

# COMPLETE ROSH CHODESH TALKS

AVODAH, ESSENCE, MAZAL & TRIBE OF EACH MONTH

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Drashas from Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh

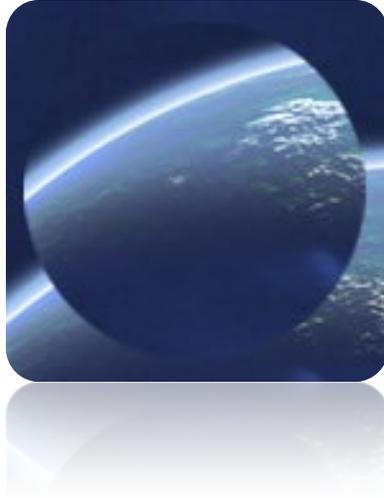
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*Part One:  
Avodah  
of the  
Month*

## *1 / Nissan – Conversation*

### *Nissan: Speech*

The special ability in the month of Nissan (according to the *Vilna Gaon*) is identified as the power of speech (“*sichah*”).<sup>1</sup> The power of speech is mainly utilized by women; as our *Chazal* say, the women took ninety percent of speech, while the men only took ten percent.<sup>2</sup> In addition, *Chazal* state that in the merit of the righteous women, the Jewish nation merited to be redeemed from Egypt.

Thus, the power of speech, which is the nature of the month of Nissan, is mainly reflected in the speech of women, whose merit brought about the redemption. With the help of Hashem, let us learn how we can utilize the soul’s power of speech.

### *Three Kinds of Talking*

It is brought in the *sefarim hakedoshim* that there are generally three kinds of speech:

- (1) Talking for the sake of a *mitzvah* (i.e. *davening*, or speaking with someone in order to help him);
- (2) Talking about matters that are not about a *mitzvah*, but are nonetheless necessary (such as talking about matters that we need to take care of); there is nothing wrong with this.
- (3) Talking about things that are unnecessary.

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1 This series of “Rosh Chodesh Avodah”, which explains the special abilities contained in each of the Jewish months of the calendar, is based on the Vilna Gaon’s commentary to Sefer Yetzirah 5:5.

This shiur was given to women and is geared towards women specifically, in how to use the power of “*sichah*” in the month of Nissan. A series of three shiurim similar to the concepts of this shiur was given to men, in the series “Fixing Your Wind”, classes #09, #010, and #011. For a deeper understanding of the power of ‘*sichah*’ in the month of Nissan, see also “Essence of Rosh Chodesh 01. Nissan. Speech and Prayer”.

2 Kiddushin 49b

### *Man Is a Creature of Speech*

A person is called “*medaber*” (a social creature). The Torah calls man a ‘*nefesh chayah*’ (living spirit), which is interpreted by *Targum Onkelos* to mean “*ruach memalelah*” – a “talking spirit”. Speech personifies man. Thus, speech is clearly an ability in man that can be used for holiness.

### *Analyzing Our Conversations*

Let us think about the following: How much time of a day do we spend talking, throughout the 24 hours of the day?

Once we’re thinking about that, now we need to think: What is the nature of our conversations? Are we talking about things that are a *mitzvah* to talk about? Are we talking about things we need to take care of? Or are we engaging in empty chatter?

Making this reflection helps us become aware of our speech and how we are conversing. Being that there are three kinds of speech (*mitzvah*, necessary, and unnecessary), we need to first identify these three kinds of speech in our own conversations. Most people, upon making this reflection, will discover that most of their conversations are not necessary.

When our power of speech is mostly being used for unnecessary conversations, we can let it bother us that our power of ‘*medaber*’ which defines man is being used for lower and unholy purposes. In fact, many of us will discover that our speech is mostly being used to speak about things that are forbidden – such as *lashon hora* (gossip) and *rechilus* (slander), and *motzi shem ra* (spreading false and derogatory information about others). This is even more degrading to the power of ‘*medaber*’ which personifies man.

Thus, the first thing we have to become aware of is to realize that most of our conversations are not utilizing the true and intended purpose of speech.

### *Two Kinds of Unnecessary Speech*

When it comes to speaking about unnecessary matters, there are actually two kinds of this.

One example of idle speech is when people meet each other and they get into a conversation, and they talk about meaningless things. For example, when two friends meet each other in the store or on the bus, or in the street, or if a bunch of people are sitting together and chatting; they will speak about all kinds of various topics in the conversation, which are really not important to speak about.

Another example of idle speech is when a person finds himself alone, like when’s alone in the house, and he wants to relieve his loneliness, so he picks up the phone and calls a friend. This is a more idle kind of talking, because here, the person *seeks* the conversation and initiates the idle conversation.

In the first example of idle speech that we brought, the person encounters a situation in which he ends up talking pointlessly. It can happen when he's with his family or when he goes to other places where he meets people, and he finds himself having pointless conversations. In the second example of idle speech that we brought, the person actively seeks a conversation with another; he deliberately places himself in that situation. These two examples we brought are not merely two different scenarios of idle speech that can happen. They are two completely different reasons for unnecessary speech.

### *Why Do People Like To Chat?*

Let's analyze the first example of idle speech that we brought: when a person meets others and ends up chatting with them, speaking about pointless things.

Certainly, when a person is around other people, he should talk to them, because it is '*derech eretz*' (proper manners) to do so. People become uncomfortable when they are with a person who isn't engaging in a conversation. It's considered rude and unpleasant to be completely silent around others; therefore, it is only proper that we allow ourselves to engage in conversation with others.

However, most of the time, we are not talking to others simply out of '*derech eretz*' for them. It's because we simply enjoy talking! There's a certain pleasure in talking. Just as we enjoy food, so do we enjoy talking. Thus, the deeper reason of why people like to engage in idle chatter is because there is a certain pleasure in talking with others.

On a deeper level, ever since the sin of Adam, there has been pleasure in talking simply for the sake of talking, due to the negative effect of the Snake on mankind. *Chazal* state that all of the animals asked the Snake, "What pleasure do you have in speaking *lashon hora*?" [For it spoke *lashon hora* to Adam and Chavah]. This implies that although there is no pleasure in speaking *lashon hora*, there is pleasure in talking itself.

### *Talking In Order To Relieve Boredom and Inner Emptiness*

In the second example of idle speech we brought, a person seeks a conversation with others because he is bored and he feels empty inside, so he wants to relieve his feeling of loneliness, through chatting with others.

When a person is getting anxious from the loneliness and emptiness that he is feeling, and he doesn't know how to fill the loneliness, he will seek to fill it through external means, and one of these ways is through chatting with others. In this way, he takes his mind off his troubles.

*Chazal* say that "A worry in the heart of man, should be spoken to others". When a person is worried or upset about something, he should speak to others about it in order to be able to relieve his anxiousness. Even if a person isn't worried about anything particular, and he's rather just feeling bored inside and a general lack of happiness towards himself, he feels a need to speak with others in

order to take away his feeling of inner emptiness and boredom. The problem with this, though, is that it causes a person to remove himself from his own inner world, as he exits himself and gets involved with the external and superficial world, via all kinds of conversation and chatting.

So we have explained that there are two motivations for talking to others: Either because there is a pleasure in talking to others, or because of loneliness, boredom and emptiness.

### *In Summary*

To clarify, let us summarize until now [and add on some additional points, for clarification]. There is a normal and healthy need of the soul to talk to others, but the problem is when we go beyond the normal amount of talking. There are two reasons why people speak unnecessarily: because there is pleasure in talking, or because a person wants to relieve his loneliness or boredom.

Sometimes, both factors are present when we talk. When a person meets others and he ends up engaging in conversation with them, it is not always because he simply enjoys having a conversation; it can very well be because he feels bored. He feels tension when there is quietness between him and others, so he talks, in order to avoid that feeling of boredom. Let us again emphasize that there are three motivating reasons of why we talk. Sometimes we talk when it is a *mitzvah* to do so, sometimes we talk in order to take care of things that are necessary, and some of our speech is unnecessary.

### *Defining 'Necessary' Speech*

To clarify, 'necessary' speech doesn't mean that a person will only say things so long as it takes care of something important. This cannot be, because we have a natural and healthy need to talk, and this is also considered 'necessary' speech. It is a need of our soul. What we are coming to address here is, that part of our speech is used for things that are totally unnecessary to talk about, and it is this part of our speech that we need to eliminate.

The Vilna *Gaon* says that the Torah is acquired through "less speech", and that this means that a little bit of talking beyond what we actually need ['schmoozing'] is in fact a 'necessary' kind of talking, for our basic emotional needs. Therefore, our discussion here about 'unnecessary' speech is only concerning speech that we don't need; it does not apply to the basic amount of talking which we need in our life.

### *Elevating Our Speech*

Thus, altogether, we have learned that there are really four kinds of speech:

- (1) Talking for the purpose of a *mitzvah*,

(2) Talking for something necessary that we need to take care of,

(3) Pleasurable talking (which is necessary for our emotional health, but it is sometimes overdone),

(4) Talking out of loneliness and boredom. Our *avodah* is to fix the third and fourth kinds of speech: when we talk unnecessarily and it's beyond our normal needs for talking, and when we talk out of boredom. It is these kinds of speech which need to be fixed.

We also explained that there are two kinds of unnecessary talking: talking for the sake of pleasure (when it's beyond our normal needs), and talking out of boredom. If we analyze our unnecessary conversations, we will discover that both of these factors are usually present. The only issue is in the percentages: how much of the extra talking is being motivated by pleasure to talk, and how much of a percentage in the extra talking is coming from boredom?

### *Talking for Enjoyment (When It's More Than the Usual)*

When a person talks simply because it's enjoyable (when it's more than the usual healthy need), this is like anything else we do that's enjoyable. People do things that are enjoyable, even if it's not purposeful; whatever a person enjoys, he naturally does it. Even if nothing constructive comes from such talking, as long as the person is enjoying the conversation, he will continue on talking for a very long time.

We can see that this kind of conversation is very common. A person goes to a wedding or a *simcha*, or he meets someone on a trip, and he gets into a lengthy conversation with another person he meets; it can go from being two minutes to being several hours! And it is entirely an empty conversation, with nothing of purpose that was discussed. Where does this nature stem from?

What we need to understand is that everything which Hashem created, He created it for a purpose. The purpose of Creation is often not on one's mind; usually, a person is mainly concerned at the moment to do what he enjoys. To illustrate, a child enjoys anything that will give instant pleasure; when he plays games, he is doing so that he can enjoy the results. When he gets that enjoyment, it lasts momentarily, and then he's onto the next thing he enjoys. So there is a deep nature in man to always seek something pleasurable at the moment. Usually, this desire for pleasure manifests in one's speech.

With most people, their conversations are unnecessary. The conversations that most people have are for the purpose of an enjoyable conversation, and not about anything in particular that is of purpose to discuss.

But if a person reveals purpose in his life, he will begin to notice that there is no longer a need to have most of his conversations. He will realize that most conversations are empty and meaningless. The less a person is living with purpose, the more he engages in conversations that have no purpose; he can chat for hours on end, about nothing important, yet it doesn't bother him that he is having

empty conversations. Even worse, most conversations that lack purpose to them often lead to speaking about matters that are forbidden.

To summarize: the more a person lives with purpose in his life, the less he is dominated by the pleasure of the moment. His conversations will become more purposeful and ‘to the point’. In contrast, the less a person lives with purpose, the more he is drawn after what’s pleasure right now, and he will find it difficult to pull away from an enjoyable conversation that has no purpose to it.

### *Thoughtless Talking*

We explained that there is another motivation for talking unnecessarily: when a person gets used to talking without thinking at all about what he’s saying. The Ramban says, “Think about the words [that you are about to say], before you release them from your mouth.” If we reflect, we can see that most conversations are thoughtless.

It is shocking to see, but it is very common: We can see people going on and on in their conversations, talking about topics that they have no idea about!

In the first kind of unnecessary talking that we discussed, a person might talk about things that he knows about, but it is simply a conversation that has no purpose to it. For example, a person meets someone and says to him, “I did such-and-such yesterday....Tomorrow, I plan to do such-and-such...My daughter did...My baby woke me up last night. I got up, then I walked around, then I had a drink, then I sat back down.” Conversations like this are meaningless. However, at least the person knows what he is talking about.

In the current kind of talking we are discussing, though, a person is having a lengthy conversation about matters that he really doesn’t know anything about. He has no clue about the topics he’s discussing, yet he talks about them anyway. Many times, a person will have a whole conversation in which he offers his opinions about all kinds of topics, when in reality he doesn’t know what he’s talking about.

For example, he will give his opinion on politics, on how the principal should run his child’s school, his views on *chinuch* (child education), and on current events. It’s very possible that he has absolutely no idea what he’s talking about, yet he continues to express his views on such matters. Where does this nature stem from?

It is a result of living for the pleasure of the moment. Such an orientation doesn’t allow a person to connect his thoughts with his speech. When a person doesn’t think, he cannot talk properly; thus, when people don’t think, their words sound thoughtless and meaningless. Of course, there is always some minimal thought that goes into how we speak, enough to carry a conversation, but the words will still be lacking a great degree of content. In most scenarios, the words will come out of his mouth quickly, with no involvement of thought beforehand.

There is another problem with thoughtless conversations: the quality of the conversations is often devoid of any real content. So the more a person puts thought into his conversations, thinking before he talks [as the Ramban writes], the more he will talk with precision, and his words will be less. He won't have to speak so much, because he is already putting content into his conversations. When a conversation has content and meaning to it, it's impossible for a person to talk so much, for his words will be limited to speak a certain amount that is necessary.

Let's summarize the two steps in elevating our conversations that we have spoken about until now. Most extraneous conversations that people have are being motivated for either of two reasons. Either a person is engaging in idle chatter because he is missing a sense of purpose in his life, which results in talking many words that have no purpose to them. Or, the conversations are thoughtless, because the person is simply talking without thinking beforehand of what he will talk about.

If we examine most of the conversations that go on in the world, we can see that most conversations lack purpose to them, in addition to being thoughtless, or with minimal thought from beforehand.

### *How to Think Before You Talk*

The more a person gets used to having purposeful conversations, and he is thinking of how he can put more content into his conversations, he will see an overhaul in how he talks. He will suddenly discover an entirely new power of speech in his life.

Practically speaking, before a person knows he will have a conversation, he should think about what he will say. Let's say a person knows he will go to a certain place and meet people there, and he knows that he will end up 'shmoozing'. He should prepare the conversation: what kind of subjects he will speak about, and how; and what the purpose of the conversations will be.

A person should try doing this once a day. This slowly gets a person used to speaking with thought and with purpose.

Understandably, along with this, a person also needs to lessen the amount of idle chatter in his conversations and to avoid speaking words that are thoughtless and purposeless.

[On a deeper note], getting used to this enables a person to reach the holy power of "*sichah*" (conversation) – to leave the "*peh ra*" (evil mouth) that is hinted to in the word "*Pharaoh*", and to instead enter into the holy kind of "*sichah*" – to tell over the story of the exodus for the entire night of Pesach.

### *Don't Speak About Everything That Comes To Mind*

There is also another fundamental point to consider: A person needs to get used to the idea of not always saying everything that comes to mind.

Just because a person has an opinion about something doesn't require him to say it. One must know that there are things he has no understanding of, as well as things he doesn't have that much understanding about, as well as things which he doesn't understand at all. So just because you see a bunch of men or a bunch of women sitting together and discussing a certain topic does not require you to express your personal opinion about the subject being discussed.

A person needs to get used to talking only about things he is clear about. When a person limits his conversations to only speaking about matters that he is clear about, this will also lessen the amount of idle chatter in his conversations, because he will be speaking a lot less. When a person is used to talking so much without any restraint to his speech, he will naturally talk about all kinds of subjects, as if he knows it all. This is more than just a habit that one acquires; it is human nature for a person to talk about all kinds of topics.

So it is very important for a person to train himself to only speak about matters that he knows about, and not to speak about all kinds of topics. As *Chazal* say, "Teach your tongue to say, "I don't know." These are the three steps we need in order to elevate our conversations: to seek purpose in our conversations, to think before we talk, and to only speak about things we know about and avoid speaking things that we don't know about.

### *Conversations Caused By Boredom and Emptiness*

Until now, we explained how to fix the first kind of idle chatter, which stems from a pleasure in talking. We explained the three steps we need in order to elevate our conversations.

But there is another kind of idle chatter we mentioned: when a person feels lonely, or empty, or bored, so he engages in conversation with another, to relieve his feeling of emptiness. Either he will go to a friend's house, or he will pick up the phone and call, or he will use any of the means of communication that are available today.

This is a different kind of 'schmoozing' than when two people meet and they get into a conversation. Here, the person actively seeks out a person to have a conversation with. It is usually stemming from inner emptiness and boredom. The first step to overcome this is for a person to become aware, in the first place, of the loneliness. When he's picking up the phone to call his friend, or as he's feeling the need to communicate, he should stop and ask himself: "Why do I want to talk to my friend now? Is there a real need for this, or is it just a desire I have?"

If a person realizes that it is more of a desire than a need, the next step is for him to analyze where this desire is coming from. Is it coming from a desire for the pleasure of talking, or is it coming from boredom? When he realizes that it is coming from boredom, he should become aware that the boredom is a sign of emptiness. If so, the communication with another that he wants is stemming from a need to fill his emptiness. But it is not really filling his emptiness – he is rather running away from it, by seeking a friend to get into a conversation with.

The first thing one must realize, then, is to become aware of his situation. After that he can work on a solution, as we will soon say (with the help of Hashem), but the very first and essential step must be that he become aware of this in the first place.

If one realizes that deep down he feels empty, he should know that this comes from a lack of satisfaction within himself. A person needs to learn how to solve his general sense of emptiness in life, but here we are not addressing this<sup>3</sup>. Here we are addressing how to solve conversations that stem from emptiness.

### *Chatting With a Friend vs. Talking With Hashem*

As we brought from the words of the Vilna *Gaon*, every person has a normal and healthy need to converse with others. This is necessary for peace of mind. But most of our conversations are more than the normal amount of speech that we need in order to stay emotionally healthy. The question is, how much of our speech is necessary for our peace of mind, and how much of it is unnecessary? We definitely need to ‘schmooze’ a little, and the only question is, how much.

The more a person lives an inner kind of life, he lives deeper. He lives more with the Creator in his life. He will naturally talk to Hashem a lot more. When a person is alone, and he is used to talking to Hashem, “as a man talks to his friend” (as the *Mesillas Yesharim* writes), he will find himself talking to Hashem a lot when he is alone. He can do so mentally or verbally. His speech will mainly be utilized to talk with Hashem, and as a result, he will feel much less of a need to speak with people.

We must know, clearly, that the desire to talk is human nature. We all have it. Most people are not talking as much with Hashem as they are used to talking with people. Talking to Hashem, by most people, is limited to the times of *davening*, but this is not nearly enough; often a person does not feel that he is standing in front of Hashem as he *davens*. A person often does not feel as he is *davening* that he is talking to Hashem; he thinks he is just saying words. Therefore, most people are not using their power of *sichah* properly, and instead, their power of *sichah* is turned outwards – empty chatter with others.

But the more a person is living inwardly and deeper, he is more connected with his true self, and he connects to the Creator more often. His power of *sichah*, for the most part, will be used towards Hashem. When he finds himself alone, instead of becoming bored and seeking a conversation with another, he will realize that being with himself means that he is with Hashem. When he feels a need

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<sup>3</sup> See the derasha called “The Void”; refer also to Reaching Your Essence #02 – Searching For Satisfaction

to talk, he mainly talks with Hashem. This doesn't mean he never talks to others. He talks to others too; it is just that most of his speech is directed towards talking with Hashem.

The more a person is living inwardly, he trains himself to think more. The first gain from this is that he will find that he speaks less with others, (because he is living more in the 'world of thought' than in a 'world of speech').

### *To Speak To Hashem, Naturally*

Additionally, one must understand the following important point. We see people who can talk, talk, and talk. Human nature is that we like to talk. Women, especially, have a nature to talk; *Chazal* say that the women took nine out of ten measurements of speech. The only issue is what we do with all of this talking. It needs to be mainly channeled towards speaking with Hashem.

When two people meet, they can get into a conversation that lasts for hours. If a Jew truly lives with Hashem in his life, he will speak to Him a lot, throughout the day. Speaking to Hashem is not limited to the three times of the day that we *daven*. Nor is it limited to when we do *hisbodedus* (meditation). Talking to Hashem is meant for the entire day! It is to speak with Hashem, naturally; to recognize that Hashem is the partner in your life, Whom you include your whole life with<sup>4</sup>.

This will sound very foreign to certain people when they hear it. It might even sound strange and weird. But a person only reacts that way when he isn't used to living with the Creator in his life in a palpable sense. The more a person lives with Hashem in his life, in his heart, in his thoughts – and he feels that he is actually with Hashem, and he feels Him in his heart – he will naturally talk to Him. His power of *sichah* is then channeled towards its true Source.

This is the depth of the redemption from Egypt, when we were redeemed from Pharaoh, from "*peh ra*", the "evil mouth", and we instead entered the holy kind of *sichah*. In the true way that a Jew lives life, he indeed speaks a lot – he speaks in prayer to Hashem, and in addition, he speaks a lot with Hashem throughout the day.

Of course, this does not mean to imply that a husband should lessen how much he talks with his wife, and that a wife should talk less with her husband, or that the parents should speak less with the children. This cannot be done, because it is not *derech eretz*, and it is not a way to live. Life requires us to speak with our family members a lot. We are only addressing the many extraneous conversations that people have, which are not necessary. It all stems from a lack of sensing Hashem in one's life.

### *In Summary*

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4 See the shiur of Getting To Know Your Hisbodedus (Practice) #018 - "Talking Continuously With Hashem"

To summarize, when it comes to unnecessary speech, we explained that there are two kinds.

There are conversations that stem from the pleasure to talk; in this, the way to improve is by training ourselves to speak with purpose. In the general sense, this means to live life with a sense of purpose, and on a more specific level, it means to speak with purpose: to infuse content into our conversations. It also includes thinking before we talk about what we will talk about, and to only talk about things we know about, as opposed to talking about things that we don't know about.

The second kind of unnecessary speech is when a person engages in conversation because he is feeling bored or empty. The way we improve this is by speaking with Hashem whenever we find ourselves alone. When one gets used to talking Hashem when he is alone, his life will undergo a complete overhaul. He will feel new, even more new than how a convert feels upon becoming a Jew. He will feel like he has left a narrowed kind of existence in which he was living disparate from the Creator, and that instead he has entered a world in which he lives together with Hashem, connected with Him.

Every person needs to get used to talking with Hashem, simply, and earnestly. Sometimes we talk to Him from the depths of our heart, and sometimes less. But in either situation, we need to train ourselves to always talk to Hashem, on a regular basis. We can talk to Hashem verbally or mentally.

Understandably, talking to Hashem needs to be done sensibly and only when it is not disrespectful to others to do so. The point is that a Jew needs to get used to living life this way, in which he lives with Hashem and he speaks with Him on a regular basis. His nature of *sichah* is then turned towards the Creator.

This is the meaning behind the redemption from Egypt. May we merit with the help of Hashem to speak words of holiness, to tell over the story of the exodus, to speak to others properly, both in our family life as well as towards our friends, neighbors, and those we know.

Even more so, may we merit that our power of speech mainly be used to speak with Hashem, to connect to Him completely – which will make our speech true and holy.

### *Questions & Answers with the Rav*

**Q1: *What exactly is the power of a woman to talk (since they took ninety percent of speech), more than a man?***

**ANSWER:** Since a woman's heart is [generally] more opened than a man's heart, she can speak more easily from her heart to Hashem.

**Q2: *If a woman is very reserved and doesn't like to talk to her neighbors, and instead spends her time reading books all the time (I know such a person), does that come from an emotional problem (since a woman by nature likes to talk), or does it come from avoiding idle chatter?***

**ANSWER:** It depends. Some people have a more reserved nature and don't like to get into lengthy conversations, and they only talk out of *derech erez*. They will say "Hello" or "Good morning", but they don't like to get into conversations. This can also be because some women are more intellectual by nature, and would rather spend their time reading than talking. But if a woman doesn't like to talk to people, it might come from an emotional issue that she has which needs to be addressed. It could be that she is very afraid what others think of her, and she has an unhealthy fear of people which she must work to get rid of.

**Q3: *When someone insults another person or talks to hurt people, from where does this come from in a person? Which kind of speech is this included in – talking out of enjoyment (because the person enjoys hurting someone) or out of inner emptiness?***

**ANSWER:** When a person talks, he reveals what's going on inside his *pnimiyus*. Since we are made up of good and bad, the bad inside a person is revealed by how he talks, and that is why a person can talk to harm another person. Part of what's going on deep down needs to be fixed and dealt with.

**Q4: *If I'm talking to a close friend and we are just talking mutually, isn't that a mitzvah of chessed?***

**ANSWER:** We do not mean that a person has to measure every single word that comes out of his mouth. It is impossible to live like this. A father who talks to his child only about what's absolutely necessary is sorely lacking in his relationship with his child. A husband and wife who only talk with each other about what's absolutely necessary is not a way to live together. In every relationship, it's necessary also to talk things that are unnecessary in order to maintain a healthy relationship. We are not saying that a person has to have "exact" speech and only speak what's necessary; this is an impossible way to live. We are just saying that many times, we speak about unnecessary things that have no benefit whatsoever, speech which doesn't contribute to a relationship. This is a fine line we need to think about: what is considered small talk that is necessary for a relationship, and what is considered small talk that is unnecessary.

**Q5: *If a woman has a certain nature to be very outgoing and friendly, does she have to work on uprooting her nature? For example, if someone has a daughter who is very talkative, does she have to train her daughter not to talk so much?***

**ANSWER:** We cannot tell our child exactly how much to talk. We cannot tell a child, "Don't talk more than 30 minutes every day with someone." We just need to give them over a general message, that we need to make our conversations more meaningful and not to always talk mindlessly.

**Q6: *If a woman is more intellectual and doesn't like to talk so much, does that mean that something is wrong with her heart and that she needs to open up her heart more?***

**ANSWER:** This is a deep question. Generally speaking, a woman's heart is more open than a man's heart, and therefore a woman has a nature to talk more with Hashem about her feelings more than a man does. But although this is a rule, there do exist exceptions to the rule. There are some men whose hearts have been opened up much more than most women, and there are some women who

are more intellectual than others. If a woman is more of an intellectual and has a hard time talking out her feelings, it might be that she is an exception to the rule, and it is merely upon her to learn how to speak out her thoughts. But no matter how intellectual a woman is, every woman is still a woman, and she has a heart which she can access if she works to get there. A more intellectual kind of a woman might have a harder time getting to her heart, but she still has a heart in her, and she can work to get to it.

However, it may also come from an emotional issue that she has, or it can come from a difficult time she is going through, like if there are major problems in her marriage or in her house. These are emotional problems which can all be dealt with, and it doesn't mean that something is wrong with her natural heart.

## *2 / Iyar – Thinking*

### *Women Have “Extra Binah”*

The ability of the month of Iyar is *hirbur* (thought). This is also known as *binah* (contemplation), the ability to have deep thought and analyze.

