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Four Approaches to Avodas Hashem

Reb Yeruchem Levovitz zt"l, the Mashgiach of the Mir, said that "Reb Yisrael Salanter taught *mussar* (ethics), the Alter of Kelm taught the "*chochmah*" (wisdom) of *mussar*, and I (Reb Yeruchem) teach the "*daas*" (knowledge\applications) of *chochmah* and *mussar*."

The truth is that after Reb Yeruchem Levovitz's approach, there is a fourth level that can be added on, which was defined by Reb Chatzkel Levenstein zt"l: *Emunah* (faith). Reb Chatzkel, as is well-known, mainly spoke about *Emunah*.

The statement of Reb Yeruchem Levovitz meant as follows. Reb Yisrael Salanter revealed only *mussar*, which was comprised of two things: repeating the words of Chazal with enthusiasm, and the ability to imagine the punishments of *Gehinnom*. The writings of the Alter of Kelm, which are called "*Chochmah U'Mussar*", reveal different matters – matters that require a lot of thought, and through absorbing it, one comes to an appreciation of the matters. Reb Yeruchem's writings went beyond that, and described a deep look into Creation and into the ways of Hashem. This is described in his sefer, "*Daas Chochmah U'Mussar*".

Reb Chatzkel zt"l focused mainly, though on *Emunah* in his talks. This was his innovative approach. Although it was based on what he had heard from his mentor, Reb Yeruchem Levovitz, it was his move to put the emphasis on *Emunah*.

Each soul is unique, and no two souls are alike. Although each of these great people received a method from their teacher, each of them still had their own unique approach, because each of their souls uncovered a unique point which was their focus.

In order for a person to use the approach of Reb Yisrael Salanter, he has to learn how to repeat a statement of Chazal with enthusiasm, and this requires a lot of strength of character. A person has to be very stubborn for this, and he also needs a powerful kind of imagination that will allow him to think about *Gehinnom* in an effective way that won't harm him.

As for the Alter of Kelm's approach, his language is very sharp in many places, and one needs a strong level of understanding, as well as a subtle sense, to get to the depth of his words. If someone doesn't have highly developed feelings, he cannot understand or appreciate any of the words of the Alter of Kelm. The Alter of Kelm spoke of *mussar*, not about intellectual matters; if one isn't pulled toward *mussar*, he won't have the patience to get through his words.

The writings of Reb Yeruchem Levovitz often quote the works of the Ramchal, and one needs to have a lot of knowledge about the inner world in order to understand what he is talking about. Although Reb Yeruchem Levovitz spoke on a simpler level to people when he gave his talks, his words are very deep, and if someone doesn't know the root of what he is talking about, he will only receive the external meaning of the words. He will receive the "branches" of the discussion without the "roots" of the discussion, and therefore he doesn't really understand what is being said.

If a person hears any of these great people's words and he knows the root of the matters they spoke about, he is able to reach an astounding level of understanding about this world, and he knows about the deeper meaning of Creation. But if someone just hears or reads their words and doesn't understand the root concept of what they were saying, he just sees this detail and that detail, and it is very difficult to add up all the details and come up with a plan in Avodas Hashem from them. Each point is something else, and they do not connect.

This is where the method of Reb Chatzkel Levenstein came in. By speaking about *emunah peshutah*, simple faith in Hashem – the root of all his words is always the same: that we need to return to *emunah*. Although he is also spoke about other concepts, such as the ability to imagine *Gehinnom*, the main point which he always spoke from was *emunah peshutah*.

We will explain in this chapter the fourth approach in Avodas Hashem – the way of Reb Chatzkel Levenstein zt"l: *emunah*. With the help of Hashem we will continue to explain the root and the depth of what we need to work on, and how everything else which we need to work on are only what results from it.

"The Whole World Is Sustained Through Chanina, My Son"

The most fundamental *mitzvah* we have upon us is *emunah*. The Rambam (*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*) writes "the fundamental of all fundamentals and the pillar of all wisdom is to know that there is a Creator who first existed." The root of all our beliefs is that there is a Creator, and from this we believe as well that He created this world, and that He runs everything; etc.

There are many kinds of *emunah* that result from the belief that there is a Creator. For example, we have *emunah* as well that we all stood by Har Sinai and received the Torah. This *emunah*, though, has to come after we firmly believe that there is a Creator, because without belief in a Creator *chas v'shalom*, Who gave us the Torah?

