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Will, Thought, and Speech

At the end of the previous chapter, it was explained that the *avodah* of *tefillah* begins with the *ratzon* (the underlying will). This itself is a great *avodah*. At first, one must discover the source of the *ratzon*, and after that is clarified, he engages in the long process of strengthening the *ratzon* (there is a "will deeper than a will"). The first stage is the will to serve the Creator in general and with all the details.

The second stage is thought, contemplation, and delving, in order to understand things. This is the order: *chochmah* (knowledge), *binah* (understanding), and *da'as* (connection). With *chochmah*, one knows the information. Then, one contemplates it (*binah*). After that, comes the stage in which the idea is fixed deep inside a person (*da'as*).

After this stage of thought, one goes to the world of speech. He first speaks to himself, and then to Hashem. Even in the speech with Hashem, there are two stages: speech, and then prayer. First, one speaks to Hashem, and says to Him, "I want such and such, I thought in such a way, and I spoke to myself in such a way." He tells Hashem about everything that happened to him, and enters the process of conversation with Him. After he concludes relating everything, he presents this all as a *tefillah*. In other words, one must involve Hashem in all that has happened until that point in one's life.

If a person comes before Hashem with only his conclusions, and presents them before Him without laying out all the prior doubts and difficulties, there is no real partnership!

To what can this be compared? A husband and wife are trying to decide if they should buy a new cabinet or not. Two days later, the husband approaches his wife and tells her, "I decided to buy a cabinet," without telling her why. It is difficult to live with someone who does not include the spouse in his decisions.

The only way to truly include Hashem in one's life is if even the subtle feelings of the heart, the thoughts that never led to fruition, the failures and the tests, are all shared with Hashem, and one discusses all of them with Him: "I tried this and that, and I thought this and that, but then it became clear to me that it was a mistake. I thought this and that, and I found a support for it." These are the kind of things one should say. Speech can include everything.

It is known from the *sefarim hakedoshim* that speech is the vessel for everything, and the vessel must include everything that preceded it. If a light does not enter a vessel, it disappears and returns to its source, and naturally has no permanence in the soul.

"The Tzaddik Falls Seven Times and Rises"

"And this obstacle is under your hands" (*Yeshayahu* 3:6) - "One does not find the truth of the Torah's words until he stumbles in them" (*Gittin* 43a). The depth of the matter is that the obstacle is inseparable from the *avodah*.

It says in the *pasuk* (*Mishlei* 24:16), "A *tzaddik* falls seven times and rises." You must know that not only does one fall in the world of action, but even in thought, there is this process. In every world, these seven levels exist, and one must try and fall, try and fall, etc. It's not as it seems on the surface - that only in action is there the principle of "the *tzaddik* falls seven times and rises." If this exists in action, then it certainly exists in *ratzon* (will), thought, and speech.

After the stage of "A *tzaddik* falls seven times and rises," when one reaches eight (not necessarily the eighth time literally, but the eighth level, which transcends nature), all the merits of the tests come together, as *Chazal* said (*Berachos* 34b), "Where penitents stand, perfect *tzaddikim* cannot stand." Every person is essentially a penitent, due to the earlier sins. And when he "rises," he repents for the seven falls that came before. His repentance then receives the light of the seven falls.

If a person has reached the stage of being a *tzaddik* but does not include his earlier seven falls, he loses the high level of "Where penitents stand, perfect *tzaddikim* cannot stand." The light that one receives from the tests and the falls, whether they be in one's will, thought, speech, or action, is a great light that is essential if one is to acquire anything!

Relevant to this, there is a wondrous and profound story. As is known, the Gr"a carried out a long period of exile. Some time after he returned, Rav Chaim of Volozhin visited him. He wanted to know if he should accept exile upon himself, as well. (It is known from the *sefarim hakedoshim* that a Jew must participate in the pain of the *Shechinah* [Divine Presence] that is in exile. "When they went into exile, the *Shechinah* went with them." As long as we do not have the *Bais Hamikdash* [the Temple], the holy *Shechinah* is in exile. Hence, Rav Chaim of Volozhin wanted to emulate his *rebbe*, and accept a period of exile, as many *tzaddikim* did.)

The Gr"a said to him, "I did so, and I regretted it." We will not enter here into the reason for his regret. Certainly, the exile itself was good, but there were other side issues, such as the disturbance of his learning.

Rav Chaim of Volozhin gave a very profound response: "I, too, will do it and regret it!"

If one hears this without thinking about it, he will not understand: if the Gr"a tried and saw that exile is not helpful, and regretted it, why wouldn't his student learn from his *rebbe's* error?

