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## Reaching Your Essence - 005 Balancing Limits and Freedom

### ***The Yechidah - The Place In Your Soul That Reveals The Infinite***

We will continue the discussion we began on how a person can reveal his identity as being that of a *neshamah* (soul).

Our soul has five names to it – *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, *Chayah* and *Yechidah*. The true “I” is the *Yechidah* of our soul.

The *Yechidah* of the soul is a feminine expression, as opposed to the word *yachid*, which would be a masculine expression. This is because the *Yechidah* is the tool a person can use to connect man to Hashem, similar to how a woman connects herself to her husband by allowing herself to become a receptacle for him.

If a person wants to be a container for Hashem’s Presence – if he wants to feel Hashem inside him and with him, that He fills all of existence – that He is everything – in order to feel this, a person has to reveal the Infinite Light in his own soul. This is the *Yechidah* of the soul, which is the tool to reveal how Hashem is endless, how He fills everything.

When we speak about this concept of *Ein Sof*, the Endless, it’s the opposite of a *sof*, an end. So in order to understand what *Ein Sof* is, we need to know its opposite concept, which is the idea of *sof*, an end.

### ***The End, and Beyond the End***

Normally, there is an end to everything. There is nothing that has no end; everything has its limits, its rules, its end.

We can see this from time. Throughout the end of many times of the year, we keep meeting up with Dovid *HaMelech*.

The end of the day is nighttime, in particular, midnight, as we see from Dovid *HaMelech*, who hung a harp on his bed which would blow at midnight, which signaled the end of the day. The end of the week is *Melave Malka*, which is called the “meal of Dovid *HaMelech*”. The end of the month is *Rosh Chodesh* – it is the end of the last month, and the beginning of the next month. *Rosh Chodesh* is also called the festival of Dovid *HaMelech*. The end of the year is *Rosh HaShanah*, which is about declaring Hashem’s kingship. Dovid *HaMelech* is the epitome of a king on this world, thus he is a parable to the kingship of Hashem, so *Rosh HaShanah* is also connected with Dovid *HaMelech*. Every 7 years is

*Shemittah*, and Chazal say that *Moshiach* can come on *Motzei Sheviis*; and *Moshiach* comes from Dovid *HaMelech*. So the end of every 7 year period is also connected with Dovid *HaMelech*.

On a year of *Yovel*, which is after 49 years - 7 cycles of *Shemittah* - it is the time when slaves go free. *Yovel* represents the concept of no more boundaries, the *Ein Sof*, the endless.

There are two people who are called "Moshiach" - *Moshiach* ben Dovid, and *Moshiach* ben Yosef. What is the depth of this concept? Why do we need two Moshiachs?

Yosef is from the word *sof*, end. Dovid represents the *Ein Sof*, as we have seen above. Whenever there is a *sof*, an end, after that is the point of the *Ein Sof*, which is represented by *Moshiach* ben Dovid. So *Moshiach* ben Yosef represents a *sof*, while *Moshiach* ben Dovid represents the *Ein Sof* - the point of the endless, which comes after the endpoint.

Now we will draw this closer to our soul.

In each of our souls, there is a point of *Moshiach* ben Dovid and a point of *Moshiach* ben Yosef. We can reveal the light of the *Ein Sof* in our soul - after we reach the *sof* of our soul. As an example, the Zohar says that at death, a person can see the *Shechinah*, because when we get to the end, we can then receive higher comprehension, the comprehension that comes after the endpoint - which is the *Ein Sof*. When we get to the last point of what we can comprehend, after that, all we can do is "jump" to Heaven, to the Endless. "The task is not upon you to complete" - after we do as much as we can, from there, we can jump beyond the endpoint and enter into the Endless.

There are two ways to get to the Endless (the *Ein Sof*). One way is to get there step-by-step, until we reach the endpoint of our soul, when are standing at the point of the Endless; and when we get to that point, all we can do is to take a "jump" in order to get to it. The other way, though, is, to begin our entire *avodah* already with the ability to jump straight into the Endless.

The truth is that if we take the first method, which is based on steps of growth, then when we get to the end, we won't be able to take the jump anyway, because jumping is the antithesis of everything we had been doing until then, which was all about taking steps. But if we already develop from the start our power to "jump", then when we get to the endpoint, we will be able to take that jump, because we will already be familiar with what it is.

### ***The Understanding of "No Barriers"***

There is a deep parable from the Baal Shem Tov to explain this concept - of how we reach the *Ein Sof* of Hashem.

Once there was a king who wanted to see how much his son loved him. So he built a fortress around his palace and sent his son out of the palace, so that his son will break through the fortress and get to him.

