

EIKEV REMOVING THE BLOCKAGE OF THE HEART

ORLAS HALEV – THE FORESKIN OF THE HEART

[In *Parshas Eikev*, the Torah writes, “And you will circumcise the foreskin of your hearts.” What is this concept of the “foreskin upon the heart”, which the Torah calls *orlas halev*?]

It is written, “And you shall know today, and you shall return the matter to your heart.”¹ Our *avodah* is always first to know the facts, and then to internalize our mind’s knowledge into our heart.

The Egyptian exile deterred us from receiving the Torah. As long as we were in Egypt, we could not receive the Torah; we had to leave Egypt in order to become purified at Har Sinai and receive the Torah. In Egypt, we would not have been able to internalize the Torah had we received it. In Egypt, there was “bricks and mortar”, and this personified the exile. What exactly are these “bricks and mortar” that held us back from receiving the Torah?

It wasn’t just that we had cruel physical labor. It was a spiritual kind of bricks and mortar – a blockage that held us back from receiving the Torah.

There were two layers to the redemption. There was a physical redemption, which took place when we actually left Egypt, in the physical

sense. But there was also a spiritual layer of the redemption – the redemption that took place in our souls, enabling us to receive the Torah.

Although the physical redemption happened a long time ago, the spiritual redemption of our souls happens every year. Let us learn how we can merit having the yearly spiritual redemption during this time – to reach the level of receiving the Torah, the level of internalizing our knowledge.

In the *Haggadah* we express, “By your blood shall you live”. The Sages explain that this refers to the blood of the *korban pesach* (paschal sacrifice) and the blood of *bris milah* (circumcision). What is the connection between *korban pesach* and *bris milah*? Simply it is because in order to eat the *korban pesach*, one had to be circumcised, as the Gemara says. But the deeper meaning is that one has to circumcise his “*orlas halev*” – the blockage that is on his **heart**.

There exist two kinds of *orlah* (blockages) which we remove – a physical blockage which exists in the part of the body that is circumcised by *bris milah*, and a spiritual kind of blockage, which is present on the heart. This is called *orlas halev*. When our heart is blocked, the Torah knowledge in our mind isn’t able to penetrate into our heart.

On Pesach, we were commanded to become

¹ Devarim 32:9

circumcised; the simple meaning of this, as we said, was because we need to undergo *bris milah* in order to eat from the *korbon pesach*. But the deeper meaning is that we had to remove our *orlas halev*, “blockage of our heart” that was on us – as it is written, “*And you shall circumcise the foreskin of your hearts.*”

We must remove the barrier between our mind and heart, so that our mind’s knowledge can settle in our heart. And it has to be “*in*” our heart, not just *on* our heart.²

In order to eat the *korbon pesach*, we had to have a *bris milah*. As we explained, the deeper meaning of this is that we had to remove our “*orlas halev*” in order to eat the *korban pesach*. In Egypt, we removed some of the blockage as we began to cry out to Hashem from our heart, but this process was not yet complete until we left Egypt, when we actually received *bris milah* – which was not just a physical act of circumcision, but a removal of the blockage on our heart.

HOW WE CAN ACCOMPLISH INTERNALIZATION

How do we internalize the knowledge of our mind into our heart? We get to know the Torah by learning it well, but how do we internalize it into our heart? There are two general ways described in the works of our Rabbis of how we can accomplish this.

² Based on a teaching of the Kotzker Rebbe who said that there are two levels: “On” your heart, where inspiration is still external and not as effective, and a deeper level, “In” your hearts, where one’s knowledge penetrates into his heart and becomes more internalized.

THE FIRST WAY: DA’AS

One way is as follows. We have three different mental abilities: *chochmah* [lit. wisdom] *tevunah* [from the word *binah*, contemplation] and *daas* [knowledge, or understanding].

Chochmah is what one learns from his teacher. *Tevunah* is when we think on our own. *Daas* is when we connect to our knowledge.

Daas is when a person is always thinking about Torah, because he connects to the knowledge of his mind. *Daas* is an inner kind of thinking, not a superficial kind of thinking. When a person merely intellectualizes about his learning, he’s either using *chochmah* or *tevunah*, but this isn’t yet *daas*. *Daas* is only when a person thinks all the time about his learning because he is truly connected to his learning.

When a person uses his *daas*, he is connected all the time to his learning as he thinks constantly of Torah – and in this way, his mind’s knowledge enters his heart. This is when a person learns Torah along with *emunah* in Hashem in his life. The Torah then penetrates into his heart.

THE SECOND WAY: VERBAL REPETITION

The second method brought by our Rabbis how to internalize the knowledge of our mind into our heart is by making a direct imprint on our heart. This is accomplished when we review matters repeatedly using our simple *emunah*. As it is written in the verse, “*I believed, for I spoke.*”³ When we constantly repeat a fact, it eventually settles into our heart, where it becomes internalized knowledge.

