



## PRESTIGE

## HONOR – SPIRITUAL PLEASURE FELT IN THIS WORLD

The soul wants pleasure – it seeks the “love for pleasures” [that is, holy pleasure, and when one doesn’t have this, he pursues the wrong kinds of pleasure] and one becomes pulled after such pleasures. There are physical pleasures such as food and drink and other worldly pleasures, but there is also the subtle pleasure which a person can enjoy on this world – as Rav Chaim Volozhiner explained – and that is the pleasure of honor.

There is a certain subtle pleasure in receiving honor, and Rav Chaim Volozhiner explained that a person is able to get his reward of the Next World already on This World when he receives honor. Why? Although This World is physical and reward in the Next World is spiritual, a person is able to get rewarded for his mitzvos on This World when he is given honor. This is because honor is a very subtle, intangible kind of pleasure – it is a spiritual kind of pleasure that can be felt on This World.

Of course, spirituality can be used for evil as well, and the classic example of this is Bilaam, who knew “knowledge of Above” and knew the time when Hashem gets angry – he knew how to use spirituality for evil purposes. Sorcery is knowledge of the spiritual which denies the side of holiness, and there are other evil forms of spirituality as well. In any case, a person feels subtle pleasure when he receives honor.

The following story illustrates the subtle pleasure in feeling honor. In Ponovezh yeshiva, the eastern side of the Beis Midrash was reserved for Rabbonim who taught in the Yeshiva. Once there was an avreich who came by and davened in that section by mistake, and after davening ended, the Mashgiach Reb Chatzkel Levenstein *zt”l* asked him, “Nu, what was it like to sit there? What enjoyment did you feel when sitting there?”

## PLEASURE OF CONNECTING TO A HIGHER LEVEL

The way we simply understand honor is that it’s a way for people to have some kind of relationship with one another, where they give honor to each other, as a way to maintain some kind of relationship. In the same vein, we give honor to Torah scholars and to parents. The person gets pleasure here from the relationship that’s being accorded to him. There are two emotions here that he can be feeling pleasure from – the love he is receiving, and the honor he is receiving.

But, as explained here, there is a deeper way to understand it: Honor is really a connection to that which we are honoring. What, then, is the pleasure that we feel from honor?

Honor is not merely a way of forming relationships with others, it is not some outer show of conduct. It is not like anger for example, where one is allowed to make himself look angry yet internally he is not angry, where he has to “act” angry but really he isn’t. The pleasure in honor, then, is a pleasure in something that’s really there, in the fact that one is connecting himself with something above him, placing him on a level that’s higher than where he really belongs. Connecting to something above you and being found in a higher place is a pleasure for the soul, and that is the subtle pleasure of honor.

For example, a child enjoys copying his parents and acting like them. When a child copies a parent, he is really recognizing that he’s a part of his parents and he is going a bit beyond his childish immaturity. This is a certain kind of pleasure, and it is really the “water”-of-fire-of-fire.

Fire wants to rise, and fire-of-fire, which is the essence of honor, is the soul’s ascent to a higher place, where one becomes elevated to a higher level. It is not merely a superficial feeling of elatedness, it is a true ascent to a higher level. When one rises

to there and he connects to it, he gets pleasure (the element of water) from being in that high place. Thus the essence of honor contains within it a feeling of true pleasure.

## PLEASURE DERIVED FROM “STOLEN WATERS ARE SWEET”

Normally, pleasure is experienced when you have something that belongs to you or something that’s within your reach. For example, a person enjoys eating something sweet and delicious, and in a spiritual example, a person enjoys Shabbos. One buys the food for Shabbos and relies on Hashem to pay him back for his Shabbos expenses, and now he can enjoy it on Shabbos. But another kind of pleasure is when it’s “stolen pleasure”, as in the verse “Stolen waters are sweet”, and this is a pleasure of connecting to something that’s not really for you. Either it can be stolen in the simple sense, which is when one takes something that doesn’t belong to him and then he enjoys what’s not his, or, on a deeper level, a person will enjoy something that’s beyond his current level.

In the first example (stealing) a person is enjoying pleasure from the world that he’s found in, just that it’s something which belongs to his friend and not to him, and that is the simple kind of “stolen waters are sweet”. But the second example is deeper. When a person is connecting to a world that’s above his current level, he is enjoying “stolen waters” in the sense that he is receiving pleasure from a world that’s completely above him. This is the pleasure (water) that one can find in fire-of-fire, the essence of honor.

