with the Creator.

There was a story with Reb Chaim of Brisk, that one of his students was sitting with him and writing down his teacher's Torah *chiddushim*. Reb Chaim would dictate to him what to write, and the student would write down each exact word. They sat for hours together, forming piles of written notes. At a certain point (this is how the story is told, though it is not clear if this is exactly what happened), the Rav requested to his student that he tear up the papers. (I do not know if, from a *halachic perspective*, this was permitted to do or not, even if the Torah *chiddushim* weren't truthful. Leaving aside the questions about the details of this story, though, let's consider the lesson here.)

The student, who had sat with Reb Chaim for such a long time writing down the *chiddushim*, begged the Rav to reconsider, for he had spent so much time and hard work on it. Reb Chaim's response was: "When words of Torah are not truthful, they are not needed."

Let us consider for a moment something about this story. Reb Chaim had exerted his mind greatly in developing these Torah *chiddushim*, and the student had worked so hard to write them down. Certainly, when Reb Chaim was dictating his words of Torah, they seemed to be truthful to him. After several hours had passed, suddenly Reb Chaim realized that there was a mistake about something, or a certain point that contradicted his words, or a certain logical reasoning that undermined everything. In one moment, he erased it all! The student, though, who had spent so much time writing them down, found it difficult to part with them. He found it too difficult to part with his hard work, rather than submit to the truth.

There is a saying that "In Brisk, they learn how to erase." In other words, it is a style of learning in which one aims to root out any points that aren't totally truthful, even if they are already written down. It should not only be this way when it comes to Torah learning. Rather, it should also be applied to our own beliefs and ways of thinking.

The reality is that if a person was raised and educated with certain beliefs, he generally remains with those ways of thinking until he dies (unless he went through anything extreme in life that caused him to majorly overturn his thinking). In contrast to this, a truthful kind of person inspects his own beliefs

and opinions every day, filtering and refining and clarifying them, seeing if there is anything untrue within his beliefs which should be removed, and the parts are true that can remain.

This is really a task which spans all of our lifetime: to learn how to become *yoshor* (upright). Learning how to become *yoshor* is to learn how to look at each matter through a lens of *yashrus*.

This does not mean to become judging of others, and to view a person who profanes the Shabbos as a wicked individual. This is not *yashrus* - and in fact, it is a superficial perspective.

(*Yashrus* stems from a deep point in the soul which is capable of seeing even the most wayward Jew as a complete *tzaddik* (for there is a very deep place in every Jew's soul which is completely righteous and pure of sin), and on a more external level, to see the wayward Jew as a "captured child" [*tinok shenishbah*, who is not to be blamed for his sins, due to his careless upbringing]. Even if it is a Jew who sins with the intention of angering Hashem, it is only his external layer which is evil. In his inner layer, he is a *tzaddik*. This is an example of viewing another person from a perspective of *yashrus*.)

The view of *yashrus* is a view which takes everything into account. It sees a matter in its entirety, with no leanings towards any particular detail and with no personal motivations to arrive at a certain conclusion.

For example, when seeing a person who commits negative deeds, instead of imagining him to be a "bad person", a person can view him from a perspective of *yashrus* and see that the person is very complex, with good parts and bad parts to him. He can see the totality of the person, and he does not become transfixed on one particular aspect of the person which would either make him completely good or completely bad. Rather, he sees the external layers of the person, the parts that are on the surface, as well as the more inner parts of the person, all the way to the innermost point.

This is one of the tasks which spans all of our life: to acquire for ourselves more *yashrus*, more *yashrus*, and more *yashrus*, both when it comes to our Torah learning and when it comes to how we live all of our life. A person may be capable of learning Torah, but when he goes outside and he takes a look at the world around him, his view may be totally mistaken. Why? Because he still hasn't yet acquired the inner *yashrus* of thinking that is in the Torah. While it is true that he's learning Torah, that does not mean he has acquired the upright perspective which can be gained from it. If he would acquire it, he would view others from a perspective of *yashrus* as well, no less than how he approaches a subject in his Torah learning with *yashrus*.

Generally, there aren't many who think that much. The "thinkers" of today are usually people who form new opinions, who challenge the traditionally accepted ways of thinking. There are few people in this generation who are constantly refining their thinking process in a way that is *yashrus*. This is usually more common when people are young and idealistic, because the older that one becomes, the more he finds it harder to let go of his old opinions that he is so used to, and it becomes impossible to change his thinking patterns.

You can meet a 40-year old or 50-year old and try to explain something to him, and he is basically telling you, "Don't even try. I've already made up my mind about this." Clearly, this means that the person is not truthful, because a truthful person doesn't stop clarifying his thinking until the day he dies. For Creation is so deep, layer within layer, and there is always more truth that can be uncovered.

