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We have so far described the way to achieve the first stage - the maintaining in one's mind and heart the basic awareness that there is a Creator. [But before we continue, it is important that you remember an essential rule for success, both in physical and in spiritual matters.

Any achievement begins with an effort "from below," (issarusa dilesato) which stimulates a corresponding blessing "from Above", (issarusa dile'eila) which enables one to attain one's goal. A person on his own can do nothing; he is feeble. Nevertheless, the rule is "If I do not do for myself, who will do for me, but if I am on my own, what am I?" (Avos 1:14). If one focuses on "if I am on my own, what am I?" he will think that there is no point in trying. But the truth is that "If I do not do for myself, who will do for me?" In other words, a person must realize that he cannot accomplish anything on his own, yet he must nevertheless do his part. If one truly senses this, he will make the effort, with the knowledge that on his own he cannot achieve anything, - because man's ability is limited. One can start various projects and never finish a thing. "A task is accredited only to he who completes it," and in fact, it is only Hashem who brings each thing to completion. Hence, nothing can really be attributed to man's efforts. One can only put forth the effort "from below."

"Man prepares his heart, but the expression of the tongue is from Hashem" (Mishlei 16:1). A person tries to prepare his heart, but the resulting words are only from Hashem. A person can never feel that he has started and completed a task by himself. Since this is the real truth, one must realize that all one does is to put forth the effort "from below," but one must anticipate help from Hashem. Each time again, he will call upon the Master of the World and say to Him, "I have done my part. Now, Hashem help me. Otherwise, I will not be able to attain what I seek."

No matter what area a person is working on, he must daven. If he is working on being aware of Hashem, he must recall that on his own, a person is forgetful. If he tries to remember by himself, and does not ask Hashem for help, he will never achieve true awareness. Hence, with regard to our topic, a person must make maximum effort to constantly remember that there is a Master of the World, but he must also daven to Him to truly implant this knowledge in his heart.]

We will now endeavor to continue on to the next stage. But this is provided that the first stage is solidly acquired.

As stated above, the knowledge that there is a Creator is not ordinary knowledge that is intellectually known and sometimes surfaces in the consciousness, rather, it is an awareness experienced in the

soul. Just as a person is basically aware of the time of day and does not err by five hours in either direction, so too, must the knowledge of the Creator be alive in the person, encompassing his whole life. If a person hasn't yet reached this level, it is not appropriate for him to advance to the next stage. The path of avodah must be well-founded, so that one advances to a later stage only after the prior stage is inwardly acquired.

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After one has indeed merited that the awareness of the Creator is part of his being, he is ready to progress to the next stage.

The next stage is the knowledge of the relationship of the Creator and His creations - the recognition in one's soul that he and the entire world are creations of Hashem. Until this point, we have discussed the knowledge that there is a Creator. Now, we will continue and work with the fact that Hashem created all created things. Certainly, this is obvious to any believer, but our task is not to merely know this, our main avodah is to actually feel it. The soul must feel that it and the entire world are creations of Hashem.

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Pharaoh said, "The Nile is mine, and I made myself" (Yechezkel 29:3). In other words, although he clearly believed in Hashem's existence, as he said, "Who is Hashem that I should listen to Him?" (Shemos 5:2). He believed that he, not Hashem, created himself.

We see here an example of someone who entertained the absurd idea that he created himself. Now, one might think that this was just some fool who lived on the earth once upon a time and maintained this absurd notion that he, not Hashem, created himself, chas veshalom, and that has nothing to do with us. He disappeared along with his mistake, so why should we bother with this ancient error?

Yet, the truth is not so. We have a tradition from our teachers that the whole Torah, with all its details and fine points, relates to every single person. Each person has within himself an aspect of Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe, and the other great people of the Torah. Similarly, each person has within him the opposite kinds of forces - Lavan, Pharaoh, Bilaam, and the other evil people mentioned in the Torah.

