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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 approach of simplicity (so that we can get to the simple awareness of Hashem), or should we start by thinking about this matter on an intellectual level? 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 so complicating, because by very definition 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 the approach of “simplicity.”

But as a person expands his mind more, his **heart** still remains 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, we must keep in mind that 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, “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 the force 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 second level is called *echad* (one), and the third 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, and 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; it is *echad* and *achdus* in its simplest form.

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.

But herein 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, because they will seem very ambiguous at first. What is this “unity” we are referring to? How do we reveal it in our soul?

There was a well-known method used by Reb Yeruchem Levovitz zt”l that one should take one thought and 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 anything.

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 things 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, 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 holds back the Redemption? What is holding back all people from reaching the inner perfection?

Chazal state that as long as Amalek lives, there cannot be a Redemption. Amalek detracts from the honor of Hashem. This 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. In this way, one 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, good, 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.

Source: <http://bilvavi.net/english/bilvavi-part-6-chapter-10-unifying-everything>