

## REVIEWING THE BASIC GOAL

### AN INNER POINT THAT UNIFIES EVERY DETAIL

We have so far merited from Hashem to discuss many different important points about our Avodas Hashem. However, we must be aware with all of this that in everything we learn about, there are always two layers, an external layer and an internal layer.

The *sefarim hakedoshim* tell us that there is always one underlying point behind every matter. What we see as many various details in a matter is only the external layer of a matter. The inner layer of a matter is always one point, and it a point which unifies all of the details into one unit. This one underlying point in everything is always one fact: that Hashem's glory fills the entire world. "You exist before the world was created, and You exist after the world was created."<sup>1</sup>

Hashem is everywhere, and He is contained in everything. He is the inner core of everything in Creation, of every place, of every time, of every soul. The soul is called a *cheilek eloka mimaal*, a "piece of G-d from above", because Hashem resides in the core of our soul.

When we only have a simple, superficial perspective on things, then we see many random details in front of us. We see different places, different times, different souls—all we see is differences, and we don't see anything unifying all information together.

But when a person finally merits to transcend the superficial perspective of what he's seeing, he leaves that mentality of separation (*alma d'piruda*,

"world of separation") and enters into an inner outlook on things, an outlook that gives a unified perspective on things. It is the viewpoint from the deepest part of our soul - a viewpoint that sees how all details are unified, because all of the details we know of are really filled with Hashem's glory.

### YOU CAN'T TIRE FROM THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

We can give a *moshol* to explain what we mean, and with the help of Hashem, we can then try to understand that inner point well.

Let's say a person owns a store, and he sells all kinds of products: bread, milk, etc. If it's a big supermarket, he has hundreds of items he sells in his store. If we ask him why he has a store, he will not answer that it's because he has to sell this item and that item. It is for one reason alone: so he can make money!

A customer walking through the aisles of the store, however, just sees many various items, and he doesn't think about how all of the items in the store are all about this one thing. He's thinking about this item and that item; he isn't thinking about how all of these items serve one purpose alone.

Let us explain these different perspectives, and what we can learn from this.

We can compare the customer's viewpoint to a superficial perspective on life: seeing many details, without seeing how all of the details connect.

If the storeowner doesn't know why he owns his store, then what will hap-

pen? He will order all kinds of items to sell, even items that won't even sell so much, because he's caught up in details. He's forgetting the purpose of why he sells all these items in his store. Instead of trying to make money in the sensible way, he focuses on various items, not on the store as a whole; and this is a very silly way to run his business.

When it comes to worldly matters, we can all understand right away that the above attitude is erroneous, and it will not amount to any success. But when it comes to our *Avodas Hashem*, we don't find the above lesson to be that simple, and we find ourselves getting caught up in the various details we need to work on, forgetting the unified purpose of all those details.

Let's return to the above *moshol* of the store. Let's say we can go ask the storeowner: "Don't you ever get sick of working in your store all day? What do you care if you have this store or not?"

He will probably be baffled at such a question. He will respond, "I don't understand your question. I am trying to make money here! That is why I have my store!"

"But don't you ever get tired of making money? What do you need it for?"

He will probably ignore such a question and think to himself, "I don't know what this person wants from me."

Why? Because the storeowner lives his whole life for money. Money is his goal in life, so all he thinks about, nat-

<sup>1</sup> Tefillas Shacharis

<sup>2</sup> in Bilvavi Part 4

urally, is money. In his mind, he can never get sick of making money, because he thinks that money is the goal of life, that money is the thing that he needs to make him happy. Maybe he goes away on vacation sometimes and goes on a temporary hiatus from making money, but even when he goes away, he's still thinking about his business; he leaves on his cellphone so he can take any business-related calls.

The above storeowner has a constant goal in front of him: to make money. He doesn't stop thinking about making money – yet he never gets sick of this. He goes to sleep thinking about it, and he gets up in the morning thinking about it: “How much money did I make today? How much money will I make tomorrow?”

If we understand the lesson from the above *moshol*, we can get a very clear picture about our life. We all know that the purpose of our life, and the purpose of the entire Creation, is one reason alone: to become close to Hashem. If only we could think about our purpose in life as much as a businessman thinks about making money! The goal of becoming close to Hashem has to become our most important wish in life, the point that is the driving force behind every single thing that we do.