In other words, our Avodas Hashem – which mainly *consists* of **learning Torah** – has to be *based* upon the simple belief that we all accept, which is deeply rooted in every Jew's soul – that **there is a Creator**. "*I am Hashem, your G-d.*" This is the clear fundamental point that any believer knows of.

That is the beginning point of everything, and everything else continues from there. Now that we believe that there is a Creator and that He gave us the Torah, we try to figure out what He wants. His main will from us is that we learn Torah, and the results that come from this are that we carry out what it says in the Torah.

So the root of all our beliefs – the simple belief that Hashem exists – is not something we actually do in our Avodas Hashem; rather, it is something which if one doesn't have it *chas v'shalom*, all his Torah learning and *mitzvos* have nothing to stand on. A person who already believes in Hashem, then, has a clear job: to do His will, which is to learn Torah and do the *mitzvos*.

That is the simple outlook one needs to have. But we also have to know something else. Just like "Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world", so is learning the Torah the source of all sustenance in the universe. When a Jew sits and learns Torah, he is bestowing vitality upon people on

this world.

Rav Chaim Volozhiner wrote extensively about this (in *sefer Ruach Chaim*, Avos1:3): “At their root, all the mitzvos awaken much good and awesome effects throughout all the universes, and they bring about sustenance and other gains. But if few people do mitzvos, there are fewer channels to bring down the heavenly sustenance toward the universe; if this is the situation, Hashem, in His mercy, Who desires that all people be sustained, even those who aren’t worthy, takes away the sustenance from those who fear Him and instead splits it up amongst all people; He might even at times take it all away from one single person who is the one channeling down all the heavenly sustenance, and this person won’t even receive what he himself has drawn down to the world. This is like what is said of Rav Chanina ben Dosa, of whom Hashem said, “The entire world is sustained because of Chanina, My son...who can survive just on a measure of carobs”. Rav Chanina was a channel of heavenly sustenance, yet he himself didn’t receive it, because he was able to be satisfied with little.”

The “Rav Chanina” of every generation is those who learn Torah. Those who learn Torah are sustaining the world – they are the pipe that channels down all heavenly sustenance onto this world.

Every generation has its own unique form of sustenance – both physically and spiritually. Even the methods of learning Torah have changed throughout the generations. We can see this when we compare the words of the earlier generations with the words of later generations. They are all true, but each generation has its own unique expression in Avodas Hashem, according to the Torah.

In the way that the Torah is affecting the world, that affects the quality of how the world is sustained from it. Each generation was thus sustained in a different way, through the way that the Torah was revealed in that specific generation.

There is a “Rav Chanina” in every generation – in other words, there is a head of Torah in every generation who sustains everyone. This is also known as the “Moshe Rabbeinu” found in every generation.

The Level of Learning Is According To How Clear The Emunah Is

A *tzaddik* is the channel that brings heavenly sustenance down to this world. He is not just a channel; what he does actually fashions the nature of the sustenance!

We can explain this with a simple parable. When a person needs to drink water, it doesn’t make a difference what cup he uses; the water always tastes the same. But if someone is cooking food, the food will taste differently depending on if he cooks it in a pot of water, or in a frying pan with oil. Every kitchen appliance has its own way how it cooks, and the food comes out differently with each one.

This is how we can understand the inner point we are describing. The fact that we believe in the Creator and that the Torah comes from Him – this itself is the channel which with through it, we can receive the Torah. It is not just that Hashem “gave” us the Torah, as we say in the blessings; it is more than that. The root of our Torah learning is the belief that there is a Creator, and that the Torah comes from Him.

In even clearer words: the clearer our belief is in the Creator and that the Torah comes from Him – the more we reveal this belief – the clearer our Torah learning becomes, and the higher of a level our learning will be on.

If *emunah* would just be a subject that is separate from learning Torah, than when a person is sitting and learning Torah, it wouldn't matter how strong his *emunah* is. The main thing would be that he's sitting and learning and applying all his energies to learning Torah.

But now that we have clarified that we only receive the Torah according to how powerful it has been channeled toward us – “*For Hashem gives wisdom, and from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding*” (Mishlei 2:6) – then it is clear that if a person really wants to understand the Torah in a true way, he needs to strongly reveal his *emunah*. According to the strength of one's *emunah*, that is how much truthful understanding of the Torah he will be revealed by Hashem.