*Chazal* say that women were blessed with “extra *binah*” than men, for the wife of a household can better recognize the spiritual level of her guests more than the husband can. A woman can better sense inner realities; she can see into the heart and sense what kind of guest the person is. A guest might look very well-dressed and well-behaved, but a woman can see what he’s all about inside, like if he is a G-d fearing person or not.

### *What is the “Extra Binah” that Women are Blessed with?*

Our eyes only see something appears like at first glance, but with our power of thought, we can see what’s really going on in the inside of something.

Everything in Creation has much depth in it – depth within depth. We need to think into things, at how deep everything really is.

A child doesn’t think that much. He knows that food is food and that a toy is a toy, but he doesn’t realize that there is more uses to everything. He never thinks into the depth of something. But as a person gets older and matures, he thinks more into things and discovers that there is a lot more to life, such as picking up a pen to write or driving a car. The more we think into something and what it is, the more depth we uncover to everything in life.

The more we think into things, the more our outlook changes. When we think into things, we get a whole new outlook on the same situations, just like an adult sees a situation in a totally different way than a child does. If we use our ability to think deeply, we can see a whole new depth to old situations and uncover a whole new outlook on what we are used to.

To give an example, as parents, we change our perspective on raising children as they grow older. When our children are younger, we send them to nursery, and as they get older we help them with their homework. Parenting gets more challenging the older our children get. When they reach marriageable age, our perspective as parents is a whole different outlook than when our children were young.

The same can go for any other situation. We need to change our perspective on our situations in life and think into them. We must mature in life.

Our responsibilities have grown more since we were young. We have grown in our actions, and we have grown in our feelings. We must grow as well in our thoughts – our outlook on life. Our outlook has to be different now than it was ten years ago.

### *1- Thinking Into Our Acts of "Chessed"*

We will give a few examples of how we can gain a more mature outlook on situations in life.

One example is *chessed* (acts of kindness). It is not just in our actions of *chessed* which we must learn to increase as we go on through life, but it is our perspective on *chessed* which must change. We can gain a whole new perspective on *chessed* now if we think about all the *chessed* that Hashem does in Creation. *Chessed* is not just acts of kindness which I do, but it is a power which affects all of Creation. Hashem does endless *chessed* throughout the whole world. When we do *chessed*, we are called "partners with Hashem" in doing *chessed*. This is a change in perspective to our *chessed* that we need to acquire as we get older and more mature.

### *2- Thinking About The Purpose of Life*

Another example is to contemplate the concept of our *tachlis* (the purpose of life). We know that there is a purpose and goal to everything we do, but how much do we think about the purpose of life? We know what the purpose of life is, but how much do we think about it? Knowing what the purpose of life is not just another detail in life. The more a person thinks into the purpose of life, the deeper his perspective is on the purpose of life becomes.

### *3- Thinking About Being Close to Hashem*

A third example of using our power of thought is to contemplate *kirvas Hashem* - what it means to be close to Hashem. We know that the purpose of doing the mitzvos is to become close to Hashem (as the *Mesillas Yescharim* states), but how often do we think about this? We must deepen our awareness of this. Are you close to Hashem on the same level that you were when you were younger?

Most people look at closeness to Hashem in the same way since they were children, but our whole attitude to being close to Hashem should be vastly different now than it used to be. Most people stay the way they were as children and aren't connected yet to Hashem. Their feelings toward Hashem haven't grown since they were younger. We need to think about this more and it will become more of a reality to us.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to the Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh, Parts One and Two

We gave three examples of how to think deeply into familiar parts of our life, but we must know one thing. If someone doesn't have time to think on a constant basis about his life, he might get older and become smarter, but his actual level of *Yiddishkeit* remains small.

### *Making Use of Our Power to Think*

The month of *Iyar*, which is to work on deepening our thoughts and awareness about life, can change us and help us grow in our values.

Usually, a person only uses his deep thinking to think about his problems: “How do I get out of this problem...What should I do...” But we should make use of our power of thought and think into simple things as well, when we are calm.

Women have a power of “extra *binah*”, and they can use this to take simple things and think into them deeply. So we should take everything that we know about since we were younger, and think into them.

Women are often using their extra *binah* to think into materialistic parts of life, but really this power can be used as well to grow in spirituality. In order for a woman to really utilize the potential of her “extra *binah*”, she should take the time every day and think into her life, such as the three examples we gave. If we begin to think more into what's in our life, our whole way of life will change for the better! We will uncover a deeper and inner kind of life.

There is a lot more which we can know and should know. We should think more into important topics, such as the foundations of *Yiddishkeit*, some of which we mentioned before.

The words here are not just a piece of advice. It is a way to really live life. We need to think more about what we do and what we feel. This is the root of an inner kind of life. Once we are connected in our minds more to a matter, we will carry them out with a whole different meaning, and we will feel totally different toward them. When we use our thoughts, our actions and feelings gain a whole new perspective, and we reveal a whole new depth to life.

*Questions & Answers with the Rav*

**Q1: *If my birthday is in Iyar, does that mean that my special Avodah in life is to use the power of deep thought?***

**ANSWER:** It can definitely help you find your main *avodah* in life, but it doesn't mean that this is your main *avodah* in life.

**Q2: *If someone wasn't born in Iyar, can he still have this ability of deep thought?***

**ANSWER:** Yes.

**Q3: *How can I know what my main, personal Avodah in life is (Besides for the general mission that the Jewish people has)?***

**ANSWER:** That is a very complicating matter. Generally speaking, a person has to know his main quality and his main weakness in life, and these are the roots of his *avodah*. The rest are always details which one has to learn about himself, but the root of one's mission on this world is to know the depth of his main quality, and the depth of his weakest point.

**Q4: *What does it mean to analyze things using the power of binah?***

**ANSWER:** There are three kinds of *binah*. There is *binah* which comes from the mind, and in this men are better at than women. This is intellectual understanding. There is another kind of *binah* which comes from the heart, which is intuition, and in this women are better at than men. There is a third kind of *binah*, when we think into facts. This is also an ability which women excel at more than men. It is this third kind of *Binah* which was discussed here in this class.

**Q5: *Is there a month which is associated more with the other kind of Binah that women have (intuition)?***

**ANSWER:** The month of *Elul* has the *mazal* of *besulah* (a virgin girl). This represents the power to have intuition.

**Q6: *Is there a connection between the two kinds of binah?***

**ANSWER:** Yes, there is a connection. First, we must analyze facts, which is the power of this month of Iyar, and then we will be healed, which is the power of the month of *Elul*, when we are healed from our spiritual failings.

**Q7: *Is there a special power of refuah (healing) in the Hebrew month of “Iyar”?***

**ANSWER:** As is well-known, the Hebrew word “*Iyar*” (אייר) is an acronym for the verse, **אני ה' רופאיך**, “*Ani Hashem Rofecha*”, “I am Hashem, your Healer”, and the Talmud teaches that the request in *Shemoneh Esrei* for healing, *Refoeinu*, is placed near the request about *teshuvah*-repentance, *Hashiveinu*, to show that healing is a result of doing *teshuvah*. This is based on the verse, “*And understand with its heart, so that it will repent and be healed.*” (Yeshayahu 6:10). Through attaining the heart’s ability to understand, one draws forth *refuah*/healing from there. The verse is teaching us that through gaining the ability to “understanding” (*hirhur*, which is the special power contained in the month of Iyar), one can get healed. Iyar is a month of gaining the ability to understand deeply (*hirhur*) and that is precisely how one gains *refuah*/healing that is inherent in the month of *Iyar*. But it depends on one condition – doing *teshuvah* (repentance).

**Q8: *Is hisbonenus (reflection) the same thing as hisbodedus (meditation)?***

**ANSWER:** That is a very good question. They are two different abilities in our soul. Many of our Sages said that they need to be practiced together, but some say they are two separate forms of *avodah*. What we need to do is integrate them with each other. *Hisbodedus* is to be alone from people, but what do we do once we are alone? That is where *hisbonenus* comes in: we analyze our life, and we also use our power of simplicity (*peshitus*) in the soul to talk to Hashem. There is a deep, analytical part to it – which was the subject discussed today -- and there is also a simple part, which is to talk to Hashem freely.

**Q9: *What is the order – to first think deeply and then think simply, or to first have simplicity and only then to think deeply?***

**ANSWER:** It depends on the person, and we would need to have a whole series of derashos just on this one topic to know the answer.<sup>6</sup>

**Q10: *Is analyzing our strong points and weak points a part in this?***

**ANSWER:** Yes, that is part of how we become close to Hashem.

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<sup>6</sup> Refer to the Rav’s series on Inner Silence, which explains how to do hisbodedus



## *3 / Sivan – Keep Going*

### *Sivan – The Month of “Walking”*

Every month has a special power in it, and the special power found in the month of Sivan is “*halichah*” – walking.<sup>7</sup> This is not referring to physical walking, but walking with our soul. What is walking with our soul? It is not just another ability we have, but it is a power which encompasses the full spectrum of our soul.

When a child grows into an adult, at a certain point he stops growing. A woman at a certain point in life stops being fertile. Physical growth is limited - but spiritual growth never ends. When a person studies a profession, like if he studies to become a doctor or a lawyer, he learns much knowledge, and there comes a point in life where he has reached the peak of how much he can know about these fields. The growth in areas of knowledge eventually stops. Here we will speak about a kind of growth that never stops: our spiritual growth.

### *Endless Growth*

*Chazal* say that Torah scholars are always advancing to another level, and they never stop<sup>8</sup>. The kind of walking that is the power of the month of Sivan is this kind of endless walking – *halichah* - it is an ability in a person to have endless growth.

There is no person who doesn't have times of growth in his *Avodas Hashem* (spiritual improvement and service towards G-d). We all have a desire to grow in spirituality. But most people experience this desire only temporarily, and then people usually go back to their routine in life, and then they stop desiring to grow. Even when people do restart their spiritual growth, it is not a continuation from where they last left off, but they have to start all over from scratch.

We need to find a place within ourselves that enables us to have endless growth – to never stop growing in spirituality. As one of the Sages said, “I have seen those who grow spiritually, but they are few.”<sup>9</sup> There are people who are constantly advancing in their spiritual growth.

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<sup>7</sup> *Sefer Yetzirah* 5:5

<sup>8</sup> Berachos 66a

<sup>9</sup> Berachos 45a

The question is: don't we all need to rest sometimes? How is it possible to always be involved in growth? Don't we need to relax...?

### *How To View Breaks*

Here we come to a great fundamental in life. All of us go through stages in our life – we go through times that are hard either physically and emotionally. One who constantly grows spiritually learns how to grow from these situations, while a non-growing person falls apart from difficult times.

One who wants to constantly grow more in his spirituality knows that he has to relax as well, but he understands that resting is in order to re-energize so that he can have return to progress. A non-growing person, however, relaxes so he can sit back and take it easy – he does not desire to continue his growth. When he relaxes, he disconnects from spiritual growth.

It is impossible for a person to constantly be in growth mode when it comes to our spiritual progress. This is because we all have times that are simply too difficult. We all have times in which we are slowed down to a halt, times in which we feel like we can't go on anymore. So we all need to take a break sometimes from our progress - but the only issue is how we *view* these situations. Are we looking at these breaks as a way to give up on our growth – so that we can sit back and just take it easy - or are we looking at our breaks as a way to refresh ourselves so that we can have more energy to go on?

That is the question we should ask ourselves: we need to realize how we view our necessary breaks, with what attitude are we going about it.

### *Holding Onto Our "Fire" When We Go Dry*

There is another way to deal with the times in our life in which we don't feel any drive to grow.

[To illustrate the concept we are about to mention], let's say a woman is cooking supper for her family, and suddenly she realizes she needs to leave the house to take care of an errand. Either she can put out the fire on the stove when she leaves, or she can lower the flame a little. What's the difference? If she turns off the flame completely, the food gets cold, and she may have to start cooking it all over again when she comes back. But if she just lowers the flame, the food will stay warm, and when she comes back, she can continue cooking from where she left off without having to start all over again.

The same can apply to our own personal situations in life. When we have to "stop" sometimes and take a break, we need to be able to hold onto our inner "flame" of growth, and not to put it out just because we're relaxing. That is how we should go about our difficult times, in which we lack the motivation to grow: by knowing that even though we can't grow fully, at least we can grow a little.

Hold onto your “flame” at least a little, even though your flame isn’t being ignited so much – and in this way, you retain your aspirations and hold onto them even as you’re not actively involved in spiritual growth. You can do this by remembering the times in which you *did* grow.

### *Good Times and Bad Times*

Rabbeinu Tam writes in *Sefer HaYoshor* that every person has “Days of Love” and “Days of Hatred” – in other words, we periodically have “good” times and “bad” times. Our “good times” are when our soul feels opened, and we thus feel good about ourselves. During our good period, our emotions and our thoughts are positive. Our “bad times” are when our soul feels closed up – when we feel negative about ourselves, and we aren’t experiencing positive emotions and thoughts.

What are we supposed to do during our bad times – our “Days of Hate”, as Rabbeinu Tam describes it?

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz *zt”l* said that the way is to hold onto our inner fire, as we described above. We should hold onto our previous growth even though we are currently in a time when we aren’t growing. In this way, we connect our current dismal period with our uplifting periods. By holding onto some of our growth even as we take a break, we form a connection between our “bad” times and “good” times, and then we can survive even the bad times!

For example, if a man always was used to learning five pages of *Gemara* a day when he felt that he was in a period of growth, and now he finds himself in a period where he feels that his willpower has weakened, he can still learn four pages of *Gemara*. He can tell himself that although right now he’s not up to it to learn five pages of *Gemara*, at least he’s able to learn four pages of *Gemara*.

Another example: If someone learns with a *chavrusa* (study partner) for ten minutes a day and then a day comes where he doesn’t feel like learning with his *chavrusa*, he can at least learn with his *chavrusa* for two minutes a day.

If someone has ten a minutes a day in which he or she sits quietly and talks to Hashem, and then a hard day comes in which a person feels that he/she has no motivations whatsoever to do this, then one can at least do it for two minutes. That is something one can do no matter how hard of a period he/she is in.

In this way, even if you aren’t actively involved in a period of spiritual growth, you are still somehow involved in growth, in spite of the dismal period you’re going through.

### *We Need Both Attitudes*

We mentioned two ways how we can survive difficult times in which we don't feel like working on ourselves. Let us summarize them – and we will see why we in reality, we need both.

The first way is that when we are in a hard time, we can tell ourselves that really we want to grow right now, but we are just taking a break so we can re-energize and have more strength to later progress. The second way is to take some small growth with us even into the times when we don't feel like growing, “lowering the flame”, as opposed to putting it out totally.

We need both ways simultaneously. Everything in life has an external layer to it and an internal way to it. The first way we mentioned is the external layer of our avodah here, while the second way is the inner layer of the avodah here.

Let's say a person only uses the second way, which is the inner way. The person is in a rut, so she decides that she will grow at least a little, even though she can't grow fully. This alone won't be enough, because a person has to realize as well that her break from growth is really a way for her to reenergize. A person has to realize that even if I can't grow fully right now (because I am growing through a very hard time right now and I am too stressed out to work on myself), I am taking a break right now so that eventually, I will be able to return to my growth, reenergized.

And if a person only uses the first way, which is to view the situation as only a temporary break – but she doesn't try to grow at all during a hard time – it will also not be enough. When a person completely stops *Avodas Hashem* and gives up totally from continuing – even if it's only a temporary period of total despair - then the person's desire to grow in *Avodas Hashem* may become lost totally.

So when we go through a hard time in our life and we don't have the strength to work on ourselves and grow, we need two things: we need to look back at the times of growth even as we are not actively growing, and in this way we hold onto some growth even as we're in a rut; and we also need to know that although right now we are taking a break from growth, the plan is really to return to eventually return to our growth.

### *Failures Are Not Failures*

Finally, there is a third step we will add onto this and clarify.

When a person is in a difficult time and he doesn't feel a drive to grow, there are two attitudes he can have. One attitude is to completely give up: “That's it. I've had enough, and I can't take it anymore. Today is a bad day, and I'm only going downhill. I can't work on myself today.”

But the other attitude he can have is to have a different perspective on the situation: “My soul needs a break sometimes. I can't always be growing. It's really not a *bad* day – it's a day that I have to

go through, because it's normal for my soul to feel closed up sometimes, [since Rabbeinu Tam has written that] everyone has these "Days of Hate".

We can compare this to going to sleep. Although sleep is not productive, is sleep a bad thing? No one looks at sleep as unproductive, because we all realize that we need to go to sleep in order to reenergize. We can't function unless we get our sleep. Taking a break is part of life, and we must not look down at ourselves for this.

The difficult times in our life are thus really not "difficult" or "bad". Rather, they are like our sleep. It is necessary for us sometimes to pull back from growth, and let us not beat ourselves up that something is wrong with us that we don't feel any willpower to grow spiritually. If you have those days in which you don't feel like learning or *davening* or making any spiritual progress, realize that it's normal, and that it is actually a necessary part of your growth to go through these times in which you lack motivation.

This can change our whole attitude about life! Our soul needs to rest sometimes – we can't always grow and reach higher levels. This is not a fall from our level – it is a necessary part of our growth. "Failures" are thus not really "failures" – they are needed for our growth.

This is important to know even while you're in a period of growth and you feel fine. You need to prepare yourself for those times in which you will find it hard, by telling yourself that in order to grow, we need to go through a constant cycle of rising and falling from our level.

### *In Conclusion*

In the month of Sivan, we didn't just receive the Torah. We received the power of a Jew – the power to always grow, no matter what we feel like we're in. Our difficult times are like times in which we go to sleep.

This power is revealed in the month of Sivan, but we must take it with us to the rest of the year: remember that no matter what, a Jew never gives up.

### *Questions & Answers with the Rav*

Q1: *What is an example of a good point to hold onto when we are going through difficult times?*

ANSWER: Good question. There are two opposite powers in the soul: despair, and hope. When a person is in a going through a dismal period and he despairs, and he is too accepting of the despair, he is weakening the "fire" of his hope. The only thing a person needs to do, in order to access the power of tikva/hope, is for a person to know that "I will soon return to the way things were."

Practically speaking, a person should understand that his soul needs to go to “sleep” sometimes, just as the body needs sleep [meaning that the soul isn’t able to perform at it best, during a dismal period].

*Q2: So when a person is awakening the power of hope, there is nothing specific which a person needs to hope for?*

ANSWER: You only need to be on the proper level to do so, to have hope that you will certainly return to the way things were before, and that you can certainly succeed. This doesn’t mean to simply say “I hope” superficially, but to feel truly confident that Hashem will certainly help you succeed.

*Q3: If a person gets sick and is physically not able to do anything, and he doesn’t even have a minute or two minutes a day to work on the idea of increasing the power of “hope”, is there anything she can do, to grow right now?*

ANSWER: If he doesn’t have 2 minutes, he can still find half a minute for this.

*Q4: The sick person can only think about hope, but he has no one to work on it together with and speak about. For example, he was used to learning every day with a chavrusa, and now that he is ill, he has no one to verbalize his hope with.*

ANSWER: So he can do it while learning alone.

*Q5: But there are days when an ill person will find even this too difficult for him to do.*

ANSWER: He still has a second or where he can find time to work on this – in spite of the fact that the yetzer hora (evil inclination) is very strong.

*Q5: If a person’s ratzon (will) dries up, how can he get it going again?*

ANSWER: During a dismal period, a person should not focus on action (maaseh) that much, and instead he should focus more on maintaining whatever willpower (ratzon) he has acquired until now. It will be too difficult for a person to “create” a ratzon now for more growth, now that his will for growth has stopped. But this much, he will still be able to do.

*Q6: I have learned that a person needs to keep doing what he needs to do and to keep serving Hashem, even when he doesn’t feel like it and he has no enthusiasm or will to serve Hashem. For example, a person should daven to Hashem even if he doesn’t feel particularly enthusiastic about davening right now. But according to what the Rav is saying here, it sounds like we need to keep awakening our emotion and will.*

ANSWER: Only a person who has reached a very high level of pnimiyus is able to do so. A person will never build his inner world if he serves Hashem without feeling. If a person has already developed his pnimiyus, then he is able to have times in which he serves Hashem even when he doesn't have any will. But for most people, it is not a proper approach to always serve Hashem without any feelings.

*Q7: But perhaps the approach (of action over emotion) would work better for women, who are usually more action-oriented.*

ANSWER: Actually, it is the opposite. Since women are more usually emotional than men, they need to work more with their emotions, than with trying to act when they don't feel like it. By contrast, men, who are less emotionally inclined than women, are better equipped to do what they have to do even when they don't feel like it. But this doesn't either mean that men need to act robotic and mechanical, with no feeling in what they do. Everyone needs to open their hearts. This should not be about "doing what you have to do even when you don't feel like it."

*Q8: Do we have any way of knowing when these "good times" or "bad times" will come?*

ANSWER: We do not have any control of when they come and go, but the more a person works on himself, the less the "bad times" will come, and the less intense they will be. But there is almost no one in the generation who never goes through these "bad times."

*Q9: During a dismal period, a person wonders if he's going on the right path or not. How can person indeed know if he's going in the right path?*

ANSWER: During the "bad times", it is too difficult for us to know if we are going on the right path or not, so we will have to wait for the "good times" when we can think more objectively. During a dismal period, if a person feels that he needs to improve in certain areas or take a different path, it is usually coming from an unhealthy place in the soul, from feeling down and broken. So in order to analyze one's path, one will need to wait for the dismal period to pass, and analyze his path later, when "good times" return.

*Q10: How do you know if you're going through those "Bad Days"? Can it be that for two hours a day that you're going through "Bad Days"?*

ANSWER: "Bad Days" ("Days of Hate") can last well beyond 2 hours or half a day. They can go on for several days, and sometimes they can even go on for several weeks. Sometimes you can feel physical aches from them. But if you feel like you're in a dismal period for more than a few months

already, that's a sign that there is a problem. Then it is not just a period of "Bad Days" anymore – it is a sign of depression.

*Q11: Why does our soul need to go through this state of "sleep", or "Bad Days"? And is there any way we can prolong our periods of "Good Days?"*

ANSWER: Hashem created the world that everything needs sleep, even our soul. Since our soul needs sleep, we need to also go through "Bad Days." There is nothing we can do about it. But the more we work on ourselves, the longer our "Good Days" will last.

*Q12: How do we start serving Hashem? Where do we begin?*

ANSWER: Start by working on a point that is closest to your heart. But you need to also daven to Hashem for help in this. Every person's soul is different [when it comes to where a person should start].

## 4 / Tamuz – Seeing The Good

### *Tamuz – The Power of Re'iyah (Inner Sight)*

Tamuz and Av are the two most tragic months from the whole year, due to the tragedies in our history that took place during these times. We must know how to properly view this time of the year, or else it is possible that a person views this time of the year as a sad and tragic time of the year, with no other meaning to it. We must know the *avodah* that is upon us during these difficult months of the year.

*Chazal* state that five tragedies took place during the month of Tamuz. These months require a lot of contemplation, and we need to find how Hashem is here with us, even in these trying months. It seems as if nothing good can be said of these two months, which are full of sad events. But we can learn how to see the good, even amidst all the bad.

The power contained in the month of Tamuz, as explained by our Sages in the *sefarim hakedoshim*<sup>10</sup>, is *reiyah* (“sight”). There is physical sight which our eyes can see, and there is an inner power of sight, called “*einei haseichel*”, the “eyes of the intellect”.<sup>11</sup> Just like our physical eyes can see both good and bad things, so can our power of inner sight see both good and bad.

Ever since Chavah set her eyes upon the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V'Ra* (the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil), which contained a mixture of good and evil, all of the things which we see in the world since then are a mixture of good and evil. Nothing we see is totally good, and nothing we see is totally bad. It is always a mix.

There are people who were naturally born with a very positive nature and they are inclined to focus on the good in everything, while others were born with a more negative nature and thus they are naturally inclined to see the bad side of everything. But all of us can see everything as a mixture of good and evil.

*Chazal* state that those who have a “good eye” (*ayin tovah*) are the students of Avraham *Avinu*, while those who have a “bad eye” (*ayin ra*) are students of Bilaam, so we must therefore strive to have a “good eye”. Ever since the sin of Adam, everything has become a mixture of good and bad. If

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10 Sefer Yetzirah, with the Vilna Gaon’s commentary

11 A term used by sefer Chovos HaLevovos.

we look at the good of things, we are being “students of Avraham”, but if we only see the bad in something, we are being negative, “students of Bilaam”.

We can't see only good or only bad, though, because in the current state of affairs, there is no such thing as only good, and there is also no such thing as something totally bad. Everything is a mix. Therefore, we need to see the good, and bad, in everything, and after that, we can connect to the good that is found in it.

We will try to explain, with the help of Hashem, how we can come to think about only the good in things.

### *The First Step: Taking Apart the Information*

Since everything is a mixture of good and evil, the very first step of learning how to see the good is to see what each thing we encounter is made up of. We need to see how much good is in something, and how much bad is in it. Everything has some good in it and some bad in it, and we need to get used to thinking into the good parts and the bad parts in something. The point is to take something apart in your mind and analyze it, thinking: “What is the good here, and what is the bad here?”

Practically speaking, take a piece of paper and make two rows, one row labeled “Good” on the right side and the other row labeled “Bad” on the left side. Write down all the good things you can find in a situation, and all the bad things you see, and line them against each other.

You will discover as you get used to this that there are things which you thought were totally good that have really have some bad in them also, and there are things which you thought were totally bad that actually has something good in them.

### *The Tricky Part*

Now comes a danger which you should watch out for, though. When you realize that a situation is mostly bad, you know that you should keep away from it. But the tricky part is when you discover something good in something which also has bad in it, and you might be tempted to connect to it, because you see good in it. But although you see good in something bad, this doesn't mean you should connect to it.

There are some situations which we cannot choose otherwise, so there is nothing we can do to get out of them, even if there is bad in them. But there are situations in life which we can choose to connect to or not. In these complicated situations, should we choose to connect to the good in them, or not?

What we need to do is to somehow connect to the good in every situation. The question is, how? If there is mostly bad in a situation, even if you have found some good in it, how can you connect yourself to it and feel that it is somehow good, when you know quite well that there is bad here also?

### *Finding the Root Good Point*

This is the hard part. There are difficult times we go through in which we can't seem to find anything good in the situation. When we go through a difficult time, we must bear in mind that our difficult times are just like everything else in life that is made up of both good and bad.

If there is more bad than good, how do we get by a situation? How do we deal with situations that are mostly bad? True, there is some good to everything, even situations that are mostly bad. But if it is mostly bad, how indeed do we get by these situations?

What one has to do in such a situation is to find the strongest good point in this situation, and that will shed an entirely new light on the situation. Let us give some more background to how this works.

Everything in Creation has in it a root and its branches. There is always one root good point in every situation, and although there are many branches that stem from it which are bad, the root is always good. There are actually 287 branches which can stem from one single root<sup>12</sup>, so a person can find 287 negative things to say about any situation! But if a person finds the root of a situation – if he finds the root good point – then all of the “branches” lose their vitality, because they have no ‘bad’ root with which to feed on.