When our soul truly comes to the realization that the purpose of life is to become close to Hashem, we will discover that we don't ever tire of this, and we can hear about it all day without getting sick of this point. We wouldn't get sick of always hearing about it, because you can't get sick of something that your soul yearns so much for. It is a desire that comes from our very soul, not just some knowledge of our intellect.

If the desire to become close to Hash-

em remains in a person as just some intellectual knowledge to him, then of course, he would tire from hearing about it. Our brain would grow impatient from hearing the same thing over and over again. But if a person merits to *internalize* what the goal of life is, then he automatically will realize that we have nothing else on this world other than seeking closeness to Hashem, and to him, life looks a lot different. It's a whole new picture. Just like worldly interests can consume a businessman's thoughts and he will never grow disgusted from thinking, how much more so is this true when it comes to our spiritual concerns, that we never grow tired from thinking about it.

If a person ever feels that we are repeating too much that we have to become close to Hashem, and even more so, if he just thinks that way – he's right. It's true – we keep repeating it! If the reader is connecting to these words and living by them, then he will find that he is ready to hear about these concepts even hundreds of times and never grow tired of it. If he doesn't connect with what we are saying here, then it just means he has to hear it again, because he obviously hasn't really understood what we are trying to convey here...

### THE BASIC, FUNDAMENTAL POINT

As long as a person still feels that he isn't living by the words here, he will run away from this point all his life and look for some new idea; he will look into this detail and that detail, and the details are innumerable.

We can present here a lot of nice ideas and wise advice on how to work on all kinds of areas, but if a person misses the inner point of it all, he might *chas v'shalom* drown in the giant sea of all these details. The inner point

of the details we will learn about here is one point alone: that all of our life is meant to live with the *Ribono shel Olam*. When we get up in the morning, we are supposed to think about Him; wherever we go, we go with Him, and to Him we return to at all times. If a person doesn't understand this, and he instead begins to work on any detail in his Avodas Hashem other than this, he will just be involving himself in various details that bear no connection. He will go lost in all the details and he might stay like that forever, *chas v'shalom*.

Whatever we have said until now has all been leading up to a certain direction: the inner point of all of this – that we must seek to always become closer to Hashem. Although it seems that we have said many various details over here that we need to practice, really, they are all just like wrappings covering over the inner point of everything we are trying to convey here.

If the reader has been hearing these matters already for a few months and he hasn't seen a difference in how he relates with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, and he is the same now as he was before he learned this *sefer*, the reason for this is either one of two possibilities. Either he understands all of this but he's having trouble implementing these matters, or is he isn't clear about the understanding of these matters here.

It would be easier for us if we just continue on here and say more, and keep advancing. But if someone truly understands the inner point behind everything we've learned here, he realizes that the inner point contains everything he needs to know, and he won't even feel a need to continue this *sefer*. We don't mean that there is no other inner work that needs to be done over here. Rather, our intention

is that all of our *avodah* can sprout forth from the understanding of the inner point, from truly grasping how important it is to become close to Hashem.

The Sage Hillel said, “If I am here, everyone is here; and if I am not here, who is here?”<sup>3</sup> The commentators are perplexed at Hillel’s statement. How could it be that Hillel, who was known for his humility, could make such a seemingly conceited statement? One of the famous answers to this is that Hillel was talking about the *Shechinah*. He was saying that if “I” – the true “I”, who is Hashem, is here – in other words, when we reveal Hashem in our heart – then we can conquer all evil. But if we don’t have Hashem revealed within, *chas v’shalom*, then there is no true “I” here, and we will have nothing.

Without revealing Hashem in our heart, even if we attempt to improve on many areas, such as to try and fix our *middos*, it will be very difficult to see any success from this.

Every person must therefore make the following clarification: to see if he’s truly ready to connect to the matters here. Each person has the choice to search for the way that he wants to go in. This is actually an *avodah* that can take *a few years!* This is not an exaggeration. It can take a few years to clarify with oneself this very first, basic point.

There will probably be readers here who don’t understand this, but we must be very honest and clear over here.

When a person merits to feel that he is living with Hashem in his life, he won’t give this feeling up for anything.

