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## Getting to Know Your Inner World - 008 Detaching From Ta'anug and Ratzon, Part 2

*(To summarize our avodah thus far, we are attempting here to realize some of our end goal already in the beginning of our way, so we can navigate the confusing "garden maze" of life. For this we need some degree of menuchah (serenity), which we explained about before. This helps us get in touch with our actual essence (our very havayah). We have described that the way to reach menuchah is through halbashah (wearing) and hafshatah (removing) the soul's various abilities, which helps us learn how to detach from our soul's layers and thereby get deeper and deeper into our soul.)*

### **The Torah Approach To "Detachment"**

We must have "detachment" (*hafshatah*) in two ways. We need to divest ourselves from evil, which are sins and bad *middos*. We have to wage war with evil and take on different kinds of resolutions that will help us overpower evil; but that is not our discussion here. We also need to learn how to divest ourselves from even the faculties of our soul; this is the focus of our discussion here.

If someone just wants to detach from his soul faculties simply to feel what it's like to detach, this is the way of the non-Jewish nations, and it is not the Torah way. The Torah way is to learn how to detach because you are trying to gain something positive from it – because you are trying to reach your very essence.

We need to learn how to both "wear" and "remove" our soul faculties; we wear them by learning how to use them, and we remove them by detaching from them when we have to. If you know how to detach from your soul faculties, you will become free from your inner imprisonment, and you will become truly free. If someone can't detach from his faculties, he's imprisoned to them; even though the soul faculties are all good and holy, if someone can't get past them, he's still imprisoned by them.

Learning how to detach ("*hafshatah*") is really a very complex discussion; we are just giving a few examples of the concept. It is a great wisdom to know when to 'wear' your soul faculties and when to 'remove' them. Just like there is no end to how many ways the letters of the *Aleph Beis* can be combined, so are there endless scenarios of how to wear and remove your soul faculties.

### **Using Ratzon To Remove Emunah**

The highest soul faculty (after your very essence, which is your *havayah*) is the faculty of *emunah* (faith): the ability to believe. Sometimes, it is necessary to detach from *emunah*! We do not mean, *chas v'shalom*, to deny Hashem. There is no such thing. We are referring to a different kind of

“denial” which you can make use of. This is when you need to detach from *emunah*, like when a person is having too much *emunah* and acting improperly, blaming everything on Hashem. The person is having misguided *emunah*.

In order to remove yourself from *emunah*, you need to make use of its opposite ability, which is the ability to deny. Usually denial is evil, but sometimes it can be good; how?

Such a situation needs to be dealt with by opposing the extreme *emunah*: by “denying” the faculty of *emunah*. How? Denial (*kefirah*) is really the power of free will (*bechirah*) in a person, which stems from the faculty of *ratzon* (will). If so, *ratzon* is the opposing force to *emunah*. So when you need to detach from having too much *emunah*, you need to make use of your *ratzon* and instead choose to deny your misguided *emunah*.

### **Detaching From Taanug/Pleasure**

In the previous chapter, we spoke about how to detach from *ta’anug*/pleasure. Although we know that a person was created in order to have pleasure, if the power of pleasure is too extreme in a person and being used in the wrong place, it needs to be opposed.

This can be done by accepting non-pleasurable activities, such as taking on responsibilities. That is how you “detach” from pleasure. The temptation comes your way, so what do you do? You awaken from within yourself the ability to restrain from pleasure, which is by accepting upon yourself the responsibility of not going after evil pleasures.

(We also find two titles for how one serves Hashem: *ben*, a son, and *eved*, a slave. What is the difference? A son serves his Father only out of pleasure, but a slave serves his Master because he has responsibilities toward Him, whether he likes it or not.)

The power to detach from *ta’anug* is essentially the faculty of *shiflus* (lowliness) in the soul, which is the thirteenth soul faculty. A person fights forbidden pleasures by being subservient to Hashem, awakening his feeling of *shiflus* and obedience to his Master.

### **Exertion and Enjoyment in Learning Torah**

In learning Torah, there are two kinds of learning: *ameilus*/exertion and *ta’anug*/pleasure.

On one hand, a person has to exert himself in learning as much as he can. On the other hand, learning Torah has to be enjoyable; “A person does not learn except for what his heart desires (*libo chofeitz*)”.

