



JOY FROM STEADY PROGRESS

REASONS WHY PEOPLE AREN'T HAPPY OR SUCCESSFUL Let us try here with siyata d'shmaya to clarify a very small point which has a lot of meaning for us.

Who among us doesn't search for fulfillment and joy? We do not always find what we search for, so let us think here of a small but fundamental way which will help us attain the joy we seek.

We see that when people feel successful, it is easier for them to be happy, and by contrast when people feel like they're failing and not succeeding, they are far from being happy.

Part of the reason why people aren't successful is because they are doing a lot of things that are way beyond their actual capacity to do – they are overdoing themselves. Another reason why people aren't successful at what they do is because they aren't being consistent at anything.

Upon some analysis, we can see that these two reasons are really connected. When a person does things beyond his actual capacity, he really can't be consistent either with whatever he's doing – it's impossible to be consistent at something that you don't have actually have the capacity to do. But when a person is doing things that are within his ability, then it becomes possible for him to be consistent at what he's doing. If a person for many years has gotten used to doing things that are really beyond his capacity, that means he has never really done anything consistently.

Ever since childhood, a person has learned and taught himself that whenever he keeps doing something and he isn't successful at it, he has been telling himself that he really cannot do it. After all, he has failed so many times at it. A person teaches himself that he can't work at something consistently, and instead, he tries to grab onto any success that he can, but never really building any one area of success. People like to console themselves with the words of Chazal, "Grab and eat, because tomorrow we will die." They get used to not being consistent with whatever they do. When it comes to making livelihood as well, they keep grabbing onto whatever success they can, never learning how to be consistent at anything.

GAINING STABILITY THROUGH BEING CONSISTENT Every person is looking for a good salary, but he also needs a job that's steady and consistent. Just like our physical body needs a stable source of income, so does our soul seek stability. The more we feel our need for stability, the more we can feel the need to progress with steadiness,

The proper way to reach joy – and thereby live a life of regularly experiencing joy - is to take small things that we can do, and consistently work on them.

Every person understands himself at least partially, if not completely. Every person knows what's preventing him from success. With some people it's anger, with some it's impatience, etc. Many times people tried and didn't succeed, and then they give up and they say "This is the way I am. I was born like this, and this is how I will always be."

But if a person really wants to come out of problems and make progress- after he has first identified the problems that are blocking him from success - he will then decide to work on one small point which he will keep being consistent at working on. He should choose to work on one small, easy point that's holding him back from progress, and he should focus on seeking only this small amount of progress that's steady and consistent. It should be something that's possible and easy for him to work on. Then, once he decides to work on this, he should do it once or twice a day and not more. But he should be consistent for a period of time about it.

This way of living brings a person into a certain process, of building and moving forward, taking step at a time, but fundamentally. Whoever will try to do this, working consistently at this, will see progress within the next few months. After a few months he should see how he has grown, how his soul has moved forward.

VALUING THE SMALLEST ACHIEVEMENTS There are those with a nature to seek big things, big growth, a lot of achievements, etc. So they try moving forward very fast. The idea of taking small steps of growth and steady progress is hard for them to work on, and even when they do decide to work on small steps of growth, it has no meaning to them, because it's only a 'small' achievement and not a big, huge achievement.

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Consider the following analogy. A Bar Mitzvah boy is really a result of 4000 days of the hard work that his parents have put him into. Until his Bar Mitzvah, the parents patiently watched him grow. Even though they could have given him a “wonder drink” to make him get big and mature very quick, they chose not to do that and instead they were patient in watching him grow, because they realized that his growth must be slow and steady. They know that it’s a certain process and that it doesn’t happen quickly. Once one realizes that he needs to work on something slowly because he realizes that such growth fundamental for him, he can have patience to work on it. If a person is patient and he is also consistent, like the parents who are patiently watching their boy grow and mature until he reaches Bar Mitzvah age, then he will be successful.

When it comes to the growth of our inner world as well – the growth of the inner human being that is inside us – we need patience as well, when growing and nurturing our inner world. The clearer we are about this point, the better we will grow.