## SIYATA D'SHMAYA (HEAVENLY ASSISTANCE) TO FIGHT THE EVIL INCLINATION

There is a well-known statement in Chazal<sup>4</sup>, “the evil inclination gets stronger every day...and if not for Hashem helping, it would be impossible to overcome it.” In other words, Hashem gave us the power to fight evil, but He has informed us from the start that we cannot overcome evil without His help. He is telling us, “I created you, and I created as well the evil inclination. I have given you certain abilities, and I have also given the evil inclination certain abilities. I am letting you know that the power which I gave the evil inclination is stronger than what I have given you.”

Any able-minded person realizes this and immediately sinks into despair. If Hashem, the source of all strength, has informed us that He has given more strength to our evil inclination, then how are we to ever overcome it??

However, at the same time, Hashem is telling us “if not for Hashem helping, it would be impossible to overcome it.” In other words, Hashem is saying: “I have a way for you to overcome the evil inclination. What is that way? Connect to Me. I can do anything and help you.”

Simply, this statement of the Gemara is telling us that we can have *siyata d’shamaya*, heavenly assistance, which we can receive from above. But the deeper understanding of this Gemara is that Hashem helps us when we reveal Him in our heart. Our strength we can have to fight evil is not simply coming from ourselves. It is coming from Hashem, who resides in our heart, and we must reveal His existence in our heart in order for us to

get help from Him.

We need to realize that it is not our own strength which can fight the evil inclination. The evil inclination is far mightier than our puny human strengths. Our strength can only be supplied by Hashem. When we recognize that, when we attribute all strength to Hashem, then we will gain Hashem’s help – an unlimited strength to fight evil.

Let us be very clear about this. It is impossible to fight the evil inclination with our human abilities. “*Hashem will fight for you your wars, and they will be silenced.*” Even if a person isn’t seeing total successes in his fight against the evil inclination, and he isn’t meriting how “*they will be silenced,*” he can still have the main part of the fight, which is “*Hashem will fight for you your wars.*”

When a person makes sure to include Hashem in every aspect of his life, Hashem will become his partner as well to help him fight his battles. But if, *chas v’shalom*, a person is apart from Hashem, he has severed the partnership, and he will be left all alone to fight the evil inclination – an impossible match.

## THREE LEVELS OF RECOGNITION

There are people who have reached the understanding that the purpose of life is to become close to Hashem, yet this remains by them as a mere intellectual kind of knowledge and nothing more than that. They know of it, and they are clear about it, without a shadow of a doubt about it. Yet, their heart is feeling differently. First of all, they feel a pull towards evil. Also – and this is a more inner kind of problem – they do not see the goal of our

3 Sukkah 53a

4 Sukkah 52a

life to be everything; people feel that there are other things which we need to focus on as well besides for this. Although people can be perfectly aware in their minds that something isn't right about this, their feelings differ totally from their minds' knowledge.

Let us define three kinds of people.

There are people who merited to purify their hearts to the point that they feel clearly what the purpose of life is – to become close to Hashem. Such people will never tire of hearing the topics discussed in this sefer, even if they keep hearing it again and again. They enjoy hearing about these matters even if they don't hear a novelty.

(It's like how we never tire of eating. We can eat the same food every day, yet never get sick of it, because our sense of taste renews the food each time.)

This is the perspective a person reaches when he feels, in his heart, that Hashem is the purpose of everything, and that all of our desires on this world (or at least most of them) should be about connecting more and more to Hashem. Such a person is more than happy to hear the topics that are being discussed here, because the words here are about the truth, and the inner truth in the person will be pulled toward the truths of the matters here. The words here are simple and true, and even if they are heard again and again with nothing new added, they still don't lose their effect – to someone who has uncovered these inner truths in his heart.

Yaakov Avinu is called *ish tam*, a "wholesome man" – he personified

the quality of *temimus*/simplicity. When a person has *temimus*, he loves simplicity, and he will love to hear even about well-known matters. We can see this from the pure innocence of small children, who radiate *temimus*. We can tell them a story, and they want us to tell it over and over again to them, and they won't even mind if we tell them the same story hundreds of times. Children love to hear the same story, over and over again, even if they know it by heart with all its details. Why? It is because they have a quality called *temimus*, simplicity (it is also called "*peshitus*"), and simplicity is drawn after hearing the same old beloved topics.

