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בלבבי משכן אבנה



ספר זה עוסק בביאור פרטי מידת התאוה הרעה שבאדם, והדרכה מעשית לאופן תיקונה.

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BEHAALOSECHA PASSIONATE HEART & TORAH MIND

The Soul - The Internal Flame of Man Which Desires the Spiritual In the beginning of Parshas Behaaloscha, Rashi brings the statement of Chazal [concerning the lighting of the Menorah in the Beis HaMikdash] that "the flame should rise on its own." The Sages compared the neshamah (the Divine soul of a Jew) to a ner, a flame, for it is written, "The flame of G-d, is the soul of man." Just as the menorah was kindled in the Beis HaMikdash, where the flame would then rise on its own after it was lit, so must the soul of man, which is compared to a flame, rise on its own.

In the early stage of a person's life, the soul is mostly hidden. Man has the task to inspire himself and awaken the passionate spiritual desires of his soul, to reveal his neshamah. At first, one must exert oneself to acquire this spiritual passion, but eventually, the "flame should rise on its own" [his spiritual passion should come naturally to him]. The soul of man is likened to an inner flame. Just as a fire keeps getting bigger [as long as it isn't extinguished], so must a person increase his spiritual desire, the inner 'flame' of the soul.

As long as the soul/inner flame of man remains in its concealed state - either totally or for the most part - the deep spiritual desire in man will remain dormant.

The Five Levels The Chofetz Chaim once said a sharp statement, that This World is not at all like Heaven. He explained that in this world, there are all kinds of people with different opinions, tastes, and various mannerisms, which all comprise the "world of falsity" that is This World. But in the upper worlds, in Heaven, in Gan Eden, there are only five levels

of people. In Heaven, a person had a heart on this world that was either spiritually:

- 1) Ice [completely callous and indifferent to the spiritual].
- 2) Cold [mostly callous and indifferent to the spiritual].
- 3) Lukewarm [a bit of feeling for the spiritual].
- 4) Hot [enthusiastic about the spiritual].
- 5) Boiling [very passionate for the spiritual].

Those are the five levels - a person either has a heart that is either completely icy, or his heart is just cold, which is a bit better than the above. In contrast, his heart can be 'lukewarm', and if he has become more spiritual, his heart becomes 'hot' - he becomes warm and receptive to spiritual matters. Finally, a person can attain a heart that is 'boiling' hot for truths of the spiritual - he is truly passionate about it. •••

The Level of One's Heart Influences How Well One Sees Reality From a simple, superficial perspective, it appears that having a spiritual heart means to have spiritual feelings, and that there are varying levels of these feelings - ice, cold, lukewarm, hot, or boiling - and that there are some who have hearts that are more sensitive to the spiritual, and some with less spiritual sensitivity. However, if the Chofetz Chaim said that there are these five levels in Gan Eden, it is clear to any sensible person that this is not just about having passionate feelings. It is important of course to have passionate feelings, but this is not all there is to spirituality. There is much more to it than that.

The level of one's heart determines how one views the reality in front of

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him. If one's heart is totally 'frozen' and his heart is a complete "heart of stone", he will not see the depth of reality in front of him. If his heart is only a bit cold towards the truths of the spiritual, he will see a little better into reality. If his heart is 'lukewarm' towards the spiritual, he will see deeper into reality, and if his heart is 'hot', he sees an even deeper reality, one that is totally different. And if his heart is 'boiling' hot, meaning that he is very passionate towards spiritual truths, he will see an altogether different reality than the above views.

These five levels of the heart, which are degrees of a person's spiritual level, are essentially five different perspectives on reality. Therefore, one with a colder heart cannot view reality as deeply as one whose heart is warmer and more alive to the spiritual.

