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Holiness Is Found In Silence

It is written, "Hashem is not found in noise or in wind, but in a soft, subtle voice." If a person wants to find Hashem – if a person wants *menuchah* – he needs to find a quiet place, a place where there is a *kol demamah dakah*, a "soft, subtle voice." If a person wants to live an internal kind of life, he needs to find quiet. A more external kind of person likes noise, but the more spiritual a person is, the more he lives a quieter life, and the closer he is to *menuchah*.

The Avos, as well as Moshe Rabbeinu and Dovid HaMelech, were all shepherds who lived far away from civilization. *Sefer HaMaspik L'Ovdei Hashem* (the son of the Rambam) writes that this was intentional, because the Avos wanted to live lives of solitude. They chose to settle in quiet places and take care of animals, which is a peaceful kind of life.

When a person leaves the noise and finds in himself a connection to silence, his inner world is opened up. If a person is used to noise and needs a lot of noise in his life, then even when he has peace and quiet, he seeks noise. But when a person lives a life of peace and quiet, he runs away from noise as soon as he encounters it.

Silence is a Tool for Inner Peace

A person must leave his connection to noise and connect to silence. When a person craves silence, he has a strong tool to find *menuchah*. Besides for having actual quiet, he achieves an inner kind of silence as well.

Before we listed several things that allow for quiet. Let us review them.

If a person is choosing where to live, he should live in a more quiet kind of neighborhood, not a loud one.

We need to avoid gadgets that take away our quiet. Cellphones, which we usually take with us wherever we go, are a big deterrent to *menuchas hanefesh*. Not only is it a bother when it rings, but the fact that one has a cellphone on him is bothersome, because the mere fact that it's possible for one's inner peace to get ruined is already a deterrent to *menuchas hanefesh*.

If a person works, he should work in a quieter kind of job and in a quieter kind of atmosphere.

A person should be friends with those who have a quieter kind of life, and not with friends who love noise and action.

A person shouldn't buy loud items for his house and his house should also be designed in a way that will allow him to have some peace and quiet and not hear all the noise.

When a person encounters someone who is loud, this can also ruin his *menuchas hanefesh*. A person should make sure that he goes to places which will not take away his *menuchas hanefesh*, like meeting up with friends who take away his *menuchas hanefesh*.

The *Tiferes Yisrael* (Avos 1:15) writes that a person should even learn Torah in a quiet place, because a person's mind is more open in a quieter place and he can remember things better there. Although there is a benefit to be around more people, "The glory of the king is among the majority of people", usually, being around people doesn't allow for *menuchas hanefesh*, because it's noisy.

It is very important to have actual quiet, even physical quiet. A person should always seek the quieter route.

Have Times of Quiet

Besides for physical quiet, a person should get used to have times set aside every day for quiet. We are not speaking about *hisbodedus* and doing *teshuvah*. Nor are we speaking about *hisbodedus* with Hashem. This is something else entirely. There must be times every day in which a person simply calms himself. In the Yeshiva of Radin, the yeshiva students would take a walk every day for a half hour in the gardens outside the city. This was not *hisbodedus*, simply making time for peace and quiet to calm oneself down.

Each person has actions, speech, feelings and thoughts in his personality. All of these need to be calmed. A person needs to have a quiet time in which he does nothing. He needs to be alone, as much as time allows him to be, and silence his feelings and thoughts. It is not possible to totally silence them. However, a person should silence them as much as he can.

What should a person do during this quiet time? He should think light and calm thoughts, and nothing stressful. Sometimes a person will have to use his imagination for this and picture something that's relaxing. But at the same time a person has to be careful that he doesn't get carried away with his imagination. There is a very fine line between positive imagination and negative imagination.

Silence is not just another detail, but a very basic attitude to have in life. A person shouldn't get involved in something if he doesn't have to and even when he has to be involved, he should seek the quieter option.

Silence Helps a Person Reveal Himself

When a person chooses to live a quieter kind of life and craves peace and quiet, he begins to reveal who he is. We can compare this to the contrast between a rushing river and a calm pond. When there is a rushing river, you can't see what's underneath the water. But when the water is calm and unmoving, it becomes clear and you can see all the way down to the bottom of it.

If a person likes noise, he doesn't experience himself, but only what's outside of himself. Once a person leaves all the noise and enters a more quiet kind of life, he reveals who he is.

There are people who are afraid of discovering who they really are, so they seek noise and are uncomfortable with silence. But if a person truly seeks the purpose of life, he desires real peace of mind, and he craves silence.

Tzaddikim Draw All Their Inner Peace from Silence

This silence can give a person the opportunity to live a new kind of life. It enables a person to derive vitality from his inner silence, similar to how the entire earth was quiet by Har Sinai.

Silence should become the way a person leads his life. When a person just considers silence to be a

tool to reach himself and doesn't see how it leads his life, then he simply gains some vitality from it, and it is more like an extra to him. But when a person makes silence into his life, then he can't stand noise, and when he is among noise, he feels himself in great danger.

A *tzaddik* lives totally in this silence. He gets his vitality from a quiet place inside himself. When he has to enter a loud place, he feels like part of him is being removed, and he feels like a fish being taken out of water.

Two Purposes of Silence

There are two ways silence gives a person *menuchas hanefesh*.

There is an inner peace that one has from the silence. When a person derives vitality from this silence, he finds *menuchas hanefesh* there. This is when a person feels that his real place is silence, and he finds peace there. A person finds his roots in silence, and this gives him *menuchas hanefesh*.

When a person derives vitality from silence, he also achieves clarity and orderliness in his life. Without being organized, a person can't have *menuchas hanefesh*. In the Yeshiva of Kelm, a lot of importance was placed on acquiring *menuchas hanefesh*, and thus, they were very strict when it came to *sefer* (study sessions) and timeliness.

External orderliness contributes a lot to *menuchas hanefesh*. When a person enjoys silence in his life, his thoughts become more organized. If he isn't orderly, his thoughts are also disorganized.

Revealing Hashem from the Silence

When a person is in a quiet place, it is there that he can find himself, and if he is more spiritual, he can even reveal Hashem there; "Hashem is not found in noise, but in a soft, subtle voice."

This is more of an inner kind of vitality, more than an ordinary silence, where a person derives vitality directly from Hashem. If a person just enjoys silence but he doesn't try to reveal Hashem from the silence, this is not the proper way for a Jew. The correct approach is to use silence as a tool to reach Hashem, not for the sake of silence alone.

It can happen that a person doesn't feel Hashem in this silence, for different reasons: either because of his sins, or because he is too materialistic, or because of his bad middos which are getting in the way of feeling Hashem.

Balancing Our Noisy Life

Silence is only one side of the coin. Just like Hashem wants us to have this silence, so does He want us to live in this noisy world. It is not the way of the Torah to only live with silence and never experience any noise. A Jew has to balance both noise and silence in his life.

Hashem doesn't want us to become loners. A person has to be connected to others and daven with a *minyan* every day, and he must endure all the noise that comes with this.

At the same time, we need to balance all this noise with silence. We need to realize that the main part of our life is our silence, while the noise we experience is only an outer garment that we put on ourselves. We need to make sure that the noise in our life isn't taking away our connection to silence, which is the source of our *menuchas hanefesh*.

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