This is the inner meaning of the statement of Chazal (Berachos 20a), “The earlier generations gave up their lives to sanctify the Name of Hashem, while we (the later generations) do not.” The greatness of the earlier generations was that their *emunah* was very clear, and it was very much revealed in their hearts.

In the writings of the Rambam, we can see how clear his *emunah* was. His great knowledge in matters of *emunah* all came from his own clarity in *emunah* which he achieved.

When a person believes in the Creator and that the Torah is from Him, he draws his soul toward the Torah. The less *emunah* a person has, though, the less true understanding of Torah he will merit.

Torah and Doing Teshuvah

This applies directly toward our own Avodah. The *Nefesh HaChaim* (4:7) writes, “It is proper for a person to prepare himself at all times, before he begins to learn Torah, to think a little about the Creator, with purity of heart and fear of Him, and to purify himself from his sins by thinking about *teshuvah* (repenting), so that he can be connected and cling to Him even as he learns Torah...and in the middle of his learning, permission is granted to a person that he take a short break and reinforce his fear of Hashem, which he took upon himself as he began to learn, that is shouldn't become extinguished; he should think again about his fear of Hashem.”

In other words, before a person sits down to learn Torah, he should do *teshuvah*, and even in middle of learning, a person is allowed to make short interruptions to remind himself about *Yiras Hashem*.

This was also the way of the Vilna Gaon, who would interrupt his learning four times a day to learn *mussar*. This doesn't mean that he began to suddenly work on his *middos* in middle of his learning. It is a much deeper matter, as we will see.

The *teshuvah* which the *Nefesh HaChaim* says to do in middle of learning needs some questioning. *Teshuvah* is indeed one of the *mitzvos*, but why do we need to do it in middle of learning? Is it because it's a *mitzvah* that can only be done by you and no one else, which it is permitted to interrupt learning for?

It is because the true way to learn Torah is together with *teshuvah*.

The Torah is something which we receive from Hashem; we need *teshuvah* to receive it because that cleanses us from sin, enabling us to return to Hashem. Doing *teshuvah* before we learn creates the right atmosphere in order to learn Torah, because it reveals to us from Whom we are receiving the Torah from.

When a person sins, his *emunah* is diminished; thus *teshuvah* does not only serve as regretting the sin, but it helps return one to the recognition that he has Whom to fear. This is why the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes that *teshuvah* and learning Torah are intertwined. When a person does *teshuvah*, he

purifies his heart, and from this he can recognize Whom he must be afraid of and Whom he receives Torah from.

Torah and Tefillah

Herein lies the secret of how *emunah* relates to our Torah learning and is necessary for it.

We know that learning Torah is the most important *mitzvah*. It is the root of all the *mitzvos*, and it must be based on *emunah* revealed in our heart. This does not mean that one should stop learning Torah in order to instill in himself *emunah*. It is rather that a person must sharpen his *emunah* with the more he learns Torah. This has to be done **while** a person is learning Torah – not separate from it.

The Chazon Ish wrote that learning Torah and *davening* are intertwined one with another. When he did not understand something he was learning, he would *daven* to Hashem about it. From a superficial sense, it seems that just as *davening* helps a person earn a living or get a *shidduch*, so does *davening* help one's learning.

That is true, but it is a deeper matter. All things have to come through *davening*, but the only thing that *davening* is really intertwined with is Torah. This is because Torah is an entirely spiritual matter, for "Hashem and the Torah are one." Thus, the Chazon Ish wrote that when a person learns Torah and he wants to be connected with Hashem, on one hand he should be focused on his learning, but on the other hand, he should also be focused on the Creator.

"Hashem, the Torah, and the Jewish people are one."^[1] When a person learns Torah and he makes sure to turn to Hashem in prayer as well when he learns, his soul is attached to the Torah as he learns, and in turn he is attached to Hashem.

How Teshuvah and Tefillah Are Needed In Order To Learn Torah

Herein lays a great fundamental. Both the Nefesh HaChaim and the Chazon Ish are saying that we need to add on things to our learning. The Nefesh HaChaim wrote that we must do Teshuvah as we learn Torah, and the Chazon Ish wrote that we must daven as we learn Torah.

There seems to be a great contradiction, however. The Chazon Ish (*Igros*, Vol. I, Letter 3) himself wrote that "the main learning of Torah is when it is constant and uninterrupted. Constant learning is the secret to holiness, and if someone interrupts his learning, his learning is like torn pieces, and it is as if he has gathered air."

