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בלבבי משכן אבנה



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

האופנים שבהם מתגלית מידת התאוה בנפש האדם רבים הם מאוד. בספר זה מובאים ט"ז האופנים היותר עיקריים והיותר בולטים, שבהם מתגלית מידת התאוה בנפש האדם.



קובץ שעורים זה, הינו היסוד של כל הסדרה. בלשון רכה ונעימה, מעורר הוא את האדם מתרדמת הגלות, בה נשכחה תכלית חייו ויעוד מציאותו: לחזור לחיות בדבקות במחיצתו של מקום. וכך, שלב אחר שלב, בעקביות ובבהירות, מבאר הרב את דרכי קנין האמונה החושית להבחנותיה, כדי לזכות על ידה לדברי המס"י שכתב: "כי השלמות האמיתית הוא רק הדבקות בו ית', כי רק זה הוא הטוב."

SHELACH SEEING REALITY

The Spies Saw What They Wanted To See – A Grim Reality

Parshas Shelach recounts the story of the Spies who entered the land of *Eretz Yisrael*, and then disagreed with each other about how to view the land.

Calev and Yehoshua saw the land in positive terms, because they had a "good eye" towards the land. They spoke of the praises of the land of *Eretz Yisrael*. The other Spies, however, gave an opposite report. They spoke of a dangerous "land which consumes its inhabitants".

Chazal revealed that as the spies were scouring the land, Hashem made a miracle for them so that the Canaanites shouldn't see them, by placing the rulers of Canaan throughout the cities. Through this, the Canaanites were distracted and they did not see the Spies. The Spies, however, interpreted what they saw as a frightening sight, a "land that consumes its inhabitants."

The Spies also reported that "We were like grasshoppers in their eyes", claiming that there were giants in the land who could squash everyone. The Gemara says that this was false; it was an exaggeration, for they "preceded with their mouth, what they had not seen with their eyes".¹ Only after delivering their

negative report did they also see it that way. According to another opinion in the Sages, they spoke exactly what they had seen with their eyes and they had seen people who looked larger than them.

The members of the Spies were prominent members, carefully selected from amongst the tribes. They were originally righteous, but they each saw the land of *Eretz Yisrael* differently. Yehoshua and Calev saw it one way, and the rest of the Sages saw a totally different *Eretz Yisrael*. It wasn't just about what they said, but an entirely different reality that they saw.

Clearly, *Eretz Yisrael* is the "land that the eyes of Hashem are always on"² – it is a special place in the world where a person can receive "eyes of Hashem", which is a higher perspective, one that is closer to the perspective of Hashem. That is the view which Yehoshua and Calev received, when they saw the qualities of the land of *Eretz Yisrael*. Chazal state that "the land of Israel is the highest of all the lands"³, and the deeper understanding of this is that a person can receive a higher view in *Eretz Yisrael*, more than in any other land.

We have no comprehension of the Spies, but on our own level, let us examine the soul's power of

² Devarim 11:11

³ Kiddushin 69b

¹ Sanhedrin 104b

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sight (*re'iyah*) – of how we see reality.

The Phases of the Power of Sight from Child to Adult

The soul's power of sight begins in a child, as soon as Hashem opens our eyes. In the first phase of the power of sight, a person simply sees whatever he sees. At this immature level, a person doesn't think at all about what he sees. A child has no access yet to his intellectual thinking abilities, for the most part. He sees whatever he sees, but without understanding anything about what he sees.

When he gets a little older, and he begins to understand a little, his abilities of recognition are developed. When a child begins to nurse, he acquires the sense of taste. Thereafter, a child puts everything in his mouth. This is because a child senses and understands the world through the powers of touch and taste.

Eventually, when getting older, he plays games, and then he begins to understand the world as a game. He seeks to have fun, to play, and this is how he sees the world – one big playground. That is how he sees reality.

As he gets older, he begins to understand that life is not about food or games, but that there is a certain system of how things work, which requires thinking. He sees that in order to get what you want, you need to be able to think and to understand. He sees that there is a deeper world beyond food, games and fun. There is a world of things to attain, which require certain actions. He has certain wishes, which is a more inner world than anything that he knew from childhood.

