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## Fixing Your Water - 004 Solving The Desire To Take Pleasure | Part 1

### *Summary of The Previous Chapter*

We have so far explained that besides for the fact that the element of water in the soul in us is the root of seeking pleasure, there are additional factors which can lead us to pursue pleasure.

It has been explained that a person might develop a tendency to get 'dragged' after a pleasure, and as a result, he might get used to becoming a habitual taker of pleasure. Previously, we spoke about how to counter the nature of seeking pleasure (specifically with regards to the desire to have fun in the water), by getting used to some discomfort.

There is more to discuss about the nature in a person to take pleasure, and how we can solve it.

### **1. Inevitable Taking: The Proper Perspective**

Although a person has a nature to take pleasure, at the same time, he naturally does not have a good feeling when he has to receive pleasure from people. This is because we feel indebted to the one who gives him something, and this makes us uncomfortable inside.

When a person needs *tzedakah*, for example, although he will take the money, deep down he is uncomfortable from having to take things from people. Why? Because now he feels like he owes something to the person who gave him the money.

Hashem created all of us in a way that we all need to take things from each other. All of Creation gives and receives from each other, so in concept, we must all accept this fact of life, that we ultimately have to receive from people. In essence, there is nothing wrong with taking pleasure, because that's the way Creation is designed. We just need to know how and when to take pleasure in a healthy way.

A person needs to be willing to accept this fact about life, and this will rectify an unhealthy desire to take things.

### **2. Getting To Used To Giving**

Along with this, a person should also make use of the power of giving to others, through various ways of benefitting other and giving pleasure to others. This will help counter the habit of taking.

### **3. Giving As You Take**

We will also add on another point to the solution, which is deeper: When you take something, make sure you give something back in return (besides for getting used to giving in general). If you ever have to receive pleasure from others, make sure you are giving something back at the same time.

The point is that within the very act of taking, there should be giving involve. (This does not even have to be done *lishmah* (for the sake of Heaven); it can be done even *shelo lishmah*).

### **4. Accepting Responsibilities That Are Non-Pleasurable**

There is another point as well that we will mention as part of the solution.

Each day in *Kerias Shema* (and in the blessings preceding the *Shema*), we take upon ourselves the *kabalas ol malchus shomayim* - to bear upon ourselves the yoke of Heaven. We "take" upon ourselves each day the responsibility to dedicate ourselves to keeping the Torah's mitzvos, and this is a kind of "taking" which does not give us pleasure, but it rather serves to get used to responsibilities. This shows us that there is a kind of "taking" which is not about pleasure, but it is about taking upon ourselves responsibilities.

Thus, if you get used to taking upon yourself responsibilities, you weaken your habit to take pleasures. Through the power of *kabalas ol* - 'taking' upon ourselves responsibilities - we lessen our habit to 'take' pleasure.

### **Weakening The Pursuit of Pleasure - Through Transcending Pleasure**

Until now, we explained about the abilities in the soul of giving and taking. Generally, man is identified as the 'giver' in Creation, while woman is called the 'receiver'. But there is an ability in our soul that goes above our power of giving. Giving is not the entire depth to our existence. Rav Dessler zt"l writes extensively about the power of giving, but, this is not all there is to our existence. There is to more to who we are than the ability to give.

Our soul's root abilities are *havayah* (existence), *emunah* (faith), and *taanug* (pleasure). Through *taanug*\pleasure, we can move to a higher point in our soul and reach *emunah*\faith, and from there, we can reach our *havayah*. But most people remain at their level of *taanug*, and they never use it to reveal their point of *emunah* (and certainly not their point of *havayah*). Thus, most of the world runs after pleasure, and usually, it is an unhealthy kind of pleasure. It is because people do not know of anything deeper than pleasure; they are unaware of the higher parts in the soul, which are *emunah* and *havayah*.

So what we need to do is go beyond *taanug*. We can do this by using our *taanug* to reach the point in the soul above *taanug*, which is by uncovering *emunah* - namely, that Hashem runs the world.

*Emunah*, without getting into all the details, is to believe in Hashem and that He runs the world. This is a deeper part in our self than our *taanug*\pleasure. By accessing our point of *emunah*, we can go above our initial point of *taanug*, and then we won't run after *taanug* so much. We won't get dragged helplessly after a pleasure, because we will identify with concepts that are above pleasure, which do not involved sensual pleasure.