How, then, is one allowed to interrupt his learning for Teshuvah and Tefillah?

Also, Chazal (Avos 3:7) warned that if someone interrupts his learning even to look at a nice tree, he is liable to death. Even though he has stopped to contemplate the greatness of Hashem, still, he was not allowed to interrupt his learning. How, then, can one stop in the middle of his learning to daven or to do Teshuvah?

It must be because the Torah is only continued through Tefillah and Teshuvah. So without Tefillah and Teshuvah, there is no Torah, because it can't continue without them.

This is because learning Torah requires a connection with Hashem. Hashem, the Torah, and the Jewish people are one; the Torah by itself is not one – it is only "one" when it is together with Hashem. So if a person learns Torah but he is far from Hashem – either because he isn't *davening* to Him or because he isn't doing Teshuvah – this will make his learning "like torn pieces to him."

The words here were already written long before, and they are clear; it is just that we have to actually see them. We need to see that learning Torah is connected with a bond with Hashem, and this was always the way of our earlier leaders.

What Is The Main Thing - Torah, or Hashem?

We are speaking about *emunah*. We must know that Torah and *emunah* in Hashem are not two different subjects. They must be connected, by essence.

The *yetzer hora* convinces a person that *emunah* is more of an intellectual matter, while a person's actual heart and focus should be on his learning, and that one is allowed to be disconnected in this way. But there is no such thing! Such a mentality is not written in any place!

This mistaken attitude must come from the fact that a person is so used to forgetting about Hashem. We make a blessing before we learn Torah so that we can be reminded of Who gave us the Torah. We must be connected with Hashem both before we learn Torah and as we learn Torah. It is clear to all that we must learn Torah, but we must also never forget for Whom we are learning. *Emunah* and Torah have to be equally important to us. Our learning Torah has to also be nursed from our *emunah*, and not just from our intellect.

If a person learns Torah and tries to figure it out without any intention of deepening his *emunah*, Teshuvah or Tefillah through it, he is lowering the importance of the Torah, *chas v'shalom*.

"The Torah is precious to Hashem" – (*chaviva oiraisa kamei d'kudsha berich hu*). The Torah is precious to Hashem because He is one with the Torah; since the purpose of mankind is to become attached to Hashem, we must know our purpose and the *tool* that brings us to that purpose. If a person uses that "*tool*" (Torah) to get to Hashem, then he understands why the Torah is precious to Hashem; he understands that Hashem and the Torah are one.

For this reason, the Nefesh HaChaim wrote that one must include Hashem in his learning, even while he learns.

But if a person *chas v'shalom* is disconnected from Hashem in his heart and he is only involved in "learning", he loses the value of Torah, and he insults it. The Torah is precious if it is "one" with Hashem, but without Hashem in the picture, it loses its value. Besides for the fact that such a person doesn't have Hashem in his life, he also loses the worth of his learning.

The Jewish people are also precious to Hashem; we were chosen amongst all the nations. This is also because Hashem is one with the Jewish people.

If a person doesn't have Hashem in his life, then he doesn't either really have importance for other Jews. He has the "*Shema Yisrael*" part, but not the "*Hashem elokeinu*" part!

If a person wants to internalize how learning Torah is the most important mission he has on this world, what should be his mentality? What can he think to feel how special the Torah is from all the other mitzvos?

The Nefesh HaChaim lists many great things about learning the Torah: it can change decrees, it draws down heavenly sustenance, it sustains all the universes, it can revive the dead, and other things as well. But what is the deepest quality that is contained in learning Torah? What can we think about that will give us the most importance possible toward it?

To say that the deepest thing that learning Torah achieves is that it merits a person to get

resurrected from the dead is still just being superficial. Yes, the Torah merits a person to be revived from the dead, but why? The answer is because the revival of the dead in the future will be a revelation of Hashem. Our purpose is to become attached with Hashem, and the tool that brings this is about is the Torah.

Our learning Torah has to be us “one” with Hashem. If one remembers this when he learns – if one learns Torah and he wants to get to that oneness with Hashem – then he must reveal his *emunah* in Hashem, and he must also firmly believe that Hashem gave us the Torah. Hashem said about the Torah that He cannot part from it; the whole purpose of learning Torah is so that we attach ourselves to Hashem through it.

