

## 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.”<sup>1</sup> 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 circumcised; the simple meaning of this, as we said, was because we need to undergo *bris milah* in order to eat from the *korban 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.<sup>2</sup>

In order to eat the *korban 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

<sup>1</sup> Devarim 32:9

<sup>2</sup> 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.

our heart? There are two general ways described in the works of our Rabbis of how we can accomplish this.

## 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."*<sup>3</sup> When we constantly repeat a fact, it eventually settles into our heart, where it becomes internalized knowledge.

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 Shavuot, 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 AND 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.<sup>4</sup>)

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* excerpted here:

#### **The Soul – Internal Flame Desires The Spiritual**

In the beginning of Parshas Behaloscha, Rashi brings the statement of Chazal that "the flame should rise on its own." The Gemara compares the neshamah (the Divine soul of a Jew) to a ner, a flame, for it is written, "The flame of G-d, is the soul of man." Just as the menorah was kindled in the Beis HaMikdash, where the flame would then rise on its own after it was lit, so must the soul of man, which is compared to a flame, rise on its own.

In the early stage of life, the soul is for the most part concealed, covered over, and hidden. Man has the task to inspire himself and awaken the passionate spiritual desires of his soul, to reveal his neshamah. At first, one must exert himself to acquire this spiritual passion, but eventually, his "flame must rise on its own" – it should come to him as natural. The soul of man is an inner flame, and just as a fire gets bigger and bigger, so must a person increase his spiritual desire.

As long as the soul's inner flame of man isn't yet revealed, and it remains in its concealed state

- either totally or for the most part – the deep spiritual desire in man will remain dormant.

#### **The Five Levels**

There is a sharp statement of the Chofetz Chaim, who said that this world is not at all like the heavenly world. In this world, there are all kinds of people with different opinions and tastes and mannerisms, which all make up this world of falsity. But in the upper worlds, in heaven, in Gan Eden, there are only five levels - those who had a heart that was either spiritually:

- 1) Frozen [completely callous and indifferent].
- 2) Cold [mostly callous and indifferent].
- 3) Lukewarm [a bit of feeling].
- 4) Warm\Hot [enthusiastic].
- 5) Boiling [very passionate].

Those are the five levels – a person either has a heart that is frozen, cold, lukewarm, hot, or boiling.

#### **Frozen and Cold**

The frozen or cold heart is what is known as a "heart of stone". In the future, Hashem will erase the "heart of stone" amidst people and introduce a new heart. When the heart has become spiritually frozen, it is like when water freezes. It becomes hard as stone. The element of earth, according to one opinion of Chazal, was formed from frozen water [snow]. A frozen heart is like frozen water, which has become a "heart of stone" [callous to the spiritual].

A level that is a little better than the above, but still cold to spirituality nonetheless, is when the heart of a person is simply cold. This is also called "Amalek", the paradigm of being cold and callous to the spiritual; Chazal compared the nation Amalek to a person who jumps into a scalding hot bath and cools it off, hence, Amalek is personified as the cold.

In the generation we are in, there is not only Amalek, but there is also the Erev Rav, who are worse than cold souls – they are totally frozen, so their hearts are "hearts of stone".

## WHAT IS THE HEART?

QUESTION: 1) What is the “heart”? 2) Where can I learn about the “70 soul faculties”?

ANSWER: (1) The heart is the product of the extension of Binah. The Binah faculty of the mind extends into the body, where it becomes a new creation: the heart. This is explained by the Arizal. The concept of the heart is hakarah (*recognizing*), and a more external level of the heart is hargashah (*feelings*), and the most external level of the heart is hispaalus (*reactiveness*). You may learn about this in the series “Getting To Know Your Heart”. Refer to the Arizal’s words in Eitz Chaim, shaar 31:4. (2) Refer to the series “Getting To Know Your 70 Soul Faculties” and also the sefer Shivim Kochos HaNefesh L’Gra by Rav Greenwald zt”l who was a student of the Steipler zt”l, which explains the 70 soul faculties listed by the Gra.

## HOW DO I OPEN MY HEART

QUESTION: How can I open my heart more?

ANSWER: You can try to do so by learning and working on the steps laid out in sefer “Bilvavi”, Part One.

## REACHING HEART RECOGNITION OF HASHEM

QUESTION: I understand from the Rav’s approach that emunah must be coming from our heart, that we must be able to feel our awareness of Hashem, as opposed to merely knowing of Him in our intellect, because we cannot base our emunah in Hashem on our intellect, since our intellect is limited and we can become mistaken through it. So how indeed do we reach emunah of the heart? I don’t mean to ask about how to internalize our intellectual emunah into our heart, rather I mean to ask: How do we start directly with emunah in our heart?