And he will see the world according

to what he desires and wishes. At the age where he begins to mature, some of these desires are good, and some are bad.

The Two Sources of Sight: The Mind and the Heart

In clearer terms, the eye's power of sight has two deep sources to it.

The *Raavad* writes that the eyes see through the brain. This does not mean that the brain/mind is the only source of sight. Rather, it means that according to how you think, that is how you will see.

A second source of sight is in the heart. In the side of holiness, this is described in the verse "*My heart has seen much wisdom*"⁴, as Shlomo HaMelech said. One of the powers of the heart is "sight", as the Sages state.⁵

Thus, the physical eyes are not the beginning of the sight. The source of sight begins in the thoughts of the mind, and in the heart.

An Impure Heart Sees an Impure Reality

When the heart contains certain desires - the desires of the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) which is "hidden" in the heart⁶, and specifically in the "left chamber of the heart"⁷ - a person will then see what his heart wants to see. He will see the world through these evil desires, which are contained in his impaired heart.

Chazal state that "The eyes see, and the heart desires, and the actions complete."⁸ When a person sees what he

wants, he wants it more. The simple understanding of this, as implied from "the eyes see and the heart desires", is that a person first sees something, then he desires it, which leads him to actualizing the desire. But the deeper, truer understanding is actually that the desire begins in his heart, and then this desire spreads into the eyes, and then it returns as a stronger desire in the heart, which leads a person to act upon the desire.

Therefore, a person sees reality depending on the level of his heart. If he purifies his heart, he sees a purer reality, and vice versa - if his heart is impure, he sees an impure version of reality.

As long as a person does not do the inner work of purifying his heart, there will be impurities that remain there. Chazal state that the *yetzer hora* is called by seven names, such as "Uncircumcised", "Impure", etc.⁹ When one remains at this state, he will see reality from this impure heart, and as a result, he will only see his own animalistic desires. The way that his soul sees things will stem entirely from his various desires.

It is not simply that he sees something improper and then he desires what he sees. Rather, it all begins from the state of his heart. If he had a pure heart, he wouldn't see improperly in the first place. Once a person purifies his heart, he doesn't see the evil desires that others see. This does not simply mean that he has overcome his desires – it means that he will see an entirely different world to the one that others see.

With most people, the heart is the source of their vision, and since most

4 *Koheles* 1:16

5 *Pesikta D'Rav Kahana*: 16

6 *Sukkah* 52a

7 as explained in *sefer Tanya*

8 *Bamidbar Rabbah* 10:2, *Yalkut Shimeoni* (II)

244, cited in *Rashi Bamidbar* 15:39

9 *Sukkah* 52a

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people haven't purified their heart, they see what they want to see. When a person is "bribed" by his own desires and his thinking becomes influenced by those desires, the mental source of vision is also impaired, corrupting his normal, logical thinking patterns. The mind then becomes subservient to the level of the heart, which, in his case, is currently controlled by the desires of the *yetzer hora*.

Repairing an Impure Heart`

There are two ways to repair this problem. One way is to gain control of the mind, and then "the mind controls the heart".¹⁰ (There is also a way for the heart to control the mind and influence it for holiness, but this is a level reached only by those who have *ruach hakodesh* (the holy spirit).

If an impure heart rules the mind, a person's thinking patterns are controlled by his desires, like a form of bribery. He won't see correctly. Rather, he will only see whatever his heart wants him to see. That is the case whenever a person remains with an impure heart and he never works to improve it: "For the inclination of the heart of man is evil from his youth."¹¹

Understanding the Error of the Spies: They Saw an Impaired Reality

The Spies saw Eretz Yisrael as a bad place. According to one opinion in the Sages, they exaggerated their report and did not speak the truth; and according to the other opinion of the Sages, it is because they saw what they wanted to see.¹² The heart wants certain things, which bribes the mind, resulting in an

impaired reality. This is what happened with the Spies.

In different terms, there are two different ways to see: the view from the *guf* (body), and the view from the *neshamah* (soul). The external view on reality comes from the view of the *guf*, which is linked with the senses that stem from the brain. The inner view on reality comes from the *neshamah*, and it stems from the heart.