One must search for truth and for *yashrus*\uprightness not because he should seek Torah *chiddushim*, and not because he should seek additional depth, but because he should always seek to straighten out his own thinking, to keep sharpening it, more and more. As explained earlier, the more a person's



mind becomes *yoshor*, the more he becomes attached to the Creator, Who is (so to speak) *yoshor*.

We have been lengthy here in explaining this matter, because this is really a perspective about life: to keep developing more and more inner *yashrus* \uprightness in our thoughts [to match our thinking with the Torah's thinking].

### **[Yashrus Brings Ruach HaKodesh]**

This *yashrus* that is being described is an ability that brings a person to *ruach hakodesh* (lit. the "holy spirit" - an enlightened level of thought), as explained in the *sefarim hakedoshim*. Whenever a person receives an enlightening thought from the Creator, this is a degree of *ruach hakodesh* in one's thoughts, which we touched upon earlier.

The reason why *yashrus* brings about *ruach hakodesh* in the thoughts is, that when the thoughts of a person are beginning to resemble the thoughts of the Creator, they become aligned with the Creator's thoughts and therefore they can receive spiritual illumination from them, which is *ruach hakodesh*. In contrast, when the thoughts of a person are dissimilar to the Creator's, the spiritual illumination is greatly minimized, so the thoughts of a person do not become enlightened. Thus, the more a person attains *yashrus* in his thoughts, the more he is able to merit *ruach hakodesh*.

(Unless he attributes the *yashrus* to himself. If a person does not attribute the *yashrus* to its source, he cannot truly attain *yashrus* in his thoughts, because his thinking would already be crooked from the start.)

In summation, the more a person aligns his thinking with the thinking of the Torah, and the more he attributes this *yashrus* to its Source and not to his own thinking, to that degree, he opens a spiritual pipeline to the Source, so that his thoughts can become enlightened from their Source.

### **4. Bonding With The Creator Through The "Chayah" Level of the Soul**

The next step is to bond with Hashem through the "*Chayah*" level of the soul.

To give an introduction to this stage, we need to know that there are many ways to serve Hashem. Generally, there are four schools of thought when it comes to how a person should go about *avodas Hashem*, serving the Creator.

- 1) The first way is ***mussar (self-discipline)***. *Mussar* focuses on recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses as a way to know oneself and be able to serve Hashem by working on oneself.
- 2) A second way is the ***Chassidus of Poland***. *Chassidus* focuses on one's relationship with Hashem through the feelings, such as through love and fear of Hashem.
- 3) The third way is the thinking of ***Chabad Chassidus***. The *sefarim* of *Chabad* deal with the concept of *bittul* - nullifying oneself completely to the Creator.
- 4) The fourth way is ***temimus (simplicity)***.[\[8\]](#) [\[8\]](#)

When we discussed the power of thought in the *Nefesh* and *Ruach* levels of the soul, we explained that this refers to simple awareness of reality (*Nefesh*) and of one's character traits and emotions (*Ruach*). This is, in essence, referring to the school of thought of *mussar*. And when we discussed the stage of bonding with the Creator through the emotions, this is in line with the teachings of Poland *Chassidus* - to develop a bond with the Creator through one's natural emotions.

The current stage we are discussing, which is about developing the power of thought - for the purpose of developing our power of thought, and not in relation to developing the emotions - corresponds to the school of thought of *Chabad Chassidus*. We will try to explain this way of thinking, in these brief words.

The word "*Chabad*" is an acronym for **C**hochmah (wisdom), **B**inah (contemplation), and **D**aas [lit. "knowledge" or "understanding", but more accurately known as "awareness"]. It is a school of thought that is based on using the power to mentally reflect (*hisbonenus*).

All other ways of thinking include mental reflection as well, but they are not based particularly on this power. The other ways of *avodah* certainly involve mental reflection, but only for the purpose of simply knowing what to do, for if there is no reflection, a person will not know what to do. By contrast, the teachings of *Chabad Chassidus* are based on the power of mental reflection: to use the abilities of *chochmah* ("wisdom" - the initial, simpler level of thinking) and *binah* ("contemplation" - in-depth thinking) and then *daas*, to fixate one's thoughts on something.

What should a person fixate his thoughts on? Generally, there are two parts to this matter, which we will now explain.