### **Emunah and Havayah**

Higher than our *emunah* is our *havayah* (sense of existence). When we reveal our *havayah*, we go above even our *emunah*.

*Eemunah* is usually accessed when we feel times of darkness; as it is written, “Your faith at nights.” But our *havayah* is to recognize an unchanging reality as it is, even when we are not in a time of darkness. The *havayah* of Hashem is a constant reality, and the inner self of a person is a spark of the *havayah* of Hashem, thus, our inner self is really constant.

*Eemunah* is essentially our point of *ayin*\nothingness, which we access when we nullify our sense of “I” (otherwise known as “*bittul ani*” – nullifying the ego). It is also called our point of “*shelilah*”, “negation.” It is the point in our selves where we negate and nullify our “I.”

But our *havayah* is called our point of ‘*chiyuvi*’\positivity. It is above the point of *bittul ani*\ayin\emunah.

Our deep inner *avodah* is to move back and forth between our points of *emunah* and *havayah*. This also reflects our general *avodah* of *rotzoh v’shov* (“running and returning”, to constantly be in movement in our *Avodas Hashem*.) In this way, we transcend our point of *taanug* - and then we will find that won’t need *taanug* as much.

(How to reach our *havayah* is a discussion for itself, and it merits a whole series to explain it).

Most of the world runs after unhealthy pleasure, because since they do not know how to go beyond pleasure, they never revealed *emunah* or *havayah* in their life, and therefore they end up seeking unhealthy pleasures. This is the situation we mostly find in the world. By accessing our *emunah*, we weaken our pursuit of *taanug* to a very large extent (not totally; but to a very prominent extent).

Rav Dessler (in the end of *sefer Michtav M’Eliyahu*, Vol. I) writes about two powers of our soul called *havayah* (existence) and *hasagah* (achievement). When we achieve something, this is pleasurable, thus, *hasagah* is parallel to *taanug*. But we have a deeper point in us, *havayah*, which is to go above our need for pleasurable achievements; to derive a sense of pleasure from our very existence, which is a higher kind of pleasure than the sense of our achievements.

### **‘Roots’ and ‘Branches’**

We always need to mainly work on the root of the problem. The root of the problem of seeking pleasure is that as we seek pleasure, we become confined to seeking pleasure. Thus, we need to learn how to go above pleasure: first, by accessing our point of *emunah* (and later, by reaching our *havayah*).

Along with this, we also need to work on the branches of the problem, which are the topics we discussed earlier in this chapter: to accept the fact that we need to take sometimes, to get used to giving, to give even as we are in the midst of taking, and to get used to non-pleasurable activities.

Although it is mainly our *avodah* to work with the root of the solution, this does not mean that we should completely ignore the branches of the problem (which is that we get dragged after pursuing pleasures). Rather, we should mainly work with the root solution, while at the same time also putting effort into working with the branches of the problem.

In general, whenever there is a problem in the soul, there is always the ‘root’ of the problem, and the ‘branches’ of the problem; the ‘root’ of the solution mainly lays in fixing the ‘root’ of the problem. Practically speaking, though, we always need to work with **both** the ‘root’ and ‘branches’ of the problem in order to solve the issues. But, we should mainly put our efforts into working with the ‘root’ of the problem, while putting in a smaller amount of effort (no less important) on the “branches” of a problem.[\[1\]](#)

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[1] After the shiur, the Rav clarified to a questioner: “Even our spiritual pleasures are meant so we can connect to our higher source. Pleasure, even spiritual pleasure, isn’t everything. Although pleasure in spirituality enables us to connect to spirituality, it is not everything. One of the reasons why we have suffering is because life is not entirely about pleasure; although it is true that we mainly connect to Hashem through having pleasure in our connection with Him [as stated in the beginning of *Mesillas Yesharim*] sometimes we need to learn how to connect him purely from our *emunah*, and for this reason, Hashem sends us suffering sometimes. Of course, pleasure has a very prominent role in life, as we see from the concept of *Oneg Shabbos*; and we also need enjoyment in our Torah learning. But it is just that spiritual pleasure isn’t everything. If pleasure is everything, then a person will learn Torah as long as he’s getting out of enjoyment out of it, but as soon as he stops enjoying it, he gets burnt out and leaves the *Beis HaMidrash*...

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