BEING PATIENT WITH OUR GROWTH To say this even more clearly, we all have inner abilities that are hidden and dormant within us, and our avodah (our inner work) is to activate that potential. It is like planting seeds in the ground, which later sprouts and develops into a plant. The Maharal says that a person is called adam from the word adamah, the ground, because just as planting a seed will take time until it sprouts and develops, so does a person slowly develop. Chazal said that there is one tree which takes 70 years to develop - the carob tree – and this tree represents the 70 years of life of a person’s life.

If we have patience like that towards ourselves – knowing that we can only grow in a slow process and that our growth cannot come rapidly – then, we can succeed in our growth.

But the nature of a person is that he wants so much and very quickly. The power to grow, from the bottom up, is like the element of fire, which naturally rises upward. Fire quickly rises, but the problem with fire is that it doesn’t stay lit for long, and it can only rise when the source of the fire is strong. When we light a fire it takes very quick to go up, it only stays lit if the candle is well-lit and thick, some can light for 2 or 4 hours, some light for 24 or 48 or 72 hours, some can light for a week, some can even stay lit for a month, but after that it extinguishes. Fire doesn’t last that long. Eventually a person’s fire gets extinguished after some time. So a person needs more than just fire in order to progress - he needs the element of earth, the

stable ground that will enable him to build himself step after step, and then he can rise properly.

Here is an example to illustrate the idea. A child can barely do anything when he’s born. Then he opens his eyes, and the parents are happy with anything he can do, the smallest progress he shows, the smallest step. But as the child grows, the parents stop being so happy with every small thing he does, and so does the child. Yet, though the parents have stopped enjoying his every small step of success, the child should learn to be happy with his small achievements, and he should do that when he is an adult as well. We need to keep being happy with even our smallest success, just like we are happy with a little child’s smallest steps. The more we understand that this is how we grow just like when we are small children, the more we can grow as adults. Let us explain what changes as we become more mature. When a child starts to walk, everyone is happy with even the smallest step he takes. The child takes a step and falls, then he starts walking a little until he is walking regular and later he is running. Now let’s understand deeply, what does the child subconsciously as he progresses like this? He learns that small steps can all be done quickly instead of slowly. Then he stops valuing the small steps, and now he only has value for big and fast steps. Subconsciously he keeps learning that small steps forward are meaningless, and only instant or quick results are important.

This carries into adulthood as well, where he believes that things which can be done quickly are a waste of time when done only slowly and steadily. He stops having value for slow, steady growth and he only values quick growth. Even more so, a person learns that he doesn’t have to be conscious of his growth and progress. These thought patterns become carved into us deeply.

When we get bigger, who has gotten bigger? Our body has grown, we have become smarter too, but our heart remains the same as a child’s. Raboseinu teach that our heart always remains youthful like a child: “The inclination of the heart of man is evil from his youth”, and the word ra (bad) is from the word naar, child, hinting to how the heart is childish.

The heart can only grow slowly, like the steps that a child takes. Even very great people with great minds have hearts that have grown very slowly. A person has an intellect and heart.

By a child, the intellect works slowly, and when he gets older his intellect works quicker, so he realizes that he has to work

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faster. But he also thinks that his heart also has to work fast, while in reality the heart must remain the same as a child's. Even with older and greater people, their heart can only grow slowly like a child's. One can only grow his heart very slowly – meaning that his inner growth can only be gradual.

And, just as he has patience to bring up a child slowly, so must one have patience to grow his heart with the gradual growth process that it needs – he cannot accelerate his inner growth.

When one understands this, he won't have difficulty with trying to grow and progress forward in anything, because he knows that's all growth has to be slow and steady. He has anticipated this already, growing only at the pace that the heart can grow at. The older a person is, the more patience he can have towards his heart – the more patience he can have towards his own growth, knowing that this is the way it's supposed to be.

All those who are successful are those who recognize that their heart can only grow slowly. The more we are zocheh with help from Hashem to internalize this deeply that our heart must grow slowly like a child's, we will then speak to our heart – we will view our inner world of growth - with the heart's language,

and with the heart's slow, child's pace. The “evil inclination from youth” can then be worked on slowly, and at our heart's child pace that it needs.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION Practically speaking, one should identify what's holding him back from moving forward and take small steps forward, as if he is teaching a child to learn one letter after another, and this is how one works properly with himself. And he can be happy with every small step of progress just like we are happy with every small step of a child.