The son thought, "How will I be able to break through this fortress? It will take me a lifetime. Why did Hashem place me outside the fortress if it's impossible to break through?"

He thought and thought, and then he came to the following conclusion. "It must be that there really is no fortress here, because if there was, why would my father place me outside of it if I can't get to him, when he wants me to get to him? It must be that this whole fortress is a mirage. Maybe it's magic. But it's definitely not a real fortress."

This is a deep parable. It means that we really do not have any barriers to get to Hashem. Nothing is

really holding us back, even though it appears that it is.

However, this deep understanding about life is only one side of the coin. The other side of the coin in our life is that, yes, we do have difficulties. We must also be aware that life is full of difficulties. We all have difficulties; there is no one who does not have difficulty.

How can we deal with them? Chazal say that the evil inclination gets stronger every day, and that we cannot overcome it unless Hashem helps us (*Sukkah 52a*). We are facing struggles that we simply cannot overcome with our human strength. So why did Hashem give us such a test, when we cannot overcome it? It is because Hashem wants us to take a jump. We cannot complete our task, but that doesn't exempt us, as Chazal say.

So we need to work hard in our Avodas Hashem, step by step, building and developing and improving ourselves, but we must also realize, that we also need to be able to take a jump, and we have the ability to do so - to take a giant leap and reach the unlimited.

The possuk says "Behold, it [the redemption] will jump over the mountains and skip over the hills". The meaning of this is, that we have a part of our avodah to "jump", to realize that we have no barriers, as the Baal Shem Tov said.

What does that mean?? We don't have any barriers?! We have problems! We have bad *middos*, we have desires, and we have sins, *chas v'shalom*. So we do have barriers! What does it mean then that there are really no barriers in our Avodas Hashem?

The answer is, there are five parts in your soul. From the viewpoint of either your *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah* or your *Chayah*, you have barriers. There is *avodah* and hard work to improve those layers of your soul. But when you gain the viewpoint of your *Yechidah*, which is the inner view, you see that there are no barriers.

So if a person *only* tries to break all the barriers that are in his way of serving Hashem, and he never awakens his actual "I", his *Yechidah*, then it will be very hard work, and not only that, but he won't get to the inner point of his soul. Hashem gave us a deeper power to work with in our avodah: our *Yechidah*, which tells us that there are no barriers in our avodah.

### **Two Viewpoints At Once**

Maybe a person will get carried away with this concept and say, "So you mean to say that I don't have to work hard at anything, because there are no barriers?" But this is erroneous, because we have other layers in our soul, our *Nefesh* through our *Chayah*, which feels that there are barriers. So yes, we do need to work hard to overcome struggles, because we have the four outer layers of our soul, which require us to work hard and grow in a step-by-step ladder.

We can compare this to someone who says "I am totally spiritual, because I have a *neshamah* in me. I don't have to eat or drink." He is being suicidal! So maybe a person will say, "Okay, so I am not a *neshamah*, because I will die if I don't eat or drink. So I must be a body, and not a soul." But that's also incorrect. As we explained previously, a person is not "black or white." We are a complicating existence. We are made up of many layers, and we need to balance out all our layers.

To illustrate, when you want to grow a garden, it's not enough to feed it and water it. You have to plow it properly and give it enough fertilizer. If you don't, the garden will not grow. It's not enough to simply feed it. There are other factors to consider.

So too, you are multi-faceted. You need to feed each part of your soul. This is how you build yourself.

You can't jump too many levels at once. But that's all within the first four layers of your soul. But in the *Yechidah* of your soul, in that deep place in yourself, nothing has to be built in a step-by-step manner. The *Yechidah* in you is not developed in the same way you work with your *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, *Neshamah*, or *Chayah*. It involves totally different thought patterns than what you are used to.

Here we come to a great fundamental in all our inner work. We have an inner point in us which is a whole different perspective, a whole different way to work with, and it gives us different comprehension. So if we want to identify ourselves as a soul, we need to carry over this perspective into all five parts of our soul. We have to keep identifying ourselves as our inner point. This will give us a change of perspective entirely towards our avodah than from what we are used to.

This concept will be explained more in detail, but to give a general outline of it, we have in us a *Yechidah*, which has a different kind of comprehension towards things. We all have it. But we have to believe that it is in us, and we must want to reveal it, and we must want to know how to reveal it.