What Life Looks Like Without Purifying the Heart

Unless a person works on himself to purify his heart, he will only see the desires of jealousy, lust, and honor. There are those who are already born with a purer heart, or with a "good heart", so they don't have to struggle with these desires. But most people are not born with this purified view of reality, and they have to work on themselves to purify their hearts. If they don't, they will see reality from their desires, and they will only see what they want to see – the impure desires that remain in their unfixed heart.

If a person works to purify his heart, he will see an elevated reality. If he doesn't work to purify his heart and simply tries to do the *mitzvos* and to do the will of Hashem, and to *daven*, etc. - this will not be enough. Although all of those things are truthful and commendable, the problem is that he will be living with a generally erroneous perspective towards life. He might try to do everything he should for 10 years, 20 years, or even until the end of his life - but he will see life as nothing but a constant series of difficulties, *nissyonos*, hard situations, etc., because his vision will be tied down to the current situation he is in & he can't see past it.

A Life of a Purified Heart: Seeing a Different Reality

In contrast, a true kind life looks very different. It is when a person works to purify his inner character, to purify the heart – through the means of inner work, prayer, and tears to Hashem to merit a "pure heart" [as in the verse, "A pure heart You created me with"¹³].

If a person does merit to be given a "pure heart" from Hashem – a "pure heart" on his own level, even if it is not yet the perfected level – he will begin to see an entirely different world, an entirely new perspective towards reality that he had never seen until now.

This will not simply mean that he will begin to judge others favorably. Rather, he will see a different world entirely! To illustrate, Reb Yisrael Salanter said that a shoemaker will see shoes wherever he goes, and a carpenter sees wood wherever he goes.

The more a person's view changes and it matures, the more he will see a deeper reality. As a result of this, his power of *bechirah* (free will) will become elevated as well. He will see past the previous obstacles and instead he will find himself with deeper, more elevated choices to make. He essentially enters a new world.

Compare this to the following. If a person tries to become mature when he is surrounded by children in kindergarten, he wouldn't be able to, because the surroundings don't let him. But if one goes to a place where people toil in Torah, in holiness and purity and are completely dedicated to learning Torah, surely one will become more spiritually elevated from his surroundings? So too, when a person leaves the view of the im-

10 Sefer Tanya in the name of the Zohar

11 Beraishis 8:21

12 Sanhedrin 104b

13 Tehillim 51:2

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pure heart because he has gained purity of heart, he sees an entirely new world.

What the Spies Saw, and What Calev and Yehoshua Saw

The Spies all viewed the same reality, but Yehoshua and Calev saw a good Eretz Yisrael because they had purified themselves internally and thus they received a higher view, which enabled them to see a more elevated reality. In contrast, the rest of the Spies, who did not purify themselves internally beforehand, saw a 'bad' Eretz Yisrael.

We have no comprehension of the greatness of the Spies, but one thing is certain - they definitely saw something other than what Yehoshua and Calev saw.

Examples of Seeing a New Reality:

Here are some examples of how a person sees a different world entirely, after he becomes more elevated from the process of purifying his heart.

When a person becomes open to *chessed*/kindness, it is not achieved by simply learning *sefer Ahavas Chessed*¹⁴ and then trying to fulfill everything he learns in that *sefer*. That is also commendable, but when a person becomes open to kindness on the level of the heart, he sees a whole new reality, in which he must help people. Until then, he had not been aware of this. He will also see his money as a way to help people with, not as a way to fulfill his desires.

He gains a perspective of "kindness" towards Creation. He sees a "world" of kindness, as in the verse, "*The world is built by kindness.*"¹⁵ One who is at this awareness towards kindness isn't taking

inventory of how much reward in Gan Eden he will be getting and he won't think of the reward that he hopes to receive for all of it on the "Great, Awesome Day of Judgment" that will be in the future.

This is all the more so when it comes to seeing the world through the lens of Torah – which is the root of everything. A person can learn to see reality through the lens of Torah, where he will see an entirely different view of reality.

For example, Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l once saw chickens in the street, so he began thinking of what the laws of its eggs are: Is the chicken's owner liable to pay if the chicken damages anything from the wind of its wings? An ordinary person would just look at the chickens and see chickens, but Reb Shlomo Zalman saw something else entirely. He saw the world through Torah.