These are two abilities in our soul which we use to learn Torah – exertion, and enjoyment. We need to “wear” and “remove” both of these abilities when it comes to learning Torah.

If a person only learns Torah when he enjoys it, then he will only learn when he likes the particular subject in Torah at hand, but if he doesn’t like it, he won’t learn it. *Chazal* say that “one is not allowed to say, “That statement of Torah is nice, and another statement of Torah isn’t nice.” Such a person needs to remove his *ta’anug* and instead have *ameilus* in Torah, which is essentially by using *shiflus*. He has to give up his desire for pleasure and instead accept upon himself the *kabalas ol Torah*, the “yoke of Torah.”

On the other hand, if a person is only exerting himself in Torah but he never has enjoyment in it, he should remove his *shiflus* and instead focus on how to get *ta’anug* out of learning; he shouldn’t exert himself so much, and instead he should only learn what his “heart desires” – *libo chofeitz*.

It is not our aim here to tell a person what to do and how to behave in his life. We are describing how we build up our soul. You can only know what to “do” in your life as a result from building up your soul.

If you are faced with an evil temptation, it is very clear that you must learn how to detach from pleasure. But even with spiritual pleasures you need to know how to detach from sometimes, like when you’re having too much *ta’anug*. The point is that we cannot be imprisoned by the faculty of *ta’anug*.

It takes a lot of wisdom to know when a person should use *ta’anug* or when he should use *ameilus/shiflus*.

If a person only knows of *ta’anug* in learning Torah but he doesn’t have *ameilus* in learning, on a subtle understanding, he is throwing off the yoke of Torah (*perikas ol*).

But when *ameilus* is balanced with *ta’anug*, and *ta’anug* is balanced with *ameilus*, such a person has the *kaballas ol Torah*, and in addition to this, he truly gains from the kind of *ta’anug* he has in it, because it is a pleasure that is well-balanced.

That is a summary of what we explained in the last chapter.

### ***Detaching from Ratzon***

The next soul faculty, after *emunah* and *taanug*, is *ratzon*/will. It is also a broad discussion, and we will describe it briefly.

There are two kinds of *ratzon* in a person: wanting to do what you want, and wanting to do what Hashem wants. It is really our will to do the will of Hashem (“*It is our will to do Your will*”) but the “yeast in the sourdough” (a reference to the *yetzer hora*/evil inclination holds us back); on a subtle note, the will of Hashem is realized when we do His will.

The *yetzer hora* doesn’t just hold back our *ratzon* to do what Hashem wants – it sways us to come up with a new *ratzon*, a *ratzon* to do something bad.

That is regarding where our *ratzon* leads to – we are not describing how to remove it yet. We are just describing the roots; if this is not understood properly, we cannot understand what is to follow.

If a person doesn’t first understand what *ratzon* is and he attempts to remove his *retzonos*, what will he be left with? He will be left with no *ratzon* at all, and this is not good. Thus, first we need to learn about the roots of the faculty of *ratzon*, and only after that can we attempt to remove ourselves from it.[\[1\]](#)

The opposite of *ratzon* is *emunah*. When a person wants something, he really thinks that it’s all up to him. Rebbi Eliezer ben Durdaya said, “The matter is dependent only on me.” *Ratzon* is when a person thinks that everything is up to him. (*Ratzon* can be used for good or evil).

How can a person nullify a negative desire for something?

The Torah commands, “*You shall not covet*” (*lo sachmod*). How is it possible for a person not to desire something he wants? The *Ibn Ezra* has a famous explanation. Just like a pauper who sees the princess passing by has no desire to marry her, because he knows that this is impossible, so can a person tell himself that his desire is impossible to be realized, because Hashem doesn’t want him to have it. This is essentially the power of *emunah* in the soul.

If so, one can use *emunah* to oppose an evil *ratzon*. A person can remind himself that Hashem “was, is, and always will be”, which is *emunah*, and this will remove himself from *ratzon*. This will not make a person freeze from whatever he’s doing; it will instead eliminate his *ratzon* to do something.<sup>[2]</sup>

If a person overdoes this, he will use too much *emunah* and eliminate his ability to act. This will breed laziness and sadness. But if a person uses *emunah* in the proper amount, he can eliminate an evil *ratzon*. When our desire for something is eliminated based on a proper usage of *emunah*, we will be able to give up what we want, but this will not cause us to be sad.