The element of water is the element of pleasure, but there is also pleasure that can be found in fire. The pleasures that one can get from the element of water are all pleasures that come from the world or level we are found in. The Gemara says, “Water leave from a high place, descends to a low place.” Pleasure from the element of water is whenever a person enjoys something that has come down to him, which is now within his reach to enjoy. But pleasure from the element of fire is to get pleasure from connecting to a higher place. This is really a pleasure that comes from connecting to something that isn’t meant to be part of your personal share, so it is like “stolen waters are sweet”, where one rises to a place that isn’t his and he gets enjoyment from this.

If one rises to a higher level and it is truly his level to be on it, he does not get pleasure in this “fire”. One of the *tzaddik-*

*im* said that “There is pleasure in the beginning of chassidus (piety and devotion to Hashem), but there is no pleasure as one continues chassidus”. Why is it that way? When one is beginning to enter into chassidus, he is trying to enter into a more spiritual realm of existence, and he gets pleasure in this as he connects to a higher level. But later, when he has indeed risen to a higher level, he no longer gets pleasure from it [it becomes the ‘norm’ for him].

Similarly, Rav Dessler wrote of two concepts called *hasagah* (becoming or attaining) and *havayah* (being) where he explains a very fundamental point, how *hasagah* is when a person tries to connect to a level above him and to reach and perceive it, while *havayah* is about being connected to a level that already belongs to your personal share.

*Chazal* said, “A person should learn Torah and do *mitzvos* even *shelo lishmah* so that he will come to do them *lishmah*.” Simply speaking, *shelo lishmah* means to learn for the sake of self-gain and honor, but the deeper understanding is that *shelo lishmah* is whenever a person is doing it for the pleasure involved in the honor that he gets out of it, and not for the sake of the honorable level itself that he’s connecting to. The Ramchal, when describing the level of *chassidus*, writes that a person who does *mitzvos* for the sake of the pleasure that he gets from connecting to Hashem is not serving Hashem *lishmah*. He’s serving Hashem, but only for the sake of the pleasure he gets in being closer to Hashem. Though we were created for this pleasure, if a person serves Hashem entirely for this pleasure then he is serving Hashem *shelo lishmah*.

Self-gain and honor are included in *shelo lishmah*, and with regards to honor, the superficial and *shelo lishmah* aspect in honor is when a person wants to receive the pleasure in being honored by others, but the deeper way to understand the pleasure of honor is that one is connecting to a higher plane than one’s current level. That is really the depth of how to understand what *shelo lishmah* is, and in the terms of Rav Dessler it means that one is found at the level of *hasagah* and not at *havayah*, for if the person would be found at *havayah* then it’s truly his place and he wouldn’t get pleasure from connecting to there. When one is truly found there, when it is suitable to him, he doesn’t get pleasure from there. **TO BE CONTINUED**

### YARDSTICK 4 – FEELING CONNECTED TO AN ABILITY?

A fourth ‘yardstick’ [which also measures the quality of a certain ability] we can use, to clarify if an ability is stronger or weaker, is by seeing how deeply connected we feel to a certain ability.

The soul is complex, comprised of a number of “layers”. One’s abilities are divided and masked between all these different layers of the soul. Some of our abilities are found in the deeper layers of our soul, while other abilities are found closer to the surface, in the more external layers of our soul.

We can identify this by seeing how deeply connected we feel towards any of these abilities. Sometimes a person can feel a deep connection to a certain ability of his, even though he cannot logically explain why.

Here is an analogy to explain this concept. A person knows many people, and he has some friends whom he feels some connection with. One day he meets a person he never met before, and suddenly, after only a short time of meeting the other, he feels a very deep and strong connection to the other which he cannot explain. One of the reasons for this is because there is a very deep, “soul” connection between them.

It is the same with the relationship that we may have with our own soul-capabilities. If a certain ability of ours is found at a very deep place in our soul, then we will feel a deep connection with this particular ability.

So when we are listing all our abilities, we can identify which abilities are coming from a deeper place in us – which of our abilities are closer to our root, which we feel fundamentally attached with- and which abilities are more external and more like a ‘branching’ ability [when compared to the ‘root’], since we are not fundamentally attached with these abilities.

Using this ‘yardstick’, we can analyze the chart of all our abilities and see better which of our abilities are stronger (which we are more deeply connected to) and

which abilities are weaker (which we do not feel deeply connected to).