This viewpoint changes one's attitude towards the difficulty of *nisyonos* as well. There are always many *nisyonos* in life, but a person can gain a higher view, where he sees a different world entirely. Then he will discover that he actually has less *nisyonos*, for now that he has purified his mind and heart, he is seeing a different reality entirely, and the issues that would have bothered him in the past can no longer bother him. This is not to say that there won't be *nisyonos* for him at all, but they will certainly be much less.

The More You Enter Inward, The Deeper Your View Becomes

Even more so, if a person merits to penetrate deeply into his own inner world, with the further he gets into himself, the deeper the view will be to-

wards reality.

Older people see reality differently, because their perspective on life has matured. If this is the case with the material side of life, surely this is the case when a person merits penetrating into his inner world – he will see reality very differently. He will see a world that was created for Hashem's honor, as it says, "*For My honor, I created it.*"¹⁶ He will see everything in the world as either something that conceals Hashem or reveals Hashem, and nothing else other than this. This will not just be mere knowledge to him (which can be attained from studying *sefer Daas Tevunos* of the Ramchal), but it will become his actual perspective.

In Conclusion

Everyone has the free will of what kind of 'Eretz Yisrael' he will see.

A true, inner life of spiritual growth is to keep seeing a new world, a new view, which you didn't see last time. You can see a different, deeper perspective in something that you saw a year ago, and then some time later, you can then see an entirely different perspective towards it. In this way, you don't just remain in the same place and see the same old thing; you keep seeing something new in the 'same old' thing that you saw a year ago.

Taking this path affords a person a higher kind of free will, and one can keep taking this ability further until one eventually merits to see a world in which there is nothing but Hashem's Presence.

[from BILVAVI ON THE PARSHAH]

¹⁴ A *sefer* on the laws of *chessed* and *tzedakah*, authored by the Chofetz Chaim

¹⁵ Tehillim 89:3

¹⁶ Yeshayahu 43:7

Internal Sources of Vitality From The Soul

The soul's primary sources of vitality are actually found deep within the soul. We need to become connected to these inner sources of vitality, because anything that comes from outside of ourselves will not be nearly enough. To say it more precisely – we need to mainly become connected to our internal sources of vitality, in addition to any outer sources of vitality that we are getting. Our inner sources of vitality are: Our soul's abilities.¹ To the extent that we connect to them, the greater vitality we receive from them, quantitatively and qualitatively speaking.

There are varying levels of internal sources of vitality for the soul. The stronger abilities of the soul are more inward and they are the roots of the soul's abilities, while the weaker abilities of the soul are more external and they are the branches of the soul's abilities. The more one connects to his stronger abilities, the more vitality his soul gets, and vice versa.

When a person doesn't clarify which of his abilities are stronger or weaker, and he isn't connected to his stronger abilities – especially to his strongest ability – it is almost certain that he is only connected to his weaker abilities. The weaker abilities of the soul are “garments” that clothe the stronger abilities of the soul, and usually the garments are more revealed than the abilities clothed under them. That is why

1. Certainly the main sources of our soul's vitality – the needs of our neshamah – are our relationship with Hashem, learning the Torah, and keeping the mitzvos. These sources keep our neshamah healthy. But the lowest part of our soul, the nefesh habehaimis (animal level of the soul), the level of the soul that we are dealing with here – does not get that much vitality from these spiritual sources, because these sources are way above its level. Just as an animal eats straw and doesn't enjoy a deep understanding about something, so is our nefesh habehaimis mainly nourished with sources that it relates to and enjoys, the basic emotional needs that it has – it does not get enjoyment from the vitality that speaks to the neshamah.

However, there is a way to feed the nefesh habehaimis even from a high spiritual source, and that is through mesirus nefesh (giving up one's desires). When one has mesirus nefesh for the spiritual (either mesirus nefesh for Hashem, mesirus nefesh for learning Torah, or mesirus nefesh in doing any of the mitzvos), he penetrates past ever barrier that blocks the lower levels of the soul from the higher levels, and then he can go up and down to any level as he wishes, as if he is on a ladder that he can climb to Heaven with or go down to the ground.