ANSWER: The depth of our soul’s power to have emunah is from the same place in you where you recognize your own existence, the truth of your havayah. It is from your own havayah that you can recognize the absolute havayah, which is the truth of His infinite existence. For a Jew is an actual “portion of G-d from above”. Understand that well. When a person penetrates into the depth of the truth of his soul, after he has purified the soul’s outer layers, he then reaches his very havayah, and then he can recognize the absolute havayah, the truth of the Infinite. This is the root way of recognizing our Creator, by recognizing our own existence and from that very same place of self-recognition we can recognize that the existence of all creations is only allowed due to the truth of His havayah, His infinite existence.

When one is beginning to surround this perception, it is called ohr makif, where his

awareness of Hashem is called emunah (*belief in Hashem*). When one internalizes it, it is ohr pnimi, and it is called hakarah (*recognition*). In these short lines, we have written the pnimiyus, the inner depth and the truth, of all of life!!!

## EASILY HEARTBROKEN

QUESTION: I easily feel others’ pain, every painful event that happens in the world bothers me to no end and I can’t think straight from it. Is this a good middah or a bad middah?

ANSWER: Feeling another’s pain is a good middah, mainly when it stems from your nefesh Elohis (*G-dly soul*). However, if feeling others’ pain makes you unable to function afterwards meaning that you can’t return to being happy afterwards, and slowly your pain for others is controlling you, then it is not feeling another’s pain anymore because now it has turned into depression and it is a sign of being emotionally imbalanced.

## THE JOY OF DANCING

QUESTION: I didn’t understand a concept that the Rav said in a shiur about how dancing with the feet, which the Rav explained as the joy called alitzah (*rejoicing*), how this repairs the sadness that is caused by the impaired element of earth in the soul which is caused by Amalek. The verse which the Rav quotes “My heart rejoices within me” is referring to a joy that comes from the heart, not by dancing with the feet. I didn’t find any of the commentaries explain this verse as referring to joy that comes from dancing, what does this joy of alitzah have to do with dancing?

ANSWER: There are 2 aspects to how dancing causes joy. The lower, physical aspect of dancing comes from the act of the dancing, which brings on joy, because “The heart is pulled after the actions.” The higher, more spiritual part of dancing comes from the heart.

## HOW TO RELATE TO OUR SON WHO GAVE UP YIDDISHKEIT

QUESTION: About 10 years ago, for various reasons our son left yeshiva. He was a very emotional and good-hearted type of child and he had been very talented. His ruchniyus began to spiral downward until he left Yiddishkeit totally. He had kept up with us though very minimally. About 3 years ago, though, he totally severed his connection with us. He says that no one understands or feels him (*as a mother would to her child*). Recently he has severed himself completely from Yiddishkeit and from the Creator, Rachmana Litzlan (*may Hashem save him*). As his parents, what should be our relationship with him? And how can I, as his mother, give him the mother-to-child bond

that he feels I’ve let him down in?

ANSWER: Give him genuine love and help whenever he needs it, without thinking about how he acts. Help him in anything he needs, except if it’s for something that’s forbidden to help him with. Having pure motivations to help him and with being open towards him will, with assistance from Above, touch his heart. And if there is a zechus, this will even become the path for him to return to his root.

## CHRONIC SADNESS

QUESTION: Ever since I was a child I have had such difficult emotional suffering. I never felt serene in my mind for even one day of my life. I had it very well though from others and pretend that I’m not suffering inside, because my life is enough of a Gehinom (*purgatory*) and I don’t need to add to it but turning off other people with my negativity which would make them avoid me and then I would be living a double Gehinom on this world. So many times I feel so discouraged that even when I daven it’s all just on autopilot. I can’t find the calmness to just sit down and learn. It’s also very hard for me to separate even a bit from permitted taavah (*physical desires*). My life is basically on autopilot, I live like a robot. Yet my heart is sick inside me because I know all that’s bothering me is all worthless and imaginary, and still even though I know this, I can’t find any inner peace.

ANSWER: Every day, do at least one thing amidst a feeling of simchah (*joy*) and chiyus (*energy*), and from being deeply connected to what you are doing. And, with any moment of the day when you do feel serenity in your mind, be happy with each of these serene moments.

## GETTING PAST OUR GUF & REVEALING OUR NESHAMAH

QUESTION: What should a person do if he has already tasted some ruchniyus, he feels a tremendous burning desire to grow higher in ruchniyus, as if he’s found the light, and he connected to his neshamah – but afterwards he finds that this experience is gone, because his guf (*body*) has taken over again? How do we get past our guf and subjugate it to our neshamah?

ANSWER: The sefarim hakedoshim say, “Smash the body”. This is by (1) Developing pure, unquestioning emunah in Hashem. (2) Connecting to the depth of the Torah’s wisdom. (3) Crying out to Hashem for help, both externally and internally (“*their hearts cried out to Hashem*”). (4) Through hisbodedus (*solitude and reflection*), until a person reaches a place of inner silence in his soul. (5) And finally, it entails improving one’s middos.