When a person reaches, in his heart, this point of simplicity – he can hear about the same truths over and over again, and he never tires from it. This is tried and tested by anyone who has begun to enter inward.

That is one kind of person (and this is the ideal level we should want to achieve).

There is another kind of person that can know about all these things in his head, but he doesn't feel them in his heart. Such a person needs special guidance in how to internalize a matter from his intellect into his heart.<sup>5</sup>

There is also a third kind of person, who does not even understand at all any of the words here. He does not understand what we are making such a big deal out of over here. He's thinking, "Very nice point; important. But I have to learn Torah, do the mitzvos, and work to improve my *middos* – and through that alone, I will get to my inner world."

Such a person has the choice to go back and review everything we have said here until now, from beginning until this point, and try to clarify them. He should daven to Hashem that he be directed to the truth. If he arrives at the understanding that the focus of our life is about becoming close to Hashem – good, because then he has advanced to become like the second kind of person we mentioned above.

But if a person, after trying to clarify the matters of this sefer and daven about it, still doesn't have that understanding, then he will gain almost nothing from this sefer. This is because we will be very repetitive about the inner point of all these matters, and although we will also mention other details besides for this, we will still keep reiterating the inner point: that we must become close to Hashem through all of this, and that we must simply live with Him in our life.

Of course, there are individuals who need to hear some other points, but this is the general point that is applicable to any person: We must begin to truly feel Hashem, and not just sometimes. Our whole route in life needs to be accompanied by this very simple feeling – that we are living life with Hashem.

### "TASTE AND SEE THAT HASHEM IS GOOD"

There is a story told over about Reb Aryeh Leib Malin zt"l that once a young boy asked him a certain question in learning, and when he told him the answer, the boy didn't understand. After many times of trying to explain the answer and being unsuccess-

5 In *sefer Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh* Vol. V (p.337), in a short piece called "The Way To Internalize Matters Of Our Mind Into Our Heart", the author gives two possible methods of how to internalize knowledge. One way is to simply verbalize a certain fact many times, again and again – even hundreds or thousands of times – until it finally gets absorbed in the person. If this does not work, one can either write the fact down or he can review it mentally, for hundreds of times, until it eventually absorbs.

cessful, Reb Malin zt"l told him the following: "I can explain it to you from all different kinds of angles until you understand it. But I can't give you my level of grasp." (He was not referring to sharpness or memory, but clear understanding).

Once, Rav Shimshon Pincus zt"l came to a yeshiva to speak, and in middle, he said the following: "I can talk and explain a lot, but believe me: If you would only know what it is to feel like when a person lives with Hashem in his life, you would run after it, after I explain to you how you can get there. You don't understand how much darkness you are in, what you are missing in life, and how far you are from the truth, from *"taste and see that Hashem is good."*

He continued: "And you should also know that even if you would ask me how you can taste that feeling, I wouldn't be able to give it to you. Hashem did not give me the power to be able to give over what it tastes like – the taste of true *d'veykus* with Hashem."

Everyone has special times in which they feel themselves growing spiritually and enjoying this. However, people come to imagine that such elation is supposed to be every second, and that this is what it means to be close to Hashem all the time.

This is a mistake! Being close to Hashem is unlike anything you recognize from until now. A person can live all the time with closeness to Hashem, or *chas v'shalom*, the opposite. A person has to decide, with total conviction, with clarity, if he truly wants to let Hashem enter his heart.

This is the meaning of, "*Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*" – "In my heart, I will build a sanctuary." It is to truly live with Hashem. It is not merely about thinking about how Hashem is next to us, or to put the four-letter Name of Hashem in front of us all the time. These are superficial methods, as they does not define being close to Hashem. Being close to Hashem means that *Hashem is found within one's heart*.

We cannot really explain what it is to anyone who hasn't reached it yet. But what we can all do is to firmly believe that it is possible to attain, just as all the other *tzaddikim* in the past reached – and lived – closeness with Hashem.

Once Reb Moshe of Kobrin zt"l said that if lustful people would only know how enjoyable it is to be close to Hashem, they would give up that fake, physical pleasure for the real thing – an intimate closeness with Hashem, which is true pleasure.