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You must understand that this does not only mean that there are hints and lessons we can learn from our great leaders and the evil people of old. Rather, the idea is that "Avraham" is a force of purity that exists in each soul, and so it is with all the holy Avos and the rest of the seven "shepherds" of our people (Yosef, Moshe, Aharon, and Dovid). Conversely, the evil characters are forces of impurity present in each soul, as the Rambam writes (in a letter to his son), "Pharaoh is truly the yetzer hara." This teaches that every soul has a force of evil called Pharaoh, and the claims and acts of Pharaoh seen in the Torah and Midrashim actually exist in the soul. There is a Pharaoh in the world, and a Pharaoh in the soul. The Pharaoh in the world once existed, but is no more, and we are presently not very much involved with him. But the Pharaoh of the soul exists now in literally each and every Jewish soul, and we are very much involved with him. We must recognize him well and know how to wage war against his false views and the foolish thoughts he sends our way.

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We can now well understand that each of us has deep in his soul a force that declares the equivalent

of, "The Nile is mine and I made myself." We must know how to do away with this notion. We must understand that the feeling that we and the entire world are created beings is not at all simple to attain. There is an internal force in a person called "Pharaoh," which prevents a person from feeling this. If we skip this stage, the soul will retain a force that contradicts simple emunah. Therefore, we must work hard to instill inside ourselves the simple fact that we are created by Hashem and to sense this at all times.

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We must contemplate and understand that a person is called a microcosm, and whatever exists in the world exists in man. Any force of evil we see in creation must be present in each person's soul. However, not all forces are equal. Some forces are quite apparent in the soul, while others are more hidden, but each force in the world has a corresponding presence in the human soul.

Harav Yerucham Levovitz zt"l of Mir once expressed the idea that there exists in a man's soul an entire zoo, containing a lion, a bull, a snake, and so on. We will not go now into all of the soul's forces, only the force mentioned above - the force in each person's soul that feels that he created himself. This is not so strange. We have seen in recent generations, up to our time, that people think they came into being naturally. The difference between that view and the view that one created oneself is not all that great. They are both extremely absurd. Yet, both of these beliefs are present in the soul. Each soul contains a feeling that it created itself and that it came into this world through a natural, unintelligent process.

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Although each soul possesses all of these forces, they are not necessarily evident in every believing person. Therefore, a person may come to think that there is no need for him to work on these points. He will skip over this aspect of avodah and want to immediately begin working on loftier points. But this attitude and form of avodah is fundamentally flawed. Although these negative thoughts may not be apparent in the soul of any believing person, deep down, they certainly exist. If one neglects these forces and skips over them, he leaves within himself a vacuum and an empty rung on the ladder. Every vacuum and empty rung causes a lack of stability and permanence in one's avodah. Therefore, the proper way is to work with each stage, even those that seem simple and unnecessary, because in fact, there is no stage that can be ignored.

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What lies at the root of our failures, such as the lack of real emunah in Divine Providence? It is not only a problem with emunah in Divine Providence, but a more basic problem. It comes from a lack of real palpable emunah in the existence of the Creator and the awareness that He created the individual. Certainly, the person knows all this in his mind. But since deep in the soul, there is a force that feels otherwise, the emunah is not sufficiently clear. Since the fundamental, simple emunah in the existence of the Creator is lacking, there will be a lack in the results of that emunah. Therefore, a person must instill in himself the simple emunah that there is a Creator, and the fact that Hashem created him.

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One's age is irrelevant to this. If one has worked on the simple points, he may progress further, but if not, he must go back to the beginning and lay the foundation on solid and true basics. Every person who works in this way and has properly established simple emunah in his heart in an alive, palpable and clear way, will immediately feel that many of the difficulties he had previously encountered have

now disappeared - or at least, have been attenuated.

As long as the light of simple emunah does not properly illuminate the soul, the soul is immersed in deep darkness. There is no light clearer and brighter than simple emunah, and when a person is lacking this light, he is missing the primary pure light, and his soul feels sadness and a lack of clarity. Even if the soul is not aware of the problem and does not understand the cause of its darkness, this fact is nonetheless true. A soul without pure and clear emunah is lacking the ultimate light, the light needed to generate all the other illumination inherent in Torah and mitzvos.