Unifying With Hashem - Our Whole Life

Thus, Torah unifies us with Hashem, and in order to reach this unity, we need to reveal Hashem in our life. If we have sins on us, this holds back the revelation, and that is why we need Teshuvah.

If a person wants to internalize what the point of life is, he needs to be cautious of a certain mistaken mentality: it's possible that a person always thinks that the purpose of life is Torah. That is true – utterly true. But why, indeed, is that the purpose? Why is Torah specifically our purpose in life? The Nefesh HaChaim says because there is nothing that connects a person more with Hashem than learning Torah.

Since this is so, we need to reveal this in our soul.

Let us clarify even more what is meant here: it's possible that a person knows in his mind that “Hashem and the Torah are one”, but what is he thinking as he's actually learning? Does he want to connect with Hashem through his learning? If he does, he would do Teshuvah, because since he wants the connection, he will realize that he has to remove the barriers that are holding back the connection; and he would also daven to Hashem, as the Chazon Ish wrote.

A person needs to receive the proper outlook to have on life. Life is one thing alone: to unify with Hashem. How do we unify with Him? First of all, we need *emunah* - to believe He exists. Without knowing He exists, a person can't unify with Him.

Emunah does not mean an intellectual belief, but a recognition in one's heart! When *emunah* is in one's heart, and a person realizes clearly that the purpose of learning the Torah is to unify with Hashem – and that is why one must never cease from learning Torah, so that the connection is never broken – such a person always lives with the Torah as a way to be connected with Hashem.

These words are simple and clear, and they are already written in *sefer Nefesh HaChaim*. But they must become to us a way of life, not as mere knowledge. We have to reveal this fact in our life – that Hashem, the Torah, and the Jewish people are all one.

May Hashem help all of us to truly serve Him, and that we should all soon merit the revelation of His glorious kingship.

PART TWO:

MATTERS OF *CHOCHMAH*\INTELLECT

Chapter Ten

Unifying Everything Into One Point

The Simple Approach Combined With the Intellectual Approach

When we come to speak about matters in Avodas Hashem, there are two ways how we can go about this. One way is to speak of it with a simple approach, and this is called *peshitus* (simplicity). The other way is to speak about it intellectually - to utilize our mind's thinking abilities of *Chochmah* (wisdom), *Binah* (contemplation) and *Daas* (connection to our knowledge).

It is essentially a question of which path to take. Should we start with the simple approach so that we can get to the simple awareness of Hashem, or should we start by thinking about this very intellectually (so that we can arrive at this simple reality)? Either way, the goal is the same: we are trying to reach Hashem, Who is defined by the *sefarim hakedoshim* as the most simple Reality that there is.

If we take the path of simplicity, then our job is not complicating, because it is a simple approach. Simplicity is that a person thinks about Hashem - simply, at all times, verbally and mentally as much as each person can. The goal is to be able to live simply with Hashem throughout the day - in our words we speak, and in the thoughts we think. That is if we take the simple approach.

But as a person expands his mind more, his heart is still closed, and simplicity will actually become very difficult to work with. This is because the intellect, which has now grown, is the opposite of simple thinking, and when the intellect is mainly at work, the heart, which is the source of simple thinking, actually becomes concealed! If this is the case, it will be easier for a person to take the intellectual route and from that, to come to reach Hashem.

However, when it comes to Avodas Hashem, "all paths are dangerous." If a person only involves his intellect in Avodas Hashem (and he only thinks deeply, never simply), then there is a danger that only intellect speaks to him, and he will never reach his heart, which is the ability to live simply with Hashem at all times. On the other hand, if a person only takes the path of simplicity, he won't have this problem, but he will have a different problem: it will be very challenging for him to absorb these concepts, because he is dealing with facts that aren't tangible at first, and his mind isn't strong enough to comprehend these matters. What will happen is that because he can't comprehend these matters, he is apt to think that he is just imagining these concepts, and the result will be that he will become very disconnected from himself.

Which path, then, do we take? Do we go with simplicity, or do we go with the intellectual approach? Such a decision really needs a prophet to decide; the Ramban writes that in the time of the prophets, everyone would come to them, and the prophet would tell him what his soul needed to accomplish on this world. If a person takes the wrong path of Avodas Hashem in life, he actually causes destruction to his soul in the process! If a person wants to be successful in life, he really should cry to Hashem about this for days and nights, until he clarifies which path to take in how to serve Hashem.