Thus, if you want to see how any situation is good, no matter how bad it is, you need to find the “root” of the situation. The “root” is always good, and this knocks away all the negative things you see in the situation.

We will try to explain how we can put this into practice. These are really very deep matters, but they are the root of how to live a true, inner kind of life.

### *What It Means To “See Good”*

There are two approaches in how a person can become more positive, to have an “*ayin tovah*” (“good eye”). One way is to think positive thoughts all the time, and as the saying goes, “Think good and then it will be good.”<sup>13</sup> When you think positive, your good thoughts can help you transform

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<sup>12</sup> The source for this is in the writings of the Arizal

<sup>13</sup> Editor's Note: Based on the Yiddish saying, “Tracht gut un zul zein gut” – “Think good, and then it will be good.” Based on a statement of Rabbi Nachman of Bresslov.

the situation into a good situation. Another way, though, is to find the good point that is contained in every situation. [This second approach is the way we are describing here.]

This doesn't simply mean, however, for a person to try to find the one good point in any situation; that alone will not be enough, because there are many other bad points in the situation which would just cancel it out. If a person is aware of many bad points about a situation and he simply comes up with a good point contained in the situation, this will not help, because then he is still saying that there is mostly bad here, and he is just admitting that there is some good here also. This is not the depth to having an "*ayin tovah*".

The real definition of "*ayin tovah*" is to find how the *root* of the situation is somehow good, and therefore, that root good point makes the *entire* situation good as a whole.

### *An Example From Chazal*

How do we know this is true? We can give a very good example. The destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, as we know, was a very great tragedy, a truly sad situation. On one hand, we must mourn the destruction and all the tragedies it caused, but on the other hand, *Chazal* also brought words of comfort for us. How did *Chazal* find comfort over the destruction?

There is a statement of *Chazal* that Hashem was so angry with the Jewish people that He really wanted to destroy them, but instead He unleashed His anger on the stones and wood of the *Beis Hamikdash*. In this statement, however, *Chazal* did not find comfort. This fact alone wasn't enough for *Chazal* to find solace. There is a different fact about the destruction, however, in which *Chazal* found comfort in. *Chazal* state that on the day of the destruction, Moshiach was born. This was how *Chazal* found the positive in the tragedy of the destruction.

The fact that Hashem took out His anger on stones and wood doesn't bring out the comfort in the situation, because this doesn't show how the destruction was a good thing. It just shows us some good amongst the bad. But the fact that the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash* heralded the birth of Moshiach is something that shows us how the entire tragedy, at its root, was good, because now we saw that the destruction was a cause to begin the final redemption.

From here we can see that when *Chazal* wanted to find how even the worst situation can be good, they didn't find comfort in the fact that there was one good point to say about the situation. That alone was not a comfort. What *Chazal* found positive about the situation was that the root of the entire sad situation was good, and that was what is able to comfort us.

### *Summary*

To work on seeing how every situation is really good its root, a person still needs *siyata d'shamaya* (Heavenly assistance), *tefillos* (prayer), and *hisbonenus* (reflection) in this concept, besides for what we have explained here, in order to see how every situation is really good.

Anyone can split up every matter into how it is good and bad, and then he can see how the root of it is always good. Then he can connect himself to the root good point of any situation.

### *Applying This to Current Events*

The words here are not only true on a general basis; they apply as well on a more specific level.

As we speak now, *Eretz Yisrael* is going through trying times. Three young boys have been kidnapped by terrorists, and we have not yet merited for them to return home. The entire country is worried for them, and this appears to be such a bad situation that it doesn't seem that any good can be said about it.<sup>14</sup>

Yet, if you think about it, there is some good in this situation. This situation has revealed so much *Ahavas Yisrael* amongst Jews from all walks of life. All Jews are united together in prayer for the boys, and everyone has put aside all their differences. Another good point is the *chessed* that this situation has caused people to increase in.

These are some good points about the situation, yet one can still argue that the bad of this situation far outweighs the good. To counter this pessimistic attitude, we can use our deeper method of *ayin tovah*, which is to find the root of the situation, which is good; and when we find the root good point of this situation, it will show us how this entire “bad” situation is really good.

The root good point of this situation is that it shows us about our own situation: we are also “kidnapped” amongst the seventy non-Jewish nations of the world. We are Hashem's children, and we are kidnapped by the nations. This situation can show us how much we long to be rescued by Hashem from the nations who want to destroy us.

The kidnapping of the three boys shows us the depth of our exile, and how much we should want to come out of it. It can show us that we shouldn't only *daven* for the children who were captured – we should *daven* for the entire *Klal Yisrael*, who currently live in darkness, surrounded by people who wish to destroy all the Jews – who have no value whatsoever for a Jew's life.

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<sup>14</sup> This shiur was given the day before the sad news of their tragic deaths. Yet, the lesson remains true, as the author has stated that every situation is good, and it can still be said that this episode caused much unity amongst Jews.

It is unfortunate that we have to use the three captured boys as a *moshol* (parable) to our own situation, but now that this is the situation, we need to use it as a way to get us to daven for all of *Klal Yisrael*, who are kidnapped in this exile. We are kidnapped from our true level of spirituality, because of the effect that the non-Jews have had on us throughout this dark exile.

May we merit from Hashem that the boys return home, and may all of us merit the redemption. That is how this situation is good, at its root – it can stir up in us a realization to daven for *Klal Yisrael*, that He take us out of this dark exile – speedily, in our days, Amen.

*Questions & Answers With The Rav*

**Q1: What exactly is the “root” of all good that we must find? Isn’t Hashem the root of everything, who is always good?**

**ANSWER:** Very good question. Yes, it is true that Hashem is the root of all good, but the question is, what is that root that Hashem is trying to show us in every situation? We need to find that good root of every situation. We know that Hashem is the source of everything, and that is clear. But we need to see in our own personal life how we see how the root of every possible situation is somehow good.

**Q2: If I see bad in a situation, how do I focus on the good? Do I have to get myself to see a situation how others see it?**

**ANSWER:** Good question. It depends why something is bothering you and not other people. Sometimes there is something that bothers you that really shouldn’t, and you are just overreacting. This kind of problem stems from simply being negative, which is a problem that stems from the *nefesh habehamis* (lower, animal layer of our soul). But if it’s a problem that not only bothers you but bothers others as well, it can be because the negative elements in the situation far outweigh the positive aspects of the situation. If that is the case, the *avodah* is, as we have explained here: to find how the root of the situation is somehow good.

**Q3: What is the source for how there are 287 negative things to say about every situation?**

**ANSWER:** The source is from the *Arizal* in *Parshas Beraishis*, who says that the word “*merachefes*” (blowing) has in it the letters *reish*, *pei*, and *ches*, (רפ"ח), which altogether has the numerical value of 288. If a person has the root, then these three letters become the word “*perach*” (פרח) which means “flower.” If he doesn’t find the root, then the letters become “*chafar*”, (חפר) which means “dug under”, a reference to being underneath the tree.

**Q4: If someone is in a difficult marriage, how can he/she work on seeing the positive in this situation? Should he just focus on the nachas he/she has from the children?**

**ANSWER:** Take apart all the factors going on in your marriage, and see everything that’s going on. This can take a few months. You will then discover much good in your marriage, and then, you should *daven* to Hashem that He should help you find the root good point in your marriage.

**Q5: How do you know what the “root” of the situation is, and what the “branch” of the situation is?**

**ANSWER:** If you know your soul well, you can identify better what the root is.

**Q6: If a person doesn't see anything negative about a situation, is he supposed to think about the negative? For example, if a person doesn't feel pain at a situation going on in Klal Yisrael that he is supposed to feel pain about, is he supposed to feel that pain, as part of the process of seeing the bad and good?**

**ANSWER:** It's hard to answer this question, because it depends on each person and what his situation is in life. There are some people who are very stressed out in their life, and it will be detrimental to them to work on seeing what's bad in our situations, because this will only add to their stress. Only a person who is capable of doing this emotionally should work on it.

**Q7: The Rov said that a person should write down the good points on one side and the bad points on the other side. What can person do if he doesn't like to write, and it's not practical?**

**ANSWER:** Type it on a computer. Or, sit with a close friend and do it, and you will find it much easier to write it down.

**Q8: How do we tell this to people who are secular? How do we explain this concept to them?**

**ANSWER:** Even *frum* people who keep Torah and mitzvos have to work on the topic we discussed here [in this chapter]. In today's generation, although we keep the mitzvos, most people aren't connected to their *pnimiyus* (inner, spiritual world). Of course, every Jew is good in general, and there are some people today who are amazingly connected to their *pnimiyus*; but most Jews today, even *frum* Jews, are weak in their *emunah*, and therefore, they have to work on this *avodah* of seeing the good point in a situation.

**Q9: But what we can tell secular people, who aren't asking on how they can improve themselves?**

**ANSWER:** The concepts taught here was for people who keep Torah and mitzvos, who want to work on themselves. If a person doesn't ask how he can work on himself, then he doesn't have our questions, and he doesn't seek answers. The material here is thus not for people who aren't seeking to improve themselves, because my answers here are only for those who are asking on how they work on themselves.

**Q10:** *What practical point can the Rov suggest we work on every day from now on, in order to improve ourselves?*

**ANSWER:** Every day, seek to become a more truthful person.

**Q11:** *Which point should a person work on to become more truthful in – in learning Torah, in doing mitzvos? Which point exactly?*

**ANSWER:** Each person must become more truthful in his own unique circumstances in life and on his own level. This is a question which cannot be answered on a general level, because I would have to know the individual person who is asking it, in order to see how he needs to become more truthful. But there is something to this question which can apply to all people no matter what situation: no matter what your situation is in life, every person needs to try to become a more truthful person each day, in general.

## *5 / Av – Turning Sadness Into Happiness*

### *The Month of Av - and Our Avodah of Transforming Sadness Into Joy*

We are in the month of Av, the month of mourning and sadness, which will one day be turned into joy, when we merit it from Hashem. Our *avodah* during the month of Av is two-fold. On one hand, we must know what sadness in the soul is, and then our *avodah* is to transform it into joy. Let us try here with the help of Hashem to understand what the source of sadness is, what the source of happiness is, and how we can leave sadness and enter joy.

### *A Difference Between The Soul of Men and Women*

Since this is being delivered to women, we will try here to mainly discuss this subject in terms of the woman's soul.

First we will need the following introduction. Our Sages reveal that when Hashem created the world, He created it with four elements: fire, wind, water, and earth. A man's soul is mainly comprised of the elements of water and wind, whereas the soul of woman was mainly based upon the elements of fire and earth.

Of course, in general, every soul, man and woman alike, contains the four elements<sup>15</sup>. A man certainly has fire and earth in his soul, and a woman certainly has water and wind in her soul. But it is just that the man's soul is mainly based upon water and wind, and a woman's soul is mainly based upon fire and earth. Therefore, whenever a woman feels sad, this is either coming mainly from the fire in her soul, or it is mainly coming from the earth in her soul.<sup>16</sup>

When Chavah sinned by eating of the *Eitz HaDaas*, she was cursed with, “*With sadness shall you bear children*”. Women have to endure the mood swings that result from childbirth and pregnancy.

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15 Refer to Getting To Know Your Soul

16 In Understanding Your Middos #002 (Laziness), the Rav explains the various causes for sadness which each of the four elements in the soul can cause, when they are left imbalanced. (1) Water-based sadness is a sadness due to running after various physical desires, which eventually breeds on sadness. (2) Wind-based sadness is a sadness which is caused by being too haughty, which causes a person to feel disappointed at his failures. (3) Fire-based sadness is the sadness that results from becoming angry. (4) Earth-based sadness is when a person feels lethargic.

There are also other times in a woman's life where sadness becomes dominant. The element of earth is where the sadness in women stems from, and it was activated when Chavah ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*. Again, to emphasize, it is either the element of earth or the element of fire which is the main source of a woman's sadness. The sin of Chavah, which brought about the effects of sadness upon childbearing, was only a means to activate the sadness that was already part of her inner makeup.

Let us try to understand how we can see sadness coming from either the element of earth or fire.

### *Sadness Starts With 'Fire' and Awakens Our 'Earth'*

To illustrate the concept, we can reflect into the following. The *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed by fire, and when we mourn it, we sit on the ground – the 'earth'. Thus, it is 'fire' which plunged us into sadness and mourning, connecting us to the element of earth, similar to how the sin brought about the curse upon mankind, "*You are earth, and to earth you shall return*". We can imply from this that it is 'fire' in the soul which causes us to have a reason to be sad, sending us to the level of the 'earth', where the sadness is clearly manifest. So the sadness begins with the element of fire, and it is revealed in the element of earth.

Soon we will explain how sadness can come from the element of earth, but first let's digest the above concept. Now let us explain, with *siyata d'shmaya*, how exactly the element of fire causes sadness in the soul, and how sadness becomes manifest in our element of earth.

### *Fire: Destruction and Sadness*

Fire destroys. Just like fire destroys physical things, so does the element of fire in our soul, our spiritual fire, tend to be destructive to our own soul. When a person misuses his element of fire, he destroys everything in his path, like a person who feels that nothing is important to him.

You can see this clearly from sad people who complain about everything and are never happy about anything in their life. When a person is sad, he feels that nothing is important to him anymore; nothing can make him happy, because nothing has any value to him. This is how a person uses his spiritual fire to unleash devastation and destruction upon his own soul – just like a very real fire.

We can give a few examples of this. Let's say you have a person who has five children; four of them are doing well, for the most part, and are generally a source of *nachas* to the parents, but one of the five children is a problematic child, causing the parents much heartache and grief. How does the person look at this situation? Either he can focus on the four good children he does have, or, he will become entirely consumed with sadness and frustration over his problematic child.

Some people feel that they have everything good in their family, because they were born with more of an “*ayin tovah*” (a good eye); they naturally adapt a positive outlook on everything. Others weren’t born with such a positive nature, and tend to see their lives mostly in a bad light. But if a person is totally negative about his situation in life, then he is never happy. Nothing has any value to him – even if he has a spouse whom he is happy with and he has been blessed with a large family of children and he has other good things in his life. It is all worthless to him, and it’s all because he is consumed in a particular part of his life which is distressing him.

This is a clear example of when one uses his spiritual fire in his soul to be destructive and it negates everything. Such a person, if he wants to change his outlook, should do some positive thinking every day. He should say to himself, “Did I get up in the morning today? Yes. Am I alive? Yes. Am I married? Yes. Do I have children? Yes.” And just start with that.

### *Writing Down a List of What’s Good In Your Life*

Let’s give another example: when a person is amidst a stormy marriage. Although this is a problem, the question is: Is the person totally consumed by his problem? How does he look at his life? Does he consider his life to be worthless just because he has this one problem, or does he feel thankful to Hashem at least that he got up in the morning, that he’s alive, that he’s healthy, and that he has a family?

Many times people forget about the good that they do have in their life, and instead focus on the one bad part of their life. People have plenty of good in their life – good health, children, a house, and so many other good things – but because they have one problem, they don’t consider their life to be good in general. This was Haman’s problem. He had almost everything to be happy about, but only one thing didn’t go his way. For this, he said, “*All of it is not worth anything to me.*” Many people feel that way too!

We need to balance out our feelings by making sure that our inner ‘fire’ is not getting out of hand and destroying all the good that is in our life.

If a person were to write down a list of everything good and bad in his life, usually, the list of the bad things will come out bigger. This is because people are too focused on the one bad thing in their life, and thus they don’t consider their lives to be good. If only they could just get themselves to focus on the good parts of their life and keep reflecting into it.

### *Some Positive Reflections To Think About Each Day*

There are a few things which we can reflect about that can immediately make us happy, no matter what our situation is.

For example, one good thing that we can think about is the fact that we are Jewish. Every day we make a *beracha* (blessing) of “*shelo asani goy*” (That you did not make me a gentile); we thank Hashem for not making us a non-Jew. This is not just something we say – it can bring us great happiness, if we really think about it.

Another good thing to think about is that we possess a *neshamah*, a Divine soul, and we come from our great forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. Imagine if you had been born as a gentile, and you wouldn’t be part of the Jewish nation. You would be missing out on everything! If you just think about this and reflect into it, it can cause you to feel sheer joy.

Another thing you can think about is: all of us stood at Har Sinai and received the Torah. Can you imagine what your life would be like if not for this? Think about this one thing, and you will have plenty to be happy about.

Another good thing to think about is that all of the Jewish people have a share in *Olam HaBa* (the World To Come), except for a few wicked sinners who do not have a share. Do we ever think about this? The thought of this alone can make us happy.

### *When This Doesn't Work*

However, some people, when they think about this, don’t really care about the fact that we all come from the *Avos*, or that we all have *Olam Haba*, and that we all stood at Har Sinai.

A person might feel, “These are all very nice things to think about, but it doesn’t help me. Right now, I have problems. I have *shalom bayis* problems. I have problematic children. I’m not seeing enough *nachas* from my children. My financial situation is very difficult for me. My life is full of problems. It is certainly nice that I come from the *Avos*, and it’s nice to hear that I stood at Har Sinai and that I will get *Olam HaBa*, but right now, I am on this world, and it’s filled with nothing but hardships for me.”

But we have to remember that we are made up of a body (*guf*) and a soul (*neshamah*). We can use our soul’s perspective to calm our angry perspective that’s coming from our body, by reminding ourselves that we have all these great reasons to be happy: we have *Olam HaBa*, we have the Torah, we were made apart from the nations when we stood at Har Sinai, and we come from the *Avos*.

If we only look at life through the prism of our body, then yes, we will be consumed with our physical problems, and we will become paralyzed by our element of earth, which slows us down and makes us depressed.

But if we look at life through our soul, we are able to think about the fact that we come from the *Avos* – which is meaningful to our soul, because that means we have spirituality. The more we see

our life through our soul and are focused on spirituality, the more of a balance we achieve between our body and soul, and we calm down inside ourselves.

### *Self-Help Books Don't Help Us*

There are many gentile methods to get rid of depression which people turn to, out of desperation. When a Jew is sad and he seeks relief, he is tempted to read self-help books, written by various gentile psychologists or professors. But a gentile cannot help a Jew become happy. This is because a gentile lives only for This World, and therefore, a gentile's perspective is to seek how life on this world can be the most gratifying life on this world. A gentile is interested in how he can get the most out of This World, which is the world of the physical body. The secular methods of the world when it comes to treating depression cannot help us, because we have a Divine soul within us, and the soul in us needs something else which the non-Jewish books can't tell us.

We, the Jewish people, have special souls within us, and we have our own methods to reach happiness. There are actually many different ways we have, and each person needs to find the proper way that is for him. The way a Jew attains happiness is essentially by leaving his body's viewpoint, and entering into his soul's viewpoint. Then he sees life through the prism of the soul, not through the body, and then he can be happy. As a person begins to enter the inner world of spirituality, he will find that his pull towards sadness and depression is lessening.

It takes a lot of inner work to arrive at true happiness. We cannot explain here in this short amount of time all the ways how we can reach happiness; it would take several hours. But we have said here what the key is. The key to happiness, the very first step to take, is to begin living a more internal kind of life, where we are seeing life through the prism of the soul, as opposed to living a life of superficiality and the body. Everyone should try to discover how he can enter this inner world; there are many ways (as explained in the previous months).

May we merit to transform our mourning and sadness in the month of Av, into happiness.

*Questions & Answers with the Rav*

**Q1: *Why is fire associated with sadness? Also, isn't fire usually associated with enthusiasm?***

**ANSWER:** Very good question. Each of the elements has positive and negative uses. There are good and evil uses of earth, good and evil uses of water, good and evil uses of wind, and good and evil uses of fire.

Enthusiasm is certainly a nature rooted in the element of fire. When a person doesn't use his fire for enthusiasm, what happens? His fire is not being activated for good uses, so it will be destructive instead, and the person will view everything in his life as negative. Some people even use fire for enthusiasm in a bad way, like when they act very giddy always, and they aren't so focused in their life; they act childish and irresponsible. They are enthusiastic one day and forget about their enthusiasm a few days later. The way to use enthusiasm in a good way is to build upon it, not to use your fire to destroy your previous successes, but to keep the fire going and building upon your enthusiasm.

**Q2: *If women are more prone to sadness, since we come from fire and earth (which are the elements that mainly cause sadness), is there a way for us to have more access to water and wind?***

**ANSWER:** Certainly. But we need to know how to use the other elements, and it is a very long discussion which we don't have time for now. Generally speaking, the element of earth is the root of the traits of sadness and laziness. If a person is mainly drawn towards laziness, the general solution is to try to stick to doing a certain pastime every day which you never veer from. If a person is mainly drawn towards sadness, the solution is generally to find certain positive aspects about yourself and your life which you can receive pleasure from on a continuous basis.

## *6 / Elul – Renewal*

### *Hashem Recreates the World Continuously*

Hashem created the world on the 25th of Elul. On the surface, it seems that Hashem created the world one time, 5,773 years ago.

But, Hashem also re-creates the world every single day, as is explained in the *Gemara*.<sup>17</sup> “*Hamechadesh betuvo b’chol yom tamid ma’asei bereshis.*” (He renews, in His goodness, every day constantly, the act of creation.) Not only did this happen the first time on the 25th of Elul, 5773 years ago, but in fact, every single day, Hashem re-creates His world and renews it.

What difference does it make to us whether the world was created only one time 5,773 years ago, or if Hashem keeps re-creating his world every day anew?

With Hashem’s help, we will try to answer this question and explain how the fact that the world is constantly being re-created is relevant and has practical implications for every one of us. We will look into the immense repercussions of the fact that Hashem keeps re-creating the world. Hashem created the world, on the first day, on the second, third, fourth, fifth, and on the sixth day he created Adam.

On each day of Creation, it was said to be “*ki tov,*”<sup>18</sup> that it is good, and when Hashem completed the Creation, He testified that it was all very good. “*Vayar Elokim es kol asher asah, v’hinei tov me’od.*”<sup>19</sup>

But after Hashem had created the Creation, which was **all very good**, Adam and Chavah did not listen to Hashem, Who commanded them not to eat from the *Eitz HaDaas* (*Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*). By eating from it, they not only damaged themselves, but they also damaged the entire world.

If a person would not have the energy he needed for each day’s spiritual work, then every morning he would start it from an imperfect, unclean, contaminated place.

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17 *U’mechadesh bechol yom ma’asei bereisheis* – “Who renews the Creation every day” (*Chagiga* 12:2). Also in the morning prayers, just before *K’riyat Shema*.

18 *After each day, Hashem saw that it “ki tov – was good”* (*Bereishis* 1)

19 *Hashem saw that “v’hinei tov meod – and it was very good”* (*Bereishis* 1:31)

But because Hashem continuously re-creates the world every day, He gives each person the opportunity to start each day from the depths of his soul, from a place that is totally innocent, totally pure and totally holy [thus providing perfect conditions for his spiritual growth].

### *Continuation vs. Renewal*

There are two frames of reference that Hashem gives us in order to observe the world. One view is that there was only one Creation, that Hashem created the world once 5,773 years ago and, ever since, the Creation continues every day from the previous day, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. Just about every one of us has been reincarnated many times during the 5,773 years since the “first” Creation. Sometimes we did good deeds, and sometimes, G-d-forbid, we did not-so-good deeds, sometimes we were good and holy and sometimes, *chas ve’shalom*, we were not so holy. If a person lived with only this perception, then they would live their life with all their past, which was sometimes good and sometime less good.

The second view is that Hashem planted in the world a force of re-creation continuously every day, every hour, every minute, every instant. Hashem re-creates and gives a person energy to always start with a new beginning that is not affected by the defects of the past– not affected from all the transformations the person has gone through in all the years since the world was created.

### *Knowing Our Strengths and Weaknesses*

Each and every one of us knows their own soul to some degree. We all have our own weaknesses, which are expressed differently by different people. In some people, it is expressed by a tendency for sadness – some people get stressed easily while others get overwhelmed. For other people, it is expressed by fears. In other people, it is expressed by a tendency to be suspicious and in other people it is expressed in low self-esteem.

There are many other predispositions that people have, depending on their particular history. A great many of these tendencies are the results of the many situations that the person went through during his life in childhood, in adolescence, or at various other times in their life.

If a person would try to remember where certain difficulties stem from, he may be able to recall and sort through all kinds of adverse situations that he went through, along with the particular situation when this mishap was implanted in his soul.

Sometimes these situations happened in this life, but very often, these emotional difficulties do not stem from this lifetime, but from the many other lives that the person lived during his various incarnations (*gilgulim*) since the start of Creation.

### *Getting Rid of Our Emotional Blocks*

Our soul, which is now clothed in our current body, went through thousands of years in This World, in *Gan Eden* or even in, *chas veshalom*, *Gehinnom*. We have a lot of baggage that has accumulated in our soul– we are an accumulation of a lot of scars and many emotional disturbances. And these disturbances can combine generating whole new disturbances!

If each one of us had only one disturbance, or even a couple, it would have been much easier to deal with. But usually each one of us has at least a few disturbances, and many times dozens and even hundreds.

How can a person get rid of all these emotional blocks? Here we arrive to the special power we spoke about that is imbedded in the month of *Elul*.<sup>20</sup>

The advice seems to be to deal with one problem– to try to figure out how it started, what is its reason, and by finding its root reason, it would be possible to try to remove the source of that disturbance. Sometimes we can find the reason for a disturbance if we could track down its source. Sometimes, however, it is more hidden, especially if the reason for the disturbance was not in this life, but was in a previous incarnation. It is almost impossible to get to the bottom of any disturbance using the mind alone.

So, if it is difficult to solve one disturbance, how much more difficult is it to solve them all. Therefore, it is impossible to accomplish fixing everything. Of course, if we could clearly see the reason for the disturbance, we should go through it and fix it.

But for everything else, either because the reason is hidden or because there are too many disturbances, we have the power of renewal of “*Mechadesh betuvo bechol yom tamid ma’asei bereshis*”.

The *koach* (strength) that Hashem uses to renew the Creation every day gives us a new, tremendous and amazing ability to deal with the tribulations of our *nefesh* in order to attain a more *pnimi* (internal) and pleasant life.

### *The Renewal Within*

This force of renewal is found in the inner recesses of everyone’s soul.

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20 How do we balance this idea of concentrating on renewal with the avodah of Elul which is focusing on what we did wrong and doing teshuvah?

In response to this question, the Rav answered: “In fact there is an avodah of the part of the soul that sees the continuation of day after day. A person should do a cheshbon hanefesh with their lower soul for 5–10 minutes a day and it will fix what is needed, but the majority of our outlook should be on renewal.

The Ten Days of Teshuvah are also days of renewal, because if a person only does teshuvah, and only looks at the past, he will only focus on his shortcomings of the past.

The Rambam says that a ba’al teshuvah is called a breiah chadashah (new being).

If a person doesn’t regret the past they cannot feel the renewal of mechadesh bechol yom ... If someone does cheshbon hanefesh 5–10 minutes per day, then they should try to go back to the place of renewal also. This is the depth of a ba’al teshuvah who feels like a new being.”