#### **4a) Self-Nullification In The Sense That I Am Sustained Entirely By Hashem**

The first part of it is for a person to reflect on the fact that Hashem is the Source of all life, and that all of Creation in general, as well as each Creation individually (including my own vitality), is empowered from Hashem. Therefore, my entire existence depends on the higher Source of my energy, every moment. It is to know that **my entire vitality is enabled by Hashem, in His will. If He would not will it, I cannot continue to exist.**

This is the bond to the Creator through the "*Chayah*" level of the soul: in the sense of knowing the source of my *chiyus* (vitality). We will explain what this means.

In the stage lower than this, a person understands that there is a Creator and there are the creations, and the Creator watches over each individual in His Divine Providence. In this level, I acknowledge my "I" as an existing factor - I exist from Hashem sustaining me, I am watched by Him, etc. But in the current stage we are discussing, one reveals greater depth to this matter. Not only must a person recognize that the source of his vitality comes from Hashem, but he must understand that **if there is even one moment where Hashem does not give me my *chiyus*, I will become nullified, because I will stop existing. Therefore, my very existence right now is nullified to the Creator.**

It was explained previously that the "*Chayah*" level of the soul is parallel to *chochmah* (wisdom), which is an acronym for the words "*koach mah*": "What is our energy [worth]?" This is the secret known as **bittul**, self-nullification, which is described in the verse, "*V'nachnu mah*" ("And we, what are we?")

It means that not only are our movements nullified to the Creator (as we explained earlier), but that my very existence is nullified to the Creator - because if He were to stop sustaining me *chas v'shalom*, I would cease to exist. If the Creator would remove my *chiyus* from me, not only would I stop moving (and be like the dead, who do not move) - I would cease to exist. (Even a dead person is existing, and it is just that he is not moving. Even the dead have some minimal spark of vitality that remains in them, and if not for this bare level of vitality, they would stop existing entirely).

Thus, the *avodah* of a person, when bonding to the Creator [through the power of the thought] in the *Chayah* level of the soul, is to recognize that "My existence is enabled by Hashem, and I am

dependent on Him – therefore, I do not exist on my own.” Not only are my movements enabled by Hashem, but my very existence depends on the vitality that He continues to send to me every moment.

With this understanding, one’s bond with the Creator becomes much deeper. For if I believe that I can exist on my own without Him, and it is just that I cannot move without Him enabling me to do so, then my bond with Him would not be coming from my very existence. I would have the belief that deep down, I exist on my own somehow, so I am not necessarily nullified in my whole being to Him. With this perspective, my “I” will divide me from the Creator – as in the verse, “*I stand between Hashem and between you.*”

But if I have the understanding that my very vitality in life is dependent on the Creator, and that if the Creator would stop sustaining me, I cannot exist – then my very “I” is not here. In that way, I nullify my sense of existence. This is the implication of “*V’nachnu Mah*” (“And we, what are we?”) and “*koach mah*” (What is [our] energy [worth]?), the personification of *bittul* (the nullification of one’s sense of self), which in turn enables one’s existence to become more unified with the Creator’s.

This is one way of bonding with the Creator in “*Chayah*” level of the soul – by way of the “*chochmah*” that corresponds to the “*Chayah*” level of the soul.

#### **4b) Self-Nullification - In The Sense That Hashem Is So Vast And I Am So Small**

A second way of bonding with the Creator, which is greatly mentioned in the *sefarim* of Chabad, and which is also using the “*Chayah*” level in the soul, is for a person to reflect into the greatness of the Creator, in contrast to the smallness of my “I”.

It can be compared to the *halachah* of *bittul b’rov*, “nullified by the majority”, or the other kinds of *bittul*, which include “nullified by a sixtieth”, “nullified by a hundredth”, or “nullified by a two-hundredth”, where a miniscule amount is considered nullified by the majority amount that is in the mixture. This can be applied in the inner sense, when it comes to our relationship with the Creator. The Creator is infinite, and the creations are limited – therefore, all of the creations are nullified to Him, for He is the majority, while His creations are the minority, who are “nullified to the majority.”

(Understandably, a created being is nullified to the Creator in a much greater sense of nullification than how a minor amount is “nullified by the majority” - much more than being nullified by a sixtieth, a hundredth, or two-hundredth. The Creator’s vastness cannot be measured, and there is no comparison between a limited being with the infinite.)

This kind of reflection includes two parts. On one hand, a person should reflect on the fact that **the Creator is, essentially, everything**. He “*Rav v’Shalit al kula*”, “Leads and Rules over all.” It is when one understands that Hashem rules over everything, through His way of conducting the universe, His attributes, His wisdom, and all other qualities attributed to the Creator, Who Is Infinite. Along with this reflection, a person should also think how small he is, in comparison to the vastness of the Creator. He can then feel, as described in terms of *Chabad Chassidus*, the feeling of “I do not exist”.