A person can have two perspectives at once! He can be working to uncover the first four layers of the soul, while at the same time, he is aware that he is a *Yechidah*, and thus he can let the perspective of the *Yechidah* to carry over into any stage he is at. He can work hard, going in the steps of developing the soul, from lowest stage to the higher stages, while at the same time being aware, that there is a deep point in him which can realize, that there are really no barriers – from that point of view.

### ***How We Relate To Hashem***

To give a simple example of this concept, we know that Hashem fills the entire world. How can a person feel that Hashem feels the entire world? Do we really feel that way? We need to feel this reality. If we just know about it and we don't feel it, that means we don't consider it to be real.

If you get a bill from the bank and you don't pay it, it means you don't consider the bill to be real. You need to feel the reality, not just know about it in your mind. So too, we can't feel the reality of Hashem's existence if we just know about it. There is a deeper point in us which can feel that reality. Only through reaching one's inner understanding of the *Yechidah* can a person feel this. The other layers of our soul cannot arrive at this great perception.

Our bond with Hashem has many layers to it. At first we need to develop the bond in the lower layers of our soul, and then we can go higher and higher in it, until we get the deepest layer of the bond.

There are different ways how a person can relate to Hashem: "Hashem loves me", or "Hashem gives me my needs", or "I feel gratitude to Hashem", or "I feel the greatness of Hashem when I *daven*." These are all different angles of our bond with Hashem. Does each of these aspects contradict the other? No. To illustrate, if you have many children, you love all of them. Your love for one child doesn't get in the way of your love for the other child.

When a person *davens* to Hashem, how does he view this? Does he feel that he is on this earth while Hashem is in heaven? That is one perspective a person might have. Or, a person can daven to Hashem and feel that Hashem is next to him and that he is speaking to Him. Both of these views are correct, but to adapt one view alone is only half the picture.

Each person has different periods. Sometimes we relate to Hashem in the first way and sometimes we feel closer to the second method. We have times in which our heart is more open, like when we have happy occasions, and we can feel like Hashem is next to us in our actual life. But every person also has times in which his heart is closed up, times when he feels a great darkness in his life, and he feels like Hashem is in heaven, while he is on this earth, far from Him.

Indeed, Hashem is in heaven, while we are on earth. How are we able to develop a bond with Him, then? How can we bond with Him knowing that He is in heaven, while at the same time, to realize that He is literally next to us? The answer is: we have two opposite views going on in us at once. The outer layers of our soul relate to Hashem as being in heaven, while we are on earth, and that we have to climb the ladder of growth to get to Him. At the very same time, there is an inner perspective we can access, the view from our *Yechidah*, which already feels that Hashem is next to us, and that we can speak to Him because He is right next to us. The *Yechidah* in us says, Hashem is here, right next to you, because He fills all of existence.

We all want to get there, to the inner point of everything, to the complete bond with Hashem. If we want to put that goal into clearer, practical words: it is really the view from our *Yechidah*, which we need to get to.

But there are people who feel, “How can I get close to Hashem? I am on earth, while Hashem is high up in Heaven. How dare I speak to Him?”

There are also people who, if you tell them that your avodah is to feel Hashem’s existence in your heart, they will respond, “I am not one of the 36 hidden *tzaddikim*. I have sins. I know exactly where I’m holding. First I’ll try to keep a little *halachah*, the bare minimum of Yiddishkeit, which I need to improve on, before I become so lofty.”

He’s right, but he’s wrong at the same time. As a person is trying to be on this earth and be realistic and have his feet on this earth, at the same time, he also needs to realize that he can still find Hashem, even though he’s on this earth. Just like a person realizes that he needs to keep *halacha* and be realistic and be in touch with this earth, so can a person simply realize that he can realize the innermost point of the soul, which can bond with Hashem and realize the highest point of all, that Hashem is right next to him.

### ***Balancing Our Limits With Freedom***

There are people who live a very limited kind of life; they live a prisonlike kind of existence. They never buy anything more than what they absolutely have to. Such a lifestyle actually harms the soul, because it places limits on the soul as well. It takes the soul and locks it up. Humans have a need to expand a little past the absolute necessities. It is because while we must certainly be aware of our limits, we also have a deep need to expand a little past our limits.

Of course, if a person spends money like water, that is also bad. The need to expand past our limits has to be balanced. The sensible way is to be careful with your money, but to also put aside some money so you can buy something extra with it. In this way, you balance yourself .

“There is a rule, but for every rule, there is an exception”. What does this mean? It means that we have rules, which we need to follow in order to survive and be healthy, but we also need to come out of limits sometimes, or else we will suffocate. You need to develop a space you can go to in which you are free from limits. We need to come out of the limits we put ourselves in. This will feel like freeing our soul from its captivity.