In the parts of the soul that a person is aware of which are closer to the physical, a person feels that every day is a continuation of the previous day. But in the very depths of everyone's soul, is the place of “*Asher yatzar es ha'adam b'chochmah* – That He created man with wisdom.”<sup>21</sup> Iyov asked “*Chochmah mei'ayin timatza?* – Wisdom, from where is it found?”<sup>22</sup> The answer is that in the root of the creation of a Jew is the place that is known exclusively only to Jewish souls – Hashem is constantly re-creating continuously.

This phenomenon, that Hashem re-creates the world continuously (and one's private soul in particular) means that the soul is re-created without any defects, impressions, or disturbances imprinted from the beginning of Creation.

“*Chadashim labekarim, rabbah emunasecha*” – “They are new every morning, great is your faithfulness,”<sup>23</sup>; “*Briyah chadashah mamash*” – “In actuality, a new creation.”<sup>24</sup>

As such, a person is like a newborn baby or like a new convert. He starts anew in that place in the soul, where there are no imprints. The *Mishna* in Avos explains, “*Kotev al neyar chalak v'lo kotev al niyyar machuk*”, that we can “write on a clean slate and not on an erased piece of paper”.<sup>25</sup> There, a person can start anew; there he has a future that starts growing from a new beginning.

A person first must know that there is such a place in the soul, and then reach that place. He needs to understand that there is such a place in the soul where he could start anew, every day, every hour, and any time.

[When *bnei Yisrael* were in the desert for forty years, Hashem gave them *manna* from Heaven every single day for their sustenance.] What was the necessity for the *manna* to descend daily? Hashem could have brought it down once a week or once a month so that it would stay fresh. Hashem gave them the *manna* every day so that they will feel “*Chadashim labkarim rabbah emunasecha*.”<sup>26</sup>

Every morning when the *manna* fell, they felt that there was new food in the world, because it was a new world. This *manna* was white, and whitened their sins, and clearly allowed them to start every day from this new, white, blank page in their soul.

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21 *Gamara Brachos 80b*

22 *Iyov, 28:12*

23 *Rashi, Eichah 3:23*

24 “*Briyah chadashah mamash*” (*Chesed l'Avraham 3:22*).

25 “*Teaching a child is like ink on a new page, and teaching an old man is like ink written on an erased piece of paper*” (*Pirkei Avos 4:25*).

26 “*Chachmah mei'ayin timatz – Wisdom where is its root?*” (*Iyov, 28:12*)

### *Believe In Renewal, Then See It*

First of all, as we explained, a person must know that the inner strength in his soul experiences a new beginning every day.

It is only the external part of our soul that feels the world as if it is merely continuous; a day follows from the previous day, from the previous week, from the previous month, from the previous year. But in the depths of our soul, we can access the power of renewal.

After a person knows and believes the fact, that the world is always being re-created, a person should try to observe the world and see all the things that are renewed each day.

*Chazal* say that a chicken lays an egg every single day.<sup>27</sup> *Chazal* also say that in the future a woman will be able to give birth every day instead of after nine months. This is simply because the world is constantly being re-created!

We need to observe this in order to silence the external noises in our soul in order to listen to the deepest internal place in us. If we do that, we can access the place of the inner wellsprings in the soul, where the soul is continually renewed. In the language of the *Mishnah* in *Avos*, it was said, “*Na’aseh k’ma’ayan hamisgaber*”. A person becomes like a flowing wellspring,<sup>28</sup> which keeps renewing.

A person who does not quiet his soul is only aware of things that happen externally, so he only sees the world as a continuation of the past.

### *Internal Quiet*

A person has to quiet his soul, either by listening to a *niggun*, or nibbling on something tasty, or by relaxing in a comfortable position. All these are tools to reach the place of internal quiet where he can quiet their heavy feelings and thoughts.

When he is in a place of quiet, he can then dwell on this simple thought: **“I am being renewed. Hashem is in my heart, and is renewing me every moment.”**

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27 “*Asida ida sheteled b’chol yom.*” *The Gemara* compares it to a chicken laying eggs every day (*Shabbos* 30).

28 *Mishlei*, 18:14

Repeat this sentence dozens of times. This should only happen when you are in this quiet place – the deepest place in the soul. Try to repeat this from total awareness and slowly try to experience them as deep as possible in your soul.<sup>29</sup>

Each one of us should try to do this “quieting” every morning for a few minutes, and feel the reality of Hashem in the heart, and then try to believe and try to experience that “Hashem infuses in me every day new *koach*, renewing me from the start.” We can realize that “Hashem gives me a new *koach* to succeed. Even though I couldn’t succeed in the past, I was given new energies to succeed and if today I will not succeed, tomorrow I will be given again new energy so that I will succeed then.”

If a person starts each day with this process of internal observation it will fill him with mighty power. The whole day will be built from this great infusion from Hashem that resides in each of us and gives us power every day.

Also, during the day, especially after a person fell in *emunah*, or did something inappropriate, or expressed something that had disappointed him, the advice is to go back to the place where we were at, and to believe that “Hashem is planting in me new power, which is not affected by all the failures of the past.”

If a person works on this correctly, with patience and clarity, from a stable place with the understanding that on one the hand the world continues forward to the next day, but that the world is also re-created every day, then he will receive great powers of strength and purity, beauty and liveliness.

The ones who work on this will merit, with Hashem’s help, that their obstacles will become smaller so that they will be able to overcome them. But even more so, the person will live an uplifted and happier life.

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<sup>29</sup> In response to a question, the Rav explained that the best time to try this is at the very beginning of the day, before you start your daily routine. It’s best to get up a few minutes earlier, and do this before everyone else wakes up. Then you would start your day from this clean, pure and internal state.

*Questions & Answers with the Rav*

**Q1: How do we balance this idea of concentrating about the renewal with the work of Elul of inspecting what we did wrong and doing teshuvah?**

**ANSWER:** In fact there is an *avodah* of the part of the soul that sees the continuation of day after day. A person should do a *cheshbon hanefesh* with his or her lower soul for 5–10 minutes a day and it will fix what is needed, but the majority of our outlook should be of renewal. The days of *teshuvah* are also days of renewal, because if the person only does *teshuvah*, and only looks at the past, he will only go into his shortcomings of the past. Going deep, the energy that a person has to do *teshuvah* is because he is renewing himself. The Rambam says that a *ba'al teshuvah* is called a “*breiah chadashah*” (new being). This is the how deep *teshuvah* goes, if the person regrets the past. A person who doesn’t regret the past cannot feel the “*mechadesh bechol yom*” ... But if someone did *teshuvah* 5–10 minutes per day, then he should try to go back to the place of renewal. This is the depth of a *ba'al teshuvah* who feels like a new being.

**Q2: I heard of the idea that a tzaddik falls seven times. I thought that this is to comfort us, that even tzaddikim can fall seven times, but could it be that we can become a tzaddik by doing this renewing work ourselves?**

**ANSWER:** Of course the first is true, but the main process should be the second part. From where does a *tzaddik* have the power to fall and get up and fall and get up again? A regular person, if he falls once or twice, says to himself, “I fell and tried to get up but couldn’t do it, so the next time I will fall, I will not be able to get up either.” If he fell twice and couldn’t get up, on the third time he will feel that now he has a *chazakah*, and for sure will not be able to get up. But a *tzaddik* believes that Hashem gives him *koach* to fix himself. With the power that Hashem gives, one can succeed in anything. If it was my own power, it is limited and I can’t succeed, but if I receive every day a new power, the question is who gave me the power?. On this *Chazal* say, “Hashem li *b’ozrai* — Hashem is my helper.” Therefore even if in the past you failed, a person knows that Hashem helps him. Therefore there is never a place of despair because he knows that Hashem will help him even if he fell many times.

**Q3: Is there a specific time of a day when this is happening? Also because it is Elul, should we do this Avodah specifically now? Is there anything in Elul specifically to take advantage of?**

**ANSWER:** At the beginning of the day, before you start the day, is the best time. It is best if possible to get up a few minutes earlier, before others, and do this before everyone wakes up, and then the day would start from this clean and pure and internal state.

**Additionally,** Elul gives the *koach* for all the year, like a person who takes upon himself to do certain things on Rosh Hashanah, because it is Rosh Hashanah he has the power to sustain this throughout the year. But if he makes certain commitments and only does them on Rosh Hashanah, then they are not so helpful. Elul is the time from where this light shines through the whole year. It is the time to accept/acquire this energy and to stretch it to the whole year.

**Q4: *In regards to renewal of the Creation, going to the siddur and saying Modeh Ani for returning my soul, does it mean returning us the soul as it was, is it the same soul or a new soul?***

**ANSWER:** Like we say, it is “*Elokai, neshamah sh’nasata bi tehorah.*” You gave it to me pure, and I dirtied it and now you give it to me clean and pure again. A person needs to feel that Hashem is in his heart, so this feeling of “*mechadesh ma’asei bereshis*” is more real and pure. If a person doesn’t feel Hashem in his heart, he can’t feel the *mechadesh bi ma’asei bereshis*. The more a person feels that Hashem is in his heart, the more the feeling of renewal is more internal, deeper, and purer.

**Q5: *The renewal is there already there, but do we need to do an action to access it?***

**ANSWER:** We need to uncover it and feel it. It already is there, but one’s personal *avodah* is to feel it.

**Q6: *What are the different ways practically to internalize it?***

**ANSWER:** Most people have fantasies of the past and future; therefore, people don’t live in the present state of renewal. The more we quiet our thoughts and imaginations regarding the past and the future, and we focus of the present, then the person removes most of the screens covering his thoughts. When we are in the present and a person sits quietly, we can utilize tasting a fruit or hearing a *niggun*, and sitting comfortably to try to feel Hashem; then we have the possibility to feel the place of renewal. All this must be with davening to Hashem, asking him to help him get there in a complete way.

**Q7: *A question on the avodah: I understand doing it when it is quiet, and we have time and space, but then the Rav mentions also accessing it when a person gets frustrated. Does the Rav have an eitzah (advice) on how to get there even if things are chaotic?***

**ANSWER:** We need to be deep into it and that allows you to be able to get into it in a flash. It works faster after we are experienced with this *avodah* for a while. If reality doesn’t allow, we must know that life is involved with pain, and not everything has a solution for this moment or exact second.

## *7 | Tishrei – Touching The Spiritual*

### *Tishrei and the Sense of Touch*

What is the *avodah* of the month of Tishrei? It is brought in the *sefarim hakedoshim* that the month of Tishrei is the time to use our sense of touch (*chush hamishush*).

There are many ways how we can feel something through touch. One way is through our mind: our mind is the root of our five senses. Our mind sends messages through our body when we touch something. Another kind of touch is through our **heart**: our heart is able to feel something that is going on outside of us.

The regular sense of touch which we are familiar with, which comes from our brain, is, for example, when we want to feel if food is fresh, so we feel it if it is soft or hard. Our physical sense of touch can only feel the external part of something - it cannot feel the essence of something. Only our heart can feel the essence of something.

Our heart is able to sense what is going on in the inside of something. For example, when a mother hugs her child, not only does she feel her child physically, but she connects to his soul with her own soul. Her heart is feeling her child.

All of us need to become aware of our ability to feel something through our heart. Sometimes we feel through our physical sense of touch, and sometimes we feel through our heart; sometimes we use both. We need to become aware of how we feel something, and where it comes from.

### *Appreciating The Sense of Touch*

Imagine if we wouldn't have the sense of touch, and we only have the other four senses. What would our life be like?

We wouldn't be able to hug or kiss anyone. We wouldn't be able to even feel someone's hand. The world would be a very cold, unfriendly place. And when we cook food, we wouldn't be able to put the fork in to feel if it's soft or not.

All of us enjoy going swimming. If not for touch, we wouldn't be able to feel the enjoyment in swimming around in the water or even taking a shower; we would only be able to drink it. On a hot day, everyone loves to feel a breeze. If not for touch, we wouldn't be able to feel a breeze.

Touch is called "*mishush*" in Hebrew, from the word "*mamash*" – "real." When we feel something, we are able to feel how it is real. Touch enables us to connect to something. Just like we

use physical touch to connect to something physical, so does our spiritual sense of touch enable us to connect to spiritual matters.

We don't only connect to something through touch. The sense of sight, for example, can also connect us to something. Just by seeing the sky, we connect to the sky. But there are things which we don't feel connected to unless we touch. A clear example of this is a mother who talks to her child on the phone when he is away. It's not enough that she's connected to him through hearing him; a mother wants to feel and touch her child.

We have so far described our need to touch the physical. It is because we have a need to connect ourselves outward to the world. Now we will discuss here the deeper sense of touch which we have: the heart's sense of touch.

### *Feeling Ruchniyus (Spirituality)*

Where is the heart's sense of touch?

Let's say Reuven is talking nicely to Shimon, but he doesn't feel any love for him; really he can't stand Shimon. If Reuven would properly develop his spiritual sense of touch, he would be able to feel what's going on in Shimon's heart and see him in a whole different light, and then he would feel a love for him.

Our sense of touch in our heart is able to feel something that we can't feel with the other four physical senses. The only way we can connect to Hashem is through feeling Him with our heart; we cannot see or hear Him physically, but we can feel His existence with our heart. This is the power of our heart: it can feel the spiritual.

### *The Opportunity of the Month of Tishrei*

During the month of Tishrei, and especially during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, our heart is more open to feel Hashem. Of the month of Tishrei, it is written, "*Seek Hashem where He is found, call out to Him where He is close.*" Hashem is closer to us during these days. Not only is Hashem closer to us, but it is we who can feel Him more clearly, during the month of Tishrei.

The month of Tishrei are days in which our heart's sense of touch is more opened. We can feel things from our heart much more during these days than the rest of the year.

If we learn how to use our spiritual sense of touch, we can become close to Hashem during these days, to "feel" Hashem.

### *What Prevents Us From Feeling The Spiritual?*

Men have the *mitzvah* to learn Torah, while women do not. This shows us the unique role of both a man and a woman in *avodas Hashem*. Men are mainly using the **mind** to serve Hashem, and that is their main role. Women are using mainly the **heart** to serve Hashem - and this is the main role of a woman.

However, the *sefarim hakedoshim* say that during these days of *teshuvah*, even men have to use their heart more than they use their mind. The days of doing teshuvah in the month of Tishrei is a time to become more in touch with our heart, with our feelings for *ruchniyus*, and this makes much more use of the heart than of the brain/mind. Therefore, during these days, even a man's main *avodah* is through the heart.

Men and women have different deterrents holding them back from accessing their hearts' sense of touch. With men, the issue is that since they are mostly involved with their minds and not with their hearts, they have a harder time relating to a sense of touch that goes beyond the physical; they are not familiar with the spiritual sense of touch, and it does not come naturally to them to feel the spiritual.

Women are much more easily open to feeling the spiritual; they can access it much more easily than men do. But women face a different issue that prevents them from accessing the heart: it is because they are so busy that they don't have any time for themselves. In today's times especially, where women are working, in addition to taking care of the home and the children, and in addition to many other things as well - they are being held back from accessing their hearts.

A woman in today's times is much busier than she was in the past. She has no time for herself; every second she is doing something else, whether it is work, being on the phone, or helping a friend, and they simply don't find the time to sit alone and feel what's going on in the heart.

But if any woman wants to improve her *ruchniyus*, she must set aside time every day to have total quiet and have time for her heart.

### *Setting Aside "Heart Time" Each Day*

Every person – man or woman – needs times of quiet every day. This is no less necessary than our need for eating and sleeping; we all need a little *menuchas hanefesh* (serenity) every day.

We have to sit with ourselves alone, every day, with total quiet. We need time out to relax and think. Soon, we will speak about "what" to think, but first, we need the actual time.

This is not a time to learn *mussar*, or even to talk to Hashem. It is not a time for *cheshbon hanefesh* (self-accounting). All of these things are wonderful and necessary too, but we are not talking about this here. We are talking about a much more basic step: a time in which we silence our thoughts, so that we can access our soul.

We need this time every day in to tune in to what's going on inside of our heart. If we never think into what is inside our hearts, we will go our entire life living with a physical heart but without every using it for its inner purpose, which is as good as living an entire life without a heart.

### *What to Do During "Heart Time"*

During this time of the day you set aside, sit down with a pen and paper, perhaps with light music playing in the background or by first reading light material, in order to create a more relaxed atmosphere.

When you feel relaxed, now, write down all your feelings. What do you feel all the time? Do you feel love, or hatred, or any other emotion going on inside you? Write down everything positive and negative you feel in your life; the good and the bad.

We are not talking yet about *how* to work on yourself and self-improvement. We are simply writing down what is going on in our life, because we need to become aware of what's going on inside our heart. It can take months until a person figures out what's going on inside her heart.

We need to have this "heart time", every day. If we don't feel what's going on inside our own heart, how will we able to feel what's going on inside others' hearts....? How will we able use our heart to sense Hashem, if we don't even use our own heart....?

Just like a woman gets used to living with her husband and children, so must she get used to living more with her heart and experiencing more what's going on inside it. To do this, time must be set aside every day for this.

### *In Conclusion*

If we do this, we will be able to utilize our heart's sense of touch and then we will feel what's going on in our hearts – whether it is love, hatred, etc. We will become aware of the feelings in our heart. From there, our sensitivity to feelings will be heightened, and we can feel what is going on in others' hearts. Eventually, we will able to feel Hashem, Who is really found deep within every person.

May we merit to a *gmar chasima Tovah* (to be sealed for a good year), and to come to feel Hashem more in our life.

*Questions & Answers with the Rav*

**Q1:** *According to how I am understanding this, “heart time” is not a time to talk to Hashem, and it is a time to just be alone and write down our feelings. Is this correct?*

**ANSWER:** It is exactly as you have said; it is a separate *avodah*, which is besides for the *avodah* of setting aside time to talk to Hashem. However, it is not that this *avodah* is “instead” of talking to Hashem. Talking to Hashem is also an important *avodah*, but just as we can understand that a person also has to make special time to talk to Hashem - besides for the three times of *davening* each day - so can we understand that a person needs time alone with himself each day to sit with himself and discover what’s in his heart, *besides* for talking to Hashem.

Let us emphasize again that this *avodah* of “heart time” is not meant to replace our *avodah* of talking to Hashem. Rather, it is another *avodah* which we need, *besides* for talking to Hashem each day.

**Q2:** *What does it mean to write down what’s on our heart? Should we just write down whatever thoughts come into our minds?*

**ANSWER:** In order to understand yourself, you need to sit with yourself quietly and listen to what’s going on inside your heart. This is the general concept, and it is hard to say exactly what to do. Basically, try to see if you feel happy or sad, as well as your other feelings. As time goes on, you will discover more and more about what you are feeling and you will come to better understand yourself.

**Q3:** *Should a person first talk to Hashem and then write down a list of how one feels, or should it be the other way around?*

**ANSWER:** It is better to first write down the list of what you are feeling, because first we need to calm ourselves down before we talk to Hashem, so that we can talk to Hashem from a calmer place in ourselves. In order to be able to daven properly to Hashem, we need to first be calmed, and then we are speaking with Him from a more genuine place in ourselves.

**Q4:** *Even when we have “heart time”, how do we know if we are understanding ourselves from our heart? Maybe we are only understanding ourselves from our mind?*

**ANSWER:** Excellent question. Even listening to our heart is problematic, because the *yetzer hora* resides in our heart (in the left chamber). The question is if what we are hearing from our heart is coming from the external layer of the heart (which contains the *yetzer hora*), or if it is coming from a more inner place in our heart that tells us the truth. But certainly we must be concerned that what we are hearing is perhaps coming from the *yetzer hora* present in our heart.

The general answer to this issue is that all good in our soul stems from either the “light of the *neshamah*”, which is present in our brain/mind, or from the “*Ruach*” that is present in our heart. All evil present in ourselves stems from the *yetzer hora* in the heart, and to be more specific, from the *nefesh habehaimis* (the animalistic layer in the soul), which contains the negative trait of *shiflus* (lowliness).

Our *avodah* is to get used to listening to what’s going on in our hearts. As you get used to listening to your feelings, you will be able to discern it as a physical sensation, and there are usually two places where you can feel it. There are feelings you can feel coming from your heart, and there are feelings you can feel coming from the lower section of the stomach, which is closer to the liver. When you feel it coming from this lower half of the body, it is usually a feeling stemming from the body, and if you feel it coming from your heart, it is usually a feeling linked to your *middos*. This is a very subtle matter. The question you asked was very good, and the answer to it is not always so clear.

It is entirely a matter of getting used to it. As you get used to listening to your heart and writing down its feelings, you will slowly be able to discern better what it is telling you, just as it took time for Shmuel *HaNavi* to discern the voice of Hashem and he had to get used to hearing it in order to recognize it.

**Q5: *When we starting to do this, should we write down everything that comes to mind, and not try to discern where the thoughts are coming from?***

**ANSWER:** At first as you begin to get used to this, just write down everything that comes to mind. Only afterwards will you be able to discern which thoughts and feelings are coming from the *neshamah*, and which thoughts and feelings are coming from the *nefesh habehaimis*. Some things you can clearly identify as *nefesh habehaimis*.

For example, if you discover that you like to be lazy, you know clearly that this stems from the *nefesh habehaimis*. You can write it down on the list of negative desires you have in yourself. But as for any other thoughts and feelings that come to you which you don’t know if they are good or bad, write them down in a middle column on the page and come back to it later, when you will be able to better discern if it came from the *neshamah* or the *nefesh habehaimis*.

In summary, your list should include three rows. One row will contain all the good *middos* and desires you discover in yourself, another row will contain bad *middos* and desire you discover in yourself, and a third (middle) row will be the parts of yourself which you’re not sure about if they’re good or bad.

**Q6: *Should a person say a tefillah before writing down this heart time?***

**ANSWER:** Before anything we do, we can always *daven* to Hashem for help. In our case specifically, we can *daven* to Hashem before we do this that He should help us know ourselves.

The Raavad writes, based upon the verse “*From my flesh, I see G-d*” that we can only come closer to Hashem through understanding ourselves. Thus, we must bear in mind that we are only trying to understand ourselves because that is part of our *avodah* of recognizing Hashem, and not because we simply want to know who we are. The goal of trying to understand ourselves is so that we can come closer to Hashem through clearer self-knowledge. So a person should always *daven* before any *avodah* that Hashem should help him, because our goal is always to come closer to Hashem.

**Q7: *What should I do when I discover that I have many negative middos in myself and I see that I am very far from being close to Hashem?***

**ANSWER:** If a person can only discover bad things about himself and he can’t find any good in himself, it is a sign that he does not recognize anything about himself at all, and that he has never yet taken a deep look into his heart. This is because every person contains good qualities. As long as you reflect deeply into what is going on inside your heart, you will be able to find good qualities in yourself.

Of course, we must also discover our bad *middos* that we have too, but first we must reflect on the good *middos* that we have. When we begin to work on ourselves, we first need to work on our worst *middah*. The time now is too short to explain how to do this, because it a deep *avodah*. To say it briefly: we must first begin to work on our worst *middah*, or, we should first work on an area that is easiest for us to improve in.

I must repeat, however, that if you are only finding bad middos in yourself and you are not discovering any good in yourself, it is a sign that you are not reflecting properly into your heart, because every person contains good. There is always your best quality, but besides for this, there is also many other good points which you can discover about yourself, and you must discover all of these good points in yourself.

**Q8: *Should we begin to work on our bad middos when we discover them? Or should we leave that for later?***

**ANSWER:** Absolutely **do not** begin to work on your bad *middos* right away. You have just started to get to know yourself, and before you discover lots of good in yourself, it is detrimental for you to work on your bad *middos*, because you will become overly focused on the bad in yourself and you are unaware of the good in yourself. You would be working on yourself with a lowly view towards yourself. Only after discovering lots of good about yourself can you begin a healthy kind of self-improvement. You must begin from a place of finding many good points in yourself, and if you have not yet found any good in yourself yet, you must keep looking for it. If you still cannot find any good about yourself, ask someone else to point out to your strengths. Either way, you can only begin self-improvement after you have found a lot of good parts about yourself.

**Q9:** *When the Rav talks about the “heart”, is this referring to the “nefesh” (the basic life-force of the soul)?*

**ANSWER:** Whenever a person feels some emotion, like if he is happy or sad, where does he feel it coming from? Does he feel it coming from his toenails? He feels it coming from his heart. Of course, there is depth upon depth within our heart. We discussed here how one can enter the place in his heart which feels things. All of us can relate to what the “heart” is, each on our own level. We must first begin to recognize what our heart is, as much as we can on our current level. This is only the beginning stage, where we are first beginning to enter our heart. It is not yet the “heart” itself. The “heart” actually is experienced differently with each person, depending on what level he has reached. But what we all have in common is that all of us have some understanding of the heart, and that is where we can begin from.

**Q10:** *The Rav has said that at first a person can get to feel what is in his heart, and then he can feel what is going on in others’ hearts, and then a person can feel Hashem. Is this order specific, or can it be the other way around also? Can a person begin with feeling what is going on in others, and from there he can get to know himself better, and then feel Hashem?*

**ANSWER:** This is a good question. There are some people who are born with more of a feeling for others’ hearts, and they can get to know themselves better by understanding others. Most people, however, need to use our method, which is by first understanding what’s going on inside their own hearts, before they can feel what is in others’ hearts; and after that they can feel Hashem.

There are a third group of people who are born only with feelings for Hashem, but they do not feel what’s going on inside their own hearts, nor do they feel what others are feeling. For them, the order will have to be different than how it was explained here. Here we were addressing most people, who usually are not born with a strong sense of knowing what is going on in their hearts or in others’ hearts, and certainly they can’t feel Hashem yet. The order presented here, which applies to most people, is: To first get in touch with your own feelings, then with others’ feelings, and then you can begin to feel Hashem.

## *8 / Cheshvan – Smell and Breathing*

### *Cheshvan – The “Smell” Left Behind From Yomim Noraim*

We are now in the month of *Cheshvan*, after all the festivals of Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos, heading into the winter. We are taught by our Sages that every month contains a special ability which we can use to serve Hashem. In the *sefarim hakedoshim*, our Sages tell us that the power of the month of *Cheshvan* is the sense of *reiach*, smell.

Smell is unique from the rest of the senses in that it continues to linger with us even after what we already smelled isn't in front of us anymore. The senses of sight, hearing, taste, and touch can only be sensed when you're sensing it in front of you. You can't see, hear, taste or touch something if it's not in front of you. But you can continue to smell something even when it isn't in front of you anymore. For example, when a person smells flowers, he can remember how it smelled long after the flowers aren't here anymore.

This is why the month of *Cheshvan* is connected with “smell”. During *Cheshvan*, we are left with the spiritual ‘smell’ of the *Yomim Noraim*, long after it's gone. What is this sense of smell that we remain with from the *Yomim Noraim*, and how we can use it?

### *Having Quiet Time Every Day to Reflect*

Firstly, before we continue, we must know that if a person wishes to serve Hashem in a true and inner way, one needs to have quiet “heart time” every day (which we spoke about last month).

During each of the continuing months, we will explain what the *avodah* of each month is. But in every month, our goal is the same: to live a more inner kind of life. This can only be done with our “heart time” that we must set aside every day. We need this heart time in order to internalize any *avodah* we do.

If someone doesn't set aside time every day for heart time, it is not possible to really understand any of the coming ways of *avodas Hashem* which we will speak about in the coming months. We **must** have times of quiet every day in order to think and reflect into our inner world. Without this “heart time”, not only will we be preventing from actualizing any of *avodah*; we won't even understand at any of the methods of *avodah* at all.

