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## Search for Serenity - 006 What Holds Back Menucha

### *Understanding Ourselves*

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

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

### *Two Kinds Of Vision*

There are two ways to see. One way is with a superficial vision and the other way is with an inner vision. It is written, "A person sees with his eyes, and Hashem sees with His Heart." This is a hint to the two different kinds of vision a person can use. With a person's physical eyes, he can only see what's on the outside, but when a person uses his inner vision, the vision of his soul, he can see the inner layer of something.

We are not discussing the deep layers of the soul, only its outer layers. But even the outer layers of the soul have an external and inner layer. When a person sees something, either he can see the outer part of it, or he can see the inner part of it.

What does it mean to see the outer part of something external or the inner part of something external?

When a person uses his emotional amazement to understand something, he only sees the external. When a person uses a quiet place in his soul to see something he can then see the internal in the external.

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

This shows us another reason why many people feel a lot of stress, besides for everything we have said until now. People don't see the big picture of themselves, only a part of themselves. In addition to this, even what many people do see in themselves is only the outside of them-selves. They have not reached their inside yet. Thus, they have an incomplete picture of themselves, so they cannot fix their own problems.

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

### ***Seeing The Inside From the Outside***

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

To understand this idea, we will quote the *Mesilas Yesharim*, "To what can this be compared; to a garden-maze. This is the type of garden that is planted for amusement, that is popular among nobles. The plantings are arranged as many walls, and between them there are many confusing and interconnecting paths, all of them resembling another, and the goal of these paths is to reach the single pavilion in the middle. Some of these paths are correct and lead to the middle, while some paths take him further away. The one walking in the maze cannot see or know at all whether he is on

the correct path or a false one, because they all appear the same with no difference to the eye that sees them. He cannot know the correct path unless his is familiar with them...one who is already standing on the pavilion at the middle has a vantage point from above, and see all the paths spread out before him, and see which paths are correct and incorrect. He can call out to the traveler and warn them which paths are incorrect. One who wants to trust him will follow his directions and reach the middle of the maze, but one who doesn't feel like trusting him will just follow his eyes and he will certainly remain lost, and he will not find the middle of the maze."

Someone who is still in the garden-maze only sees part of the picture. Someone who has already been through it sees it all from above.

The lesson from this is that there are two ways to see something. First, there is a superficial way of seeing something, which is only a partial view. The second way to see something is to use an inner kind of vision, which sees the whole picture from above. When a person is amazed, he only sees from one part of his soul, and his understanding of something is superficial and only partial. But when a person lives with an inner silence, he can see everything, without getting overly amazed. He sees all the details and doesn't get caught up in minutiae.

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

### ***A Person Needs To Be Very Calm For This***

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

When a person becomes very amazed at his discoveries, he's too connected to what he sees. He is pulled after his sheer amazement and gets caught up in something interesting. This causes him to divert his attention and become mesmerized by a particular detail. However, when a person has an inner calmness, he isn't pulled after something interesting and he is able to stand tranquilly, taking in the full view of what's before him. He is then able to probe into the depths of a matter.

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

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

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

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

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

How can a person leave all the confusion?

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

### ***Seeing Yourself From Above***

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

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

Chazal (Pesachim 50a) reported that one of the Sages had this type of experience and came back saying, "I see a clear world." When a person sees from this deep place in his soul, he can see everything from above, with total clarity. He can understand the soul and how it works without getting fazed by its many complex details, and he can experience the soul in a calm and unmoving manner.

### ***Why Therapy Doesn't Always Help***

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

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

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

In the future, though, there will be total clarity. Chazal (Eruvin 22a) say that "Today is for action, and tomorrow is for the reward." In today's times we have no clarity and we have to work very hard at our avodas Hashem. In the future, we will have clarity in our avodas Hashem and we won't have to work hard.

In the future Redemption, we will all see the big picture. Ramchal writes (in *sefer Daas Tevunos*) that

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

When a person succeeds in knowing his soul, he will experience a personal redemption. The secret to all our avodas Hashem is inner silence. Through an inner silence, we can reveal our soul.

In order for a person to do this, he needs to have utter calm and quiet. The problem is that most people don't have this inner silence. There are generally six common causes why a person may lack this inner silence.

### ***The First Cause: Our Shortcomings (Or Our Talents)***

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

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

Not only does a person's main weak area destroy his *menuchas hanefesh*, but even a person's main good quality can be his downfall.

I knew someone who was a great spiritual personality. He had excellent talents, a great personality, and was very influential on others when he spoke in public. But because he was on such a higher plane than others, he couldn't relate to them in simple, mundane matters. It was "beneath him" to talk to his congregants about daily chatter. Therefore, he wasn't able to influence them the way he could have. He was too lofty to relate to others in practical, daily life. Here we see an example of how someone's positive qualities can also be detrimental to him.

### ***The Second Cause: What We Want***

Another deterrent to *menuchas hanefesh* is when we want things. When we have a whole list of

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

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

### ***The Third Cause: Rapid Actions***

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

### ***The Fourth Cause: Amazement***

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

### ***The Fifth Cause: Too Many Roles***

When a person does too many things, even if they are all for good causes, a person cannot have *menuchas hanefesh*.

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

Not only can doing too much destroy your *menuchas hanefesh*, but thinking too much can also destroy your *menuchas hanefesh*. Thinking too much can drive you insane. No one would think of teaching *Kaballah* to his child, because he knows it would strain the child's brain to understand these

matters and thereby, make the child go insane.