If I want something, then I must always be prepared to give it up, using *emunah*. If I want something and I’m not prepared to give it up everything, such a *ratzon* will make me imprisoned to my *ratzon*. Even if it’s a *ratzon* for something holy, if I’m not prepared to somehow give it up when I’m supposed to, then it’s also a *ratzon* that traps me.

How can a person know if his *ratzon* for something holy has him trapped or not? The way he can know this is what he feels like when he wasn’t able to fulfill it due to a circumstance which he could not have prevented. If he is sad that he couldn’t fulfill the *ratzon* and it was totally not his fault – for example, he wanted to do a certain *mitzvah*, but he got held back from fulfilling it, and he’s sad - that shows that he isn’t prepared to nullify his *ratzon* for Hashem’s *Ratzon*. If he would really be able to nullify his *ratzon*, he wouldn’t be sad, because since it is not his fault, it is Hashem’s will that his *mitzvah* shouldn’t happen.

As we mentioned before, a person has to go through a recurring cycle in his soul faculties. *Ratzon* needs to be sometimes removed by *emunah*, as we just explained, but then *emunah* can also become too extreme, and it can be removed through *ratzon*.

The cycle has to keep taking place: a person goes from *emunah* to *ratzon* (he can detach from his misguided *emunah* using *ratzon*, as we explained previously) and then from *ratzon* to *emunah* (he can detach from an evil *ratzon* by using *emunah*).

### **Two Kinds of Ta’anug/Pleasure**

When a person detaches from *ratzon* using *emunah*, and he detaches from *emunah* using *ratzon* in this way, he is able to “wear” *ratzon* or “remove” it, just like garments need to be put on or taken off. A person can also wear his “*emunah*” or take it off, when the situation calls for it; and vice versa.

In between the faculties of *emunah* and *ratzon* is the faculty of *ta’anug*, though, so a person will often encounter his power of *ta’anug* when he is trying to detach from either his *emunah* and *ratzon*.

There are two kinds of *ta’anug* – a person can enjoy what he has and believes that he has everything already, which is *ta’anug* in his *emunah*; or a person enjoys his very will to do something, which is *ta’anug* in his *ratzon*, because the fact that he has possibilities in front of him also gives him a certain pleasure.

(How do we know this is true? This we can see because a person has a feeling of despair when he gives up on what he wants; despair is a form of sadness. This shows us that when a person has an aspiration for something, he derives certain pleasure from the fact that he even has the possibility to fulfill his aspirations.)

Since there are two kinds of *ta’anug*, a person has to learn how to make use of one kind of *ta’anug* and know how to remove it as well. There are times where we should use *ta’anug* in our *emunah*, and times where we instead need to use *ta’anug* in our *ratzon*.

For example, if a person isn't happy with his accomplishments in life, he lacks *ta'anug* in his *emunah*, so he can give himself *ta'anug* from his *ratzon*, which is by being happy with the fact that he has aspirations in his life to go higher. There are times in which a person isn't deriving pleasure in his life, and he remembers how there was a time in his life in which he had aspirations, and he longs for that situation ago. This is how we can see that a person can get pleasure just from his very aspirations.

Another reason for this is because *ratzon* comes from the word *ratz*, to "run". A person enjoys running; he feels "light like an eagle." This is how a person can have *ta'anug* just from his *ratzon*. When a person loses *ta'anug* in his *emunah*, he can give himself *taanug* by summoning his *taanug* in his *ratzon*.

The opposite situation is if a person has high aspirations and then he falls from his level, he loses pleasure from those aspirations, and he needs to derive pleasure now from what he has at least accomplished so far; he can focus on what he has already. In this way, he removes his *ta'anug* from his *ratzon* and instead awakens in himself a *ta'anug* in *emunah*.

Before, we mentioned a different way to remove *ta'anug*, and that is when one makes use of *shiflus*. That is a total detachment from *ta'anug*. Now we have described a different kind of detachment from *ta'anug*, which is to remove *ta'anug* in your *emunah* and give yourself *ta'anug* from *ratzon*, as well as vice versa.