The purpose here is to open our *pnimiyus* (inner world) to us and reveal a more inner kind of life. This needs specially set aside time for every day; we must seclude ourselves a little from the world, in order to open up the internal world within us.

We have repeated this point several times, because it must be very clear: We must set aside time every day for “heart time”. There is nothing to be gained from these words unless we have this time every day.

### *Smell Helps Us Sense Our Inner World*

Having understood that, now we can start the *avodah* of this month: using our sense of smell (the *chush ha-rei'ach*).

When used in an inner way, the sense of smell helps us feel beyond the external dimension of things. When we smell something, we are sensing something more internal than what it appears to be.

Every Jew's soul wants to know of the inner world of the soul, but we cannot sense it with the other four senses. The sense of smell is the only sense that is able to sense any *pnimiyus* (inner, spiritual layer of reality) in our life. The Sages say that the only physical sense which our soul has pleasure from is the sense of smell; smell is the most spiritual kind of sense from all the senses. It is beyond the physical senses - it can “smell” spirituality. The external, superficial layer of our sense of smell can only smell the physical, but there is an inner use of our sense of smell, which can ‘smell’ the spiritual.

Our sense of smell has two layers to it: the external, superficial layer of smell is when we smell the physical, such as smelling the scent of a flower, and the inner layer of smell, which can smell the spirituality in even the physical. Our sense of smell is able to reach deep into the physical and ‘smell’ something spiritual in it. ‘Smelling’ spirituality can show us how something which looks only physical can really be spiritual.

### *The Power of Breath*

Our nose can do two things: it can smell, and it can breathe. The power of breath<sup>30</sup> in us is essentially the *nishmas chaim* (the “breathe of life”) that was breathed into us from Hashem.

It is written, “*Every soul praises Hashem*”, and the Sages explain this to mean that “for every breath a person breathes, a person must praise Hashem”. Thus, one must be aware that his every breath comes from Hashem. If one is not aware of his breathing, he is not able to thank Hashem for it, because if he does not feel it, he cannot appreciate it. If a person is unaware of his breathing, maybe he will be able to express his gratitude to Hashem after every ten times that he breathes in and out, but he will not be able to feel grateful to Hashem for every single breath. Only when one becomes aware of his breathing can he come to thank Hashem for every single breath that he breathes.

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<sup>30</sup> In Hebrew, “breath” is “neshimah”. It is also known under the terms of neshimah (inhale) and neshifah (exhale).

### *Beginning To Become Aware of Your Breathing*

How does one begin to feel and become aware of his breathing? One needs to set aside time for this and **sit quietly**, and start exhaling and inhaling, with calmness. **Pay attention to the breathing**, and **listen, slowly, to the breathing**. Then you will begin to *feel* the breathing.

Quiet time is necessary for this, because if a person is harried, like if he is mentally anxious about something, and surely if he is physically bombarded, then there is no chance that he will be able to feel his breathing and become aware of it. But if a person sets aside time in his day for this, even if it's just **5 minutes a day**, or even **3 minutes a day**, and he tries to become aware of each breath that he breathes during this time – not only when will he become aware of his breathing, but he will begin to feel a more *inward* kind of feeling as he is exhaling and inhaling.

Without having this quiet time to feel your breathing, your breathing is only being experienced superficially, as if it is one of the many various functions of the body. But when a person makes sure to have this quiet time during the day to feel his breathing and to pay attention to his breathing, he will begin to uncover the *p'nimiyus* (the inner depth) that is contained in every breath.

### *Inhaling and Exhaling To Reach Our P'nimiyus (Inner Essence)*

Many people, especially in our times where people are borrowing secular ideas that come from the gentile world, are practicing a method of breathing where a person imagines that he is releasing any negativity from his body upon exhaling, and upon inhaling, the person imagines that his breathing in new energy that will invigorate his body. However, this is just an external use of breathing. Our Sages revealed to us the inner way to use the power of breathing, which goes far deeper than this.

When we speak here of setting aside quiet time during the day to feel your breathing, we are not intending to copy the gentile approach. Our intention here is to tread the path that our previous Sages took when it came to this power, and it was they who taught us about it.

When we became of our breathing, we are essentially becoming aware that there is a *nishmas chaim*, a “breath of life”, that was breathed into us by Hashem; and thereby become closer to Hashem from this depth that we reach. Our breathing, which is sustained by Hashem's breath, is thus our very life. We can find the very source of our life contained in our breathing. When we begin to become aware of our breathing, quietly and calmly, by listening to our breath, we begin to recognize and feel an entirely different and inner perspective towards what life is.

Let's explain what is meant here. In whatever action we perform, whether we use our sense of sight, hearing, speech, or anything else that we do, most of the time we are unaware of these actions. These actions are usually not connected to our awareness. Most of the time we are far from our own selves, and surely that will mean that we are far from Hashem – because most of the time, we are far from our own inner world.

Therefore, when we begin to take deep breaths and we are listening deeply to the breathing, we need to bring the breath into a deeper place in ourselves, and then we exhale that breathe and we go deeper from there, from the deeper place that we have already reached. Slowly as we keep doing this, we can keep penetrating further and further into ourselves, deeper and deeper into ourselves.

From all of the senses, the sense of smell (which our breathing is enabled by) is the deepest and most inner kind of sense. When we see something, sometimes it can have a deep effect on us, and sometimes it does not. When we hear something, sometimes we are deeply affected, but sometimes we are not. When we touch something, we are feeling the physicality of something, and we are not feeling anything deep in this. But when we inhale the scent of something, using our sense of smell, we can sense it deeply. We can keep taking in the scent of something, where we continue to smell it more deeply.

In the same way, we can also deepen our breathing. We need to try this in the actual sense. For every breath that you exhale and inhale, you can take the breath deeper and deeper into yourself. Train yourself to slowly deepen your breathing, deepening your breathe each time.

This is an amazing ability which Hashem has given to His creations. It is a physical act of exhaling and inhaling, yet it is a use of the sense of smell, which is the only physical sense that our *neshamah* enjoys, as our Sages taught. It is the sense which we can use to penetrate deeply into ourselves. When a person gets used to this, sitting quietly and calmly, taking in deep breaths and listening to them, it can open up before him a great opening that will help him get to deeper places in his soul.

### *Entering Our Inner World*

The *avodah* of a person, as we have mentioned and as is known, is to enter into his inner world, and live an internal life, a life of the heart, a life of living the depth of the *neshamah*. The power of breathing which Hashem has given to man is one of the amazing powers which man can use to enter into his inner world.

Of course, the main *avodah* of a man is to learn Torah and to keep the *mitzvos*, and the main *avodah* of a woman is to keep the *mitzvah* of modesty. And the common denominator between all men and women is that we all have to work on our *middos*, so that our hearts can become more purified and so that the barriers between us and Hashem will be removed. Then we can enter into the inner depth contained in our heart. But there is also another way for us to enter into our inner world, which works in tandem with keeping the mitzvos (and it is not independent of learning Torah and keeping mitzvos, *chas v'shalom*): the power of breathing can help us enter more inward into ourselves.<sup>31</sup>

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31 The sources in our sefarim hakedoshim that discuss the avodah of “breathing” are: in the sefarim of Rav Abulefia, and sefer Yesod Yosef (of Reb Shlomo of Zhevil). For more on the avodah of breathing, derashos of

At first, getting used to it will feel like a mere breathing exercise, and you will only feel it in the physical sense. But if you get used to deeply listening to your breathing as you take the deep breaths, concentrating deeply into this, you will suddenly feel that you have entered deeper places which you never knew about until now that were inside of you.

This is one of the powers that help us serve Hashem, but it is not necessarily meant to be the path that every person must take. Some people are more inclined to this *avodah*, and some people are less inclined to take this path. But for those who do feel inclined towards this path, this *avodah* can be a great key for them to enter their inner world.

It begins from a mere physical act of exhaling and inhaling, and at first it will not feel very inward or spiritual at all, but as you get used to deeply listening to the breathing, the breathing will first enter deeper into the physical heart, and eventually as you keep doing it, it will enter into the deeper and more spiritual parts. (This is the “*ruach chaim*”, the “spirit of life”, which penetrates into the “*Ruach*” that is found in the heart).

### *A Word of Caution Before Beginning The Breathing Exercise*

We must emphasize that this *avodah* must be done calmly, slowly, and patiently. If a person will try to accelerate the process by taking in many deep breaths in quick succession of each other and he’s anxiously trying to get inward with each breath, this is *physically endangering*, and it is spiritually harming as well. It must be done quietly and calmly, pleasantly, and not with pressure to get anywhere.

You need to strongly want to get there, of course, but it must not be forced and anxious. You need to want to get there calmly, with serenity. The desire should be calm. You are calmly trying to get to get deeper into yourself.

We have had to give special caution about this, because it is very possible for one to harm himself if he is ignorant of these rules. Now we can begin, with Hashem’s help, of how to make this more practical. Although these are very subtle matters, we will try to explain it as much as Hashem allows us to, and to explain as precisely as we can.

### *Step 1: Becoming Aware of Your Normal Breathing*

The first step is to begin with your normal breathing. Become aware of your breathing, and don’t try to manipulate your breathing in any way that you are not used to. Simply become aware of your normal breathing. This is the first step: sit with yourself each day for a few minutes, breathe normally, and just pay attention to the breaths.

### *Step 2: Deep Breaths*

After you feel that you have become more aware of your normal breathing and that this awareness has become more natural to you and that you're not straining yourself for this, now comes the next step. Try to deepen your breathing a bit more. Sit and take slightly deeper breaths than your normal breathing. The first time you do this, take a deep breath, and keep repeating this for a few times, with the very same kind of deep breath.

After you feel that you have reached a certain depth, and that it is natural to you and you are not straining yourself to feel it, try to deepen the breathing a bit more. Concentrate a bit more deeply on the breathing, and breathe in more deeply than before, and keep repeating.

We need to keep doing this until we can do it easily without concentrating too deeply on it. Do not try to accelerate the process of trying to reaching a deeper place in yourself each time. Just go slowly in this process. Breathe in a bit deeper after a number of breaths, keep deepening the breathing this way, and slowly, you will see that you have reached a deeper place in yourself, but without concentrating so hard to get there.

### *Step 3: Sudden Inner Recognition*

When you have reached a deeper place in yourself, at some point, you will suddenly recognize that you have reached a deeper place in yourself. This might not happen to you right away as soon as you reach the deeper place in yourself. You might feel it sometime after you have slowly gotten there, where it will suddenly dawn upon your awareness.

This does not mean that you have simply learned how to take deeper breaths. If you have done it correctly and you have gotten further into yourself with the breathing, it is like entering into a new room in yourself, where you see what is inside of it. When you deepen your breathing and you have truly reached a deeper place into yourself, you will know that you are there. You will begin to recognize a deeper place in yourself that you were not aware of until now. If you do not feel that you've reached a deeper place in yourself, it must be that all of the deep breathing was done superficially, with not enough genuine intent to go deeper into yourself.

When you have reach a deeper place in yourself, of this *Chazal* refer to when they said, "For every breath, praise Hashem." The meaning of this statement is not that each breath is like the breath before it and that you must praise Hashem for the same kind of each of these breaths. Rather, it means that each new breath that we breathe can help us enter deeper into ourselves, which gives us greater inner recognition of ourselves, and thus there is new reason to praise Hashem for each of these breaths.

The power of deep breathing can provide a person with a great opening, a key, to a greater depth of feeling and inner recognition, because it takes you to a deeper place in yourself. Therefore, we

must emphasize that it needs to be done slowly, and to keep repeating the process described until you are calm, which enables you to act from a deeper place in yourself.

Hashem says, “*My son, give your heart to me.*” Hashem wants our hearts, and the kind of heart that Hashem wants us to give to Him is that we give Him the very depth that we reach in ourselves. Reaching a deeper place in our heart, which we can reach through the power of deep breathing, enables us to daven to Hashem from a deeper and more genuine place in ourselves. It enables us to be kind to others from a deeper place in ourselves. It enables us to really use our hearts for Hashem; “Hashem wants the heart” (*Rachmana liba ba’ee*).

There are many ways of how we can reach the depth of the heart: through exertion in Torah learning, through *tefillah*, through fixing our *middos*, and other ways as well. But an additional way to get to our heart, as we explained here, is to use the power of breathing: to get used to breathing deeply and to reach a deeper place in oneself, from the breathing.

When we reach deeper into ourselves, we are able to act from a more genuine place in ourselves, from our heart. When one gets used to this power and he is regularly reaching a deep place in himself via the act of deep breathing, he will see a transformation in his life, where his actions will be emanating from his heart.

#### *Step 4: Reaching the Self*

Let’s try to continue explaining this *avodah*, although it’s a matter that is very deep, subtle, and hidden.

After a person feels that he has reached a deeper place in himself and he feels that he has reached the deepest possible place in himself that he’s aware of, now comes the next stage, where a person can slowly penetrate even further than this [as he continues the deep breathing]. He will eventually feel that he has reached the very essence of his “I” – the deepest possible place in oneself. One can reach it by continuing to breathe deeply, feeling that he is getting deeper and deeper into himself, until he eventually reaches his “I”.

At that point, his breathing is helping him touch upon his very “I”. His breathing has brought him into the deepest possible place in oneself. In order to reach such a place in oneself and to be able to breathe deeply to get there, it takes a lot of hard work before this. It will take a lot of time and effort to get there, lots of hard work, but again, it needs to be done calmly and peacefully. It will mainly require a lot of purity and holiness in one’s life, which opens the heart more and makes it easier to get there. The more a person has purified himself internally, the more he has softened his heart, and his heart goes from being a “heart of stone” into a “heart of flesh”. It will then become much easier for his breathing to get further into himself, where he can penetrate into the deepest part of himself.

### *Step 5: Sensing Hashem's Existence in the Self*

Finally, there is one more step to reach. Let us explain it, with *siyata d'shmaya*, although it is a very, very deep and subtle matter.

The final step is for one to deepen the breathing to the point that he senses the reality of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

It is written, “*I will dwell amongst them*”, and the Sages explain this to mean, “It does not say “in him,” but “in them” – in the hearts of each person.” Thus, we are taught that Hashem dwells in the heart of each Jew. This point is the deepest place to reach through breathing, and it is the true meaning of the *nishmas chaim* that was breathed into us by Hashem. When Hashem breathed into us a spirit of life, He breathed into us a breath of Himself, so to speak. That means that we are breathing due to Hashem's own breath that was placed in us.

When one accesses this kind of deep breathing, he is touching upon the revelation of G-dliness that is found deep in the heart. This is the deepest possible kind of breathing that a Jew can ever breathe.

### *In Conclusion*

Part of the reason why we have had to explain this exercise very specifically is because there are many “breathing exercises” which have been gleaned from modern, gentile sources. We have tried to present here one of the paths explained by our Sages that describes how to use the power of breathing in a way that helps us reach a purer place in ourselves. The power of breathing is a way for us to reach the “I” in us, the pure soul which Hashem creates us with, and even more so, breathing can help us feel Hashem's breath as the source of our own breathing.

The words here were not ideas. They are about a way to reach an inner kind of life, of how to reach the depth of the *neshamah*, and of how to reach the Creator. But these are matters which require a lot of effort and training and getting used to, as well as holiness and purity and Heavenly assistance, in order for us to be successful with it.

May we merit from Hashem to have a desire to enter into our inner world, and to at least choose one of the paths that help us get there, even if is not necessarily through the power of breathing.

Let us stress one last point. The power of breathing is just **one of the ways** of how to serve *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. There are many other ways to serve Hashem as well which are proper and valid, and each person needs to choose one of the paths that are mentioned by our Sages. One should choose the path that speaks the most to his heart. The words here do not mean to imply that everyone must take this path [of using the power of breathing]; *chas v'shalom*. A person should only use this path of serving Hashem if it is close to his heart.

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The common denominator with all people is that all of us need to enter our inner world, in order to live a more inner kind of life, so that we can reach our essence and reach a more complete recognition of our Creator.

*Questions & Answers with the Rav*

**Q1: *What's the connection between breathing and the sense of smell? Is it simply because both of these come from the nose?***

**ANSWER:** A very good question. The sense of smell utilizes our nose, and then we are better able to deepen our breathing, which comes in through the nose. Before you begin the breathing exercises, it is indeed recommended to first inhale the scent of something holy, such as an *esrog* that was used on Sukkos, or *besamim* that was used for *havdalah*. This opens the nose in the first place, and then we can deepen the sense of smell, and from deepening the sense of smell we can develop a deepened breathing. Through a physical smell which is found on this world, one can tread its path to open the nose, and then enter the depth contained in breathing. It is therefore very recommended to start with inhaling a scent [of something holy] and use it as a way to enter into our breathing.

**Q2: *When a person supposedly "feels something" when he breathes in and out, how does he know if it's a real feeling and not it in his imagination?***

**ANSWER:** Usually, nothing is ever a total fantasy, nor is anything a totally real feeling. There is always some degree of fantasy in everything we feel, and there is always some truth to what we are feeling in every feeling that comes to us. This is because everything we come across in our feelings is always a mixture of fantasy and feeling, and the only issue is in the percentages: How much of the feeling is real, and how much of the feeling is just being imagined. We always need to sort out what we are feeling and try to discern which parts of the feeling are real, and which parts of it are in the imagination. In order to do this, we need to try to name precisely what we are feeling and refine our perception.

**Q3: *For those who haven't yet begun to recognize their inner world, how can they recognize if they are feeling something real about themselves, or if it is just being imagined?***

**ANSWER:** If a person begins to feel something deep, that is a sign that he is becoming connected to the real inner world. If a person is not used to it yet, he can get some idea of this at least when he goes through an event that awakens his deepest feelings, such as when he feels pain or when he feels joyous. The very fact that he is beginning to sense deeper things is already an opening to the inner world.

**Q4: *How is the sense of smell the most spiritual of all the senses?***

**ANSWER:** It is because we can turn something physical into the spiritual. The physical sense of smell can be turned into a spiritual sense. A clear example of this was when they would smell the

*korbonos* in the *Beis HaMikdash*, which gave off a “pleasant scent” (*rei’ach nicho’ach*) to Hashem. When you smell the spirituality in something, smell becomes spiritual. This can be experienced when you smell something before it has been turned into physical uses (and on a deeper level, even if it has already been used for physical uses and it has been returned to its root).

**Q5:** *How much time is needed for this breathing exercise? Also, after we have already gotten past the first step and we are at the second step, should we still begin each day from the first step, or can we begin immediately each day from the step?*

**ANSWER:** At first when you begin to get used to this it should not be more than 3 minutes a day. After that, the amount of time you will need to spend on it depends on how far you have advanced in the *avodah*, and if you are doing it correctly. However, no one should be spending more than 30 minutes a day on it. If you can try this *avodah* in the beginning of the morning, this is even better, as long as your schedule allows it.

**Q6:** *After we succeed in the first step, can we go quicker with the second step?*

**ANSWER:** Yes. But we must make sure that we truly gotten past the first step and not try to move on quickly to the next step. First, we must feel that we have become connected to our breathing.

**Q7:** *What should a person think during the first step, as he is beginning to take breaths?*

**ANSWER:** In the first step, do not think about anything, other than the focus on your breathing.

**Q8:** *Should a person try to rid anything from his thoughts that hamper his focus on the breathing?*

**ANSWER:** Quiet the thoughts. Try to become aware of the breathing, and then after that, try to think more deeply into the breathing.

**Q9:** *Should we sit or stand during this time? Should we close our eyes?*

**ANSWER:** However you are more relaxed.

**Q10: *The Rav mentioned that there are gentile methods of breathing exercises – what exactly is the Rav referring to? Which parts of the non-Jewish breathing exercises are inappropriate for a Jew to use?***

**ANSWER:** The Torah’s approach to the power of using breathing is not so that we should expel negative energy contained in the body and bring in positive energy. A Torah-approved method that is being somewhat mirrored in the gentile practices of breathing is that a person can bring positive energy into his system. However, this is not being accomplished through the gentile methods. A Torah-approved method would be to imagine a thought about something holy and to imagine that it is entering him, or that it is his enveloping his body, or something similar to this. The gentile approach of breathing exercises, however, involves imagining a “light” that enters the body and purges it from all evil or negativity found in the body. This approach is heresy.

The purpose of the Torah’s approach towards breathing is that breathing enables us to reach *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* found in the depths of the soul. Unlike the gentile methods, which are entirely self-focused, the Torah way of breathing exercises is to come to live with Hashem in our life, through the breathing exercises. However, that is only reached at a much higher stage of the breathing, as we explained. But we must be able to bear it in mind even as we begin to work with our breathing. We must know that the goal of deepening our breathing is because it enables us to live with Hashem in our life.

We can penetrate deeper and deeper into ourselves by imagining a holy thought that is entering us, and we can also think that it is purifying us – these two aspects are acceptable according to the Torah. But the part where they imagine that a light is entering the body and cleansing out all of the negativity – this is against the Torah, and it is basically a form of idol worship.

**Q11: *Does the Rav mean that one may imagine a certain holy thought entering his body as he is doing the breathing exercise?***

**ANSWER:** It may be done, by imagining that it is found outside of oneself and that one wishes to bring it inside of himself. The way we have described using the power of breathing here in this class is a way of how we can get inside of ourselves, as opposed to using external factors.

However, it is certainly an acceptable method for one to imagine a *possuk* or a certain holy thought about *emunah*, and to imagine that this is entering him and purifying him. But when doing so, the person must be aware that it is the holiness which is entering him, and not that some other outer force or power is entering him and cleansing him. To think that “A power is entering me” is a method that has originated in the gentile nations, and it borderlines on idol worship.

I have had to speak about length about this topic, because I am aware that many people are unfortunately using these improper methods in their breathing exercises.

**Q12:** *Is the avodah of focusing on our breathing a separate matter from the power of “levad” (alone) which the Rav has spoken about in sefer Da Es Atzmecha, “Getting To Know Your Self”? Does it get in the way of “levad” or it is a part of “levad”?*

**ANSWER:** It is within the *avodah* of “levad”. There is a general *avodah* of acquiring the power of *levad*, but what do you once you’re in the space of *levad*? Part of the *avodah* of being in the “levad” is to focus on your breaths.

**Q13:** *In the first step, when we just focus on our simple act of breathing, should we think that Hashem is providing us with our breathing and enabling me to breathe? Or should I just focus on the mere fact that I am breathing, without thinking of Hashem is in the picture?*

**ANSWER:** In the very first step, the point is to become simply aware of your breathing, because the first step is to simply become aware of ourselves, way before we connect our self to Hashem. This is because in order to connect ourselves to Hashem, we need to first become aware of ourselves in the first place, and awareness of our breathing is one of the ways to accomplish this.

**Q14:** *Is this avodah of breathing the same avodah as “hisbodedus” (meditation) and of talking to Hashem when we are alone? Is it an alternative to hisbodedus, or is it something we need to practice besides for hisbodedus?*

**ANSWER:** It is a separate *avodah* than *hisbodedus*, not a replacement to *hisbodedus*. It needs to be practiced outside of *hisbodedus*.

**Q15:** *Should a person try the avodah of breathing before doing hisbodedus, or after hisbodedus?*

**ANSWER:** It doesn’t make a difference if you do it before *hisbodedus* or after *hisbodedus*. Just like a person has to eat and sleep, so is there an *avodah* of breathing that is besides for the *avodah* of *hisbodedus*.

**Q16:** *What does it mean to reach a ‘more inner place’ in oneself? Does it mean that you feel calmer? Does it mean that you feel more connected to yourself?*

**ANSWER:** Just like when you wade through a pool you feel yourself getting deeper and deeper into it, so do you experience yourself going deeper and deeper the more you try to enter your *pnimiyus*. The more you feel yourself, the more you can discern where you are. When a person becomes connected to *pnimiyus*, it is an experience, and you can feel it, and then there is no room for this question.

## *9 / Kislev – Sleep and Dreams*

### *The Month of Kislev: The Power of “Sleep”*

We are currently in the month of *Kislev*. Our Sages described the wintertime as a time of “sleep”, and the month of Kislev is especially identified with the soul’s “power of sleep”.<sup>32</sup>

Our Sages reveal to us that it is not only human beings and animals that sleep. Even the plants and even the non-living objects sleep. Therefore, there is a lot more to sleep than we think. But let us try to understand at least what our own soul’s power of “sleep” is, and how we can channel it towards its proper direction. When a person sleeps, there are both negative and positive aspects of this human function.

### *Women and Sleep*

Let’s look at the first time the Torah talks about sleep. When Hashem created Chavah’s body from Adam *HaRishon*’s body, Adam *HaRishon* was put to sleep. Chavah’s entire creation came about through sleep – thus, the entire creation of woman stems from sleep. Therefore, understanding what sleep is an important part of understanding a woman’s *avodah*.

### *Sleep – A Time Where the Heart Dominates the Intellect*

As is well-known, the strong point of a man is *seichel* (intellect), and the strong point of a woman is *lev*, the heart. What is the root of this difference? Man was created with Hashem’s wisdom, which is called *chochmah*. The *chochmah* refers to the intellect. That is why a man’s initial perception is based on his intellect and not from his emotions. Woman, however, was created when man was asleep.

When a person sleeps, the heart dominates the intellect, as it is written, “*I am asleep, but my heart is awake.*” When Adam *HaRishon* was put to sleep, the only thing that stayed awake was his heart. Woman was created from this state, and that is why woman act more from their heart, from their feelings and emotions, and less from their intellect.

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32 Sefer Yetzirah 5:5

### *The Two Parts to the Heart - The Inspiration and the Desires*

We need to understand how we use the power of “sleep”, as a way to reach and reveal our spiritual heart.

As a general description, the heart is comprised of two parts: our feelings that inspire us, and our deepest desires. The second part, our deeply rooted desired, is also linked with our *middos* (character traits). The *middos* we exhibit are actually an offshoot of our deeply rooted desires (*retzonos*) that are present in our heart.

When a person sleeps, the main part of the heart that stays awake when he/she sleeps is not the “inspirational” part of the heart, but rather the deeply rooted desires of the heart, which produce our *middos*. It is this part of the heart which becomes revealed to the person during the state of sleep.

### *Dreams*

We are referring to dreams. When a person sleeps, he dreams. What is the source of our dreams? There are three different possible sources of a dream. The foods we ate during the day can affect what we dream about, and the body’s liver is involved with this process. The nature of the food affects our dreams, and even the thoughts of the person who made the food can affect our dreams.

There is also a second factor which can influence our dreams: Our Sages state that a person dreams about what he thought about during the day.

There is also a third cause for our dreams: we dream about our deep, subconscious desires that we may not even be aware of. It is written, “*On my bed at nights, I sought that which my heart loved.*” In the *sefarim hakedoshim*, it is explained that our dreams can show us what our deepest desires are; our dreams can help us figure out what our heart really wants deep down.

Each of our dreams contains a key to reaching a deeper understanding of ourselves. We can simply dismiss our dreams and just ignore them - or we can use them to uncover a great wealth. We will try here to explain, with Hashem’s help, of how we can use our dreams.