Of course, there are many more paths in Avodas Hashem besides for the two which we mentioned, but these two are the root paths from which all other paths stem out of. There are two general ways how we turn to Hashem: either through simplicity (to simply think about His existence), or through probing the matter with our intellect.

The words in the coming chapters are the second way, which is the intellectual approach. If someone feels that his path to take is simplicity – he feels that simplicity is what speaks more to his heart – then he needs to hear something else other than the following words. It is not because he is incorrect; it is rather because each person has to serve Hashem according to the path that is appropriate for his soul.

We have given this introduction so that we can be clear which path we are taking, as we discuss the words in the coming chapters.

Wisdom Unifies

It is written (Tehillim 104:24), "*You made them all with wisdom.*" All of Creation is a wisdom! This is not by chance. The power of wisdom – *Chochmah* – really contains everything, and it can come and unify everything. If it wouldn't, we wouldn't be able to say, "*You made them all with wisdom.*"

Before the world was created, it was a state of "*Hashem was One, and His Name was One.*" After the world was created, this oneness still continues. Day and night are called "one day". The day is a revelation of the oneness found in Creation; and the root of all creations, which is the Jewish people, are called "one": "*You are One, and Your Name is One, and who is like Your nation, Yisrael, one nation in the earth.*"

This applies to our mission as follows.

Chochmah\wisdom is when we take details and connect them. *Chochmah* is supposed to bring us to come to unify everything. Anyone who realizes the inner essence of *Chochmah* can see that this is the whole point of *Chochmah*: to unify details, to reveal the root of all details.

This is also the power in Creation known as *achdus* (unity).

Anyone hearing this the first time will find it very strange. When a person isn't there in the point we are describing, it does seem very perplexing: What does *Chochmah*\wisdom have to do with *Achdus*\unity?! It sounds more like another detail about *Chochmah*, but how can unity be the entire essence of *Chochmah*?!

But if one understands the depth of Creation, he knows that all of Creation is really all about unity.

The Inner Source of Wisdom - The Power of Unity in the Heart

There are three levels of *achdus*: the first level is called *achdus* (unity), the higher level is called *echad* (one), and the highest level is called *yachid* (individual).

The first level, *achdus*, is when two things are separate, and they become unified. The higher level, *echad*, is when they are one to begin with. The highest level, *yachid*, is when there is nothing except Hashem – the recognition of *Ain Od Milvado*.

In order to aspire to reach Hashem, the tool to get to Him is by turning all of Creation into one unit. Only through this can we reveal the Creator of the world, Who is *yachid*, because there is none other besides for Him.

When the various forces in our soul are scattered and not connected into one unit – and when there is disparity among people – there is separation in the world, and the world cannot be a tool to hold the presence of Hashem.

We are living after the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, which was destroyed because of baseless hatred. This hatred “still dances among us” (Yoma 69b). Baseless hatred (*sinas chinam*) is a force of separation in the world, which is the opposite of the *Beis Hamikdash*, the place in the world that held the *Shechinah*. In each person's heart, there can be a personal “*Beis Hamikdash*” – when we reveal Hashem inside us. Baseless hatred, though, holds back one's personal *Beis Hamikdash* within, because the disparity within a person doesn't allow the unity to enter.

The power of *achdus*\unity is located in the heart, and from it, the rest of the body thrives on. It is the power which connects all of Creation together. “There is nothing that is not hinted to in the Torah.” This is because Torah, the essence of all wisdom, contains everything. This is the secret that *Chochmah*\wisdom accomplishes.

Chochmah is also called “wisdom of the heart”, as it is written (Shemos 35:10), “*And all those who are wise of heart.*” It is also written (Koheles 1:16), “*My heart has seen much wisdom.*” When a person only has *Chochmah* in his intellect, it's not really *Chochmah*, and such knowledge is just a scattered kind of wisdom; the facts to such a person don't bear any connection to each other. *Chochmah* is only considered *Chochmah* when a person's knowledge is in his heart – “wise of heart.” The power of *achdus*\unity found in the heart is the source of all wisdom, and all wisdom stems from this power.

The fact that we have 613 mitzvos seems to imply that we have many “separate” tasks to fulfill. But there is one root that unifies all this together: Rav Saadiah Gaon writes that the positive commandment “*I am Hashem your G-d*” is the root of all the positive commandments, and the commandment “*You shall not have any other gods*” is the root of all negative commandments. Chazal

(Makkos 24a) tell us that these first two commandments were told to us directly by Hashem; if so, why do we need all the other mitzvos? It is because the entire Torah is about unity – to show how the first two commandments unify all 613 mitzvos together.