Although this is not a total detachment from the faculty of *ta'anug* as in the case of using *shiflus*, it is still somewhat of a detachment, because it is detaching from one kind of *ta'anug* and awakening a different kind of *ta'anug*, which can still be helpful.

Again, let us mention that this is a vast subject. It's like an endless ocean.

### ***Detaching from Chochmah***

The next faculty in the soul is *chochmah* (wisdom).

Hashem created the world – and people – with *chochmah*. We say in the *Asher Yotzar* blessing, "He Who fashioned man with wisdom." Hashem looked into Torah and created the world from it; the whole Creation is a reality of *chochmah*. Hashem first had a *Ratzon* to create the world, but He created it with *Chochmah*. This is what is written, "Say to wisdom, you are my sister."

When should a person detach from *chochmah*, and how?

*Chochmah* is rooted in the element of water, which is calm and unmoving (unless wind come and moves it). This shows us many ways how a person can detach from *chochmah* when he has to. The Torah is called *mayim shekaitim*, "calm waters." This shows us that by using a calm kind of *chochmah*/wisdom, we can detach from our wisdom when the situation calls for us not to use *chochmah*.

The Ramchal writes that it is the way of scholars to always think about Torah, wherever they are; if he cannot stop thinking when he is in a place where it is forbidden to think about Torah (such as a foul-smelling place), what should he do?

The advice brought is that he should think about math or some other calculations. Since he can't stop thinking, he has to give his thoughts some outlet, so he can think about math in such a place. (On a subtle note, such thinking isn't really called *chochmah*, but *hirhur*). But this is a solution for one who doesn't know how to detach from *chochmah*. If he would know how to detach from *chochmah*, he wouldn't have to resort to any thinking at all.

How can you detach from *chochmah*? A person can do this through using *emunah*. *Emunah* is the ability to believe even when something is not understandable; if I can't understand why something is good, I can believe that somehow it is good, just I don't understand it. If so, *emunah* can overpower *chochmah*. I am removing myself from my *chochmah* and returning to my *emunah*.

(On a more subtle note, I am removing myself from *chochmah* and returning to my *ratzon*, which is called *ayin*, the power of "nothingness" in the soul. It is written, "*Wisdom is found in ayin (nothingness)*." This shows us that *chochmah* is rooted in a *ayin*, "nothingness", the deep place in the soul that is above the thoughts; it needs to be accessed sometimes. *Ayin* is also identified with *ratzon*; it is the hidden kind of *ratzon*. If so, I can remove my *chochmah* by instead awakening my *ayin/ratzon*.)

The first method, which is to return to *emunah*, can only be possible if one has already developed his *emunah* before the difficult situation comes. A person has to build up a place for *emunah* in his soul way **before** he finds himself in a situation where he's not allowed to think; it can't be developed when he's at the time of the difficulty. You have to work on your *emunah* long before a difficulty comes, and to live in that clear perception on reality; if you have already developed your *emunah*, you will be able to detach from *chochmah* by returning to the *emunah* you have already built up in yourself.

Otherwise, you will have no "place" in yourself to return to when you remove your *chochmah*, and working on your *emunah* now won't be enough. The *emunah* has to be in you from beforehand. Detaching can only work when you already have the "clear world" from before; if you are already living in a clear world of *emunah*, then you are able to detach from *chochmah*.

There are more kinds of *chochmah* which we need to also detach from sometimes, and that is when one has too much *ta'anug* or *ratzon* in his *chochmah*.

A person can have *ta'anug* in *chochmah*, which is when he feels pleasure from wisdom, or he can have *chochmah* even without *ta'anug*. When a person is having the wrong kind of *ta'anug* in *chochmah*, he needs to detach from the pleasure he finds in the *chochmah*, and instead learn how to connect to *chochmah* even when it doesn't involve pleasure. This will be explained more in the next chapter, if we merit it.

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[1] The soul faculties are explained in detail in Getting To Know Your Soul.

[2] See also Bilvavi IV: Chapter 20 (Revealing The True Ratzon) which explains this avodah is more detail.

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**Source:** <http://bilvavi.net/english/getting-know-your-inner-world-008-detaching-ta'anug-and-ratzon-part-2>