It is important to have limits and rules in our life, but we need to balance this with knowing how to be free. We need to expand our soul a bit. We must have rules and limits in our lives – absolutely. Therefore, we need to go in steps in our growth. But there is also an ability in our soul to be above limits which we need to be aware of, at the same time.

We do not mean for one to have a life of total freedom from limits; such a life will not be a successful life. But there is a deep power in our soul to escape limits. As we all know, there is no job in which

there are no off days. People simply cannot work if they never have vacation from work.

*Chas v'shalom*, when a person uses this power for evil, he wishes to be free from the *mitzvos*. But the sensible way to use this power is to give yourself the ability to go free from certain limits. It is a power that comes from the deep point in your soul of your *Yechidah*, (and it is also known as the "fiftieth gate of holiness" in the soul). We all feel a need for freedom from limits. The question is if we are using it correctly or not. When it is used incorrectly, people use freedom for materialistic desires. They feel a need to go leave the country for vacations.

But the real way to use our power of freedom is, in the realm of the spiritual. We need freedom in our very *Avodas Hashem*. This does not mean that a person should abandon *Avodas Hashem* sometimes. It means that as you are involved in serving Hashem, you can serve Him sometimes through using your power of inner freedom.

### ***Examples of Using The Power of Freedom from Limits***

For example, the Ramban wrote that a person should think before he talks. This is a commendable thing to do, but it needs to be balanced. Is it always a good thing to be so exacting about every word that comes out of our mouth? No, it is not. We see that sometimes, we have to daven to Hashem and cry out to Him, without thinking into this beforehand. If we would think before davening about how we will daven, this is detrimental to our davening, because our davening has to flow out of us freely.

There is a kind of prayer called *tzaakah*, to cry out to Hashem when we are in pain, and we don't have to think beforehand about what we will say to Hashem. If we have to think about what we will say when we talk to Hashem, it shows we are not really in pain. A person in pain screams out, without organizing his thoughts. So there are times when we can't always think and be so organized.

There is a point in us which we need to develop and develop, and there is an inner point in our soul which is allowed to be set free; it doesn't have to be built in a step-by-step manner that we are used to from working with the outer four layers of our soul (*Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah* and *Chayah*).

Maybe a person will think that this means that we don't have to work hard and build ourselves and that we can do whatever we want. But this is wrong, because the Ramchal writes that even when we admonish ourselves, it should only be towards the outer layers of our soul. The inner point of our soul should be allowed to roam free, because its nature is to escape limits and be free.

To illustrate, a parent needs to let his child run around sometimes, so that the child can feel space in his life. But you can't let him run around in a place which is dangerous and he will hurt himself. So too, we need to be able to free, but that doesn't mean we can be free all the time, or else we will get hurt. But we definitely need to open our power of inner freedom.

How can we use our inner need for freedom? I will tell you that it is dangerous to use the power of freedom. Most people use it for inappropriate motives, as we can see from what goes in the world, that people who want to be free have no limits are destructive. Without rules, people would be at each other's throats.

The way to use the power of inner freedom is as therefore as follows: Remember the words of the Baal Shem Tov we brought before: that all 'barriers' in our *Avodas Hashem* are a mirage. That is the constructive way of how you can use your power of inner freedom. It is the power of the *Ein Sof* in your soul, which the outer layers of your soul cannot bring you to.

### ***Work and Freedom At Once***

Thus, your *avodah* is to utilize two different modes of consciousness at once. You need to build your "I", which is the perspective based upon the outer layers of your soul that require a step-by-step approach to build it. This entails hard work and following rules. But at the same time, you must also realize, that you have the ability to let yourself go free from limits, and this is not something you need to build step-by-step. The normal rules don't apply to this inner space.

So if we want to use our power of inner freedom correctly, then the way to do it is, make sure you are following all the rules you need in this world, which you need to do and continue; and to bear in mind that at the same time as you work to improve yourself, you also have a point in yourself which you don't need to work on to develop.

### **Balance**

To give an example of how we need this balance of limits and freedom, I knew a person who will come exactly five minutes before *davening* starts, every day. But he admitted to me that he feels a tremendous inner anxiety from this. The nature to be very exacting doesn't always come from a pure place within the soul; this kind of person will know very well how to keep to limits, but he imprisons his soul too much, because he has locked himself into a sort of self-imposed prison. He isn't balanced with the ability to be free.

There are many earnest people who serve Hashem that are like this; they excel when it comes to limiting themselves, but they aren't balanced, because they don't know how to free themselves from limits.