This is a change of perspective which brings us patience and consistent steady development. Like this, we enter into a process of living with joy, of utilizing our potential, like planting a seed in the ground which is constantly in a process of growth, it's earth that stabilizing our fire to grow higher.

May Hashem give us the understanding to be patient with ourselves like a child, to take upon ourselves small steps of growth according to the pace of our heart which can only work slowly, and to be happy with every small step we take. That is a person who lives a life of joy.

Q&A

Q: But a child is doing his maximum potential not just taking small steps, and the parents are expecting this?

A When the child gets older, the smallest thing he does should become his maximum growth. His maximum growth should be defined as the smallest step of success that he's currently capable of. We aren't telling the child to only grow slowly, we want maximum success from him, and this is his maximum success – exactly so.

Q Can the Rav give an example of this?

A There are many simple examples of this but here is one. For example if a person is lazy, whether a lot or a little, he should do 3 small things a day with the awareness that he's trying to knock out his laziness. It's better to try this with things that he doesn't have to do, rather than with obligations that he has to take care of. Do it for the sake of knocking out your laziness and not simply because you have to do it. Is there anyone who can't do this, is it too hard? Just be consistent at it.

Q How can we slowly pull out of being connected with media-devices?

A Anything that was said in this shiur does not apply to media-devices. All media-capable devices should be removed, at this very moment. It is forbidden. This shiur (about steady growth) was speaking of a certain level to attain, not about what's totally forbidden! If a person wants to slowly disconnect from media-capable devices, then it will take at least 17 years. A person has to disconnect from all media-devices at this very moment. Something which is forbidden is by definition forbidden right now at this moment and it has to get removed.

...I don't know what news is like in America, but in Eretz Yisrael it's forbidden to read papers because of lashon hora. Reading news about goyim in America isn't lashon hora but in Eretz Yisrael it's forbidden to read the papers because of lashon hora. I don't know how all these papers are able to be published. If a Talmid Chochom goes through each paper to see if there's no lashon hora in there - by the time he's done he can't be called a Talmid Chochom anymore from everything he has just heard. He would also have to clarify each story and decide on each part if it's lashon hora or not, and that's impossible. The papers are full of lashon hora and rechilus. It doesn't make any sense

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at all to have such papers. To write about modern discoveries and space travel is one thing, but most of the papers are full of lashon hora about people.

Q: How indeed can we work consistently on a small area and improve at it?

A: There are 2 different ways of how to work on ourselves. One way is to pick the area that's getting in your way the most and the other way is to start with the easiest area to work on – to start with something you're good at. There are advantages to either way. The first way makes sense because it's dealing directly with what's getting in the way of your success, but the second way brings out your root strength and gives you the energy to work on what's blocking you. Working against your nature is hard for a lot of people but the second way is easier for most people.

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BITACHON AND SIMCHAH “The tzaddikim (righteous) rejoice in Hashem.” To the degree that a person is found with Hashem – near Him, with Him – his joy will be greater, to that extent.

Who is a person that's found with Hashem? “Those who trust in Hashem forever.” The more a person has bitachon (trust) in Hashem, he is then found with Hashem, and then he can merit the joy of the tzaddikim who rejoice in Hashem.

HOW WIND CAN WREAK HAVOC WITH FIRE The avodah of a person is to rise higher and higher, resembling a rising fire, like the fire of the Mizbeiach that doesn't get extinguished. But what happens when a fire is burning and then the wind comes? A strong wind can extinguish the fire, while a light wind will move the fire to a different place by blowing the fire around. Chazal said that no wind could extinguish the fire of the Mizbeiach, but it could steer the fire away and prevent it from rising upward in a straight column to Heaven as it normally would. Wind either puts out fire completely, or moves around the fire and scatters it all over the place.

The Mishnah in Avos says that one must be like a tree firmly rooted in the ground, or else a wind can come and uproot him. In our own life, we can visualize this as a person who doesn't have bitachon, when the difficulties of life, the wind blows him all over the place. But if he is strong in his bitachon, then the various challenges tests of life – the “wind” – will not be able to extinguish his “fire” (his growth).