In the current world we live in, of ikvesa d'meshicha (the footsteps heralding Mashiach's arrival), there is tum'ah (spiritual defilement) that has infiltrated into even the most sheltered of our society, surrounding us on all sides, on the outside and on the inside (Rachmana litzlan). If one has a heart that is only 'lukewarm', and certainly if it is cold or icy [towards Torah values], a person will not be sensitive to the situation of today. It will appear to him that there are simply some problems and issues we need to deal with in our times, but that there is nothing more than this to be concerned about.

But if one's heart has become "warmer", more receptive to the spiritual, then he will see a different world. We all live in the same world, but two people can see two totally different views in front of them, depending on the spiritual level of their hearts. Shlomo HaMelech said, "My heart has seen much wisdom". The heart of a person is able to see wisdom, and to the degree that one purifies the spiritual level of his heart, that is how well he will see the reality in front of him.

A person may view a certain matter and it will not seem like a problem to him, because it does not contradict halachah, while another person will see it as totally forbidden and against all of halachah – even though they are both looking at the same exact reality. This is not a question of whose logic is correct or if it's permissible or forbidden. Rather, it is an issue of how

one sees, and when reality is seen a certain way, the logic of the mind will then fit that reality, and vice versa.

A Passionate Heart for Truth is Needed for Spiritual Survival Today In the era we live in of ikvesa d'meshicha, where the world is filled with tum'ah – which Hashem has arranged in His wisdom, in His great plan – as long as one's heart is not burning for truth, one will not see the reality in which he is found. When he doesn't see the reality he is in, it almost indefinite that he will fall into the tum'ah which surrounds him, "as a dog laps up its vomit".

Only with a heart that burns for truth can a person absorb the reality he is in, realizing that he is in a world where almost all of Creation, without exception, lives contrary to the Torah and to Hashem's will. He will see things that others who are less sensitive to the truth won't see. One person will think that a certain matter is permissible l'chatchilah, while another person will see it as unquestionably forbidden, because his heart burns for the truth.

To illustrate, there was a story that when the Chofetz Chaim attended the Knessiah Gedolah (gathering of all Jews to hear messages from the Gedolim), there was a dispute about how high the mechitzah should be, to separate the men from the women. They asked the Chofetz Chaim to decide, and he ruled that the height of the mechitzah should be raised. They asked him: What is the source for this ruling? He responded: "It is written here in this verse: "Write it on the calendar of your heart."

When the heart burns for truth, a person sees reality differently. He sees things that other people don't see. That is why an adam gadol, may render certain halachic rulings and decisions that others don't understand.

As the tum'ah increases the further that we enter into the ikvesa d'meshicha, the hearts of people have slowly become more and more indifferent – more lukewarm, colder, and more frozen. There is a lack of feeling for the spiritual, for the issues at hand today, especially in those who are born into homes where there is a lukewarm or cold attitude towards truth. Children are being born into homes where they are like "captured children", born into a cold and apathetic attitude towards

true Yiddishkeit. What was once clear to our fathers and grandfathers as totally contradictory behavior to the Torah, has now become erroneously viewed as "l'chatchilah" (ideal) for many.

What Hashem is asking from people in this generation is that the heart should be burning for His truths, His Torah, to fulfill His will. This was always the task throughout all generations, but in previous times, there were varying levels in spiritual greatness; the more one's heart burned for truth, the higher of a level he attained. But in the time we live in today, if the heart is not burning for truth, he will simply follow the environment around him, and the environment today is found in the "50th gate of tum'ah", and even worse.

In our generation, what Hashem asks of us is that our hearts should be warm and passionate towards the truth. When the heart is burning for truth, a person will feel the contradiction between Hashem's will and the reality in the world today. That burning passion will serve to separate him and distance him from the entire defiled world that is found in our generation today.

We should clearly understand that there is a need for our generation to have a passionate heart which burns for truth. This is not a high spiritual level to reach. Without this passion, a person will become captured by his physical senses today, even if he is in the world of those who strictly observe Torah and mitzvos. While something may seem permissible on a "halachic" level, a person who is sensitive to the truth will see a different reality in front of him. He will see how it is tum'ah, and how it is the depths of this difficult exile we are found in.