We will try to clarify the matter to help anyone who seeks simple and pure emunah in Hashem. In this way, he will attain true happiness and a solid foundation for the entire structure of true avodah.

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"In the beginning, Hashem created the heaven and the earth" (Bereishis 1:1). When the Chofetz Chaim zt"l would sense a weakening of his own ruchniyus, he would review the account of the days of creation, learning the order and details of creation in a very simple way.

One might wonder: Didn't the Chofetz Chaim know Who created the world? Did he have some doubt about it, chas veshalom? Of course not! But the explanation of this conduct is that even when a person senses some weakness and laxity in his Torah study or another matter, it is likely that the weakness does not stem from that area itself. Rather, the problem stems from the ultimate foundation of everything: emunah. That does not mean that the individual is weak in the intellectual aspect of his emunah, and that chas veshalom, he has some doubt in his mind. Rather, the point is that the light of emunah in his heart has become somewhat weakened, and it is no longer actively alive in his heart. When there is a weakness in the ultimate source, which is emunah, one senses a weakness in Torah study and other details of one's avodah.

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Let us ponder this point and consider it. The Chofetz Chaim was truly one of the greatest of his generation. Yet, he himself did this to awaken in himself the simplest basics. He did not work with his intellect and deep ideas, but rather with the simplest points of emunah. He achieved all this through a simple review of the pesukim about the works of creation, studying them with a deep simplicity.

You should know, dear brethren, that this is a very great secret. The soul, deep down, is very simple and uncomplicated. Therefore, when a person wishes to awaken in himself the inner aspect of the soul in all its true purity, he must develop the simplest concepts and strengthen the roots of simple emunah. The first area to strengthen is the awareness that there is a Creator, as we mentioned above. The next area is the relationship of Creator and that which He created, until these concepts are alive and clearly present in the soul in a palpable way, and the soul feels them and is in contact with them literally at all times.

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We must not make light of this recommendation to adopt the way of the holy sage, the Chafetz Chaim zt"l. We must toil to implant within ourselves the most basic principle of all: simple and pure emunah. Generally speaking, when we discover problems in our spiritual lives, we notice only the external aspects, which are the branches, but the true root of them all is deep down in the soul.

The root of the Jewish soul derives from Avraham Avinu, whose very first efforts were in the area of emunah, as it says, "At the age of three, Avraham recognized his Creator" (Nedarim 32a). Certainly,

the way Avraham attained emunah was different than the way we should attain it, for we already possess a tradition from our ancestors, and we have the Torah, which was not the case with Avraham Avinu. But what we share in common is the need to plant within ourselves the main foundation, which is true emunah in the living God.

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For example, many people fail in the areas of speaking lashon hara, looking where one shouldn't, and the like, and they attempt to fix these problems in many ways. You should know that the root of all these problems is the lack of palpable emunah. Therefore, the primary way to start correcting all these issues is not only with practical resolutions as to how to act in various situations, but primarily, to perfect one's emunah, so that it becomes pure and clear. Then, the rest will be much easier, and he will be able to deal with the details of the various sins, which are only the product of a lack of clarity in emunah.

As one's emunah becomes more alive and clear, he will find the strength and courage to properly toil in Torah and keep all the details of the mitzvos correctly. The opposite is also true: the more the emunah is missing from one's soul, chas veshalom, the more difficult it will be to toil in the holy Torah and observe the details of the laws with a true sense of fear of Hashem. May Hashem enable every one of us to truly reach this level.

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We will attempt to demonstrate how to learn the story of creation, in a way that will instill and awaken in the soul pure and simple emunah. We wish to again emphasize that we are not looking for new ideas, only to understand the pesukim with absolute simplicity.