He first needs to make sure that no matter what situation he goes through, he will remain firm and he doesn't let this extinguish him completely. That is the first step. The second step is that he needs to know how to not get thrown around all over the place and scattered – he has to know how to remain stable and serene.

BECOMING AWARE OF YOUR INITIAL REACTION TO CHALLENGES

Every person has tests and difficulties, facing situations that aren't that easy to deal with, more or less. When one suddenly finds himself in such situations, he should first check into what his “first thought” [initial reaction] is.

For example, he gets a disturbing phone call and is told he has a certain problem now, or he goes to the doctor and they suddenly tell him he has a health issue. Before he thinks into it that deeply, what are his first thoughts going through his mind – how does he initially react to such situations?

Many people react with a groan and they will say something like, “Oh no, another problem!” Others are calm and say it will be okay. They run away and don't want to deal with issues. Others call people and they make connections and find out what to do.

The first thoughts going through one's mind, upon learning of a new challenge he is facing, is the indicator that reveals how much a person is really close to Hashem and how much bitachon he really has. If one lives correctly, he first absorbs what he hears and then his first thought is that “Hashem has sent this, Hashem has sent me something new.” If one works on emunah and he wants to know how much he's growing one of the ways to know is by seeing his first thought when he encounters a challenge. After that is another avodah, but the first step is to see what his first thought is.

If he sees that his first thought is that Hashem sent this, that means his emunah has penetrated. Such a person is stable and a wind can't uproot him easily. But if his first reaction is just davening, segulos, and tzedakah – and only he finds Hashem later – that doesn't show he has stability. What will happen when he finds out he really has a problem...? But the clearer emunah he has, his first thought is that Hashem has sent him this (how to deal with it is already the second stage), he is stable, in the land of the living, in emunah. Any of us goes through tests in life. If our first thought turns to emunah, we are calmer, we have yishuv hadaas.

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Why is there so little yishuv hadaas (peace of mind) in the world? Externally it's because people are busy with so much responsibilities of life, such as their work, livelihood, bringing up the children, and the family, etc. While that's all true, there is also a more inner reason why people don't have yishuv hadaas. It is because people are full of worry inside their hearts from all their problems. They aren't calm or stable. The more a person attaches to emunah, the tests of life can be experienced calmly and with yishuv daas, staying stable and firm, for all of life.

The root of succeeding at life is when one properly reacts to sudden challenges. When everything's flowing and things are going well, all is fine and it's easy to maintain one's growth then. But what happens when a person hits a challenge? The difference between a person with little emunah and a lot of emunah can be seen in the way that a person reacts to sudden challenges that come his way. Most people will go through complex situations in life – how does the person go through it? In the ideal situation, he guards his inner calmness and peace of mind throughout all these situations, and as he matures and gets older and goes through more of life, he becomes more and more connected to the true, deep way of living.

But most people, even if they have started to go inward and they have begun serious growth, when they meet with a sudden challenge, they become disoriented completely and they lose all their footing, and they stop growing. I know some people for a few decades already, and they had been growing a lot, and now when I meet them and speak to them about how life is going for them, I don't see the same person that I saw a few years ago. He's not the same person anymore – what happened? He encountered a problem 2 years ago, he got a bit confused and disoriented from it, and he's not the same since then.

How many people stay growing throughout their life? How many people can keep up the growth? Very few. This happens because most people don't have yishuv hadaas, they have lost their peace of mind because they weren't prepared to deal with issues that came their way. They can have a lot of fire in them, they are passionate about growth, but then a "wind" comes – the various challenges that can come - and they get confused from it. It stays that way for a few months and continues for years, until all of their fire slowly wanes.

Generally the younger a person is, the more fiery he is, and if he encounters setbacks and failures, he can start again from

a new beginning and start growing again. The older one is, the harder it becomes for him to start over again after his challenges have weakened his internal state, and without starting to grow again, he remains stagnant and stops growing.

The stronger one is attached to emunah and his first thought is emunah, his life is more stable and calm. Even if his problems get worse, with the children and with livelihood, he can remain serene inside and getting more serene throughout life.