But the truth of the matter is that Rav Chaim's words contain a deep and important principle: Certainly, the Gr"a did it, and regretted it, but from the very act and the regret, he attained something. Rav Chaim wanted to go through that process of "a *tzaddik* falls seven times," in order to later reach the level of "and rise."

The attainments that one gains from an area in which he tries and does not succeed are impossible to gain in a straightforward manner.

Times of Falling - Times of Growth

Here we must add an important point. Many times, a person falls spiritually. Not all times are identical. Sometimes, a person's heart is open in prayer, and he prays from the depths of his heart. His heart pours out just as it says (*Eichah* 2:19), "Pour out your heart as water before the Presence of Hashem." But there are states of "their heart is closed" (as in *Hoshea* 13:8). The heart is sealed and the person feels tremendous difficulty in his *avodah*.

Human nature causes one to feel that the days of growth, when he can pour out his heart to his Creator as a son would relate to his father, are his successful days, but the days with difficulties seem dark, and he wishes they would just be over, so the light can shine again.

Of course, it is good to hope that the light will shine, but while one is in darkness, he should have the proper perspective. If one will recognize the great achievements attainable from the difficult tests, and recall that these tests are essential for those achievements, he will have a positive attitude about his current state.

One must delve into this. "Where penitents stand, perfect *tzaddikim* cannot stand." This applies to the small events in life, as well. Anytime one "rises" after a "fall," he is a penitent in that regard. He must realize that the difficult days allow tremendous attainments to sprout forth, which will become evident once he "rises."

However, while someone is going through the process of "a *tzaddik* falls seven times," he cannot see the light he will attain when it will be over. Even when he rises after the first, second, or third time, he cannot see the light. Only after finishing the whole set of tests indicated by "a *tzaddik* falls seven times," and then rising, do the powers he earned become revealed to him.

There is, then, a double concealment. During the fall, one does not see the light, and even after he picks himself up, he does not see what he gained from the fall. If so, the next time he falls, he doesn't know that when he picked himself up from the previous fall, he gained something. He only remembers the difficult days and the suffering he experienced then, and he is naturally very concerned about the fall.

But when a person has absolute faith in the words of *Chazal* that "where penitents stand, perfect *tzaddikim* cannot stand," he knows that he will attain more from his fall than from the times when things went well, and he will be happy even in times of a fall. Merely knowing and believing in this fact will afford the person the ability to cope properly during the difficult times.

One Should Include Hashem Even in the Times of Tests and Difficulties

In general, the way of *tefillah* should be that one will pour out his prayer to Hashem both in times of "smallness" and in times of "greatness." One can attain great things both in times when one seems to be succeeding and in times when one seems to be failing. In prayer, one should discuss his successes and his failures, whether they relate to will, thought, speech, or action.

If one has not properly instilled *emunah*, he will think that the tests he did not pass were like worthless things that came by mistake and now have passed, and that it is a shame that they came at all. But when a person lives with *emunah*, and he knows that Hashem prepared these tests for him with great precision, and that the depth of the matter is that these tests came to give him attainments which he could not have received any other way, he understands that he must include Hashem even in his tests and failures (through *tefillah*).

What this really means is that one must live completely with Hashem!

We find various kinds of sacrifices in the Torah: *olah* (burnt offering), *chatas* (sin offering), *shelamim*

(peace offering), and so on. There are sacrifices that the Yisrael eats from, and some that he may not eat from, because the Kohen eats part and the rest is for Hashem, and there is the *olah*, which is totally for Hashem.

A *korban* (sacrifice) is so called based on the word *kirvah* (closeness), as is written in the *sefarim hakedoshim*. When a person understands that there is no part of him that does not belong to Hashem, and that the closeness must embrace all 248 limbs and 365 sinews, he becomes like an *olah* for Hashem, and he has the opportunity to totally cleave to the Creator. But if a person includes Hashem only in part of his affairs, and excludes him from part, he cannot have total closeness to Hashem!

Every heart contains two inclinations: the *yetzer tov* and the *yetzer hara*. The *yetzer tov* pushes one to succeed, and the *yetzer hara* pushes in the opposite direction. Man must choose between them.

If one only includes Hashem in his positive aspect, in his successes, but not in his failures, he will never be like an *olah*. A *korban* that has a *yetzer hara* (a sense of separation from Hashem) cannot be an *olah* totally for Hashem.

Some people may say that one should do *teshuvah* (repentance). In fact, one would repent before bringing a *korban* to the *Bais HaMikdash*, as the *gemara* says. But the question is: how does one come to *teshuvah*? If he is alone during his falls, and does not include the Creator, he will never reach Him!