At the giving of the Torah, Hashem opened up all seven layers of heaven and showed us that there is nothing else besides Him (Devorim Rabbah 7:9). The root and source of all wisdom is this – *Ain Od Milvado*, there is nothing besides for Hashem. This is *yachid* – the deepest manifestation of unity.

Unifying Everything Into One

What is our inner mission that is hidden from us?

There are many works of *mussar* that have been written throughout the generations. When a person learns *mussar*, and surely when he learns a lot of *mussar sefarim*, he sees many points that he has to work on, and these are all truthful points. They all come from one pure source, and all the advice that a person sees in the *sefarim* are holy and true. The problem is, though, that there are so many details, and it is overwhelming.

However, here lies the secret to success – or failure.

If a person sees one underlying point from all the *mussar sefarim* he learns, he will be successful. If he sees this point and that point, though, he is already on his way toward failure.

What we need to do is to learn how to see one point alone throughout all the *mussar* we learn. In this way, we will find ourselves in a world of *achdus*, because all the details will be unified into one point. This will serve as a tool for us to connect with Hashem.

But if a person learns *mussar sefarim* and he sees more than one point contained in them, and he looks at all this information as many pieces of knowledge and advice – this is already a viewpoint of separation, and it distances a person from connecting with Hashem.

It is not easy to see the one point that unifies all the information one sees in the *mussar sefarim*. We are not used to thinking this way. The very way we live contradicts this way of thinking, because life is full of vast details, and we are not used to taking all the information and unifying it into one. In addition to this, we are after the sin of Adam, after the sin of the Calf, and after the destruction of the second *Beis Hamikdash*, and all this has wreaked much havoc on our souls.

In order to build a house, you take a bunch of bricks and stack them up together, unifying them all into one piece. When the *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed, all the bricks of this “house” were separated, and each brick was now by itself. In our own soul, this can happen as well – when the structure of the soul is split apart and scattered around into parts, there is an inner destruction to the person, and a person cannot connect with Hashem like this; He cannot find Hashem or sense Him.

“With wisdom a house is built.” (Mishlei 24: 3). When a person wants to take all his knowledge and let it fill his heart, he needs to unify it all together. That is how his knowledge can become like *“a pure heart G-d gave me, and a proper spirit He renewed in my innards.”*

What we actually have to work on is small in comparison to our general mission. The general mission we have is to be able to acquire the proper viewpoint – to see how all of life is one piece, one unit.

“Hashem created man upright, but they seek many calculations.” (Koheles 7: 29). The “many calculations” which people have is the root of sin and is responsible for preventing one from finding Hashem in his heart. When a person has *yashrus* (straightness), he sees only one path in front of him,

because he sees straight. But when a person has “many calculations”, he sees many paths in front of him.

In order to build anything, we need to get used to living with a “unified” outlook – to live in a world of unity. This is the foundation of the structure we want to build.

Ponder One Point For A Long Time

These words are the foundation of everything, but they will seem very ambiguous at first. What is this “unity” we are referring to? How do we reveal it in our soul?

The following story illustrates the concept.

There was a well-known method used by Reb Yeruchem Levovitz zt”l that a person should take one thought and then ponder it for a few months. One time Reb Yeruchem was talking to a student after he delivered a discourse, and he asked him, “How long do you think it took me to prepare this *shmuess*?”

The student replied, “Two hours.” Reb Yeruchem replied, “It took me more than that.” The student then guessed, “Four hours?” Reb Yeruchem again told him, “More than that.” Eventually, Reb Yeruchem told him, “You aren’t even close to how much time it took me. It took me half a year to prepare for this *shmuess*!”

What is the meaning behind this story? It did not take Reb Yeruchem Levovitz half a year to understand the material he was going to deliver; he was brilliant. It took him half a year to prepare because he had to think it over and live with it and breathe it, constantly probing its depths. Only after doing this for six months did he feel that it was ready to be given over.

What we learn from this is that being successful in Avodas Hashem is not about increasing the quantity of our actions. Our main job is to keep thinking about one point, and to live with it for a while.