In fact, all the various loves that people have on this world, besides for a love for Hashem, is fake love. People who don't have a love for Hashem haven't tasted what true love is.<sup>6</sup>

This is the way Hashem made the world; as long as a person remains outside the world of closeness with Hashem, he will never attain it - not even a tiny bit of that inner world.

The way to get our inward reality is through *emunah*. Part of *emunah* is to have faith in the many leaders throughout all the generations, faith in their students and in their students who came after them. With faith in

our leaders, we can believe the words of the Chazon Ish who wrote that it's possible for a person at times to temporarily resemble an angel even as one stands on this physical earth, and that such a feeling cannot be expressed to anyone. This is the true feeling of being close to Hashem.

If a person believes in this, he will then be able to truly feel, in a very real way and not in his imagination, a simple feeling no that is no less that how one can feel a table or a chair: that there is a Creator of the world. If a person believes that there is such a feeling he can experience, and he decides to live his life for this goal, closeness to Hashem – he leaves this world of darkness, and enters into a world that is radiant.

If the reader is still doubtful at this point about the words here, then there is no proof we can bring to convince him otherwise. But one thing we can ask of him: For your own sake, and for the sake of the Jewish people, and for the sake of giving your Creator a satisfaction, cry to Hashem every day, hour after hour, and ask Him that he guide you to the truth. If a person really begs Hashem for this, and if he really wants it, Hashem will surely help him get to the truth, that he be able to give a *nachas ruach* (satisfaction) to Hashem all his life.

[BILVAVI PART 4 CHAPTER 13]

<sup>6</sup> Editor's Note: Of course, this is not to negate the love we are supposed to have to people, especially to those who are dearest to us, such as our families and friends. It appears that intention of the author is that once a person tastes love of Hashem, his own love will deepen, and his relationships will deepen as a result (see "[Heart of the Jewish Woman](#)"). As for having a like towards various worldly pleasures, it is clear that love for these things is just indulgence and cannot be considered love in the first place.

## JOY & SERENITY

### QUESTION:

How do we reach simchah (*joy*)? There seems to be so many conditions that are needed in order to find true simchah – we need to find our “true portion in Torah”, we need to utilize our potential (*which can take so long and which may be a lifelong task*), and we also need to have emunah, bitachon and a positive outlook. It seems that there’s a very long path to take in order to get simchah. Is there a shortcut to reach simchah? Or will it be impossible to have a deep feeling of simchah unless we reach our special part in Torah and we utilize our potential?

### ANSWER:

It is a long way to reach true

simchah, but one has to be happy already now with whatever he has reached (*someiach b’chelko*). One also needs to be happy with even the smallest point that there is to be happy about, for one can always find the light of Hashem that shines in even the smallest point that can make him happy.

### QUESTION

Does simchah correspond to the Yechidah level of the soul? If yes, how can that be, if the Yechidah level of the soul is also described as menuchah (*serenity*), and the Rav explains that menuchah and simchah are actually opposite feelings?

### ANSWER

The Yechidah corresponds to the

faculty of ratzon (*the will*) in the soul. Simchah is the surrounding light of the Yechidah which equally surrounds the Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah, and Chayah layers of the soul.

Menuchah (*serenity*) is when the will is nullified. Both menuchah and simchah correspond to Keser, but within Keser there are two levels: Arich and Atik. The ratzon aspect of Yechidah corresponds to Arich of Keser, while the menuchah aspect of the Yechidah corresponds to Atik of Keser. Simchah is the surrounding light of the Yechidah which equally surrounds the Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah and Chayah of the soul (*as mentioned above*).

## DESPAIR IN TORAH LEARNING & AVODAS HASHEM

### QUESTION:

If a person feels on giving up at succeeding in his Torah learning and in his avodas Hashem in life, how can he overcome this problem and succeed, with Hashem’s help?

### ANSWER:

1. First, let us analyze what brings a person to despair, generally and briefly, and then we can get further into the details.