³ Tehillim 116:10

Pharoah knew that Hashem existed, but he didn't internalize this information. Pharoah means *peh rah*, "evil mouth." In other words, he didn't use his mouth in the right way, and thus he didn't internalize his mind's knowledge.

So one way to internalize is to use *daas*, which is by learning Torah in a way that we connect to it; and this is accomplished when we learn Torah together with having *emunah* in Hashem. The second method to internalize is to use our power of speech, to affect our heart.

THE THIRD, DEEPER WAY: REPEATING THE FACTS OF OUR DA'AS TO OUR HEART

But there is also a third way, which is deeper than the above two ways, and it combines the two methods together: to **speak** to ourselves facts that we know from our *daas*, with the intention that it should affect our heart.

This is also the deeper meaning behind why we count *Sefiras HaOmer* for 49 days. Since we repeat to ourselves that today is another day towards Shavuos, it eventually internalizes in our heart. Through the power of constant verbal repetition, the facts of our brain settle into our heart and become internalized.

Most people when they learn Torah are only using the lower power of *chochmah*, which is located in the brain. This is mere intellectual knowledge, and it doesn't always affect a person. But the higher, deeper kind of *chochmah* is called *chochmas halev* – the wisdom of the heart – and it is rare. It is accessed when we verbalize our mind's knowledge to ourselves and we repeat the facts, over and over again, until it penetrates our heart. It then becomes *chochmas halev*.

FEEL THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN YOUR MIND & HEART

First we must realize, though, that our mind and heart vastly contradict each other. There are many contradictions between our heart and mind, and therefore, our mind and heart are very far from each other. Our heart is full of various desires that are evil, even though our mind knows that it's wrong.

Desires, jealousy and honor-seeking are negative emotions that are present in our heart. These negative emotions contradict what we know in our mind. Feel the contradiction going on between your mind and heart – and let it bother you! When you feel very bothered by the great contradiction between your mind and heart, you can then realize that you must work to internalize your mind's knowledge into your heart.

It is not enough to simply ignore these negative emotions that pass through us and hope that they will go away on their own. Rather, we should seek the truth, and instead we should seek to change our heart, by repeating our mind's facts to our heart, through repeated verbalization.

In today's generation, our heart is for the most part negatively affected, and we often don't feel at all how it's affected. But our heart is being affected more and more, for the worse, as our life goes on. If we don't seek to change our heart, our heart only gets worse and worse as we get older, and we will only continue to get negatively influenced by our surroundings.

In order to survive the dismal situation of today's times, we must continuously attempt to internalize our mind's knowledge into

our heart. We have to go through a constant purification process within ourselves. Our heart has to literally burn for Torah, for *mitzvos*, for love and fear of Hashem, for a bond with Him. It has to burn like a fire, or else we get worse and worse as our life goes on. Every Jew needs to have a heart that is **actually burning** for a bond with Hashem and for His Torah and mitzvos.

Unless a person develops a burning desire in his heart to internalize the facts he knows, he will remain his whole life and end it with his initial level of *orlas halev*.

We must bring our life to a halt (*at least once*) and seek how we can internalize our knowledge, how we can acquire a heart that burns for Hashem. A person might go his whole life and know a lot of Torah, but in his heart, he is a total ignoramus, and not only that, but his heart is evil from his youth. Even if he's a prominent person when it comes to Torah knowledge – even if he gives *shiurim* and wrote *sefarim* - it doesn't mean he has internalized the Torah into his heart...

If a person seeks to change his heart constantly, he will be much less affected by society. A person needs to realize that our surroundings place us in grave danger. We can't become complacent! If we let ourselves become complacent in today's

times, we are in mortal danger.

To summarize: We must each seek to internalize our mind's knowledge into our

hearts – through our *daas*, and through repeating the facts with our mouth. And we must set aside time to reflect about important matters, (*as Reb Yisrael Salanter would do, to go over one statement of Chazal and repeat it numerous times, passionately*).

We need to do this all the time, not just once in a while: we must always seek to internalize the facts into our heart, by repeating to ourselves the facts that we know. Hashem created us with a *lev tahor*, a “pure heart” – and when we feel our pure heart, we will feel as if we have just converted anew to Judaism. (*Of course, we need a brain too, and not just a heart. We cannot live with just our mind or just our heart – we need to connect them both together.*⁴)

We need to have a life brimming with Torah, mitzvos and *emunah*. This is the true redemption from Egypt. May we merit to leave the blockage on our hearts, and instead come to “know” Hashem – and to internalize the knowledge about Him in our heart.

⁴ Editor's Note: refer to *The Weekly Shmuess_029_Behaaloscha_Torah Mind and Passionate Heart*



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