I am not saying you shouldn't come early to davening. The point is that if it is causing you to feel inner anxiety at this, if it causing you to have guilty thoughts if you don't come early to davening, then you are locking your soul up and placing it in a prison.

There are people who are very exacting to follow every law in *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law), but they don't know how to work with their soul. There are people who are actually found in the deepest levels of impurity even with all their strict observance, because since they don't know how their souls work, they end up falling very low spiritually - they fall into the in the 49<sup>th</sup> level of impurity, and sometimes even into the 50<sup>th</sup>.

### **Opening Yourself Up To Freedom**

So we need to reveal our power to be free, but it must come along with following the rules of all that we are required to do which we are familiar with; but we must not seek freedom out of a desire to throw off the rules.

I will try to explain how you can use it in a positive way.

There are people who will never buy a lottery ticket. This is an example of being too constricted. Don't buy lottery tickets all the time, but once in a while, you can buy one, just to open your soul to the concept of going free.

We all need to be balanced. If a person is always happy with himself but he never has aspirations to grow higher, this is one kind of negative extreme. Yet if a person only has aspirations and he doesn't know what it means to be content with himself, this is the opposite extreme, and it is also bad. He is too limited.

There are people who are always seeking "success" in everything, because they feel like they have a lot they must know about: "I must become very successful in serving Hashem..."

Others have a different problem, and they are confident that they know their souls very well. They never seek success, because they think they are already successful.

Both people are being extreme, because they aren't balanced. We must know our limits and be realistic, but we must also realize that we do have the power to "jump" in our spirituality to levels that are higher than the current point we are at.

### ***Believing In Your Ability To Take The Jump***

If we never believe in it, we will indeed break the key to escaping our limits. We need to believe that we have in ourselves the power to jump. That doesn't mean we must always be jumping. It just means that we need to be aware that there is such a concept, that we are able to jump. We must clearly believe that it exists, or else we will disable it from working.

When a person wants to build up his self - his true "I" - he must know that there is an "I" in him which he can understand. Although initially it is very hard for a person to understand who he really is, know that it is possible, and it is within your reach. When we have *emunah*, when we believe that we can understand ourselves, we have the key. If we give up because we know it's hard, then we destroy any possibility.

The *Yechidah* in us always exists, thus, we always have the ability to "jump" all the way until the highest point, even though the other layers in our soul are still in the development process and need more improvement. The *Yechidah* in us is already at the Infinite, ready to take the jump into the Infinite, into the complete connection with Hashem that we can have. We just have to use our power of *emunah* and believe that it exists in us! If we don't believe in its existence, then it won't work!

Rav Nachman of Breslev said, "There is no such thing as despair in the world." What is the depth of his statement? Don't people give up all the time? The deep understanding of it is very clear. What he meant was that if we reach our inner understanding of our *Yechidah*, we will be able to see how there is really no such thing as despair. We can reach an understanding that we can always be successful, and that there is no reason to give up. Our *Yechidah* understands this, but we need to access its understanding, by believing that we are able to reach such an understanding in ourselves.

If we don't believe we can get to our *Yechidah*, then we definitely will not have hope. If a person doesn't succeed at reaching it, it's because he isn't trying to connect to it.

Only if we believe in our *Yechidah* can we succeed in revealing its deep perspective [that we have described here]. This means for one to believe that he has in himself the deep ability to not be confined to any limits; just like you understand that you are limited, so can you understand, simply, that you also have a point in yourself that can reach the unlimited.

If a person only lives with rules and limits, he lives a very confined kind of life. He focuses on his failures: "I tried to get there, again and again, but I failed and I failed!!"

But when a person reveals from within himself that he can go free from limits and from step-by-step growth, he will have an opening to enter into the inner depths of his soul, which is his actual essence.

This is how you hold onto a little of *achdus* [the concept we elaborated upon in the previous chapter]. If you never believe in it, then you're not holding onto it. If you believe you can do it, though, then you are holding onto it.

### ***In Summary***

We are both limited and unlimited. We know we are limited, but we must also reach the understanding that we have in us an ability to be unlimited.

If a person only lives with rules and limits of his soul, with such an attitude, his life has already ended a long time ago. If a person believes that he can reach inner freedom and connect to the Endless, then he has the key.

We have two ways how we can use the power of *emunah* in our soul. We use *emunah* to believe in Hashem, Who is endless, but we also can use *emunah* to believe in ourselves, that we have in our soul a deep ability to connect to the Endless [in spite of the fact that we must also improve ourselves] - that we can connect ourselves to Hashem, Who is endless.

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