REALIZING HOW EVERY SITUATION IS TAILORED FOR YOUR GROWTH

Even more so though is that when one realizes Hashem is with him when a challenge comes, besides for knowing that "whatever Hashem does is for the good", that's not enough, one has to know: How has Hashem sent this situation for me so that I can grow and become elevated from it? It's not that I have to make sure I survive all this somehow and that I don't completely fall apart from this. My avodah is to see how Hashem has sent me this situation in order for me to grow!"

The first step is to make sure we don't get uprooted and frazzled - to remain stable, to know that Hashem sent this complex situation to me and that it's all a test from Hashem. But there's more. Not only is my avodah to make sure that that this fierce wind (challenge) shouldn't extinguish my inner fire (growth), but this is ultimately a test that is here to make me grow from it. It's not just so that I can stay stable and eventually get back to normal again after all this is over. Rather, this is all a test that Hashem has sent me so that I can somehow grow from it. Hashem doesn't just want me to prevent myself from falling now, He wants me to really grow from this and become elevated to a whole new level from this!

Practically speaking, in order to survive and get by difficult periods, when we are inevitably falling from our normal growth and we can't maintain our normal routine of constant growth, our avodah is to hold onto one small point of progress and keep at it – for example, if one regularly learns Daf Yomi, he should keep going up the Daf Yomi even during the difficult period he is going through. It can even be a line of Gemara a day ("Shurah Yomi" – daily line of Gemara), as long as he keeps to it every day. He should keep at it with a bit of mesirus nefesh. But besides for that, one must know that no matter what we go through, it's all a way for us to grow higher from it and reveal new strengths. *TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK*

FROM ORIGINAL HEBREW SHIURIM

RECENTLY IN LAKEWOOD & WOODMERE

הכרת הכוחות שמחה 016 רוח דרוח דעפר שמחה אמיתית
הכרת הכוחות שמחה 016 רוח דאש דעפר שמחו צדיקים בהשם

(Summary: In the previous chapter, we began to explain, with heavenly assistance, two steps of recognizing our soul's faculties – writing a notebook of our soul, and skimming through it to gain a general picture of our soul. In this chapter, we will review and elaborate further upon the previous chapter, thereby gaining a new understanding of the general work of recognizing our soul and specifically the practical work of how to do this.)

HAVING A CLEAR REFLECTION OF YOURSELF If a person is writing a book about his personal soul and he wants to make sure that it is accurately reflecting his personal life, he needs to clarify well what he's writing, by continuously checking himself to see if the information he's writing is accurate.

To illustrate the concept, if a person wants to know what he looks like, he looks into a mirror. If the mirror is black or stained, it won't accurately reflect his face and clothing, whereas if the mirror is clean, it will reflect an accurate picture of him. If his face and clothing is clean, the mirror will show it to him. If there is dirt on him, the mirror will also show it to him.

The book that we write about ourselves is like a mirror that reflects the state of our soul. To the degree that we skim through it and review our notes, the cleaner it becomes, and the better we can use it as a proper and precise reflection of our personal soul.

A king had a mitzvah to write a Sefer Torah and keep it next to him for all of his life, so that he could always be aware of his duties. Similarly, we also have to write a book about our own soul, and to read it for all of our lives, so that we will have a clear picture of our self-recognition in front of our eyes, being clear and precise about it.

SEEING SPECIFICS VS. SEEING A COLLECTIVE VIEW The book we are writing about ourselves can serve as a mirror that offers us the general view on our soul, so that we are not merely seeing one part of ourselves or another part. This can only be possible if we make sure to review the notes on ourselves that we have written down in our notebook. If we don't peruse our notebook, we will only see one part in front of us. If we are writing about how we understand love or enthusiasm or any other soul faculty, we will only see just that one part of ourselves, without seeing the greater whole.

We shall point out that there is still a great benefit to

seeing one topic at a time, because it enables you to stay focused on working on one aspect at a time. However, if we are only focusing on one detail after another, we never gain a collective view on our soul [the sum total of all our parts]. A big chunk of recognizing our personal soul depends on gaining a collective, encompassing view of ourselves.