Understandably, we must deal with the exile by making use of our power of free will to choose correctly, to put up a fight against all that isn't true and to daven and beseech Hashem to be saved from all of these difficult spiritual tests. But when the heart burns for truth, one will do even more – he will separate himself entirely from the world of evil today.

Thus, having a warm, passionate heart that burns for the truth is absolutely necessary today in order to have a basic spiritual survival. •••

[from BILVAVI ON THE PARSHAH]

*Summary: Up until this chapter, we have been explaining with *siyata d'shmaya* the first three parts of recognizing our personal soul and actualizing it. The first step is to recognize the soul's abilities, the second step is to list them in order of dominance, and the third step is to identify our strongest ability.*

In the first two steps, we learn how to have a general recognition of our soul, without focusing on any one particular ability. We become aware of many different abilities of our soul, as much as possible. The third step (identifying your strongest ability) takes our awareness further, and it comes up in middle of working on the second step. From this point onward, we will be focusing our inner work on how to use our strongest power – how to use it in the active sense, and how to become aware of it. This is the “fourth” step – after we have identified our strongest power (or if we are at least confident that we are close to identifying it), we need to become connected to it.

It should be noted that the work which will be explain this chapter is not “active” work, but work of the soul, an inward kind of work. It will not involve activities like writing, etc. This chapter will be all about becoming connected to our strongest power, and connection is a soul power, not an active power. It needs intellectual understanding as well as heart willingness, to be able to “do” it.

Everything In Creation Has A Source of Vitality

Hashem has created the world in a way that everything in Creation has a source to it by which it draws vitality from. The body of a human being has a source of vitality that keeps it alive. Animals, plants, and even rocks and still, inanimate creations also have a source of vitality to them (though it may be subtle). Each creation has a source of vitality that uniquely nourishes it, which is also needed by it. The existence of anything, its survival, will depend on how much vitality it is getting from its source. If it gets proper vitality, it will continue to exist, but if some of its vitality is cut off, it will wither. And if a creation gets no vitality at all, it cannot survive. For example, the body needs a minimum amount of food and liquid in order to stay alive and function. If a person stops eating and drinking, the body is weakened. And if he goes too long without eating and drinking, the body will get sick and it cannot function, and eventually the body will die, if it gets no food or drink.

This is simple and everyone is naturally aware of it. People will spend a lot of their time, energy, and money in

order to earn a livelihood and support their families, working very hard each day, so that they can have food, drink, clothing, a place to sleep, a place to shower or bathe, and take care of basic bodily needs. In many cases, people will also give their bodies much more than it actually needs.

As with anything else in Creation, our soul also has its vitality source which it gets all its energy from. And just like anything else, our soul also has a certain kind of vitality that is unique to it, which it needs, and our soul's survival depends on getting this vitality.

But since we live in a material world, which mainly identifies with the physical body and not with the soul, people are aware of the need for vitality only when it comes to their bodies, and not when it comes to their souls. Even when people know that they have a soul, they do very little to nourish it (if they are nourishing their souls at all, that is).¹ For most people, taking care of the body does not mean that we also need to take care of the soul. And therefore, most people are giving too much to their bodies, with their soul remaining undernourished.

But the truth is that just as the body needs physical nourishment in order to survive, so does our soul need a basic spiritual nourishment in order to function. Not only that, but even our body needs to receive some spiritual energy from the soul, in for the body to function at its best. We need to be clearly aware that that our soul needs to be taken care of no less than how we need to take care of our body. If we are prepared to spend so much time and energy to take care of our body, certainly we need to be spending energy on taking care of our soul and give it the nourishment it needs.

External Sources of Vitality For The Soul

The soul receives vitality from two different sources – an external source and an internal source. It gets vitality from the outside, as well as vitality from within. Let us explore these two different sources of vitality for the soul.