A person begins his way in life in general, and his Torah learning and Avodas Hashem specifically, with a certain ratzon (*will*) to succeed and reach his goals – each person on his own level. A person’s ratzon (*will*) keeps him motivated to reach his goals. When a person begins to see that in spite of his efforts, he is still not reaching the goal he’s trying to reach, and that he’s not even getting close to it – at least according to the way he sees reality – his soul slowly begins to feel, more and more, that it’s impossible to reach

his goals. Gradually, his motivation to invest effort is weakened. As a person continues like this, with disappointment following another disappointment, the negative feelings become strengthened, to the point that one’s soul perceives that this has become reality, and the person reaches the conclusion that “I do not have the ability to attain whatever I wanted.” In other words, he despairs. He feels that he isn’t able to invest his energies anymore in his goals, and on a more subtle level, he has stopped wanting to reach those goals.

Understandably, the degree which is this felt on will depend on how much he has given up. Usually, people do not give up totally. This is especially the case if a person is still seeking advice on how he can succeed – the very fact that he is seeking advice is an indication that he hasn’t given up totally on succeeding.

Before we delve further into your specific case, let us first establish the

fundamental point that is behind the approach here. An established fundamental is that every person has his own personal share in Torah and in serving Hashem. More specifically, every person has his “general” share in Torah and in serving Hashem, and every person also his “individual” share based on the time and spiritual level he is at. A person is also given the tools and the abilities to reach his personal share. On a deeper level, when one utilizes his potential abilities, that is precisely his personal share. Therefore, one’s task on this world is to put in effort, and clearly he is given the ability to reach his own personal share and to give of himself entirely for this.

2. Now we will get to explaining the other factors which our general avodah consists of, so that one can know how to clarify and understand exactly what the source of feeling despair is, and the root of how to rectify it. The factors in rectifying

despair are: (1) One's ratzon (*will*) to reach his goals. (2) The exertion and effort that one needs to put it in order to reach his goals. This also includes praying to Hashem for success. (3) The way of avodah which one needs to take. (4) The goal itself which a person is striving for.

As it will soon be explained, if one of the above factors is deficient, it will mean that a person is off-track and that his actions are not aligned in accordance with his actual capabilities and current level. This will lead him towards despair from reaching his goals. Let us now delve into each of these factors.

The factors of ratzon (*will*) and striving towards goals are two factors that are intertwined with each other. This is because one's ratzon (*will*) thrives on trying to reach a certain goal, as mentioned before, that the ratzon is the motivating force in the soul which leads one towards reaching his goals. A person is able to set all kinds of different goals for himself. Some of a person's goals are not proper to pursue, and these are goals which stem from an impaired place in one's soul. Other goals are worthy to pursue, and these are goals which will want to reach, but one must understand that even when it comes to such worthy goals, this doesn't yet mean that it is good for this particular person. For him, it may not be good. This point is where many people err. When people want to serve Hashem better, they set goals for themselves which are unrealistic, according to their personal nature. For example, a person may have seen that others succeeding in reaching a certain spiritual goal, or he may have read in a sefer that there is a certain quality to aspire for, and he is under the impression that he must reflect that goal in his own personal avodah

as well, without first thinking if that goal or quality is appropriate for him to pursue right now.

One of the detrimental results that this will lead to is despair. The person wants to reach a certain goal which isn't appropriate for him right now to pursue, and he will try to expend all of his energies in trying to reach that goal. Even if he tries very hard, he will not succeed in reaching that goal, if he doesn't have the capabilities for it right now. Understandably, this will cause him to despair from succeeding in his avodas Hashem. This is all because he has tried to reach a goal which he isn't realistic for him right now to pursue. He has entered into an endeavor which was, to begin with, a path that would ultimately lead him to disappointment and despair. *(It should be noted that usually a person doesn't despair from a mistake like this that only happens once. Rather, a person tries in one area and tries in another area, without seeing success, until he eventually gets a general feeling that he can't succeed in avodas Hashem).* Sometimes, this happens is lacking in his ratzon.

Whatever was explained earlier regarding attaining one's ratzon and goals, will also apply to this, the approach of one's avodah. Even if a person's motivations and goals are worthy for him to pursue, if he doesn't go about in a way that is healthy for his soul, he will not succeed, and he is prone to have despair because of it. There are many people who don't succeed in avodas Hashem because they were lacking proper direction to begin with. They didn't have a way of how to attain what they want. Rather, they acted on inspiration alone, and they immediately tried to fulfill any practical advice which they learned about or heard about, in the hope that that this would give

them a "small opening like the size of a needle" to open for them an "opening the size of an entranceway" *[they hoped that their efforts would lead to assistance from Heaven]*. But one cannot really succeed in this way. Such an approach will not help, whether it comes to material goals and certainly when it comes to spiritual goals.