### *Our Dreams Show Us Our Pnimityus*

Every person consists of two layers: his *chitzoniyus* (external layer) and his *pnimityus* (inner layer). We are all aware of the most external part of our *chitzoniyus*, which is our physical makeup. We see

ourselves in the mirror so we recognize our *chitzoniyus*. A slightly deeper part of our *chitzoniyus* than this is our actions that we do. When it comes to this area, we can also identify this part of ourselves, more or less. We are all aware, somewhat, to the actions that we do, each of us to a different degree.

The more inner parts to ourselves, our *pnimiyus*, refers to our *retzonos* (what we want), our thoughts, and our *middos*/character traits. This is the main part of who we are, and this is what more closely defines our identity.

Obviously, our *pnimiyus* does not negate the need for our *chitzoniyus*. Our *pnimiyus* cannot be contained anywhere if we have no *chitzoniyus*. So just because our *pnimiyus* defines our self does not mean that our *chitzoniyus* is worthless. But what we need to know is that if we only acknowledge our *chitzoniyus* and we have no recognition of our *pnimiyus*, we are missing the main part of ourselves.

How do we recognize our *pnimiyus*? Some of it we already recognize, and some of it is harder to recognize. We generally know if we are drawn towards laziness or towards being energetic, if we are drawn towards positivity or negativity, or if we are drawn towards joy or sadness. Anyone can have this general awareness of his character, when he makes a simple reflection about himself; unless he is a person who stubbornly refuses to acknowledge these tendencies in himself and he'd rather live in denial and fool himself.

So we have recognition of our *chitzoniyus* and we also have some recognition of our *pnimiyus*, to a certain extent. But we know that the soul is complicated consisting of many deep layers, layer after layer. How do we get in touch with the more inner parts of ourselves? How do we get to know what is going on deep down in our *pnimiyus*?

Our soul is like a roll of string; the beginning of the string is thick, and we can see it. But as the string goes on and on, it gets thinner and thinner, and it becomes harder to see it. This is like the inner parts to our *pnimiyus*, which are so refined that it is very hard to discern.

Almost nobody reaches the depth of their souls, because the more inner parts to the soul are extremely subtle to discern. If someone thinks that he recognizes his soul well, it means that he is still found on the more external layers of his soul, which are thicker and easier to see. But the more a person is recognizing himself, he begins to understand that there is layer within layer, subtlety within subtlety, in the soul. He realizes that anything he does understand about himself is a drop in the ocean. *“It is very deep, who shall find it?”*

When a person remains ignorant of self-knowledge and he has never worked hard to understand himself, it is definite that his life will lead him in a proper direction. Living on this world for 70 or 80 years without knowing oneself is like a shoemaker who never learned how to make shoes and he tries to make shoes.

A person will not be able to live properly if he does not recognize what is in his soul. Indeed, it takes a lifetime of inner work in order to recognize the soul. The Raavad and the Maharal and others, based upon the verse “*From my flesh I can see G-d*”, have explained that it is not possible to recognize Hashem unless we have a recognition for our own souls. That is why we need to work hard at understanding ourselves, more and more, discovering more and more subtleties about our souls.

### *Preface to Self-Recognition*

Today there are all kinds of self-help books and different methods which teach people of how to understand themselves [psychology]. However, we need to learn about our souls using the information of the Torah and the Sages. In addition, even after a person has gone through appropriate *sefarim* that explain this knowledge, one must understand that is but a step in the process. It does not mean yet that you know yourself. Instead, all of what we learn about is like a stepping stool that helps us get more and more inward into ourselves.

### *Step 1 – Write Down All Your Feelings & Character Traits You’re Aware Of.*

The first step of getting to recognize our soul is, to take a pen and paper, and write down all of the positive qualities you are aware of about yourself, and on a separate column of the paper, write down all of the negative qualities in yourself that you are aware of. However, make sure to emphasize the good parts about yourself.<sup>33</sup>

Simply write down all of the good *middos* and bad *middos* that you recognize in yourself, with emphasis on the good, and this gives you a general look at your soul, and it is the first step in self-recognition. You need to sit with yourself and write this list.

### *Step 2 – Write Down the Negative Feelings You Sometimes Feel.*

After making this general list (which should include all the good/bad *middos*, all of the good/bad aspects of your personality, and all of the good/bad desires that you are aware of in yourself), now comes a more inner and fundamental part of this *avodah*: to understand that each aspect of our

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<sup>33</sup> Editor’s Note: This is based upon the approach of Reb Yeruchem Levovitz zt”l, that the first step in self-awareness is to become aware of one’s qualities, for “woe is to the person who does not know his weaknesses, but even worse is a person who does not know his qualities.” (See Daas Torah, parshas Bamidbar). This point is further explained by the Rav in Fixing Your Fire\_012\_Individuality

personality also contains an opposite feeling that we sometimes feel. If we have a good *middah*, there are also times where we experience the opposite of that good *middah*.

This is due to the complex nature of our soul. We are never one-dimensional, and that is why if we experience a good *middah*, we also sometimes experience its opposite. The deep reason for this is because every aspect of the soul consists of itself and its opposite; this is called '*dovor v'hipucho*'.

For example, if we identify in ourselves an emotion of love for others, that means we also have hatred for others sometimes. We are already familiar with what it means to love and hate, but what we may not be aware of is that we sometimes experience hatred towards the very people we love!

For example, if a mother feels certain that she loves her child, there are also times where she feels hatred towards her own child. It might not be absolute hatred, but there is certainly a slight feeling of hatred that she may feel sometimes at her child (and sometimes, unfortunately, it is even more than just a slight feeling). The same is true for all close relationships – husband and wife, and parents with children. There is always love, but there will also hatred sometimes!

There is a well-known story that once a student of Rav Dessler dreamt that he had taken a knife to kill his son. He woke up terrified from the dream and he went running to Rav Dessler, to ask him how it was possible that he could dream such a thing. Rav Dessler said to him, “You love your son, but sometimes you experience negativity towards him, such as when he wakes you up at night and your sleep is disturbed. This little feeling of resentment that you have towards him made it possible for you to have a dream of killing him.”

Obviously, the father loves his child, and that is what he mainly experiences towards the child. But does he love him one hundred percent? No, because there is always an ‘opposite point’ for each point in the soul, which makes its appearance sometimes; there is some small percentage of hatred contained at the other end of the love, and it came up in his dream.

### *Dreams – The Revelation of Our Subconscious Feelings*

When a person is not trying to understand the subtleties of his soul, he doesn't take his dreams that seriously. He knows that sometimes he has pleasant dreams and sometimes he has nightmares. But when one understands that he is here on this world in order to serve Hashem and that self-recognition is a very large part of this ("*From my flesh I see G-d*"), he is aware that there is subtlety within subtlety of recognizing his inner layers, and such a person will view dreams as a great tool to help him greater self-awareness of himself and to improve his service towards Hashem.

### *Analyzing Our Dreams*

Above, we mentioned three sources of our dreams. Our dreams can be influenced by the foods we eat that day, or by something we thought about by day, or by our innermost desires present in our subconscious. Therefore, after you wake up from a dream, try to see which of these three reasons caused the dream.

When we have dreams, we must figure out where they come from. We mentioned in the beginning three causes for dreams – what we ate that day, what we thought about that day and what we really want. If it did not come from foods or from our daydreams, it must be coming from something in our subconscious. It is hard for us to know exactly which kinds of foods we ate that day that may have caused the dream, therefore, we should mainly suspect that the dream came from our subconscious thoughts and desires.

[Here is an example of how our subconscious desires can show up in a dream.] Once the Chofetz Chaim dreamt that he has become wealthy. The next day, he fasted over the dream. He thought to himself, “Either way, this is not a good dream. If it happens and I become rich, my service to Hashem will be interrupted. And if it doesn’t happen, it is bad that I had such a dream, because it shows me that I want to be rich.”

Our dreams can show us about what our deepest desires are. Sometimes they are about desires we are already consciously familiar with, and sometimes our dreams show us our deep desires which we were out of our conscious radar, and through our dreams, we discover them.

### *Listening To the Subtleties of our Soul*

If one wants to listen to the subtleties contained in the soul, one of the ways is through using our dreams. With the help of Heaven, will briefly list here some ways of how a person can listen to the subtleties in the soul.

Now that we have explained the need to recognize the subtleties of our inner world, our souls, the question is: How indeed do we recognize those subtle parts of ourselves? Here we will present briefly a general picture of how we can know.

### *1- Learn Sefer 'Michtav M'Eliyahu' of Rav Dessler*

The *mussar sefarim*, which span the earlier centuries down to the later centuries, were written by our Sages and *Gedolim*, and they exerted themselves to explain to us the most subtle and refined points. In the more recent generations, we have merited a particular sefer which does this job quite

well: the sefer *Michtav M'Eliyahu*<sup>34</sup>, written by HaRav Eliyahu Dessler *zt"l*. In this sefer, we can see how the author toiled to explain to us how to understand the human soul, based entirely on the words of the Sages. He shows us there the most subtle points about the soul.

The very first step we need to take in order to know our soul is to learn *sefarim* like this which provide us with an in-depth understanding of matters about the soul, which explain to us how our *middos* work, in their many details.

### *2 - Time Every Day to Develop Self-Awareness*

Just as some people were born with a sense for music or a feel for cooking, so are there people who are born with a subtle sense of discerning their inner worlds. If someone was born with this inner sense for soul matters, he needs to identify it, and he should have designated times each day where he concentrates on this sense for soul matters. He needs to bring out this power from its potential state and activate it, by having time every day for this.

However, not everyone is blessed with this ability. The first method presented above is applicable on all levels: everyone can learn *sefarim*, each on their own level, and gain some understanding into the subtleties of the soul. But the second way we are mentioning – setting side time each day to sense soul matters – will not come so easily to every person, because not every person is born with a sensitivity to soul matters.

In spite of this, each person to some degree can sense matters about the soul and reach a certain degree of subtle understanding towards himself. It is just that the understanding will differ with each person, depending upon how much sensitivity to these matters that a person has been born with.

### *3- Find a Friend Who You Can Talk To*

A third way of how we can understand soul matters is, if possible, to find a friend whom we can talk to about these things. A man should choose a man, and a woman should choose a woman, and they should discuss matters of the soul together. Often the combined understanding of a close friend who understands you can be a great help in understanding yourself.

### *4- Inner Silence*

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34 Available in English from Feldheim Publishers as “Strive For Truth”

Now we will say a fourth way of how one can understand the soul, but let us emphasize that it should only be attempted after one is already doing the first step: to learn the sefarim written by our *Gedolim* which explain to us about the soul. We should not be learning any secular psychology books for this, and we should only seek the words of our Sages about these matters.

The fourth method which we will mention begins with having designated times every day for “heart time”, a concept which we have spoken about often in the past. When one has this quiet time each day, he can use the quiet as a way to reflect into his soul, until he eventually attains a certain inner calm. Once a person reaches this calmness, his sense of recognition towards soul matters will be heightened, and he will be able to sense subtler understandings of his soul amidst this quiet and calmness, things which he wouldn’t have been able to sense amidst a noisy environment.

The more a person has entered this quiet and calmness, the deeper he can enter into himself and come across subtle areas in his soul. This allows him to better recognize what’s going on inside himself.

This method is one of the strongest ways to recognize the deep areas of the soul: through having quiet, deep reflection, and subsequent calmness; amidst the calmness, one can sense understandings about his soul. A person can first try reflecting and then steadily reach the calmness, or he can begin right away with calming himself and then reflecting; it depends upon personal preference. When one reaches deeper places in his soul, he experiences his soul more, in a clearer and sharper perception. From there he reaches greater self-recognition – each person on his own level.

### *5- Paying Attention to Fleeting Emotions and Thoughts*

There is a fifth method of becoming aware of soul matters, which can be worked upon even as we are not amidst the quiet.

The more a person lives throughout the day with general self-awareness, the more he will notice and pay attention to any fleeting thoughts and emotions that quickly flit through his sensory process. There are some thoughts which we spend a lot of time thinking about, but sometimes we notice thoughts which pass by very quickly and they are gone in the blink of an eye. We also experience certain feelings and emotions which are gone as soon as we become aware of them. We can slowly begin to identify these quickly passing thoughts and feelings, and begin to recognize them and become more aware of them.

Throughout the course of the day, a person who is more self-aware will “listen” to the quickly passing thoughts and feelings which come and go very quickly. Don’t take any thought or feeling lightly – each of them is saying something important. These quickly passing thoughts and emotions are portals that can open to us more awareness about what is going on inside our souls.

## *6- Dreams*

The sixth and final method which we will mention, of how we can come to better recognize the depth of our souls, is the subject of this chapter: the *avodah* of the month of *Kislev*, which is “sleep”. In our sleep, we have dreams, and our dreams show us our thoughts which we are not consciously aware of during the day.

When has already worked upon the previous five methods mentioned, he will access even greater depth to himself when he sleeps. As he sleeps and he is experiencing his dreams, he will be able to identify parts of himself which are hard to recognize during the daytime when he is awake. After he wakes up from the dream, he can analyze what caused the dream: if it was caused by certain foods he ate, or from something he daydreamed about or if it’s coming from something deeper than these things. Often, he will find that the dream is caused by a deep subconscious thought, feeling, or desire.

In this way, a person accesses the deep power that lies in “sleep”, and instead of viewing sleep as a wasted part of his life, he will see sleep as a valuable tool that helps him enter more within.

## *In Conclusion*

All that was said here is only applicable to one who wants to live a more internal kind of life. It is not merely for one who wishes to live an inner life, but for someone who wants to actually *enter* into the inner kind of life. Entering into an inner kind of life doesn’t mean to begin tasting it and then to remain at the doorway. It means to keep entering further within.

These words described in this chapter are not a way to begin serving Hashem. Rather, they are a continuation for someone who has already begun to serve Hashem and he has already traveling his inner world. The six methods mentioned in this chapter of how we can recognize our inner worlds were but general descriptions, which are describing ways of how we can enter into more subtle areas of the soul, enabling us to go deeper and deeper into ourselves, until we get to our innermost point.

We must remember, as we begin to embark on this journey into our inner world, that there is a greater purpose here we should be trying to reach. Our goal must be to gain a keener sense of the Creator. We are merely passing through these inner roads being described as pathways that lead to our innermost point, where we reach the Creator.

I want to repeat and emphasize, however, that the first step cannot be skipped: one must study the words of our Sages about the soul and its *middos*.

May we merit from Hashem to be of those who are seeking to know their inner worlds, of those who are trying to recognize their soul, as a way to reach true self and from there, to reach *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. May all of us merit to climb the spiritual ladder that leads towards Hashem, to recognize our souls with greater and deeper clarity, and from this we can come to have clearer recognition of Hashem, and connect to Him in a more complete way.

*Questions & Answers with the Rav*

**Q1:** *Besides for sefer Michtav M’Eliyahu, which other sefarim can the Rav recommend [for women] to learn?*

**ANSWER:** Besides for sefer “*Michtav M’Eliyahu*”, learning any other *sefarim* will depend on how well one understands these matters.

- One can try learning the *sefarim* of Rav Chaim Friedlander *zt”l*, the two volumes of *Sifsei Chaim: Middos V’Avodas Hashem*.
- If someone is deeper kind of person, he/she can try learning *sefer Shiurei Daas* of R’ Bloch *zt”l* [from Telz].
- If one is even deeper than this, he/she can try learning the *sefarim* of Reb Yeruchem Levovitz *zt”l* (two volumes of *Daas Chochmah U’Mussar*, and five volumes of *Daas Torah* on the *parsha*).
- It is very recommended to learn *Sefer HaMeoros HaGedolim*, which contains stories of the *baalei mussar* since the times of Reb Yisrael Salanter.
- You can also try learning *sefer Beis Kelm*, which was also produced by Rav Dessler *zt”l*; it contains the *mussar* teachings taught in Kelm which he hails from.

**Q2:** *When we make a list of our middos and we discover bad middos in ourselves, what do we do about this?*

**ANSWER:** Just write it down so that you are aware of it. At this point we will not yet be addressing how we actually uproot bad *middos*. Just write down everything you recognize about yourself, in general terms. Remember to focus on your positive points and to avoid focusing too much on your negative points. Don’t ignore your negative points, of course. Write them down, but just don’t focus on them too much. Make sure that you are keeping the focus on your good points.

**Q3:** *Is there a spiritual meaning why women have a hard time falling asleep when we are getting older?*

**ANSWER:** Yes. The simple reason for this is because when we sleep, our mind leaves us and our hearts dominate as we sleep. In women, the heart is more dominant to begin with, for their hearts are softer; throughout the day, their hearts are more active, so they are already drawn towards sleep from during the day, and that is why their need for sleep at night becomes lessened [which explains why there is a harder time for older women to fall asleep].

**Q4:** *The Rav has said that it is more important to focus on our positive qualities when we write down a list of our middos. Does this include any desires I have that are in order to do the will of Hashem? Or can it also include things which are positive but they are not necessarily in order to do Hashem's will?*

**ANSWER:** Any desire that is aligned with Hashem's will is a positive desire. The lower part of our soul, our *nefesh habehaimis*, contains a mix of desires – some of them are desired by Hashem, and some of them are not. Some of our desires are simply coming from our faculty of ratzon (will), and these can be simply desires to want a certain thing, and some of these desires can be channeled towards doing the will of Hashem. Each desire needs to be examined to see if it can be channeled towards doing Hashem's will or not.

**Q5:** *What then does the Rav mean that we should focus on the positive? Is it referring only to our positive desires, or does it also include our positive middos and other positive aspects of our personality?*

**A:** If a person only writes down on the list the desires he has which are aligned with Hashem's will, he is probably fooling himself, because a person is usually not on the level where his main desires in life are to do Hashem's will. That is why we should write down on the list all of the natural desires we recognize in ourselves. We can also include in it our spiritual and holy desires which are Hashem's will, but we should not focus on this part alone, because then we would be avoiding a basic part of our self-awareness, by ignoring our natural desires. If someone is at the level where he only does the will of Hashem, that is wonderful, but most people are not living that way, so we need to be honest with ourselves as we make this list.

**Q6:** *Based on what the Rav said earlier that older women need less sleep, does that mean that a woman who has more "heart time" each day will also need less sleep?*

**A:** Often it can happen that the more spiritual a person becomes, the less sleep he needs. Some people need more sleep due to certain physical conditions in their body, but generally speaking, the more a person is living an internal kind of life, his need for sleep is greatly weakened and he will find that he doesn't need as much sleep. Of course, we are physical human beings, and we need to sleep. *Chazal* say that it is impossible for a person to go three days without sleeping. But the need for sleep can be greatly lessened, with the more a person is living an internal kind of life.

**Q7:** *We have a general question about how to serve Hashem. We are a group of women who learn Chovos HaLevovos (Shaar Avodas Elokim), and it is explained there that a person cannot reach his neshamah (soul) until he has purified his middos (character traits). But we are getting the impression that the Rav's general approach towards Avodas Hashem differs with this, for the Rav is saying that we must first reach the depth of our neshamah and after that to work on our middos. This implies that we don't have to first work on our middos in order to reach our neshamah. How do we reconcile the Rav's approach with the words of the Chovos HaLevovos?*

**ANSWER:** That is a very good question. The *Chovos HaLevovos* lived in the times of the Rishonim (the earlier sages, spanning the tenth and fifteenth centuries), but we live in the times of the Acharonim (the later sages, which began from the period of the fifteenth century), of which it is written about by our *sefarim hakedoshim* that we are closer to the time of Mashiach, in which the light of the *neshamah* is easier to access, for it will soon be revealed upon the world. This phenomenon contains both an advantage and a disadvantage, as follows.

The advantage is clear: the *neshamah* is made easier to access, in our times. But it also presents a certain danger. You can have a person who did not sufficiently work on his *middos* and he begins to enter inward into his soul, and he reaches the light of the *neshamah* which is more easily accessed nowadays – and then what happens? The light of his *neshamah* enters his unfixed *middos*, and then all of his *Avodas Hashem* is not genuine, because he is still full of unrefined character.

Can we say that one should first work on his *middos* and only after that he should enter into his *neshamah*? This is certainly a valid point. But in spite of this, the *sefarim hakedoshim* state that as the generations get closer to Mashiach, it is easier for us to access our *neshamah* and reach its innermost point.

Therefore, our *avodah* ends up being two-fold. We need to work on our *middos* at the very same time that we work to reach our *neshamah*. We have to be careful not to fall into the trap of neglecting to work on our *middos*, *chas v'shalom*.

**Q8:** *The Rav has said that men are more gifted with chochmah and seichel (the intellectual abilities) as opposed to “heart”, whereas women are more gifted with “heart” and less with intellect; because Chavah was created from a state of sleep, where the intellect isn’t working and only the heart is active. However, it seems that the sefer Chovos HaLevovos, which is explaining to us the duties of the “heart”, is certainly teaching us how to approach the world with intellectual chochmah and seichel, and not with spiritual feelings of “heart”. What is the proper path in a woman’s Avodas Hashem? It is it the path of the Chovos HaLevovos (which seems to stress the use of seichel/chochmah), or the path of the Rav, who is explaining that womanly are meant to mainly use the heart and not the intellect....?*

**ANSWER:** You have made a clear and proper definition. But the truth is that if there is just “heart” and there is no use of the intellect, a person will not succeed in *Avodas Hashem*. Even more so, there is additional reason today why women need to use their intellect in *Avodas Hashem*. Women today are worldlier and are anyways using their intellect, to think about other things that are not spiritual. If women would not be using their intellect at all, they would easily connect to the “heart”, but since women are using the intellect more these days, for materialistic concerns, the only way to counter this problem is to put their intellect to holy uses.

So in essence, the heart is the main function of the woman, as opposed to the intellect; but in more recent times, where there are women who have become more intellectual as they are involved

more with the outside world, they are using the intellect for non-spiritual purposes, so they are less drawn towards using the heart; and the only way for them to counter this is to use their intellects for holy purposes. However, in most women, the heart is the stronger point than their intellect, and thus the main *avodah* of a woman in most cases is to use the heart, and less with intellect. The language of our Sages, such as the words of *sefer Chovos HaLevovos*, is certainly a more intellectual approach that is geared towards men and not towards women, but in our times where women are anyways using their intellect in all kinds of areas, they need to channel their intellect towards holy areas, to counter the use of their intellect that is being used towards mundane things.

**Q9: *If we learn a sefer such as Sifsei Chaim, and we come across parts that have to do with Gemara that are only for men, what should we do?***

**ANSWER:** If you come across any parts in the sefer which you cannot understand, skip those parts. The truth is that sefer *Sifsei Chaim* was written for yeshiva men, so you will definitely come across parts that are not meant for women to learn. Rav Dessler's sefer *Michtav M'Eliyahu* is preferable for women to learn because it is written in easier language. If you find *Michtav M'Eliyahu* too hard to understand, you can try learning sefer *Alei Shur*, which is easier to understand. (Volume II of *Alei Shur* is easier to understand than Volume I).

**Q10: *If we recognize our desires and middos, does that mean that we recognize our "neshamah"? Or is the "neshamah" deeper than this and it requires more layers to traverse?***

**ANSWER:** The second option you guessed is correct. We begin to understand ourselves by recognizing what is taking place in our *nefesh habehaimis*, There are many levels (the 'animalistic' part of our soul), after that we can recognize our *nefesh Elohis* (the G-dly part of our soul), after that is our *Ruach*, and after this is our *Neshamah*. It takes a long time in order to reach the *Neshamah*.

**Q11: *Since the Neshamah is very far from a person's reach, is it possible for a person to feel a closeness with Hashem after gaining the more basic levels of self-awareness? Or is this not possible until a person reaches the Neshamah?***

**ANSWER:** It surely is possible. We have been describing a path here in which we build our way upwards, beginning from the bottom levels and working our way upwards. It is definitely possible for a person to feel sparks of higher levels even before he is there, because the light of the higher levels sometimes shines itself onto the lower levels. However, we will not be able to understand the sparks of the higher levels until we have actually entered more inward.

Every person contains a spark of the *neshamah*, which enables him to feel a deep closeness to Hashem at times, even before he has risen to the higher levels of his existence. There are several ways of how it is experienced. Sometimes it happens when a person has a deep feeling of simple faith in Hashem (*peshitus/temimus*), sometimes it is experienced through a deep experience of *davening*,

sometimes it is felt through talking to Hashem, sometimes it can come from feeling a deep love for Hashem.

But it still does not mean that the person's actual soul level is there. There is a 'crack' in the soul which enables us to connect deeply to Hashem through those places, as we mentioned earlier, due to the light of the redemption which is closer to us now, which enables the light of the *neshamah* to be more easily accessed. That is why it is easier these days for a person to feel deep experiences in his soul, long before he has entered within.

However, as we said earlier, it doesn't mean that person is actually there at that level. It is just that sometimes, the light of the *neshamah* penetrates into the lower layers of the soul and enables a person to connect to it easily.

Thus, generally speaking, we must work our way upwards, starting from the lower levels of our soul. That is why when we work on our middos, we begin working with the lower levels and we work our way upwards, as opposed to beginning from a higher plane. We need to start from the bottom upwards. First we need to recognize the lowest parts of our soul and work our way upwards. We work to 'build' ourselves in this organized manner.

It is certainly possible for one to begin with the "*neshamah*" level, but it is a dangerous to do so. There are some people who begin with this path because they cannot deal with their weaknesses, and if they were to begin analyzing their weaknesses, they would do nothing to improve themselves, so they instead begin to enter the "*Neshamah*" level as an alternative. For such people, there is no realistic alternative, so they feel no other option other than to begin with the "*Neshamah*" level. Others are inclined to begin with *Neshamah* because there's a strong portal available in their souls that enables them to reach their *Neshamah*, and they would have a hard time descending to the lower levels of the soul and working from there. Others want to begin with *Neshamah* simply because they want to see success right away and they wouldn't want to deal with the failures of their weaknesses that are present in the lower layers of their soul.

So it is possible for a person to begin with the *Neshamah* level, but in all of these cases, it is always risky to do so.

The path which we must mainly use to traverse in our *Avodas Hashem* is to work in a step-by-step manner, beginning from the lower layers of our soul. This was the main path which our great leaders traversed throughout the generations. There were always exceptions to this who began to work on themselves from the higher plane [of *Neshamah*], but they were still taking a risk, and it is usually dangerous for us to take that unusual route.

**Q12:** *When I begin this avodah of calming myself to enter deeper within, I try various ways of trying to calm myself. I am doing so in order to connect to Hashem. I think of pesukim (verses) that mention Hashem, and I think about the “Ein Sof” (the Infinite) of Hashem, and this calms me, and I truly feel that I am more connected to Hashem when I do this. Is this a true feeling that is coming from my neshamah, since I am feeling a deep feeling? Or is it just something that calms me and there is a lot more for me to feel...?*

**ANSWER:** I do not know personally who is asking this question, so I cannot give a complete answer to this question. But generally speaking, any feeling which feels deep to you contains some truth to it, for there is a ‘crack’ in the soul that enables you to experience the light of the *neshamah* somewhat. But it is only experienced temporarily and it doesn’t mean that you are at that level. It is possible for a person to live in that higher state on more permanent basis, but if a person has not purified the lower layers of his soul, he is taking a very dangerous path by attempting to live in this higher state. It is fine to connect to this higher place in yourself from time to time, but then you must make sure to return to your lower levels and continue fixing yourself there.