When we are regularly perusing our personal notebook and skimming through it in one read, we are not simply focusing on one part and then another, we are gaining a general and collective view of our notebook that has notes about ourselves, which really means that we are gaining a collective view on our personal soul. At first it seems to us like we are just reading about one part of ourselves after another, but after several times of reading our notebook in its entirety, we can see how all the details we have written down are forming one total picture, with just one look through it: "And they are all analyzed with one glance." Therefore, when we keep reviewing our entire notebook, this is an important element in recognizing our personal soul.

A CHILDISH VIEW VS. A MATURE VIEW There is a big difference between just seeing details and parts, with seeing a general, encompassing view on something. It is like the difference between the way a child sees things with the way an adult sees things. A small child sees something as it is, without connecting it to a greater whole. A child can't see a bigger picture, he can only see one part and another part. Even if he becomes aware of the general picture, he will view it as another detail that he has come across.

In contrast to the immature view of a child, an adult, with a mature perspective, doesn't just see the detail as it is. He is aware that the detail is connected with other, interconnecting details, and that detail and part he comes across is really part of a greater whole. To illustrate, a father takes his child to a clothing factory. They pass by a room, and the child asks his father, "What's this?" The father answers, "This is where they process the material for the clothing." They pass by another room and the child asks, "What's this?" The father answers, "This is where they press it." They pass by another room and the child asks, "What's this?" The father answers, "This is the eating area...this is where they sew it together...this is the office."

The child comes him and tells his mother that he saw a room where they process the material, the room where they press it, the lunch room, and the office, which had a big chair in it and a long table, etc.” The child keeps going on about each of these details he saw, while the father says simply in one sentence, “We went to the clothing factory today.”

The child sees the details and parts, and so does the father, but the father also sees the sum total of all the parts. This difference of view does not only exist with an adult and child. These are two different perspectives that exist – an immature perspective and a mature perspective. There are people who are very large and imposing looking with their physical body, their money, their position of power, their profession, or other external factors, yet their perspective towards life is immature and childish. They see each thing as a random part that isn’t interconnected with other parts, and they have no encompassing view. Thus, to the degree that a person gains a mature, collective view on life, seeing each thing as part of a greater whole, he becomes a true “adult” - a great person (adam gadol).

CONNECTING ALL THE PARTS OF OUR SOUL When a person begins to enter into his or her internal world, he will identify various abilities of the soul: love, hate, enthusiasm, sadness, joy, compassion, etc. It’s very possible that the person may just be seeing each of these details alone as if they have no connection to the other parts of the soul. This is a childish, immature perspective about the soul.

By contrast, when a person has a mature perspective towards the soul, he won’t only notice the soul’s various abilities, he will see how all the soul faculties are interconnected through the general system of the soul: the four elements (air, fire, water, earth). He sees four main “rules” of the soul, with many details that branch out from each of these rules. He sees the rule that is the “element of earth”, and all the different abilities that come from it. He sees the rule that is the “element of water” and all of its branching abilities. He sees the rule that is the “element of air” and “element of fire” and all of their branching abilities that are produced from them.¹

1 The intention here is not that the reader should skip to learning about the 4 elements. Rather, it is just to give the proper perspective

And, with an even more encompassing view, a person sees only one soul in front of him - which includes in it the four primary elements that branch out into all their details and parts.

SEEING THE EVENTS OF OUR LIFE When one is regularly skimming through the notes he has written about himself in his personal notebook, he is slowly gaining the mature view of being able to view things in an encompassing way, in which he gains the ability to notice parts of a process. He will notice that his soul is going through certain process of maturity. He will notice how he is journeying through stages in life. He will notice how he is going through the process of growing and maturing in his Torah learning. He will notice how there is a certain process that he has to go through in serving Hashem. That is what gaining a collective, encompassing view is all about – to absorb one complete matter from its beginning until end, encompassing all of its details. Just like a person can gain an encompassing view on what he’s learning and on a project he’s undertaking, so can a person gain an encompassing view on many different parts of life by seeing how they are all parts of a process that’s unfolding and developing.

