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Introduction

People are made up of three parts: actions, feelings and thoughts. Having *menuchah* means to have *menuchah* in all three – calm actions, calm feelings and calm thoughts.

When it comes to our avodas Hashem, our actions are expressed with the mitzvos. Our feelings are expressed with love and fear of Hashem, and our thoughts are expressed in learning the Torah. There must be *menuchas hanefesh* in all of these. Our actions, feelings and thoughts become a tool to acquire our *menuchas hanefesh*.

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

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

What are the basics of *menuchah* in our actions?

Don't do something quickly

Although the main thing is to do actions that emanate from our soul, there is a lot of importance to the external part of what we do. Even if one does an action that comes from his soul, if he acts rushed or does two things at once, he doesn't yet have *menuchas hanefesh*.

Although the main part is the inner layer of the action, still, the external factor also plays a role. For example, acting patiently greatly affects one's *menuchas hanefesh* in an action, as does doing one thing at a time.

Finish what you start

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

Take breaks in between

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

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

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

How can we give our soul *menuchas hanefesh*?

A person has to be aware that when he does something, he is not what he does. He is a soul, and has garments on top of his soul. These are his body and his actions. A person should never think he is what he does. If a person identifies himself based on what he does, he traps his soul into his actions, and his soul is bothered by this. He can't have *menuchas hanefesh* in this way. One needs to

remember that any actions he does is only a garment on him.

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

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

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

Don't do "avodas perach"

Another thing that deters *menuchas hanefesh* is *avodas perech*, "cruel labor." When the Jews were enslaved in Egypt, the labor that they were enslaved with was particularly cruel, in that the men were given women's labor and the women were given men's labor. This is a type of *avodas perach*. The aim of the Egyptians was to take away one's *menuchas hanefesh*, by making one do things that were not meant for them.

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

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

Summary

To summarize, there are five things we need for *menuchas hanefesh* in our actions: Do one thing at a time, go in order, finish what you start, take breaks, and do what comes from one's pnimiyus. All of these enable us to view our actions as mere garments and as who we actually are. It helps us become aware that our soul is above what we do.

Fearing Death

This can help a person avoid being morbid when he thinks about death. If a person thinks that he is what he does, he will fear death, because he thinks that death is the end. After all, his body disintegrates into the earth. However, when a person knows that he is a soul, and his body is simply a garment, he will not fear death, because it will be like stepping out of a garment. It's like "walking from one room to another", as Chazal describe death.

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

If a person thinks he is what he does, then when he dies, his actions die with him, so he fears death; ceasing to exist. But when a person knows he is a soul and that his actions are only like the garments he wears, then he will not be morbid about death.

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