Usually, when a person seeks inspiration, he goes to hear a lecture. The next week he hears another lecture about that week’s *parsha*. At best, all he remembers from any of these lectures is some mark that was left on him. He remains with some small inspiration from it, but that’s it. We don’t mean to poke fun at any of these lectures; they all contain points of spirituality that are true. But hearing this lecture and that lecture doesn’t build a person.

If we want to enter the inner outlook, which is the “unified” outlook – *achdus* – we need to have the tools in order to receive it. If a person tries to work on many different points depending on the time he’s at – on Purim he tries to improve on one area, on Pesach he tries to work on a different area, during Sefiras HaOmer he works on another area and on Shavuot he works on another area – if this is how he serves Hashem, he will be all mixed up, and he will never build himself! He might get inspired every here and there, but he will never build up anything for himself.

When it comes to knowing information, the more a person expands his mind, the more knowledge he can think about. But when it comes to building oneself into one unit, a person has to take one point and stick with it. “Doing more good deeds” isn’t the point here.

This is how a person can give himself the tool that is called “unity”. When a person works on many areas at once, not only will he become confused, but his outlook on everything is separated and scattered. He loses the outlook of unity, and he will not be able to truly serve Hashem.

Therefore, before we learn about the plan of Avodas Hashem, we must first be aware of the root of it

all – we must make sure that we are immersed in one point alone. A person should take one point he knows about and think about it. “*On my bed at night, I requested that which my soul loves.*” When you go to sleep, think about the point you have decided to stick with, and when you get up in the morning, continue to think about it. Let it become a part of your life.

Seeing How Everything Reveals Hashem

All of us have heard much and read much on how to better ourselves. All the information we have heard and read is true, but the question is, where to start??

How can we take all our thoughts and unify them?

It is written, “*For My honor I created it.*” Creation is a revelation of Hashem’s honor. Everything contains in it the honor of Hashem, and that is the depth of *Chochmah*. To see the wisdom in something is essentially to see the honor of Hashem in something – to see how something reveals Hashem’s glory.

To see how each thing actually reveals the glory of Hashem is already the second stage, but the first stage is to realize that everything reveals Hashem. After one comes to the conclusion that everything contains the glory of Hashem, he can then figure out how.

When a person looks around at his house, he sees a table, a chair, and other items. It seems that these are all separate items, but really, a person can see one thing alone in all of them: they were all created to give honor to Hashem!

From a superficial outlook, it appears that in a house there are many items, but if we have the inner perspective, we can see how they are unified. The unified outlook is to have a deep look at things, and not to use the childish outlook we are born with.

Our *neshamah* only sees the honor of Hashem in something. The *neshamah* is called “*kavod*”\honor. If a person wants to become connected to his *neshamah*, and to all the other souls of the Jewish people, he needs to see how Hashem is in everything, how each thing can reveal Him somehow.

Revealing the Neshamah

What is holding back all people from reaching inner perfection?

Chazal state that as long as Amalek lives, there cannot be a Redemption. Amalek detracts from the honor of Hashem. This evil nation epitomizes the evil trait of *leitzanus* (scoffing), which is the opposite of *kavod* (honor).

If we want to get rid of the “Amalek within” our soul, we need to utilize *kavod*.

A person with a superficial outlook, who isn’t used to these concepts, will think, “How do we reveal the *kavod* of Hashem in everything?!”

But there is an inner outlook which is totally different than this way of thinking. A person should go for three, four or five months of thinking about how we are all created to give honor to Hashem. We don’t know how, but we believe that everything somehow reveals His honor. One can repeat to Himself this fact, again and again, until it penetrates his heart.

We first have to think about how Hashem created the whole world and each thing in the world for His honor, and we need to live with this fact, constantly.

After one gets used to this, he reveals his inner self - his *neshamah* - which is a tool for Hashem to reside in him. On one hand, he gets used to thinking one thought and pondering it, and on the other hand, he looks for Hashem in everything. He becomes a tool for unity, and he searches for Hashem in everything. He is connected to Hashem.

These words are a small glimpse into the proper outlook we should achieve. The truth is that the words here are not for everyone. If someone feels that the words here speak to his heart, fine, but if the words here don't speak to you, then you will need a different way than what we have said here.

May Hashem give the *siyata d'shmaya* to each Jew that he find Hashem in his heart - each person, according to the path he needs to take.

[\[1\]](#) *Zohar*

Source: <https://bilvavi.net/english/bilvavi-part-6-chapter-09-emunah-torah>