Mesirus nefesh is a powerful light that can transfer Heavenly light onto even the nefesh habehaimis and give it its needs. But only rare individuals who have very high soul levels can do this, because that is their unique work on this world. In any case, though, anything spiritual will always have some effect on the nefesh habehaimis and give it some vitality, but it will depend on how often and how strong the spiritual light is, and also on how purified the person's physicality is.

the weaker abilities of the soul are closer within a person's reach and easier to connect to – they are at the surface.

If we want to connect to our stronger abilities, though, and especially if we want to become connected to our strongest ability, we will need a lot of thinking and guidance in the process of how to get there.

The vitality that we get from the weaker abilities in our soul are certainly more helpful to us than whatever vitality we are getting from food, nature walks, compliments, love and value from others, etc. But the main vitality that's needed for our soul (which we need both in quantity and quality) is only going to come from our strongest abilities, and especially our strongest ability. This is because the source of vitality for our soul lays in the root of the soul, in something that's closely related to the intrinsic essence of our personal soul. The stronger a soul ability is, the more unified it is with our soul's root, with our essence.

If a person is only getting vitality from the garments of the soul, from sources that are outside of it, he is like a person sitting at a table full of every delicacy in the world, and he's eating some crumbs that landed on him. Though it's important for a person to receive vitality from food, nature walks, a smile, a compliment, and value from others, and certainly it's even more important to get vitality from the abilities of the soul (all in the proper balance, that is), these sources can only help certain parts of the soul, the lower areas of the soul. If one attempts to sustain his entire soul with these sources, he will not succeed, and his life won't be a life. He cannot live a genuine life as long as his vitality depends on external, limited factors.

By contrast, there is a primary source of vitality which can greatly benefit the soul. We need to get vitality from our soul root, from our essence – from our strongest power.

Compare this to a person who has a main business and also some side businesses. If he loses his main business, he is in a financial burden and he might

also lose his side businesses now that he has run out of money to run them. But if he merely loses his side businesses, he is taking a loss and he's missing his added benefits, but he has remained with his primary source of income, and he will be able to live and manage fine. The lesson from this the analogy is that the more we are connected to our internal source of vitality, the less our *nefesh habehaimis* will need to connect to outer sources for vitality.

Many people feel a horrible void in themselves, and a big push, to get vitality from some outer source. But if they would only connect to their strongest power and get vitality from it, their void would be filled, their souls will feel fulfilled, and their interest in getting vitality from the outside will minimize and they will become calmer inside.

Two Ways of Working With The Soul

Generally speaking, there are two fundamental ways of working with the soul: "Stay away from evil", and "Do good."

In the way of "Stay away from evil", a person has to fight the bad parts of himself, identifying the evil characteristics of the soul and directly battling them. In the way of "Do good", a person seeks peace with himself. He identifies his good points, connects to them, nurtures them and strengthens them, and he also derives vitality from them. Then he is empowered to go about fixing any of the unrefined parts of his soul.²

Why do many people prefer the way of "fighting" against themselves (Stay away from evil) and they don't want to take the path of focusing on their positive points (Do good)? There are several reasons for it.

(1) Some people have a nature of searching for per-

2 This path, "Do good", is not pretending to ignore those negative aspects in one's character as if they don't exist. Rather, it is a path where one begins to focus on his good parts, and after he has received vitality from his positive aspects, he has a healthy soul that is stable, empowered, and happy, and now he can deal with the negative aspects of his character from a healthy place, and be able to fix what needs to be fixed. Now that he is getting vitality from his good and positive aspects, he has the tools to deal with his negative aspects and fix them.

fection. They aspire very much to keep growing higher, and to reach the level of self-completion, to become a "complete person". Therefore, they want to root out any evil aspects of their character which are preventing them from reaching their spiritual ambitions.

(2) There are also those who are very truthful, and they cannot be at peace with and bad parts of themselves, because they do not tolerate these false parts that they discover in themselves.

(3) Others become aware of many different bad parts of themselves and they feel that it is weighing down on their lives and preventing them from all good. So they wish to be free from all of these bad parts in themselves.

(4) Others have a low or negative perception of themselves, so they want to remove their faults in order to gain a positive self-image.