It says (Shemos 13:14), "And when your son will ask you..." From here, Chazal derive the obligation of recounting the story of the exodus to one's son on the night of Pesach. In each person, as well, there is an inner "father" and "son." The intellect is the "father," and the heart is the "son." ("The heart understands"- meivin - is related to the word ben [son], but here is not the place to elaborate on this.) The intellect is the "father," and it must teach its "son," the heart. This teaching can be accomplished through thought, by thinking of something until it is firmly established in the heart, or through speech, by articulating words of emunah until they are fixed in the heart, as will be explained later at length.

We should understand that this is not an obligation only on the night of Pesach, but rather for all year around. One must instill in the "son" within himself - his heart - the simple foundations of emunah. "Even if we are all wise, all insightful, all know the Torah, it is incumbent upon us to recount the exodus from Egypt." This is because chochmah, binah, and da'as are one matter, and simple emunah in the heart is another matter entirely. One might possess chochmah, binah, and da'as, and yet, be lacking simplicity. That is why, on the night of Pesach, each person must recount (lesaper - to enlighten, based on the word sapir [sapphire]) and light up his soul with the fundamentals of simple emunah learned from the exile and redemption from Egypt.

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We learn a great and important principle from the way the story must be told on the night of Pesach. The gemara in Pesachim (116a) tells us that it must be related in a manner of question and answer. Chazal have revealed to us a great principle about human nature. When a person wants to instill within himself a very fundamental concept, he should do so by clarifying it through the method of question and answer.

Now, when one asks this type of question, he is already well aware of the answer, so what is the point of asking the question? However, Chazal have revealed to us here that this is the way to impart understanding to the heart. (In a deeper sense, the question gives credence to the stubbornness in man's heart, while the answer reveals the point of truth in the heart.) Therefore, when a person wants to speak to his heart and instill a concept in a structured and firm way, he must do so in the manner of question and answer. This is an extremely important principle that sheds valuable light on the proper manner of working with one's soul.

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We will now employ this principle to study the account of creation.

"In the beginning, Hashem created the heavens and the earth." "In the beginning," refers to the beginning of creation. When it says, "created," what does that tell us? That there is a Creator and a creation. Without this passuk, one might have thought that chas veshalom, the world came into being through a natural process. But the Torah clarifies for us that there is one truth, which is that there is a Creator and a creation, and the existence of the world didn't just happen on its own. Who is the Creator? "Elokim." The Torah tells us Who created the world - Hashem. A person should think about this and talk to Hashem and say, "The Torah says that You created the world! You, and none other created every single thing." Every believing Jew knows all of this, but we must firmly infuse ourselves with the concept that only Hashem, and nothing else, created the world. One who has not toiled greatly to infuse this pure emunah into his heart is almost definitely lacking in his emunah.

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In this manner, a person must speak to Hashem in very plain words, and say to Him, "If not for this pasuk, there would, chas veshalom, be a possibility of thinking that there was no Creator. But the pasuk clarifies for us that You created the world. A person should repeat this tens and hundreds of times, and even more, in order to implant and illuminate this simple emunah in his heart.

He should say, "What did You create? The heavens and the earth." He should lift his hand, point to the sky, and ask, "Who created these heavens?" He should then answer his question, saying to Hashem, "You created the heavens! You, and no one else, chas veshalom."

Likewise, he should point to the ground, as bnei Yisrael pointed when they said, "This is my God and I shall make a home for Him" (Shemos 15:2), and say to Hashem, "You created the earth. Was the earth made by itself? Absolutely not! Rather, You created it."

In this way, a person should continue with those pesukim. For example, it says, "and there was light." A person should contemplate the light, and ask, "Who created the light?" He should respond as above, "You, Hashem, created the light." In this way, he should go through each detail, through all the works of creation, and consider all the individual creations he sees. Regarding each one, he should ask, "Who created this?" He should respond to himself (in the form of communication with Hashem, as will be described later), "You, Hashem, created this object." In this way, a person must strive for weeks or months, for about half an hour each day, each person according to his ability, and instill in himself the simple emunah that all was created by Hashem. (Translator's note: Although this work often mentions the need for about an hour devoted daily to these efforts, the author subsequently explained in person that those who find it difficult to devote a full hour can start with even a few minutes, and gradually add to the time, until it reaches an hour. The author also mentioned that ideally, this contemplation should take place at night.)