Even in people who are able to organize for themselves an approach and how to do it, the goals will not be attained when they are pursued in a way that is not stable or consistent. These factors prevent people from progressing.

Additionally, there are also those who don't have an appropriate approach in their avodas Hashem to begin with – they are taking a path which isn't suitable for them.

Now we shall address the second aspect mentioned: the exertion that one needs to put in, to attain his goals. It is clear and simple that even if a person has a strong will to succeed and he also has a good approach to work with, if he doesn't try hard enough – whether due to laziness or other reasons – he will not reach his goals. As Chazal state, "If someone says "I didn't try but I still found success", do not believe him. Sometimes a person does not understand that he needs to try hard and also daven for success. After trying only a little bit, without seeing success, he becomes disappointed that he isn't yet finding success, and he gives up from trying further. On the other end of the spectrum are those who put in great effort, physically and mentally and emotionally, in an extreme way, and they often overdo themselves. Then they become broken and depressed. In any case, if one overdoes himself or if one tries too little, he will be prevented

from succeeding, and this can bring him to despair.

As for davening for success, it is explained about at length in the words of Chazal and throughout many sefarim that a person needs to daven for success, but what is usually missing is the internalization in one's heart of how much one needs to daven. One must always remember that by truly praying from the depths of one's heart to reach his personal share in Torah and in avodas Hashem, his prayers are certainly accepted. Even more so, "the gates of tears never close".

Before continuing, let's emphasize the general point of all the words until now. It is clear to everyone that lack of success brings a person to despair. We have had to elaborate here at length about different points which can be the reason for lack of success, and this is because when a person understands that the reason he didn't succeed in the past is not because he can't succeed and because he doesn't have the tools or talents to reach anything in learning Torah or in avodas Hashem, but probably because he entered into his efforts with a skewed approach that didn't allow him to truly succeed. From this point onward, one can know how to approach his avodas Hashem properly.

3. Let's also mention another two points, briefly, which can also be a reason for lack of success.

One factor that prevent success in avodas Hashem is, because any point of avodas Hashem takes time to acquire. It is always a gradual process, step after step, and each step is a 'stepstool' for the step after it. Many times when a person doesn't pay attention to the small steps he is taking and to the steps which he has so far acquired, he gives up from what he's working on, and as time goes on, he discontinues his work entirely. Also, when a person wants to see "quick" results and he doesn't succeed in getting it quickly enough, it seems to him that he cannot acquire it, so he gives up.

Another factor that prevents a person from success in avodas Hashem is when a person has certain unrefined middos which are getting in the way. Every person has some middos which he hasn't yet repaired, and it his lifelong work to work on those unrefined middos. But sometimes it is not a bad middah getting in his way, it can be a very good middah, but it isn't balanced. An imbalanced quality of a person can ruin all of one's avodas Hashem and prevent one from progressing and succeeding, even if one is trying very hard. Sometimes a person's bad middah can directly get in the way of one's avodas Hashem – for example, if a person has a very strong will to receive honor for his Torah learning or from his progress in avodas Hashem. Sometimes a person can

be swayed by outside factors, such as a desire for money, which is one of the traits that remove a person from his inner world.

4. You have asked a very general question and therefore we have attempted here to open the discussion from several angles, and understandably, there is more to say. The point of all this was to help people in this situation [*of despair from Torah learning and success in avodas Hashem*], to identify where the root of despair is coming from, in their personal situation, and so that one can know what exactly he needs to deal with, in order to succeed. This should all be accompanied with the clear understanding that it is within reach of every person to reach his personal share [*in Torah learning and avodas Hashem*], and, understandably, with siyata d'shmaya (*assistance from Heaven*). One needs to try according to his current capabilities and according to his current spiritual level, to progress step-by-step, gradually and patiently, amidst joy and gratitude to Hashem on whatever one has already merited until now. One should also desire to progress further, with prayer to succeed and to come closer to his personal share, as we pray each day, **וְתֵן חֵלְקֵנוּ בְּתוֹרַתְךָ** – "And give us our portion in Your Torah."