Although the way of "Stay away from evil" is a true and proper path, it is only suitable for those who seek self-perfection (*shleimus*) or for those who are very truthful. Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai said, "I have seen those who ascend, and they are few."³ There aren't many who have the truthfulness or the desire to perfect themselves. And as for those who simply want to go free from all of their faults or those who have a low self-image, it is very understandable why they want to find out about all their bad parts and root them out.

But it is very probable that they don't have the tools to fight against the bad they discover in themselves, especially if they are discovering so many different bad parts. And in addition, merely being involved all time with finding evil and fighting it can also awaken the evil even more, because "A species finds its own species and gets awakened."⁴

And therefore, the recommended approach for most people is to take the path of "Do good", to find their good parts, to become connected to their good and

3 Talmud Bavli Sotah 42b

strengthen the good parts and get vitality from them. After that, they can use their good parts as tools to repair the unrefined parts of the soul. This is especially the case for those with a low self-image. They need to write down all of their qualities and read them every day, and thereby strengthen, even if only a little, their positive self-image.

The good parts of one's soul are the positive, good abilities of his soul, and especially his strongest ability, which is the root of all his good parts. Thus in order to take the path of "Do good", we need to recognize our strongest power, and become connected to it, nurture it, strengthen it, and intensify it and get vitality from it. From the good that we will receive from it, we will be empowered to fix all the other parts of our soul which are in need of repair.⁵

The Benefits of Focusing On Our Positive Points – Gaining Identity, Self-Confidence, and Self-Worth

The path of "Do good" (focusing on our positive points) is not just another way, it is the fundamental way of actualizing, uplifting, strengthening, stabilizing, shaping, and healing, the soul. The following are examples of the benefits of taking this approach.

Many people have a self-identification, or a self-image, which is negative. They have a low opinion about themselves. As a result, they are suffering greatly. It is very difficult, and almost impossible, for this kind of person to root out the bad aspects of his character. Besides for the reasons mentioned before, it is because these people will feel that "fighting evil" in themselves means fighting against "Who I am."

They perceive themselves as bad, so when they work on themselves to improve, they feel like they

are trying to get rid of their very self, and understandably, they are overwhelmed.

For such people, taking the path of "Do good" is the wondrous solution to all of their issues. When they learn to focus on their good parts and positive abilities, especially when they focus on their strongest ability, they see that there is good in them and they identify with it, and then they can strengthen that good. Gradually they can gain a positive self-identification, and they go from a negative perspective about themselves to a positive perspective about themselves. The person learns how to see himself as a good person, and he even gains a positive perspective about his bad/unrefined aspects, and he has more inner strength now to repair his issues.

There are also many people who identify themselves as a physical body, and they don't seem themselves as a soul. This causes them, knowingly or unknowingly, to encounter much difficulty. It is hard for them to come out of the confusing garden-maze that they find themselves in. But if they take the path of "Do good", they can greatly benefit. By learning how to focus on their positive aspects, they become connected with their soul and they can now identify with it. They are now able to identify their "I" as being primarily a soul that inhabits their body (which is explained more in Da Es Atzmecha, "Getting To Know Your Self")

There are also those who have low self-confidence, they don't believe they are capable, and as a result, they suffer. This comes from several reasons, but it is mainly because the person isn't aware of his abilities, so he doesn't actualize them.³ If a person learns how to focus on his qualities and strong points and make use of them, especially if he focuses on his strongest point and he actualizes it, he will become aware of his capabilities, and then he will find his self-confidence skyrocket.

⁵ The steps explained in this sefer are noticeably avoiding the path of "Stay away from evil" and instead turning to the path of "Do good" (except for certain specific points every here and there, which are for the benefit of those who prefer to fight evil, and even then, it is only to calm the person's need for it, so that he can ultimately return to the path of "Do good"). In this sefer, we first learned to recognize our positive aspects, and afterwards we learned to list them in order of dominance and then identify our strongest ability. Now we are learning the stage of how to become connected to our strongest ability. After this chapter, we will learn how to actualize it from its potential.

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ספרי מאה שערים

רח. מאה שערים 15,

ירושלים 02.502.2567

ניתן להשיג גם בסניפי ספרי אור החיים