Earlier, we spoke of a different perspective, in which one realizes that his vitality is dependent on what he receives from Hashem, thus he comes to feel that he has no sense of an existing self. This is one kind of self-nullification. Here we are explaining a second kind of self-nullification, where the emphasis is not on the Source of my vitality, but on the smallness of a human being when compared to the Infinite, which is another way of losing the sense of an existing self.

When one reflects on how “I am so small, compared to the vastness of the Creator”, he can come to feel as if he does not exist, like a grain of sand in comparison to the rest of the universe. When one

measures his own existence in comparison with the existence of the Infinite, he can feel that his existence melts away into the vastness of the Infinite - the truthfulness of the Presence of the Creator. This kind of reflection produces in a person the feeling of "*koach mah*", of the uselessness of our own power, which is the self-nullification achieved through the perception of the "*Chayah*" level in the soul.

This is a deeper level of *bittul* than before, because in this perspective, a person doesn't feel a sense of self at all, even while being aware that he is receiving his vitality from the Creator. In the first level of *bittul* described, where a person is aware that his vitality depends on Hashem, he acknowledges his own existence, but he is aware that he depends on the Creator for survival. But in this perspective of *bittul* we are describing here, where a person reflects on his own smallness, in contrast with the vastness of the Creator, **he does not even feel his own existence. He has no sense of self at all.** It is not simply to be understood that if his vitality would be cut off from its Source, he would cease existing. Rather, **even as he exists right now, he can reach an understanding where he does not feel any sense of self at all.**

(There is also a different angle of understanding, in which acknowledging that my vitality is dependent on the Creator is actually a greater level of *bittul*, than acknowledging my smallness in contrast with the Creator's vastness. But here we have explained the more general approach).

Thus, the *avodah* of a person in the "*Chayah*" level of the soul is essentially to bring oneself to the point where his bond with the Creator is based upon self-nullification.

Earlier, we explained the levels of *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah* in bonding with the Creator. In these levels of the soul, a person acknowledges his own existence. But in the *Chayah* level of the soul, a person bonds with the Creator precisely when there is no sense of an existing self.

It is the understanding that I am nullified to the Creator, and therefore, I have no existence of my own. This is either because I understand that Hashem can take away my vitality at any given moment, or because I see how miniscule I am in comparison to the vastness of the Infinite. Either way, though, the basis of this perspective is that my bond with the Creator is through negating my sense of existence. When I am not sensing my existing self, I am nullified to the Creator; I am integrated with Him - and that is the bond.

### ***Self-Nullification Leads To Feelings of the Soul For The Creator.***

The "*Chayah*" level of bonding with the Creator produces two factors - a more external layer, as well as a more inner layer, of change.

The external change it produces is that it leads a person towards love and fear of the Creator. But these are not the same feelings of love and fear as in the "*Ruach*" level of the soul we discussed earlier, which are the actual root feelings of love and fear. Rather, in the "*Chayah*" level of the soul, the feelings of love and fear are a result of self-nullification.

The more inner layer of change which it produces, which is deeper, is where a person reaches a state of self-nullification that is higher than the feelings of the love and the fear towards the Creator.

We will explain. In the feelings in the "*Ruach*" level of the soul, a person learns what love and fear of the Creator is when he experiences these feelings. With the more he experiences these feelings, the more he learns about them. But there is also a way to get to love and fear of the Creator: through "*koach mah*", or self-nullification. One can become so nullified to the Creator that, as a result, he also loves and fears the Creator. Feeling nullified to the Creator brings a person to unify with the Creator; as is well-known, *ahavah* (love) is equal in numerical value (in Hebrew) to the word *echad* (one).

Thus, there is a way to get to feelings of love and fear of the Creator through the “I” [this is in the “*Ruach*” level of the soul], and there is also a way to get to these feelings of love and fear through nullifying the “I” [this is the “*Chayah*” level of the soul].

Taking this to a deeper level, as it has been explained earlier, *bittul* (self-nullification) is not only for the purpose of producing feelings of love and fear of the Creator. Rather, it is for the sake of nullifying the self. From being nullified, a person can attach himself to the Creator. When a person bonds with the Creator by way of love and fear of Him, He is connected to Him through these feelings, but if he bonds with Him through totally nullifying his existence to Him, he becomes nullified and integrated with the Creator. He is then able to be “one” with the Creator, so to speak.

#### **4c) Bonding With The Creator Through The “G-dly Spark” That Sustains Each Thing.**

Until now, we explained two alternate paths within the stage of bonding with the Creator [in our power of thought] through “*Chayah*” level in the soul, which were both related to the concept of *bittul* (self-nullification). Now we shall turn to a third approach.