When one is working his way upwards, beginning from the lower levels of the soul, and he is not yet feeling a deep connection with Hashem, it is very hard for most people to patiently work on themselves, when they are not getting a feeling of more connection to Hashem. This is especially the case with our generation. That is why every person needs to connect to Hashem from the place where he is currently found in, and along with this, he needs to work his way upwards. Each person can connect to his inner point of the soul, on his own level.

The truth is that sometimes a person is only imagining that he is becoming closer to Hashem, and sometimes it is a real feeling. However, even if it’s being imagined, he is still being spurred on to become closer to Hashem and to enter deeper into himself; and if only all people could imagine in this way. But, we cannot build our path in *Avodas Hashem* based upon this point. It is fine to feel a deep closeness with Hashem if this will calm you and then you immediately return to reality and you work on yourself; as long as you understand that you have merely entered into a ‘crack’ in your soul which lets you experience a higher level. But you must immediately return afterwards to the actual level that your soul is found on, and to continue to work on yourself from there.



## *10 / Teves – Overcoming Fear*

### *Our Soul Feels Scared During the Scary Months of the Year*

The month of *Teves* is of the difficult months of the year. Our Sages said that the three difficult months of the year are *Teves*, *Tamuz*, and *Av*, due to the difficult events that took place in these months; and the month of *Teves* is considered to be the most difficult from all of them.

Just like when a person enters a dangerous place he feels scared, so does our soul inside of us become scared when it senses the danger manifest in this time of the year. Let us learn about how we can deal with those fears of our soul.

There are several kinds of fears we experience. Some people have more fears than others, but all of us have fears. One kind of fear is a fear of something that we know of. Another kind of fear is fear of the unknown. There are also more kinds of fears other than these which we will discuss later.

First, we will explain how we can deal with fears of what we are sure of.

### *Fear of Something Happening To Us – Based On a Previous Fearful Event*

When a person knows clearly why he is afraid - let's say it's because he is afraid of something bad happening to him in the future - it is really because previously, he must have went through some previous experience that was traumatizing. The old fear he once went through is triggered again, every time he has the new fear.

Therefore, a fear of something happening to you in the future is actually based on something that happened the past. You fear that thing from happening again. Since you went through it and you know what it is, and you don't want to experience it, and naturally, you fear it from happening again. So any time that we feel towards something in the future that didn't happen yet, it is actually being fed from our fear of the past.

Although it seems to us as a fear of the future and not as a fear of the past, a fear of something happening to you in the future is actually a fear of the past – you are afraid that the event of the past will happen again to you, because you are still traumatized from it.

### *Fear of the Unknown*

There is also another kind of fear: when a person is afraid of something happening in the future, even though he has no idea what the future will bring. A person may be scared that something bad

will happen to him even though he doesn't seem to remember having ever gone through that event in his life before.

We would simply say this second kind of fear has nothing to do a previous trauma, because if he has never gone through that fear before, why would he fear it from “happening again” if it never happened to him in the first place? Fear of the unknown seems to be unrelated to fear of the past. But upon deeper analysis, we can see that even fear of the unknown is based on some kind of previous trauma.

How can this be? It could be that the person once witnessed a tragedy or something painful happening to someone, or he has simply heard or read about something that happened to another person, and he fears it from happening to him. Subconsciously, he absorbed the fear that what happened to others might happen to him.

### *Locating the Source of the Past Fear*

Once we find the source of the fear, we can deal with it so that we won't be afraid of it again. In most cases, a person can find out what is causing his fear. A person can sit with himself and reflect, and try to trace the event that is causing him to have the fear. He can then realize that his fear of something happening in the future is really linked with something he has experienced in the past [and this calms the fear].

There are a few cases where a person cannot trace the source of the fear. However, in most cases, we *can* trace the source of the fear and then eliminate it from continuing to haunt us.

As we said, there are things we experienced which we are afraid of from happening again, and there are also things which we did not personally experience, but we subconsciously absorbed it into ourselves because of something that we either saw, heard, or read about in relation to others, and we are afraid that those things will happen to us as well. In either case, we discover that the fear of the future event is really based on something we went through in the past.

Thus, there is a subtle and deep definition of most fears of the future, which are really based on the past. These fears are really because we have experienced something in the past that was traumatizing to us, and we fear it from happening again. If so, the problem that is fueling the fear is because *we haven't gone through the experience in the proper way*. That is why we are scared of it happening again. That being the case, we need to go back and re-experience the event in the proper way.

This is understandably true when it comes to our fears based upon what we have gone through in the past, but as we will see, it is also true about fears which we are afraid that will happen which we have never even gone through in the past, so that we can re-shape our thought patterns about the event; then we have no more reason to fear this event, and in turn, it will no longer continue to haunt us that it may happen again in the future.

How indeed can we view the situations in life which were difficult for us of which we are afraid of? How do we deal these fears? With the help of Hashem, we will try to explain.

### *Reliving the Past in the Right Way*

The basic idea is that if a person went through a traumatizing experience without sufficient *emunah* (faith) that was this difficult event was really Heaven-sent from Hashem for his own good, if he did not feel Hashem's love for him as he went through it, then he did not experience that situation in the right way. As a result, he is left with a fear of this event, and naturally, he will fear it from happening again. But if a person were to have gone through the difficult situation or predicament with *emunah*, knowing that the situation was for his own good and that it came from Hashem's love, he would have no reason why he should fear it from happening again.

Let's say we have gone through something that was difficult\bad\scary, and we didn't have *emunah* when it happened to us; we did not feel Hashem's love for us as it was happening to us. We never dealt with it in the right way, because we had no *emunah* with us and we didn't feel Hashem next to us and taking care of us, as we went through the painful ordeal. Now, we are afraid of that ordeal from happening again. What can we do to get over it?

One of the ways brought in *sefarim hakedoshim* to fix our past fears is actually by using the power of **imagination**, to *relive* the event that causes the fear. We will be going back into the past experience which was painful and traumatizing to think about, and we should imagine it vividly as possible. Let your imagination picture the entire event again – go back into the past, using your imagination. But this time, you're going back into your past experience with a new weapon in your arsenal: *emunah*.

Let us explain what we are trying to do over here. We need to look back at our past experiences and see Hashem loving us in those very situations. When we first went through the ordeal, we did not feel Hashem next to us when it happened. We did not feel His love for us. Therefore, we did not experience that difficulty in the right way. What we need to do is to go back into that past experience, using our imagination, and then re-experience it this time, *in the right way*.

We need to return to those past experiences with our imagination – but with *emunah*. As you picture yourself going through it again as it happened, you can think to yourself: "Who caused this situation to happen to me? It wasn't by chance. Hashem made it happen, and Hashem loves me, and He was doing the best thing for me, because He only does good things for me out of His endless love for me. So I really had no reason to be afraid then."

Go step-by-step through the entire painful scenario of the past, and remember how in each step of the way, Hashem was with you throughout and loving you. Let the thought penetrate into you, more and more: "Hashem only made me go through this, out of His love for me!" You can keep repeating the exercise, and slowly you get rid of the past fears. Instead, you now emerge from it with a stronger heart.

This is both applicable to fears of our own previous experiences, or with our fears when we heard about what others went through. If we heard someone else go through something bad, and we reacted negatively, we need to use our imagination and also relive that experience with *emunah*. Let us imagine ourselves returning to that time in which we heard the devastating news, but this time, we are not afraid, and that we instead have *emunah* and feel Hashem's love for us as we imagine ourselves hearing about the disturbing news.

In this way, a person can erase the fears of the past that he has created, whether they are fears of something that happened to him or fears of something that he heard which happened to others; he removes a very large amount of fear in his heart – the kind of fear that is very commonplace in today's generation.

### *Fear of the Unknown*

Until now we explained, with *siyata d'shmaya*, of how to remove fears of the known; when we know clearly what event in the past is causing us to be afraid. But how do we deal with fears in when we have no idea of what is causing the fear? When we aren't sure of why we are afraid, we do not know the source of our fears, and if we can't trace the source of our fears, how do we deal with the fear?

We can again use the same idea of the above solution, but a little differently. With fear of the unknown, ask yourself *why* exactly you are afraid of the future event you fear from happening; then, imagine what exactly you are afraid of from happening. See yourself going through that possible scary situation - but this time, apply *emunah*: think to yourself that even if it happens, it's for your own good, since everything is from Hashem and therefore anything that happens to us is for our own good; and also, Hashem is always with us and He loves us in every situation that we go through.

Understandably, there are some fears we may have which are very frightening to even think about, and we won't even want to imagine them from happening. But in most cases, our fears of the future are not that intense, and we should be able to use this method to get rid of the fear. Either it will totally remove the fear, or if it doesn't totally remove the fear, it will still greatly weaken the intensity of how much we fear the future.

In summary, of the kinds of fears that we discussed so far - fears that stem from a previous trauma we experienced, or fears based upon hearing of what happened to others, or fears of the unknown – can all be dealt with, using this solution: by using our power of imagination to fully relive the situation (whether we are reliving the past event or whether we are imagining the future event), with *emunah* and with feeling Hashem's love for us, as we explained.

### *Unexplainable Fears*

Now we will explain another kind of fear. There are fears in which a person does not know why he is afraid, and he cannot express what is causing the fear. He can't express with words why he is afraid, and even his mind is not sure of what is causing the fear. He feels uneasy inside about something; he just knows that he is not calm, and he feels fear.

Many people experience fear, and there are essentially two groups of people in this category. Until now we have been addressing one kind of fear, where a person knows why he is afraid. A second category of people, however, are those who have fears, but they do not know what they are afraid of; and they are consciously aware of the fear. Sometimes this person will go to a professional to help explain to him his fears, and sometimes this kind of person will be put on pills, in order to calm his anxieties about the fears.

There is also a third group of people: people who are not even consciously aware that they are afraid. They experience sudden “explosions” of impatience and general uneasiness, where they feel very anxious. This is really being caused by a fear they have deep down in themselves. This kind of person is not even aware of the fear; all he is aware of are the *results* of the fear – the nervousness, the lack of calmness, the lack of patience, and other symptoms, where he just cannot remain tranquil. This is a very common scenario, especially in our generation, where people have fears yet they do not even know that they are afraid.

Altogether, we have discussed four kinds of fear. (1) A person who knows he is afraid, and he is also aware of the source of the fear, which is something he went through in the past. (2) A person who knows he is afraid but he cannot trace its source in the past, but he can identify what he is afraid of from happening in the future. (3) A person who is aware that he is afraid but he does not know why he is afraid. (4) A person who experiences sudden anxiousness and uneasiness about something, but he is not aware that this is really stemming from a fear that he has deep down.

We have already explained what to do in the first two scenarios. Now we will tackle the third and fourth scenarios: When a person knows he is afraid but he doesn't know why, and when a person is anxious about something but he does not even consciously register that he is really afraid.

### *Two Sources of Subconscious Fears*

When a person knows that he is afraid but he does not know the reason for the fear, there are general rules for how to deal with this kind of fear.

The *Gemara* brings of a student who was afraid and he didn't know where the fears were coming from. He asked his *rebbe*, and his *rebbe* told him, “You sinned.” His sins were causing the fears. When a person sins, his *neshamah* become afraid of the consequences; it looks from its lofty perch and it sees the lower section of the soul where sin can take hold, and the *neshamah* is worried about

what will happen now to the lower part of the soul. This is one possible source of fear: fears that result from sin.

Thus, whenever a person is afraid and he has no idea why, he should do *teshuvah* (repentance), from the depths of his heart. The more a person is regularly doing *teshuvah* every time he experiences fear, he will find that he is calmed afterwards. Of course, we always need to do *teshuvah*, but all the more so when we are seized with fears of the unknown, which awakens us to do more soul-searching.

### *Fears Stemming From Mystical Sources*

There is also another kind of fear, which is of a more specific nature. It is brought in *halachah* that if one places his fingernails into a place where people walk, this will cause him to have fears. Another kind of carelessness which can cause fear is when one isn't careful to wash *netilas yadayim*. There are also additional matters brought in *Halacha* in which laxity in these matters can cause a person to have fears. [These fears are solved and prevented by being careful in these areas].

### *The Inner Fear of the Soul*

Here we will focus more on the source of our more inner fears (when we don't know why we are afraid, and when we feel general uneasiness but we aren't consciously aware of the fear), and the solution to these inner fears.

The source of our inner fears, deep down, stems from a fear of our soul - it fears that it is not going towards the proper direction; it fears that it will not arrive at its proper destination. On a deeper understanding, it is really afraid that it will be left alone and cut off from its Source, Hashem, as it journeys on this world. Hashem created us with a nature that we do not like to be alone; that is why people are afraid of being alone.

Thus, our soul deep down is afraid that it will not reach its goal, that it will not reach its perfection, and that it will not end up in the proper destination, *chas v'shalom*. But on a deeper level, it is afraid of becoming alone, apart from its Source.

This is the deep source of all fear. We have a simple way of understanding it: anyone can attest to being afraid of a dark, lonely road at night. We are afraid when we feel alone. If someone is walking with us, we are much less afraid. Why are we less afraid of a dark road at night when someone is walking with us? If *chas v'shalom* we encounter danger, will that person be able to help us? Probably not. So why are we more calmed when someone is walking with us? It is because we feel that we are not alone.

### *The Questions About Suffering and Tragedy That People Grapple With*

Let's discuss here an important point which people ask about. Earlier, we mentioned the solution to fears where we know the source of the fears, which is to relive the past experience with *emunah* and with Hashem's love for us. When we relive the past and we try to approach it with *emunah*, many people grapple with a disturbance. They wonder: "How will it help me if I just have *emunah* that everything is from Hashem and that Hashem loves me? Are there not *tzaros* (painful events) that happen to people??"

After all, we see that even the greatest *tzaddikim* had lives that were filled with *tzaros*. In these *parshiyos*, we are leaning about Yaakov Avinu, who went through so many difficult circumstances. He had to flee from Esav and later he had to meet with him again, where he feared for his life. He also had to deal with his tricky father-in-law, Lavan, who caused many problems for him. Then his daughter Dinah is kidnapped. Then his beloved son Yosef is gone. Then his son Shimon is imprisoned, and then Binyamin is imprisoned. Yaakov Avinu definitely believed that all of this was from Hashem and that Hashem loved him throughout; he is called the "choicest of the *Avos*", the most righteous of all the forefathers, yet even so, all of these *tzaros* happened to him.

So people ask: "What does it help to have *emunah*? If I increase my love for Hashem does that mean that bad things won't happen to me? Even our greatest Gedolim had *tzaros*, in spite of all of their *emunah* and love for Hashem. So what will it help me to work on my *emunah* and on feeling Hashem's love for me? In the end of the day, bad things happen to people, and when these bad things happen, they are painful!"

If we think about it, it's a burning question. Even more so, all of us have contact with people and with the world, and we read and hear and see about how much suffering is taking place in the world. We have all heard of people who were living very happy and calm lives, until suddenly one day their entire life changed, plunged into tragedy or misfortune. So many people are suffering in the world! How can we not be afraid of it not happening to us too?

Of course, if someone has a very carefree and very easygoing nature, he isn't bothered by all that he reads and hears about, and he just continues to live his life as he pleases. He can easily calm himself and get over it very quickly, because he doesn't think too much about it. But when someone seriously contemplates what takes place in the world today, and his heart goes out to the suffering of the Jewish people, he is seeing and feeling so much of the *tzaros* that take place. How can he *not* be afraid, from all of the many *tzaros* that he hears about?

It is very strong question to deal with, a burning issue, for anyone who reflects into the situation of the world and is aware of the many *tzaros* taking place. The answer to this gnawing question is a very deep and subtle answer.

### *Above The Questions*

These questions that people have are questions that stems from our *seichel* – our logical, thinking, rational mind. There is no "answer" to this "question" – from the perspective of our intellectual

mind, that is. But there is a more inner place in ourselves – our inner soul - which has the answer to this question. When a person is deeply connected to Hashem in his life, when he feels Hashem's Presence in his heart, he can go above his logical thinking, and he will be above this question.

In a deep place in our soul, we are able to feel that we close with Hashem. When we feel the closeness to Hashem, that secure feeling of being connected to Hashem will help us go above all of our natural fears and questions. This is also known as the point of “*temimus*” (simplicity, or earnestness) in the soul – where we feel pure and genuine faith in Hashem.

When a person remains outside of this inner place in the soul, he has questions: “Do you think that if I become close to Hashem, then I won't have *tzaros*, that I will no longer have any suffering?! I might “know” in my mind that “everything is for the good”, but it is still very frightening to me that I may go through it, and it will still feel very painful if it happens to me.”

But when one enters the inner place in his soul, there, his feelings will be connected to a higher place. His heart will recognize a higher dimension, which is above the perception of the human intellect. It is there that a person draws forth *bitachon* (trust in Hashem), which is above the place of fear in the soul.

We might still grapple with the question, for we see that our *Gedolim* did go through many *tzaros*, such as what we see with the life of Yaakov Avinu (and he had certainly had pain. He was consumed with agony over the loss of his son Yosef, that the *Shechinah* left him, for all those 22 years). Our *Gedolim* had high levels of *emunah* in Hashem and in feeling Hashem's love for them, yet they still had pain from all of their suffering. If we see that even our *Gedolim* had pain from their suffering, then what are we to say? What will it help for us to increase our *emunah* in Hashem? Surely having *emunah* can definitely weaken the extent of the pain, but it will not remove the pain totally; there will still be a lot of pain left over.

So there is no logical answer to the questions that we may have. Our *seichel* (intellect) cannot provide us with the answer. The ‘answer’ can only come to us through a deep place in our heart, the part that is intrinsically connected with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. In a deep place in the soul, a person is connected to Hashem, and there is no room there to feel alone in any way.

We explained earlier that the root of all fears stems from the soul's fear of becoming alone. Thus when we are in a place where we do not feel alone, there is no fear. When a person feels that he is not with Hashem, when he is unaware that Hashem's Presence can be felt deep in his heart, he will have fears, and indeed, he will have many things to be afraid of. He will be afraid of all kinds of painful circumstances, but the root of all his fear is because he is afraid of feeling so alone. But when a person connects to Hashem deep in his soul, the reasons for the fear fall away.

Although he will still find it possible to fear all kinds of things, if he has removed the source of the fear, he will not have that much reason to fear; his feeling of fear will only be minimal.

### *Why Our Current Generation Experiences Much Fear*

The reason why so many people in this generation have fears is not simply because there are many *tzaros* (difficulties and hardships) in people's lives. The inner reason is because most souls feel deep down as if they have no Father to be close to – we are a “generation of orphans.” When a person feels that he is so far from Hashem, it is a truly frightening feeling for him, and this is the source of most fears taking place in this generation.

There is an inner place in our soul which is so closely attached with Hashem and feels His presence, where there is no place for fear there. But we are not consciously aware of this place in ourselves, because we have usually not revealed it outward from its hidden state, and that is why we don't often feel it on a conscious level.

It appears to many people that they are afraid of certain things, or of certain trying circumstances that have happened in the past which they are afraid of from happening again. But if we look at all of this from a truthful lens, the many difficulties and trying events which we see in our generation are not the actual cause for fear, but a symptom of a deeper kind of fear. The deep root of the fears is because deep down, there is a loneliness, from feeling so apart from Hashem. When that fear exists, all the fears in the world can take hold of a person.

The deep advice we can use to solve our fears, as we said, is not simply to remove the outer symptoms of the fear. Sometimes there is a possibility to deal with fears in a superficial way, which we spoke about earlier; but although this is helpful, the main thing we need to is to get to solve the fear at its root. For this, we need to dig deep into ourselves. The inner solution to fear is: to understand that we are never “alone” on this world, and to connect ourselves to the One who has made this world come into existence. This is the true solution to all fears.

### *Practically Speaking*

All that was described here is essentially an inner solution, a more truthful solution, to deal with our fears.

However, practically speaking, since this is a very deep and inner approach, which we cannot reach in one day alone, in the end of the day we may have to use physical remedies available in order to soothe fear. People might have to take certain pills to relieve them of the anxiety they have from their fears, while simultaneously trying to get to the inner method described here. The outer layers of the soul which are closer to physicality cannot relate to the inner solution to fears described here, so they will need to be calmed with various physical means.

The physical aspects involved treating our fear may involve confiding in someone who can advise us; it should be someone who can listen to us attentively, who understands us, who feels us. Many people, when they feel that they have the support of others, become calmed from this feeling, and on a more subtle note, it is because they feel like they feel that they are no longer facing their fear alone.

Also, sometimes we can help a person with fears by showing him that it's all in his imagination, and that it is not happening in reality; this can also soothe a person. However, many times a person is well aware that his fear is only in his imagination, yet even so, he continues to have the fear. When this is the case, he should then make use of the inner solution to fears, described here.

Therefore, our intention here is not to invalidate the physical methods of alleviating fear. There are times where indeed a person needs to take pills in order to remove his fears. Here we are presenting a more inner solution that exists: that there is a deep place in our soul, where we can feel closeness to Hashem, where we can truly feel that we are “with” Hashem, and there are no fears there in that place.

Practically speaking, when we want to solve our fears, on a temporary basis we may make use of the various physical methods of treating fear; but this should not become a fundamental approach towards how we deal with life. Our point here is that in order to *fully* treat our fears, we will need to dig deep into our soul, to bring out the fear from its root, so that we can remove the root of our fears and all of the ‘branches’ of the fear that come along with it.

### *In Conclusion*

May we merit from Hashem to eliminate our fears, by feeling the great closeness with Him in the depth of our souls; and may we merit to reach holy fear, which is called “*pachad Yitzchok*” (the fear which Yitzchok Avinu had), in which our entire fear is solely about a fear of becoming disconnected from Hashem, *chas v'shalom*. This returns all of our fears to their holy root. Through this, we will become attached to Hashem from the depths of our heart, and then we will see no more reason to ever be afraid.

*Questions & Answers with the Rav*

**Q1:** *Is fear ever a good thing? For example, I live in a place in Eretz Yisrael where we need to protect our cars from rocks that Arabs sometimes throw at our cars, and sometimes there are life-endangering situations here which cause us to have real fear. Is this a constructive kind of fear to have?*

**ANSWER:** *The only thing a person must ever be afraid of is the fact that he fears anything besides Hashem.* That is something to be truly afraid of, and it is the only pure fear which exists. Either we fear Hashem Himself, or we fear anything that is besides for Hashem – which essentially causes us to have the fears. Whenever we experience a fear, like when we feel fear from the Arabs, we should view it as an awakening to remind us that we are not afraid enough of Hashem, and that is why we have become afraid of something. It is an awakening to us that we are not close enough to Hashem; because if we would really feel close with Hashem, there would be no reason to fear anything.

Again, let me emphasize that this is not a mere intellectual definition. If a person would really believe that Hashem is close to him, he would not be afraid. When you are found with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, there is no fear there. So if a person experiences a fear, it is a reminder to the person that he needs to be afraid of the fact that he is not close enough to Hashem. That is why a person becomes afraid of the Arabs!

**Q2:** *So if it is not a good kind of fear to have, is the fear showing us that something in ourselves needs to be fixed?*

**ANSWER:** Correct. Every situation can be used for good. When someone is afraid and he needs to be calmed, either we can tell him, “Don’t be afraid” [which is a superficial approach], or, we can tell him, “This fear that you are having – use it to awaken in yourself a holy kind of fear, the fact that you don’t feel close enough to Hashem.” However, this only calms a person when he is in fact upset at the fact that he is not close to Hashem. If he doesn’t care, then telling him to be afraid of his lack of closeness to Hashem will not do anything for him, because he doesn’t fear it. Only if a person is afraid of not feeling close to Hashem, can he be calmed when he is afraid of the Arabs, that the source of his fear is just a reminder to him, that he is not close enough to Hashem.

**Q3:** *When using the power of imagination to relive the past fearful experience, won’t this cause the fear to happen? Isn’t there a concept that thinking and imagining about the fear cause the fear to actually happen in reality?*

**ANSWER:** That is a very good question! Indeed, it is possible for a person to “cause” bad things to happen when he imagines about them; the Sages say that if a person worries obsessively about

poverty or other forms of suffering, the poverty or the suffering will chase after him. Therefore, we don't try to deliberately imagine bad things.

Our intention here is that if a person is in any case experiencing fears in his imagination, we need to face this imaginary fear by bringing out into the open and then uprooting it with thoughts of *emunah* in Hashem and Hashem's love for us. If a person is not having a problem with fears, we are not encouraging him to use these ideas; we are only discussing here a person who is afraid of something in his imagination, and since this is the case, we need to get him to redirect his thoughts. When a person is afraid, he is suffering from his imagination, which means that he is lacking in *emunah* and in a feeling of Hashem's love, and it is the kind of person who needs to attack the imagination in the way we have described here.

So we are not encouraging a person to deliberately imagine something fearful and to increase his *emunah*. Why should he, if he doesn't have the fears? We are only addressing here someone who already has fears and we want to help such a person face those fears that he is in any case having. So you have asked a very good question.

**Q4:** *We see that when the people were making the Golden Calf, they came to Aharon HaKohen about what they should do, and he was afraid of what would happen, so he gave them the idea of bringing together all the jewelry and make the Calf, to stall for time, because he feared for his life. So even Aharon HaKohen had fears of possibly getting killed. Why didn't he just use the method of dealing with fears, as described in this class?*

**ANSWER:** Aharon HaKohen was afraid because he saw them kill Chur for opposing them, and he feared that they would do the same to him. Are you asking how it is possible that even our *Gedolim* and the biggest *tzaddikim* can become afraid? Is that what you mean to ask?

**Q5:** *What I mean to ask is, why didn't Aharon HaKohen just use the method that the Rav has explained here, in order to solve his fear of getting killed.*

**ANSWER:** The answer to this is because even the greatest *tzaddik* is not always completely attached to Hashem in total *d'veykus*, and for this reason, there is room for fear even in the biggest *tzaddikim*. This is known as the concept of "*tzeil haguf*" ("body shadow") – since even the greatest *tzaddikim* ultimately have physical body, there is always some part of a *tzaddik* that is not attached completely to Hashem, and this is why there is no *tzaddik* who is perfect.

Yet it is always possible for a person to *minimize* his fears, using the method described here in this class. Although we can never totally uproot all of our fears, there is a very big difference between someone who has is consumed by fears with someone who has greatly minimized his fears.

There is also one more kind of fear which we did not speak about in this class: fears caused by sinning. We find that Yaakov *Avinu* was afraid of Esav, even though Hashem promised him that he

would not be harmed, because he was afraid that perhaps he had sinned in the interim and that he was no longer worthy of Hashem's protection. However, in order for this kind of fear to be holy, a person needs to be balanced out with feeling Hashem's closeness. If one feels that Hashem is close by, then it is valid for him to fear the effects of sin. But if one does not feel this closeness, then fearing the effects of the sin is not a holy kind of fear.