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There is a basic difference between man and the other creations. When a person infuses himself with the knowledge that the heavens, earth, animals, birds, etc. were created by Hashem, he is dealing only with things that are external to him. After that, his avodah is to instill in himself the awareness that he himself is a creation of Hashem, until he feels it properly. One must consider his hands, his feet and all the parts of his body - as the Zohar says that a person must make Hashem the king over all his limbs - and clarify to himself that each limb is a creation of Hashem, until he senses this as an obvious fact. He must continue infusing it in his heart until he merits that feeling.

[A person cannot instill this knowledge within himself unless he devotes a good amount of time to it. One must divide his time, devoting most of the day to Torah study, and spending part of the day working on his emunah. If there is Torah with no emunah, then chas veshalom one is not attached to the Creator. If one does not set aside time each day for contemplating and instilling these concepts, he will forget them, and they will never enter his soul.]

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A person's avodah in all areas in general and in this area specifically, should be divided into two parts: 1) He must fix a set time every day to contemplate these matters. 2) Throughout the day, he must remember the point of his avodah he is trying to acquire, about every half hour. (Except for while he is learning Torah, when he must be immersed in his learning. Much has been written on this issue, and an intelligent reader understands this.)

With regard to the area of avodah we are now discussing, a person must remember about every half hour that everything is created by Hashem. He should make himself reminders to remind him of his area of avodah. He should contemplate a particular object that is before him, and ask himself in the question and answer method described above, "Who created this object?" He will answer, "You, Hashem, created it." In this way, the matter will become fixed in his heart, both through the time devoted for this each day and through the remembrance at brief intervals throughout the entire day.

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Using this method of avodah, we can advance from one stage to the next. However, you must remember that you cannot advance too quickly. As long as a prior stage is not well-established in the heart, you cannot advance, but rather, you must continue to properly internalize the prior stage. One must work on the topic we have mentioned until the clear awareness that everything is created by Hashem is properly fixed deeply in his heart. At that point, it will be as if the object is crying out and proclaiming, "I am a creation of Hashem!" May Hashem help us all to merit that this emunah shall take root deeply in our hearts and truly sustain us, and may we thereby merit closeness and attachment to the Creator all our lives.

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We will now summarize what has been said so far. The purpose of every Jew is to be close and attached to the Creator. We discussed at length the meaning of deveikus - an inner bond with the Creator. One's entire life must revolve around one point. All one's actions must be focused on the One Who created him, the One Who sustains him and guides him each moment, the One before Whom he will give an account of all his deeds, and from Whom he will eventually receive his reward - which is itself the experience of deveikus to the Creator of the world.

[The sefarim hakedoshim write that if a person does mitzvos for the sake of pride and honor, then

when he requests his reward after leaving this world, he will be told, " 'The one you worked for will give your reward'" (Avos 2:17). Go and seek your reward from that which motivated you. Go to the attributes of pride and honor to receive your reward. Only if a person serves the Creator can he expect reward from Him.]

Essentially, we have presented a way to bring a person to a state in which he and the Creator will be very strongly bound together and he can live with Hashem every moment and in every situation. We wish to show how a person can be bound with Hashem in every time, place and situation. We are striving to achieve one thing - to connect every person to Hashem in all aspects of olam, shana and nefesh, space, time and soul, until, as the passuk says,, "they will be as one" (Yechezkel 36:17).

The first point we mentioned is that a person must remember the existence of Hashem. After that, we taught that a person must always remember that each thing is a creation of Hashem. Not only did He create it in the past, but He is creating it in the present, as it says (in the morning prayers), "He makes light and creates darkness," in the present tense. The sefarim hakedoshim write that each moment, Hashem makes His creations anew. The relationship of Creator and created, then, is not only a matter of the past, but a constant process. A person's avodah is to sense that each thing is a creation of Hashem and to sense the relationship of that which is created to the Creator.

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