As is well-known, one of the clearest principles taught by the Baal Shem Tov is that each and every thing in the Creation contains a “G-dly spark” which empowers it. This is a fundamental which is deep and subtle. Much of the written opposition against the teachings of Chassidus, which was fought between the students of the Baal Shem Tov and the students of the Vilna Gaon, revolved around this matter: What is this “G-dly spark”? If it is understood simply and literally, *chas v’shalom*, it sounds like trying to give physical form to the Creator, which is against the Torah. There are many other issues as well, surrounding this concept. This was the main argument fought in those times against *Chassidus*.

Here we will not get involved with that controversy. What we want to know here is: What our inner work in our soul is, when it comes to this matter. The principle taught by the Baal Shem Tov, that each thing contains a G-dly vitality which empowers it, means that the G-dly vitality in something is what enables it to become a tool in connecting it with G-dliness.

Let’s explain this matter further. Hashem can keep a person alive even without the G-dly spark of vitality, and Hashem could have created man in a way that he won’t need this G-dly spark in order to live, for Hashem is capable of anything. If so, why then did Hashem make man in a way that his vitality must become from this “G-dly spark”?

The answer to this is because the goal of Creation is for man to be brought to the state of *d’veykus* (attachment) to G-dliness. When man receives vitality from this G-dliness, this is exactly what brings him towards the connection with the Infinite. If man were to receive vitality from a source other than this, it would not bring him to a connection with the Infinite. Since man’s purpose is to connect himself to the Infinite, the thing that revitalizes him is the “G-dly spark” within him.

The Baal Shem Tov’s principle, that each thing contains a G-dly spark which empowers it, is essentially the perception of the “*Chayah*” level of the soul that connects man with the Infinite. It is not simply a way of defining the source that keeps a person alive. Rather, it is a definition of how a created being can become connected with the Infinite, through the inner work of his soul.

We have already explained in the previous chapter that the inner work in our “*Chayah*” level of the soul is, firstly, to reveal the understanding that there is an inner energy source in man, which keeps him alive. From there, a person can reach the ultimate Source behind all of his energy - Who is *Hashem Yisborach*. Then a person can feel the “G-dly spark” within him.

The purpose is not simply to simply say these words. “In each person, there is a G-dly spark.” That, anyone can say. They are simply words, and most people can understand this concept intellectually,

to a certain degree. But a person has not reached the purpose just by saying these words or defining it, and even if he understands it. Rather, it is a definition that must be lived, which provides a person with actual energy. The “G-dly spark” must be an active source of energy to a person.

When one bonds with the Creator through the levels of *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, and *Neshamah* in the soul (as explained earlier), and then traversing the first two paths in the “*Chayah*” level of the soul which we explained, he has reached the level of *bittul* (self-nullification) to the Creator. From being nullified to the Creator, he can then feel that his inner energy source comes from the Creator. This reflects the verse, “*For with You is the Source of life, in Your light appears light.*” [9] [9] When one is nullified to the Creator, he can feel how the source of all his life comes from the Creator. After a person is found at this point, and he has solidly acquired it, **he will then be in a state where his mind never stops being cognizant of the Creator.**

Let us explain. At the beginning of one’s *avodah*, a person seeks to remember that there is a Creator. At this stage, he should seek various external reminders that can aid him in this: To hang up signs that state “*Shivisi Hashem L’negdi Tamid*” (“I place Hashem opposite me, always”), and other ideas which exist. But these are all tools which bring him closer to the more inner point.

The inner point itself, once it is reached, can be compared to a person with a stuffed nose, who is trying to breathe. He realizes that he must breathe in order to stay alive, because if he doesn’t breathe, he will die. It is the same once a person recognizes that his source of life is the Creator. This is not another fact of knowledge to him, but a perception in his soul, in which he feels that he receives his very vitality from the Creator. Just as a person knows how to keep his body alive, by making sure to always eat and drink when he needs, so can a person come to feel that the source of his life is the Creator, and that if he stops thinking about the Creator, he loses his energy source. (In deeper terms, this is really an inner awareness in his soul, of the Creator.) He will feel that if he loses awareness of the Creator as his Source of energy, it is a death for the soul.

Of course, he knows that he can remain alive even when he loses this awareness – but only on a physical level. His body can continue to live even if he forgets the Source of his energy. But deep down, in his soul, he feels like a person thrown from a bus onto the street outside. When he feels helpless, he can try to grab onto the ‘rope’ that attaches him to his Source which is Above – to his bond with the Infinite.