Our soul gets revitalized from several sources that are outside of it. Our soul isn't nourished by material things,

1 This error goes so far to the point that there are even theories and views in therapy which maintain that the body's needs must be seen as priority over the soul's needs. This view maintains that the soul 'agrees' that the body is supreme over it, and that only after one is concerned for his body's needs does the soul finally 'agree' to have its 'personal needs' met. [That belief is incorrect, for it runs contrary to the Torah's system of self-care, as is being explained here].

but it can get revitalized from spiritual things that are cloaked in material things. The more that our soul gets something spiritual from a material source, the more vitality it gets. And, the more refined its physical properties are, the more the soul can derive vitality from it.

For example, if a person eats an appetizing food because he likes it, the taste of the food gives some feeling of pleasure to the lowest part of the soul, which is the *nefesh habehaimis* (animal level of the soul). But although the soul gets some energy from this, it is very minimal. The food is thick and coarse in its physicality, and therefore the soul cannot enjoy it that much. Contrast this with a person who goes out for a nature walk. He sees scenic views from atop a hill and he breathes in clean air. The soul enjoys this, even though the enjoyment here is coming from the physical world. Unlike eating appetizing food, a nature walk provides the soul with far more vitality. Although eating food and nature walks are both physical, a nature walk is a more refined kind of physicality, while food is coarse physicality. Therefore, the soul will get more vitality from the pleasure of a nature walk than the vitality it gets from the pleasure of eating food.

But eating appetizing food and going on nature walks still won't be enough to give the soul all the vitality it needs. These are very minimal sources of vitality, relatively speaking, for what the soul needs. These sources of pleasure are external, superficial, and physical. The soul won't be nourished enough from these pleasures.

There are deeper sources of pleasure we can find, which are more internal – but which are ultimately external sources of pleasure. Even within the external sources of vitality that exist, we can find external sources that are more internal in their nature. Examples include: receiving a smile or compliment from another, or getting a positive emotional expression from another, and the like. When a person receives a smile or compliment, and even more so, when he feels loved or valued by another, his soul gets energized from this. These are internal, soul kinds of pleasure, and even though they are coming to a person by way of the physical, the physical expression here is subtle and refined, unlike coarse physicality. And therefore, the soul gets a lot of vitality from these feelings. We can see how people will spend great effort in order to win a smile or compliment, or some feeling of

love and value, from others.

But the outcome of this is very understandable. Koheles said, *“And also the soul is never satisfied.”*² Chazal said, *“This is compared to an analogy of a pauper who married the daughter of a king. Even if he brings her everything in the world, it is nothing to her. Why? Because she is the daughter of a king. So too is the soul – even if all the pleasures of the world are brought before her, it is meaningless to her. Why? For she comes from the upper worlds.”*³ When the soul isn't connected to an inner source of vitality, when it doesn't get the vitality that's appropriate, physical pleasures cannot satisfy it. It will want to uncover a pleasure that speaks to the soul, though that pleasure may still be superficial. It will want a deeper pleasure in a refined kind of physicality, as opposed to coarse physicality. That is why people will do anything to get a smile or compliment from others, or to feel loved and appreciated by others.

But in reality, most of the world doesn't receive warmth, compliments, love and true value and appreciation from others! And even for those who do receive a true feeling from another, it is not even a tenth or a hundredth of what they really need, in order to feel inwardly satisfied. Why? Because ultimately, these good feelings come from the outside, from the souls of others, and it leaves a person dependent and needy on others. If a person isn't getting “his emotional needs from others” enough on a consistent basis, he always return to feeling empty afterwards.

When we are energized from a good feeling that others give to us, it is limited. Our soul cannot be satisfied only from compliments, love, and value from others. Any source of vitality that comes from outside of our soul cannot be a complete source of vitality for our souls. Either the good feeling is very small and not nearly enough, or it is limited by way of the physical expression that it comes to us in, or it is simply superficial and not satisfying enough. And the main reason is, because these sources of vitality are not coming from oneself, from within.

מהספר הכרה עצמית והעצמת הנפש

2 Koheles 6:7

3 Koheles Rabbah 6



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