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

### ***The Sixth Cause: Noise***

Finally, it should be noted that even noise can take away our *menuchas hanefesh*. Loud noises don't let us think calmly and make us anxious. Even being around someone who isn't calm can make us anxious and does not allow us to have *menuchas hanefesh*.

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

### ***Find Out What Is Destroying Your Inner Peace***

Most people lack *menuchas hanefesh* because of the first two reasons mentioned. Either they have major weaknesses that pull them away from doing what is right and good or they have many things they want. Some people aren't calm because they keep feeling "amazed" during their avodas Hashem, and they are suffering from an imbalance and a disconnection. One must take the time to reflect on which one is destroying one's inner calm.

### ***Menuchah From Feeling Emptiness***

#### ***The Other Kind of Menuchas Hanefesh***

Until now we spoke about *menuchas hanefesh* in order to gain something - calm actions, calm feelings and calm thoughts. Now we will speak of a much quieter kind of *menuchas hanefesh* - when a person doesn't do anything at all.

This other kind of *menuchas hanefesh* - drawing inner peace from a deep place in the soul is the ability in one's soul "to feel like "nothing".

## ***An Empty Place In The Soul***

A space in our soul is called a *chalal*. Chazal mention this as “*chalal shel olam*”, the space of the world. Avraham Avinu was taken there (see *Beraishis Rabbah* 14:42).

In terms of the human soul, it is an empty place in our soul, essentially the inner silence in one’s soul.[\[1\]](#)

There are non-Jewish methods to achieve inner peace, and they only use this part of the soul in order to reach a deep silence and become calm. But the non-Jewish method is to simply feel this emptiness in oneself for the purpose of feeling empty. They don’t do anything with this emptiness.

A Jewish soul, however, is able to take this emptiness and do something with it. A Jew uses both this and the active kinds of inner peace in order to achieve *menuchas hanefesh*

### ***Feeling The Emptiness of This World***

What exactly is the *chalal* in the soul? This is when a person contemplates about how empty the world is and feels the emptiness.

There is a danger for one to enter into this emptiness. Rav Nachman of Breslov said that if a person enters this part of his soul and he isn’t ready to experience this emptiness, he can fall to the lowest level in the world, which is to deny Hashem altogether. But if a person enters this part of oneself and knows what to do with this feeling, he can use it as a source of total *menuchas hanefesh*.

### ***The Three Kinds Of Menuchas Hanefesh***

Chazal say that when Hashem created the world, he first had to create a space in order to make it and then He filled it up. At first, Hashem filled the entire existence. Then in order to create the universe, He left some empty space which He made Himself not fill, so to speak. This empty space was then filled to become the universe. Although all this took place at the beginning of Creation, there is an ability in our soul to feel this as well.

In addition, a person's soul can feel Hashem's existence. One's soul can sense how His existence fills all that there is and that there is nothing besides Him. In this, a person can find a total and complete *menuchas hanefesh*.

When a person utilizes this part of his soul correctly, he experiences what is called "*Ain Od Milvado*" – "There is Nothing Besides Hashem". This is the correct kind of nothingness a person needs to experience. It is when one realizes that there is truly nothing in the universe except for Hashem. This is also known as having *menuchah* in the *Ein Sof* (Endlessness) of Hashem.

If a person only has the first kind of *menuchas hanefesh* – calm actions, feelings and thoughts – he is missing the other kinds of *menuchas hanefesh*, which is to feel the *menuchah* that comes from the *chalal* in one's soul, as well as the *menuchah* which comes from the *Ein Sof* of Hashem.

If a person only has *menuchah* of the *chalal* in his soul, he is living an impure kind of existence. And if a person only has *menuchah* in the *Ein Sof*, he is missing the other two kinds of *menuchas hanefesh*. A person needs to all have three kinds of *menuchas hanefesh*.

### ***Menuchah in the Ein Sof***

There are altogether three kinds of *menuchah*: *menuchah* amongst people (which is found in actions, feelings and thoughts); *menuchah* that comes from the empty space in our soul, and *menuchah* in the *Ein Sof* of Hashem.

The first two kinds of *menuchah* are different with each person, but the third kind of *menuchah*, *menuchah* in the *Ein Sof*, is the same for each person. Each person can point to Hashem and feel that he has only one Father in Heaven, the Creator.

### ***Shabbos Contains All Three Kinds of Menuchah***

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

The first two kinds of *menuchah* are not yet the total *menuchah* a person can reach, because they have movement. Anything that has movement cannot be considered total *menuchas hanefesh*.

When a person has calm actions, feelings and thoughts, he has calm movements. Even drawing *menuchah* from the *chalal* in one's soul has movement, because one needs to create a space within oneself in order to have it. This is a type of movement (albeit subtle). But the third kind of *menuchah* in the *Ein Sof*, is the most perfect kind of *menuchah*, because it comes from the deepest place in one's soul. This is the ability to utterly feel Hashem's existence.

### ***Shabbos of Today and Shabbos In The Future***

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

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

Just like the goal of the week leads up to Shabbos, so too, the goal of our soul leads to *menuchas hanefesh*. *Menuchas hanefesh* is the basis of our soul's avodah. It is the ultimate goal.

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[1] The author is probably referring to the concept of "*Olam, Shanah, Nefesh*" - "World, Time and Soul", a concept mentioned in *Sefer Yetzirah*, which the author frequently uses. This concept means that everything that takes place in the world also takes place in our soul. Here the concept clarifies that just like there is a physical outer space, so is there an outer space in our soul. The author in this chapter is explaining what it is and what we do with it.

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