As long as a person has not yet reached the point where he feels that his source of vitality is coming from the Creator, it is impossible for him not to lose awareness of the Creator. After all, we are not made of material which is unceasingly cognizant of the Creator. But once a person reaches the point where he feels that the source of his vitality is the Creator, he won’t be able to forget it. It is like a person who is suddenly prevented from breathing normally, who will naturally and quickly remove the impediment to his breathing. Such action is natural, and it does not require any deep thinking, for even a little child would do the same thing.

Once a person reaches this inner understanding, that the source of his vitality is from the Creator – and when this is not just knowledge to him, but something he actually feels (and even more so, when he perceives it in his soul), which he feels no less than his own need for breathing – from that point onward, a person will not be able to lose his mind’s cognizance of the Creator.

The *sefarim hakedoshim* state that before a person reaches this level - of never losing cognizance in his mind of the Creator – a person must first attempt to “capture” the presence of Hashem, so to speak. At that initial stage, a person cannot possibly be on the level where he never forgets about Hashem. Only when a person feels that his vitality comes from the Creator, does he reach a point where his mind never forgets about Hashem.

## 5. Bonding With Hashem through the “Yechidah”

Finally, with the help of Hashem, let us complete the picture here by explaining how we bond with Hashem through the “*Yechidah*” part of the soul that is in us.

**We bond with our Creator through our “*Yechidah*” level of the soul when we firmly believe that “Hashem, Yisrael and the Torah are *chad* (one).”** These three are all interconnected.

When we discussed how we bond with the Creator through the “*Chayah*” level of the soul, it was explained that this is when a person nullifies his existence to the Creator; alternatively, it is when one realizes that the Creator sustains him. At this level, a person still has the understanding that there are “two” planes to exist on – the plane of the self, and the state of being nullified with the Creator – and it is just that he nullifies his self to the Infinite. But in the “*Yechidah*” level of the soul, there is a state of total *emunah* (faith) in Hashem. It is the soul’s inner perception that the Hashem and Yisrael are one: **where a person feels *chad* (one) with his Creator.**

Many have grappled with this concept. How can a created being, a human, become “one” with the Creator? Understandably, the attempt to understand how this can make sense logically is already out of the question. Why? Human logic comes from *chochmah* (wisdom), which exists in the *Chayah* level of the soul. The *Yechidah* point in the soul, though, is above the *Chayah* level of the soul. Therefore, it is beyond all intellectual wisdom, and its perception cannot be contained or absorbed through any intellectual means.

The *Yechidah* belongs in the category of “The hidden intellect that is above all idea.”<sup>[10]</sup><sup>[10]</sup> It is above all logical reasoning and understanding. In the *Yechidah* level of the soul, there is no intellect. It simply does not pass through the understanding of the human mind. Just as the air cannot be tangibly grasped, so is the perception of the *Yechidah* out of the range of the intellect. It is said, “*All of them, You made with wisdom*”, and this is a perception which speaks to the *Chayah* level of the soul and below. It does not apply to the *Yechidah* level of the soul.

In the *Yechidah* level of the soul, there is only *emunah*. The definition of *emunah*, in clear terms, is that it is a power of the soul which does not pass through the intellect. Just as there is an existing force called weight, an existing force called movement, and an existing force called wisdom, so is there an existing force called *emunah*. It is essentially a path in the soul that does not pass through the radar of the intellect. It is a power of the soul just like any of your other senses, and it is fundamental.

Bonding with Hashem through the *Yechidah* level in the soul is when one has the *emunah* that a person and *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* are one. Anyone can **say** these words, but when it comes to **understanding** this concept, that is much more difficult. A higher level is to **feel** it, and anyone who has traversed all the steps of this *sefer* will have sharpened their sense for *emunah*, to the point that they can feel it palpably. (Without feeling it, it just remains on a level of knowledge to a person.) But when one strengthens his bond with his Creator to the point that he has become totally nullified to the Creator – which is the “*Chayah*” level of the soul – he can then reach a level of **firmly believing that he and the Creator are, so to speak, one.** That is how he perceives reality.

As soon as people hear about this concept, they are usually filled with questions: “If I can be “one” with the Creator, does that mean I don’t have to serve Him (*chas v’shalom*)? If I am “one” with the Creator, does that mean that I am the Creator?” We all know of such questions that people like to ask. But the answer to all of these kinds of questions is always one answer alone. A person who is truly on the level of oneness with the Creator does not have such questions, and if a person is asking questions on this concept, he is obviously not *there*.