### YARDSTICK 5 – CLARITY ABOUT A PARTICULAR ABILITY

A fifth ‘yardstick’ (and which also measures the quality of a particular ability) which we can use to figure out if an ability is stronger or weaker is, by seeing how clear we are about a certain ability.

There are certain abilities we have which we can see clearly. We have both a good definition on them and emotional experience of these particular abilities. In contrast, there are other abilities we have which, no matter how hard we try to understand these parts of ourselves, these abilities remain cloudy and unclear to us.

When are listing all our abilities, we can identify which of our abilities we see clearly, and which abilities are not as clear to us. Using this ‘yardstick’, we can go back to the charts we made in which we listed all our abilities, and see better which abilities are indeed stronger (clearer) or weaker (unclear).

### YARDSTICK 6 – NOTICING SUBTLETIES

The sixth ‘yardstick’ (which also measures the quality of our abilities) to know which of our abilities are stronger or weaker is, by seeing if we can notice subtleties about a particular ability.

We can notice that with some of our abilities, we succeed in seeing their subtle aspects, finding minor nuances and differentiations and perspectives to them (both intellectual and emotional). With other abilities, though, no matter how hard we try to understand them in detail, the most we can succeed is to gain a very general perspective on the ability.

When we are listing all our abilities, we can identify which abilities we succeed in getting down to their subtleties, and which abilities we don’t grasp in detail yet.

# FINDING YOUR QUALITIES

## SELF-RECOGNITION & SELF-ACTUALIZATION

Using this ‘yardstick’, we can see better which abilities are stronger or weaker.

### GETTING TO WORK

We explained here six yardsticks by which we can measure how strong or weak our abilities are. The last three yardsticks mentioned (feeling a deep connection to an ability, feeling clear about an ability, and knowing the subtleties of an ability) are all deep and complex methods to use, and therefore most people won’t be able to use them right away, when trying to figure out which of their abilities are stronger or weaker.

Therefore, it is recommended to first focus on using the first three yardsticks mentioned (seeing how often we are making use of an ability, how connected we are with a certain ability, and how much stability a certain ability provides us with).

After implementing these methods several times, and after we are understand and agree to go further with this, we can then proceed to use the last three yardsticks mentioned, and gradually so.<sup>1</sup>

*1 Besides for the methods explained in this chapter, there is also an additional way to know our soul-capabilities in order of their dominance and to identify our strongest ability. This is by learning how to identify complex factors that comprise our motivations (explained in Chapter 14), an approach which examines the motivations of our actions and the root abilities of our personal soul. This, in turn, also shows a person which of his abilities are stronger or weaker. However, that approach (explained in Chapter 14) is not recommended to use at this current stage. It should only be implemented after the steps that will be explained in the coming chapters (12-13). For this reason, we did not mention that approach in the text of this chapter. At this current stage (which is the beginning), we should use only the methods explained in this chapter.*

### IN CONCLUSION: PATIENCE REQUIRED FOR THIS PROCESS

This work of listing our abilities in order of their dominance doesn’t happen in a day or two. It is a work that we need to gradually and consistently weave over a considerable course of time.

During the first few times of listing our soul-capabilities in order of their dominance, we should try doing it within a relatively short span of time,<sup>2</sup> gaining a general picture of our soul-capabilities and identifying our strongest ability.<sup>3</sup> But in order to complete the process, it will take a considerable amount of time, and requires patience and persistence. Therefore, entering into this work should not be done chaotically and from an impatience to progress quickly. The steps of the work here have to be implemented gradually and fundamentally, step by step.

We also have to remember that all beginnings are hard. When we begin something new, it will be cloudy and unclear. But usually, after finishing the first step, a large part of the difficulty goes away, and instead there is clarity and joy. Although we need to keep continuing and trying hard in order to progress further, it can all be done amidst a feeling of fulfillment and joy.

The more we persist with this path, we will advance towards the direction of clearly seeing our internal world that will shine brightly for us. There, we will see a world and its fullness: “Your world can be seen in your life.”<sup>4</sup>

### NEXT WEEK CONTINUING: FINDING YOUR QUALITIES

*2 This is especially because the first time we try to work on it, we will probably be going with our own understanding and gut feeling, without using the ‘yardsticks’ that were explained in this chapter.*

*3 This will also give us basic tools to advance to the next steps, which will be explained in the coming chapters.*

*4. Talmud Bavli Berachos 17a (This was an expression the Sages would use to bless each other with.)*