The *Admor*, Rabbi Moshe of Kuvrin, would say, "A person who, *chas veshalom*, has fallen by committing a real sin and cannot immediately go and speak to Hashem has not entered the gateway of *chassidus*!"

This is the point: in order for one to bring his negative and separate component to Hashem, he must include Hashem in all his affairs, without exception!

For example, at times, heretical thoughts enter one's mind, *chas veshalom*, and a person naturally rejects them. This certainly doesn't happen to every single person, and is not necessarily frequent among those who do suffer from this, but the phenomenon does occur. A person has a heretical thought, *chas veshalom*: "Perhaps there is no Creator?" He will immediately push it out of his mind.

What is the proper way to act in such cases? One must stand and speak to Hashem and tell Him **everything**: "Master of the World, I suddenly had a thought that You might not exist. But who sent me that thought? It was You Who sent it! And why? Obviously, not so I would accept it, but so that I would reject it and not think about it. But it is clear to me that You were the One Who sent me that heretical thought, and it is clear that it was Your will that I would take that thought and remove it from my mind."

In other words, not only a thought that represents a "fall" in one's *avodah*, but even what seems to be the worst possible thought - that there isn't even a Creator, a thought that is not at all from the world of *kedushah*, which the *sefarim hakedoshim* say comes from the world of emptiness, the original void - must be taken and returned to the Creator.

It is written (*Devarim* 4:39), "Hashem is the G-d in the Heavens Above and on the earth below; there is no other." *Chazal* explained, "What is the meaning of 'there is no other'? Even in the void of creation." For our purposes, this means that one must bring Hashem into every aspect of one's life. There should be no aspect of life in which one does not include Hashem: successes, failures, times of happiness, and times of sadness. One should always say, "Please, Hashem, save me now!"

When Hashem is with a person, the person attains a salvation, but if He is separate, one must contend with the tests all alone. But *Chazal* have taught us that "one's evil inclination overpowers him daily and seeks to kill him, and if not that Hashem helps, he could not succeed, as it says, "Hashem will not abandon him in [the *yetzer hara's*] hands" (*Kiddushin* 30b).

Restoring the Powers to the Creator

Chazal have said, "Every day, a heavenly voice goes forth and proclaims, 'Return, wayward children'" (*Eichah Rabbah, pesichta* 25). What this means is that one must restore all of one's powers to the Creator.

How is this done? How can one restore to Him a force that is separate from Him, *chas veshalom*?

This can be explained through an illustration. In order to transport water from place to place, one needs a pipe. The water flows through the pipe and goes to the other place. One needs a vessel to move the water, and the vessel is the pipe.

"Return, wayward children," means that you must restore all your powers, your whole existence, to the Creator. How does one do this? First of all, one needs a vessel. What is the vessel for doing this? It is the power of speech. If one does not speak to the Creator, and one wishes to restore his thoughts to the Creator, the *sefarim* say that he is delusional! If one does not orally restore every single detail to the Creator, he is lacking the vessel for transporting the "water."

If one connects everything to the Creator (every thought, desire, word, and even a faint deep-seated *ratzon*), and says to Him, "Master of the World, You sent this to me," then there is a "direct light," and there can be a "reflected light" for restoring everything to Hashem. But if a person does not consider the source of the thought, there is no capability of restoring the thought.

Through speech, one forms a vessel. He recognizes that the light came from Hashem, since He sent the thought or the *ratzon*. One should first deal with the thoughts, and then restore them to Hashem.

Whether it is a thought, or *ratzon*, or desire that is improper, one must stop himself and say, "Master of the World, You gave me this thought, and You don't want me to use it. Please, then, take it back."

"If Hashem does not help, one cannot succeed." How does He help? By taking back the power he sent to the person and restoring it to its root. In this way, one can succeed in the war against the *yetzer hara*.

"*VeAhavta* (You shall love) Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your wealth." *Ahavah* (related to *VeAhavta*) has the numerical value of thirteen, which is the value of *echad* (one). A Jew must love Hashem with "all his heart," so that all his thoughts will be together with Hashem and he bonds them all to Him. He knows that Hashem sent the thought and that it will return to its source.

"With all your soul" is taught by *Chazal* (*Berachos* 54a) to mean, "even if He takes your life." The soul is bound with the Creator, and one must be ready each day to restore it to the state of unity with Him.

"With all your wealth" means that even the distant sparks of a person that are in his money must be harnessed for love and unity with Hashem.

If one does not restore all the thoughts of his heart, and his very soul, and his distant projections (his money), he has not yet reached the state of love!

May Hashem enable our prayer to be a true vessel for bonding our 248 limbs and 365 sinews to Him, and allow us to be truly close to Him.

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