When one is “there”, his brain is rewired and it is not busy with such intellectual questions. He has entered a whole new mode of life. A person might wonder, “If you can’t answer my questions about this, it must not make any sense.” But again, all of the questions about this topic are coming from a superficial kind of understanding, the understanding that our human intellect has to offer. The inner dimension of reality doesn’t follow all the rules of logic.

So although there are no answers to the questions we may have on this matter, that doesn’t tell us anything, because you cannot try to understand a plane above the intellect through your intellect. One who is there at the inner dimension has different thinking patterns. One who is not there can only perceive things with his logic, so he won’t be able to understand the inner dimension.

When a person has *emunah* that he and Hashem are one, that *emunah* itself is what defines the “*Yechidah*” level of the soul.

### ***The Danger of Trying to Enter this Level***

Here we will state the following crucial point.

Just because one is advancing in this *avodah* does not mean that he can allow himself to slacken off from doing any *mitzvos*. If one is becoming weaker in his *mitzvah* observance due to the ‘spiritual high’ feeling he is getting out of this (and therefore he thinks he doesn’t have to do the *mitzvos*), he should know that he is deluding himself, and he is not at the inner dimension yet.

Of this, Chazal say, “If your heart runs, return to your place.”<sup>[1]</sup> [11] Such a person is using the area above the intellect in order to nullify all human intellect, and in doing so he will uproot the entire Torah. One who is truly at the inner dimension does not damage his intellect in the process; if he does, he is obviously not at the inner dimension. One who is not there, and he tries to enter there, will only damage his intellect in the process; and he will come to destroy all the holy rules of the Torah with it [*chas v’shalom*]. Once a person breaks the rules of the Torah, he breaks everything.

This was the terrible mistake that many people made throughout all of the generations: people who tried to enter into the higher dimensions when they weren’t careful to keep the rules of the Torah, and they only damaged themselves in the process.

Therefore, we are warning here that **this *avodah* is only for those who have already traversed all of the previous steps in this *sefer***. Such a person has already built the previous rungs of the ladder in order to reach his *Yechidah*. If one isn’t built properly, he will fall from his ladder and end up in the lowest depths, *chas v’shalom*.

So if a person feels that this *avodah* is doing any detriment to him, it is a sign that he is not there, and if that is the case, he must remain below this level, and instead he should focus on developing his lower levels of the soul.

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[\[1\]](#) [12] *Beraishis* 1:26

[\[2\]](#) [13] *Yeshayahu* 49:3



[3] [14] Mishlei 27:19

[4] [15] Koheles 7:21

[5] [16] Chullin 5b

[6] [17] Sma: Choshen Mishpat 3:13

[7] [18] Eruvin 13b

[8] [19] Editor's Note: The way of "temimus" is not discussed in this chapter. For more on temimus, see Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh Vol. IV, Chapters 09-011 and Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh Vol. IX.

[9] [20] Tehillim 34:10

[10] [21] From "Keil Mistater", one of the Zemiros of Shabbos Shalosh Seudos

[11] [22] Sefer Yetzirah 1:8

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### ספר דע את נשמתך - פרק טו - מחשבת האדם בבורא

#### **The Third Stage of Hisbodedus (In Thought): Thinking About The Creator**

The previous chapter explained the second stage of *hisbodedus*: how man bonds with the Creator. In order to complete the picture, we will progress to discuss the third stage: the thought about the very reality of the Creator.

To think about the Creator is to think one thought alone: the simple fact that Hashem exists. If one thinks about anything else in this stage, he is still at the lower stage, which is to bond oneself personally to the Creator, or the stage below that. In the third stage, which is higher, one is not even thinking of his personal bond with the Creator. He is thinking solely about Hashem's existence.

So the final step is for one to simply focus on his thoughts on the Creator's existence alone. Of course, if this just feels like a mere thought to the person, then it is a superficial awareness. But when it is experienced on the real level, it is a soul experience, and it is then that one truly experiences the level of thinking about the Creator. It is a thought that has no agendas to anything else. It is to think about Hashem's existence alone, the fact that Hashem is existing.

#### **The Innermost Point: Sensing Hashem In The Heart**

These words alone do not describe what the experience feels like; the words here do not say much,

because it is something that your soul has to actually experience. We are describing it as “thinking of the existence of the Creator” but that description really does not do any justice to this experience.

To try to describe this in more inner language, it is to **grasp the existence of the Creator in your heart**. At this stage, a person is not thinking of himself at all, and he’s not even thinking about his personal bond with the Creator. He is not even thinking that “I am becoming one with the Creator.” He is simply letting his thoughts stay focused on the fact that the Creator exists.

The essence of our existence, which is called our *havayah*, is covered by three garments: action, speech, and thought. The purpose of all our *avodah* is to reach the point higher than all of these garments: our essence (*havayah*).