For example, any person’s life is comprised of several crucial stages of life. Each stage of life has its own ‘personality’ to it – they each mean different things for a person. There is the stage of infancy, childhood, adolescence, maturity/adulthood, marriage, parenthood, aging, etc. If a person just views each of these periods alone, without seeing how they are interconnected, this is a childish perspective, which sees each period of life as a random detail that isn’t connected with the rest of his life, as if it didn’t influence the other stages of his life. He doesn’t see all the different stages of his life as one long process.

Even if he is aware that the big events of his life did have a big impact on him, he may fail to see the impact of smaller events of his life, and that, too, is a childish perspective. For example, there are those who understand the signifi-

about how to approach inner work with our soul, and an aspiration to acquire a mature, encompassing view towards our soul. It is through regularly perusing our personal notebook about our soul, that we can gain that mature perspective [in which we are unifying the many different parts of our soul].

SEEING YOUR DEVELOPMENT SELF-RECOGNITION & SELF-ACTUALIZATION

cance of big events in life such as having a new child, making a Bris, a Bar Mitzvah or Bas Mitzvah, marrying off their child, etc. There are also major setbacks in life, such as going through a complicated surgery, getting fired from a job, the death of a family member or relative or friend, etc. A person views these events as impactful, but as for the rest of life – all of daily, routine living – he may not see how this, too, influenced his life. This is a childish perspective, which doesn't allow a person to see all the details of his life as part of one long process.

The Torah says about Avraham that he was “elderly and becoming of age”² and Chazal explain this to mean that Avraham utilized all of his days fully, filling every moment with meaning and content. Every moment of a person's life is filled with a flow of energy from Hashem, and all of one's soul faculties are existent every moment. There shouldn't be a moment in our life that is empty from content and meaning, because any given moment can always be connected with other moments of our life and influencing them, and therefore any given moment is really a part of the bigger picture of our life.

Without a doubt, it is a very high level to value the importance of each moment, seeing how it influences other parts of our life and how it connects with the bigger picture of our life. That was the level of Avraham Avinu, but we on our own level can also see, as much we are able to, how each step of our life is not merely another part, but interconnected with other parts of our life, and even more, it is part of a greater whole.

“The days of our years are seventy years, and with strength, eighty years.”³ Reaching 70 or 80 years of age is not simply a golden age to reach, nor is it a mere milestone after having gone through so many major life events. They are years that are part of one long process, which began from the day a person is born, and which ends on the day a person leaves to his eternal home.⁴

² Beraishis 24:1

³ Tehillim 90:10

⁴ Going deeper, the process really began the moment that Hashem created one's neshamah (soul) before He created the world, and the process ends whenever Hashem wills it to. However, these points of our ongoing process are beyond our conscious access. What is upon us is to realize how our current lifetime, which is within our conscious

GAINING AN ENCOMPASSING VIEW Being able to see a collective view of something enables a person to grasp parts of a process, and the same is true vice versa – through grasping parts of a process, we gain the ability to see an encompassing view.

Generally speaking, there are two ways to see collectively – one is way is when we notice several points at once, and another way is when see an encompassing view. For example, a person goes into a room and sees it in general terms: The size of the room, the tiles and the objects in the room, etc. He is seeing certain points of the room, but this will not give him a view of the building he is in. Just from seeing the room, he still does not know the size of the building, and how many rooms are in it, etc. In order to gain a collective view of the entire building, he needs to see all the parts of the building, as well as the building in its entirety.

Applying this to our subject – when a person peruses his personal book, he receives a collective view on his soul, but he may only be seeing a partial view. He is gaining a collective view on a particular period of his life, but he doesn't see the other periods of his life. He sees only one picture, but he is missing the other pictures. Although he gains a collective view of his soul, he isn't encompassing it entirely. How indeed can a person be able to see his soul with a more encompassing perspective? It is when one gains the ability to see parts of a process. The emotional process that his soul is in the midst of is ongoing, and it doesn't happen overnight. It overlaps many periods of his life.

To conclude all of the above, when a person regularly skims through his notebook, he gains several internal, emotional tools – one after the other. (1) He gains the ability to see collectively, which (2) gives him the ability to grasp parts of a process, and this (3) helps him gain a broader and more encompassing perspective.

NEXT WEEK: CONTINUING "SEEING YOUR DEVELOPMENT"

grasp, is all one, ongoing process.