Thinking about the reality of the Creator, His existence, is a far deeper kind of thought than any other kind of thought. Our regular thoughts are complicating and multi-layered, but the thought of the Creator’s existence is not a complicating thought at all – it is a “simple” thought with nothing else involved in it.

We define it as a ‘thought’, though, so as to enable us to enter this deep and inner arena. It is an inner sense. Just as you can feel yourself as existing, so can you feel the endlessness of Hashem, so to speak. So it is only categorized as ‘thought’ as a borrowed terminology, for lack thereof. The title ‘thought’ therefore does not mean that it is a mere thought, rather, that it is trying to convey to us an understanding that the soul grasps and experiences.

Thinking about the existence of the Creator is only the garment that covers over this inner grasp. The actual grasp itself is **when a person feels the *havayah* of the Creator as his own *havayah***.

We will repeat and emphasize that this is not an emotion. It is a sense - an inner kind of sense - in which one feels his existence as being that of the existence of the Creator. It is felt no less than how one can feel his own self existing. It is not any of the seven emotions that one has in his bond towards the Creator; it is to grasp reality itself.

A person has to first traverse the first three levels of thought (thoughts of the soul<sup>[1]</sup>, then to think of his bond with the Creator, and then to think of Hashem’s existence), though, until he can get to this inner kind of ‘thought’. When he gets to it, first he must simply think of the fact that Hashem exists, but this is not yet the essence of the experience. It is only the garment that covers over the actual experience. The inner point of the experience is when a person senses his own existence as being that of the Creator.

This concept is actually the inner point of all of Creation. It is the purpose which all creations are meant to reach. All of the steps of *avodah* that were explained in this *sefer*, as well as in all other *sefarim*, and all of the 6,000 years of this era (and even beyond that), are all but a path to get to this inner point. The inner point is: **to sense the actual endlessness of the Creator**. It is first reached through accessing the perspective of the *Yechidah* in our soul, and from there it can spread to the rest of the soul’s lower layers.

There is not much more we can say about this and explain, because most people do not recognize this concept at all. When people do have a feeling of the Creator, it is usually felt on a personal level, such as through prayer, when a person feels like he is missing a lot of things and he realizes that only Hashem can fill his void; or when he feels love or awe of the Creator, and other deep emotions towards the Creator. A person can also reach deep perceptions in his thoughts of the greatness of the Creator and of His Divine Providence, and the various other methods of reflection that are brought in the *sefarim*.

But beyond all of these perceptions is to sense the actual endlessness of the Creator, and it is a concept which is very hidden from most people. It is a concept that is barely mentioned in the *sefarim hakedoshim*, and it is a matter that is not explained clearly, so it is something of a mysterious matter. It is therefore not of that much place in a person's life. In fact, this deep concept is not even be termed as an 'avodah' that one "works" on. Instead, it is a "hasagah" - a perception; or a "tefishah", a grasp of reality.

We will not summarize the third level of *hisbodedus* when it comes to our thoughts, which is to think of the endlessness of the Creator. It is the path, and the precedent, which one needs in order to reach his essence - in which one feels his existence as being that of the Creator's.

### **A Clarification**

We must be clear about the following important point, being that the words here are about a subtle matter.

When we describe 'thinking about the reality of the Creator', this does not mean, *chas v'shalom*, for one to ponder the ways of Hashem and what defines the Creator. This is because the Sages state, "No thought can comprehend Him at all."

Many failed with regards to this point and became mistaken, and many even became heretical, once they began to think about giving definitions of the Creator. If someone thinks he understands the Creator in essence, he is not there at all. One who is *there*, however, is one who feels the reality of the Creator in his heart, which is where He can be found; and he feels that he is integrated with that great reality. He doesn't think about anything else. He is only grasping reality - reality as it is.

Thus, our goal can be defined as recognition of the existence of the Creator, so to speak, from within ourselves. The purpose of Creation is that we all be brought to the **absolute** recognition of the reality of the Creator. This is the inner point of which it is said, "The mouth cannot speak of it, and the thoughts cannot ponder it." It is not something that can be spoken about by words, and it is not something that can be analyzed in our thoughts. It is only the grasp of reality itself.

"As for the rest of it - go and finish it."<sup>[2]</sup>

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**[1]** This first stage included the five kinds of thinking of the soul: Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah, Chayah, and Yechidah. It was also preceded by a preliminary stage, in which one simply becomes aware of his power of thought to begin with.

**[2]** Shabbos 31a

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**Source:** <http://bilvavi.net/english/torah-way-enlightenment-010-bonding-meditating-creator-through-thought>

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