**Q6: *So is this something else we need to fear (to fear the effects of sin)?***

**ANSWER:** Yaakov Avinu had this fear, of being afraid of the effects of a possible sin. But even this fear that he had was ultimately stemming from the "*tzeil haguf*" ("body shadow"), from the physical body of a *tzaddik*, the part which is not completely and perfectly attached with Hashem. But Yaakov Avinu had a balance between the inner layer of the soul (which contains no fear, for it is part and parcel with Hashem), and the outer layers of the soul, which fears sin. If a person does not feel enough closeness with Hashem, he will be dominated by more fears, fear of sin included. If a person becomes more connected to Hashem and he feels closer to Him, he is calmed on the inside, and the outer part of the self which feels the effects of fear will stay in balanced proportion. This is the kind of fear which our *tzaddikim* had. They had a fear of sin, which was equally balanced with a great feeling of closeness to Hashem.

**Q7: *When a person fears the effects of a sin, does this fear exist even in the inner part of the soul which only feels closeness to Hashem? Or does it exist only on the outer layers of the soul that experiences fear?***

**ANSWER:** The inner part of the soul feels a complete closeness with Hashem, so it is not possible in that point to feel any fear of sin, because the inner part of the soul is above the point of sin. Therefore, when a person feels this part of the soul where he is completely attached with Hashem, there is no fear of sin, because there is no possibility of sin there.

**Q8: *So whenever a person feels a fear, it is a sign that something is wrong and that he needs to improve in some area? Does it mean that he has sinned, or that he is not close enough yet to Hashem? Fear is thus entirely a symptom that something is wrong?***

**ANSWER:** You have defined it correctly. If a person is feeling a very intense fear, it is a sign that something is amiss. But if you keep feeling an alternation between fear and feeling close to Hashem – in other words, at the same time that you feel calmed by the knowledge that Hashem is near you, you are stilling experiencing a fear – this is called *pachad d'kedushah*, "holy fear". If you do not feel that you are moving back and forth between these two feelings, it is a sign though that something is wrong [and that you need to work on your relationship with Hashem].

**Q9: *Is it possible for one to have fears that come from his previous gilgul (soul reincarnation)? And if it is possible, is a person allowed to take away his fears by going to a hypnotizer?***

**ANSWER:** Yes, it is possible that one's fears come from a previous *gilgul*. Rav Chaim Vital said that his Rebbi, the *Arizal*, said that some of his fears came from his previous lifetime. Whenever the *Arizal* heard that someone had been killed, he felt fear, and he said that this was because in a previous *gilgul*, he had been one of the Ten Martyrs who were killed by the Romans.

As for going to a hypnotizer, this is not the ideal solution to solve our fears. First of all, you have to do your research on the hypnotizer in question and find out if he is a real *ben Torah*, who genuinely observes Torah and mitzvos. But even if he is a *frum* hypnotizer, there is a more inner issue involved with turning to hypnosis in order to deal with our fears: it would only be removing the outer garments of our fears, and it would not be uprooting the fear at its root. We want to get to the root of the fear and uproot it totally, as opposed to just removing its symptoms. The inner solution to fears which we have said here, which gets to the root of fear, is: that there is a deep place in our soul where we can feel close to Hashem and that we are with Him. This soothes our soul from all fears.

## *11 / Shevat – Elevated Eating*

### *The Month of Shevat – Sanctifying the Act of Eating*

The month of *Shevat*, as we are taught by *Chazal*, is associated with the act of *le'itah* (chewing), which is otherwise known as *achilah*, eating.<sup>35</sup> When Esav was starving and he wanted food, he said, “Feed me (“*hal-iteini*”) from that red stuff” – from the word “*le'itah*”, to chew and consume food. Let us understand what our *avodah* of “eating” in *Shevat* is.

We know that a person cannot survive without eating. It is possible for a person to go several days without consuming food, but generally speaking, we need to eat every day of our life. Except for the fast days, such as Yom Kippur and the Rabbinically ordained fasts, we eat every single day. If we never reflect into the purpose of why we eat – of how it can be holy to us or of how it can be spiritually detrimental to us - then we will go our entire life without any sense of purpose in our eating.

If you make a simple calculation, each person eats an average amount of 70,000 meals in his lifetime (assuming that a person lives for 70 years, since “*the years of a man are seventy*”, and that he eats about 1000 times during each year of his lifetime). Should a person eat for his entire life, going through 70,000 meals or more, without ever reflecting into the purpose of why he eats?

Clearly, we need to understand what the role of food is in our life, and how it can serve to elevate us spiritually. There’s a very big difference between a person who thinks about it and a person who doesn’t think about it; being aware of the purpose in our eating can change the whole way we are living our life.

### *Four Possible Reasons of Why We Eat*

Eating takes up a big part of our life. Let’s first think into what factors are included in our eating. Usually, when a person eats, there are two factors. The first thing to consider is: What kind of food to eat. It can be bread, eggs, vegetables, fish, chicken, and other foods. Another factor in our eating is the taste of the food. Usually, we want to eat food that has a decent taste to it. We are usually not just looking to eat a certain kind of food – we want it to also taste good.

So whenever we eat food, there are always two motivating factors taking place: a motivation to eat the particular food we are eating, as well as a motivation for taste. If we make a reflection, we can notice that sometimes we eat because we really need to eat, and sometimes we eat because we just

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want to taste something good, and not because we really have a need to eat right now. We might want to eat because we really need to eat, or we might want to eat just to fill up our stomach; both of these motivations are within the desire to eat. But there is also a third motivation of why we eat: to simply taste something that's good.

In the first motivation of why we eat, it is a desire for food, not taste. This itself divides into two categories: (1) Eating because we are hungry, and (2) Eating more than what is necessary to fill our hunger – which is actually a desire to experience more materialism of this world. In the second motivation of why we eat, we eat simply because we feel a need for taste, and we will want to experience various kinds of taste.

If we reflect into it, we can discover these three motivations in our eating. Sometimes we eat because we are hungry, sometimes we eat because we are desiring materialism, and sometimes we eat for a completely different reason: because we are looking for taste.

There is also an additional, fourth reason why we eat, and every person can also discover this motivation in his eating: sometimes we eat because we are feeling bored. We are in the mood of doing something, and sometimes we fulfill this need for action through engaging ourselves in eating. In this motivation for eating, we are not eating because we need to eat, nor are we even trying to fill our stomachs and pursue physical desires, and we are not either doing so out of a need to experience new tastes. Rather, we are in the mood of having some kind of action, and we are using eating to fill that void.

### *In Summary*

So there are altogether four possible reasons why people eat: (1) Because we are hungry, and we are trying to fill the hunger, so that we can feel nourished and full. (2) Because we are pursuing bodily cravings, which is a materialistic kind of desire; (3) Because we want to enjoy a good taste, (4) Because we are bored and we feel a need for action, and eating makes us feel like we are being active.

### *Developing Awareness of Why We Are Eating Right Now*

Before we continue our discussion on this, with *siyata d'shmaya* – we first need to conceptualize the first idea we mentioned, which is that we need to reflect into the things we do and to have an awareness in what we are doing; to know why we are doing something as we are in the midst of doing it. If a person eats and never pays attention to why he's eating, his eating is no different than how an animal eats. But if a person is at least a bit spiritual and isn't entrenched in the materialism of life, he thinks into why he eats, before he is about to eat something, as well as while he's eating. He eats with a sense of awareness.

When a person wants to become aware of why he is eating, he should first reflect: “What is the reason that I am about to eat right now? Is it because I am hungry? Is it because I simply want to nosh? Is it because I want to taste something? Or is it because I’m just bored?”

One must be aware: “Why do I eat?”, and try to find which of the above four reasons are his motivation to eat right now. Clearly, there will not always be one reason that is motivating him to eat. There can be two reasons, three reasons, or even all four of the above reasons, which are all driving him to want to eat right now. The more a person can “listen” to what’s going on inside himself, he can better discern what his motivations in eating are.

### *Focused, Calm Eating*

By many people, there is problem that they have of having food in one hand and doing something else with their other hand, and at the same time, they are talking on the phone during all of this multi-tasking. Besides for how this ignores the *halachah* that one must not converse as he’s eating, there is another problem which develops from this unfocused kind of eating.

When a person is doing other things as he’s eating, he usually will not have any awareness of why he’s eating right now. He won’t be able to listen to himself at this moment and be aware of why he’s eating. When a person gets used to eating in this way, he does not pay attention to why he’s eating at the moment, and he will be very far from developing any awareness in his eating and from elevating the act of eating. Therefore, practically speaking, we need to avoid as much as possible this kind of unfocused eating, where a person does various different things as he’s in middle of eating. One should view eating as a time to work on his *menuchas hanefesh* (serenity). Eating should always be done calmly, and that will enable a person to have the calmness to listen to himself and reflect into the reasons of why he’s eating.

Therefore, in order to carry out this advice, try to make sure that you don’t eat during a time of the day where you are harried or feeling pressured with lots of tasks to take care of. Every person needs to set aside a part of the day where he will have some *menuchah* (serenity), and for part of this time, he should eat calmly.

When a person isn’t focused and calm as he eats, he doesn’t digest it as well. Not only is it unhealthy to our physical body, but it damages us as well on a more inner level. When a person eats as he’s not calm, he will eat more than he really needs to, because he can’t think properly about how much he needs to eat right now.

If we do not see the importance of paying attention to our eating, we damage ourselves both physically and spiritually, and as we mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, we would go through about 70,000 meals during our lifetime having never given any thought to our eating, and all of those meals would be eaten without any purpose.

### *1) How We Can Elevate Hunger*

Let us now continue, with the help of Hashem, to discuss the last point we mentioned.

We need to have the proper perspective towards eating. Eating is an important part of our life, both in the physical and in the spiritual. However, we mainly need to consider how eating affects us spiritually. We need to have a serious attitude towards eating, by setting aside some time of the day where we will work on mindful eating. But if we never think into why we are eating and we don't take it seriously, we will probably not care to set aside the time each day to work on mindful eating, and then we will go through a lifetime of meals with no sense of purpose in them, and all of the meals of our lifetime then become wasted opportunities.

That was the introduction to the discussion here, of how we need to generally view eating. Now we will elaborate upon the four motivations of eating which we mentioned earlier, and go through each of these with greater depth.

The first reason we mentioned, of why a person eats, is to eat out of hunger. When a person feels hungry to eat, he should ask himself the following: “Who made me hungry? Did I make myself hungry? No, that can't be.” Whenever a person feels that he is “hungry” and he immediately goes to eat something, without thinking it through enough, he might open up the fridge and eat whatever he finds there. But this resembles the way an animal eats. A person who wishes to live a more inner kind of life doesn't act upon his impulses so fast. He first thinks, calmly, about this simple thought: “Who made me hungry?”

If a person immediately answers to this, “The nature of my body made me hungry”, he should then counter to this thought, “And who made the body have this nature?” After simply reflecting onto this, you discover simply that it is Hashem who made you hungry. Now ask yourself, “And why did Hashem make me hungry? Ah, so that I will need to eat, and then make the required *berachah* (blessing) to Him before I eat it, so that I can thank Hashem for it. In this way, I am elevating the materialistic act of eating.” And, on a deeper level, perhaps you are also elevating the souls who may have been reincarnated in the food you are eating, who are raised to holiness when a blessing is made over them.

The point of this thinking is so that you become aware that there is a more spiritual source to your hunger. The reason why your hunger has appeared is not simply because your body has made you hungry, but because Hashem made you hungry so that you will be able to elevate the act of eating, and on two levels. First of all, you make a *berachah* over the food, where you thank Hashem for the food you're about to eat, and that itself elevates the mundane act of eating. Secondly, by making the *berachah*, you can feel gratitude to Hashem for this food, and this elevates the materialistic aspect of the food, bringing Hashem into the picture.

As you are feeling a hunger for food, be clear about this attitude: “When I get hungry, it is because Hashem made me hungry, so that I should eat in a more elevated manner, which enables me to elevate the food I am eating, from the material to the spiritual.”

In summary of until now: When you are aware that the reason that you're eating is because you are hungry, don't act upon it so fast. Train yourself to start thinking like this before you are about to eat, and get used to the habit of making reflection before you eat. Even if it is only a little amount of reflecting, it is helpful, because it trains you not to act upon impulse as soon as you get hungry. You can try waiting for 60 seconds, or 30 seconds (and if you can't do that, try it for 20 seconds) before eating upon the hunger.

Whatever amount of self-control you can muster when it comes to this, the point is not to eat immediately when you feel hunger. When you get used to reflecting a bit before you eat, your eating becomes more spiritual, it becomes more refined and loftier, and it becomes elevated from the normally animalistic eating that it would have been. This advice has been mentioned in the works of the *Rishonim*: whenever you are hungry, wait a little bit before you eat [and reflect into the purpose of eating].

## 2) What To Do About Cravings

Until now we explained about what do when you're eating of hunger. Now we will learn about what to do when we are eating due to the second possible motivation in our eating: when we are eating simply because we are getting a craving for food, which is really a desire to attach ourselves to the materialism of this world.

First of all, let's go deeper into this motivation. Every person contains a *guf* (body) and *neshamah* (soul). Our *neshamah* doesn't need anything to eat, because it is completely spiritual. It is only interested in the spiritual, as it is written, "*When there will be no hunger for bread, no thirst for water, except to hear the word of Hashem.*" But we also have a body, which needs physicality in order for it to be sustained. For that reason, we need to eat when we feel hunger.

But our body also causes us to pursue the second motivation in eating: to eat food simply because we feel a craving for materialism. The body is interested in more and more materialistic desires, and that is what causes us to pursue food and other desires which we don't really need to sustain ourselves. It is simply a desire to attach ourselves to the thick and heavy materialism of this world, and it comes from our physical body.

We can see this in different meals we eat. Sometimes we have a lighter kind of meal, and we don't feel heavy afterwards, and sometimes we eat in order to feel full, where we will eat heavier and thicker kinds of foods, and we feel heavy after such meals. Many times people will intentionally eat a thicker kind of food which makes them feel heavier afterwards, because they want to have this feeling of "feeling full" after they eat. This is a bodily desire, which wants to experience more materialism. It causes cravings in a person for more food that is necessary for him to eat, and it is rooted in the body's desire to "feel full" after a meal.

It is written, "*A righteous person eats to satisfy his soul, and the stomach of the wicked always feels lacking.*" The *possuk* is saying that a *tzaddik* eats until he feels satisfied, whereas a wicked person eats

in order to feel that his stomach has been filled up. Many times people mix up the two motivations, and they think that to feel “satisfied” from a meal means to “feel full”. But if a person has trained himself to eat calmly and with awareness, as we spoke about before, he will be able to make a distinction between eating to feel “satisfied” and eating to “feel full”, and he will be able to see how they are not the same thing.

The Rambam says that a person should eat less than a third of his portion, but even if a person can't eat on the disciplined level that the Rambam reached, he can still train himself not to eat his entire portion at once, and to instead eat slowly and calmly. He can try eating a bit, then pausing, then continuing to eat, and repeating the cycle, during his meal. When a person gets used to eating like this, he will suddenly begin to feel a deeper place in himself, where he will realize that his hunger was not actually hunger, and that he had really been satisfied all along. It was simply a desire to have a “full stomach”, and not a desire to become satiated.

When a person keeps eating continuously and without pause, he might think that he is doing so in order to be satisfied from the meal, but in actuality, it is stemming from a desire to have a “full stomach”. But by getting used to taking breaks as we are eating, such as by pausing for 2 minutes every here and there during the meal, a person will suddenly discover that his will to keep eating is not stemming from a will to be satisfied, but from a will to feel like he's “full” afterwards, a “full stomach”.

This is a very subtle differentiation to discern in oneself. The practical way to work on this is by pausing every so often as you eat, and the point of it is to be able to eat in a serene way, where you can listen to the real needs of your body.

There is an inner power we have of listening to the body. It is hidden from most people, but the more a person is living a serene kind of life and he does things calmly and with reflection beforehand, he is better able to listen to the messages of his body. As a person is eating, pausing, and continuing to eat, he can listen to the body and discern if his need to eat right now is stemming from a desire for hunger/satiation, or because he simply has a desire to have a “full stomach” – which is not necessary, and it is merely a desire rooted in materialism.

Another point to mention here is, about what we actually eat. In order for a person's eating to be on the level of a *tzaddik's* eating and to avoid the kind of eating that is about having a “full stomach”, a person needs to get used to eating lighter and more refined kinds of food. We know that some foods are heavier, thicker, oilier and fattier, with many different ingredients, whereas other foods are lighter, more refined, and contain fewer ingredients. If a person wants to live a more truthful life and he wants his eating to become more spiritual and less materialistic, he should get used to generally having a lighter diet.

Much of the cooked meals that we eat are heavy and thick, which are not meant to merely satiate us and nourish us, but to make us feel like we have a “full stomach” afterwards. A person needs to get used to eating foods that are closer to the nature which Hashem Himself prepares. This doesn't

mean that you should only eat vegetables and fruit, but the point is to eat lighter foods, with most of your meals being lighter in their nature, and to avoid heavy, thick foods with all kinds of ingredients. By getting used to a lighter diet, the body will become trained to eat for the purpose of satiation, and much less for the purpose of “feeling full”.

In summary, when a person feels cravings to eat more food than what he needs, the first part of the advice for this is to get used to takes pauses in between the meal. The second piece of advice is to train ourselves to eat lighter kinds of foods, and to avoid eating heavier and thicker kinds of food. All of this should be done with conscious attention that you are trying to eat calmly, and it should be done during a time of the day that you set aside specially for this, where you will work on eating with more *menuchas hanefesh*.

There are also loftier and more spiritual ways than this to elevate our eating, and if a person can have those lofty thoughts while he is eating, that will also serve to help him avoid heavier, thicker foods and to stick to a lighter diet.

### *3) What To Do About the Need for Taste*

Now we will deal with the third reason of why people eat: when a person feels a need for taste.

Our body has a nature to want to taste things, and this is especially the case ever since the sin of Adam, where man tasted of the *Eitz HaDaas*. Ever since then, there has become a genuine need to taste things. This need is used for holiness when we taste of the Shabbos food, as it is written, “*Those who taste of it [Shabbos], merit life*” [and this refers to tasting the Shabbos food]. But even during the weekday as well, almost all people need to have a good taste in their food, and they will not be able to have tasteless food.

However, we need to have the proper attitude towards the need for taste. The Hebrew word for “taste” is *taam* (טעם), which has the same letters as the word *me’at* (מעט) – which means “a little”. This hints to us that the need for taste is only meant to be utilized “a little”, meaning, to eat the food in order to taste it, and not more than that. But if a person eats more than that need, he is mixing in a craving for more food, which is the motivation in eating that we discussed earlier, where a person eats in order to feel full; he will keep eating it until he feels heavy afterwards. This is a double motivation contained in one act: a motivation for taste, and a motivation for more materialism.

For this reason, most people, when they taste a certain food, they will keep gorging on it, even though they didn’t plan on having more than a taste of it. When people keep eating the food after they have tasted it, this is not stemming from the original need for taste. If it would be a need for taste, the person would taste it and no more.

A person should first identify this when he tastes something. When he tastes it, he should realize that this came from a need to taste it. If he keeps eating after the original bite, he should identify that

this is not coming from his need to experience taste, but from a craving to eat more food and to feel full and heavy afterwards. To counter this problem, one should taste the food, then pause, and then taste a little bit, and then repeat the cycle. In this way, he will calm the desire to engage in unnecessary eating. He will still want to taste it, but he will have calmed his desire to gorge on the food.

When most people overeat, it is due to these combined factors in their motivation. They usually began with a desire to taste of the food, and this awakens the desire for materialism, where a person will want to finish what he tasted, so that he can “feel full”. The motivations of taste and materialism become mixed with each other in the act of eating.

As we mentioned, the advice that can work for this is to take pauses after you taste something. Taste it, then pause, then take another bite, and repeat the cycle. Make sure not to go overboard as you are tasting it, leave it at just a taste of the food, pause, then taste it again, making sure not to eat beyond that amount, and repeat. In this way, you will identify in yourself the two different motivations, the desire to eat more and the desire to taste something, and by getting used to this, not only will you calm the desire to eat more, but you will also be able to calm the desire for taste itself.

This is a subtle matter which requires you to listen to your body, and when you identify the motivating factors that are taking place in your body, you are then able to deal with them accordingly.

To bring out this idea, the *Shelah HaKadosh* writes that the *mitzvah* to taste of the Shabbos food is precisely to take a little taste of each thing [on Shabbos]. But when people taste the *cholent* on Shabbos, and they like the taste of it, they will usually keep eating it, until they feel like they have full stomach from it.

However, Shabbos is the time to elevate our eating. By having a little taste of the food on Shabbos and by leaving it at that, we elevate the act of eating, on the holy day of Shabbos. Even during the weekday as well, there is this concept, where a person can elevate his eating by having a mere taste of the food, in order to calm his anxiousness; but nothing more than that.

Based upon the above, a person should make sure to taste things, so that his body will be calmed, and he should try this with lighter kind of food which doesn't have too many ingredients. Throughout the day, if you ever feel a need to taste something – and we should emphasize that it's only when you feel a need to taste something, and it should not be brought on deliberately – make sure to put something tasty in your mouth, so that you can satisfy the need for taste; and leave it at that.

You can try this with the Shabbos food, which is the main time to work on this *avodah*. But even if you can't do it with Shabbos, you can still try it during the weekday, as we explained.

This is something that can be worked upon by almost anyone. There are others who can elevate their eating even more than this, because they have worked very much on purifying themselves from

materialism. But the words here are geared towards most people, who still struggle with the pull towards materialistic desires.

The words here are about a very basic level, which can be worked upon by anyone. Understandably, if one can achieve an even higher level of self-control than this, it is certainly praiseworthy.

#### 4) *Eating Out of Boredom*

Now we will address the fourth reason of why people eat: boredom. When a person feels a need for movement and action, he may ease this tension by eating, which gives him the feeling that he is “doing” something.

Here is an example of it. Many times, when people nosh on glazed nuts or the like, it makes them move around a lot as they eat it. There is much movement in their mouth as they crunch on the food, and they are moving around their hands a lot too as they eat it, so it can feel very engaging. There is also a lot of digestion taking place from this kind of eating, which is internal movement, and all of these movements make a person feel like he is active, which eases his boredom.

Firstly, one needs to become aware of this motivation in his eating. If he is bored and he is eating, the first thing he should realize is that he does not need to eat this, and that it is only because he wants to feel like he is having some kind of movement.

When this is the case, a person needs to set up a schedule for himself where he will be able to engage in productive kinds of movement, in order to satisfy his need for movement. If he wants, he can taste something as he’s involved in the activity that he chooses, in order to calm his desire. The main thing to do, upon becoming aware of his need for movement, is to find other movements to do, which can calm his body’s need for movement.

With some people, this desire for movement is calmed if they go for a walk. Another person is calmed by engaging in conversation. Another person can calm himself by reciting verses of *Tehillim*. Another kind of person can calm himself by listening to a *shiur*. The point is to replace the eating with another kind of movement that will calm the body, and each person will have to find what kind of movement calms him from boredom; it is mainly about being aware that his desire to eat food right now is not coming from a need to eat, but from a need for movement.

By replacing the food with some other engaging act of movement, he calms his body’s need for movement which is causing the boredom. As we mentioned, he can also try eating something as he’s involved with that other activity he chooses, so that he can feel calmer. This is similar to the idea we mentioned earlier when we spoke about how to calm the desire for taste. Once he becomes aware of the motivation of why he wants to eat, there is much less of a chance that he will be dragged after the eating, if he just takes a taste of it to calm himself and no more.

By finding some engaging activity that makes him feel like he is doing something, he calms his desire to eat out of boredom, which is entirely a need to experience movement.

### *In Summary*

We have learned here about four motivations of why we eat. These are subtle and complex matters to understand, and there is a lot more to say about this topic. But the most important thing to remember is the point we started out with, which is that a person should always reflect into what is motivating him to eat. It is a whole different kind of eating when a person eats with this awareness, which spans an average of 70,000 meals a lifetime – it would be a shame to have all these meals go to waste.

We should first internalize the fact that eating with this mindfulness causes us to be better off physically, but we should mainly think of its spiritual benefits. Thus, we should try to bring an inner attitude into our eating. We should eat calmly, with *menuchas hanefesh*, and from “listening to our body” as we eat. Eating calmly includes avoiding eating while standing, avoiding eating quickly, and not to multi-task while eating. Therefore, we should set aside time every for “*menuchas hanefesh*” eating.

Slowly but surely as we get used to this, we will be able to better feel what our motivations are as we eat, and direct ourselves accordingly.

### *Avoid Talking About Food So Much*

There is also another important point we will mention now: we shouldn't make such a big deal out of eating and talk about food so much. It has become common in our generation for people to talk about food for hours and hours, discussing all kinds of foods and tastes. People will talk about what kinds of food they ate at a wedding the day before, and how it tasted, and wonder how it is made. But if we want to live a more truthful kind of life, we need to develop an inner attitude towards eating. We need to avoid talking about food and how it tastes, and instead we need to view eating as part of how we can serve Hashem in an inner way.

With the help of Hashem, if we reflect into these matters well, our eating will be elevated, and then all of us together will merit to eat from the *korbonos*, with the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash* - *Amen*, and *Amen*.

*Questions & Answers with the Rav*

**Q1:** *I do not make a deal out of food that much, but I make sure to have certain foods and drinks when I eat breakfast, which doesn't take up much of my time. I just eat a quick breakfast and then I'm done. Is there anything wrong with this kind of rushed eating, since I'm not eating normally and I'm just eating and drinking enough to stay healthy?*

**A:** It sounds like you are eating in order to stay healthy. What is wrong with this?

**Q2:** *What I want to know is: Is this a lack in elevating my eating?*

**A:** If you are referring to how you eat during the weekday, and not Shabbos, there is no problem with this. It is totally fine. However, you need to know for sure if it's indeed coming from a reason to stay healthy, as opposed to a motivation to become physically slim. You need to know for sure if you're eating less because you are indeed keeping away from physical indulgence, or if it's just coming from a desire to "look good" [which is not a holy desire].

**Q3:** *I make sure to eat only healthy foods, and I educate women on how to eat healthy foods, by informing them of how necessary it is to eat healthy and how to avoid the unhealthy foods which are so common in our generation. Since the Rav said that we shouldn't make such a big deal talking about food, how much should I talk with others about the need to eat healthy food, and how much shouldn't I talk about it? It seems from the Rav that the main thing is not about what you eat, but about how you eat. So what is the amount of time that I can spend talking to people about what to eat?*

**A:** This is a very, very good question. There's a problem in our generation where people talk a lot about health, but it does not come from a balance between the physical and the spiritual. In fact, it has become like a form of *avodah zarah* (idol worship), where people emphasize physical health so much, to the point that they only care for their physical well-being. The *Chovos HaLevovos* has a term for this: "They made their stomachs into their own gods." When the body becomes the central aspect in people's lives, this is what causes people to talk about health so much and to make such a big deal out of it, because the physical body is their priority, and therefore, much effort is expended by people to make sure that the body is being well taken care of. After all, they see their body as the main thing in their life.

Therefore, when we want to speak about health with others, we need to have the appropriate balance between a concern for our body and our soul. We can inform others of what the healthy foods are and what the unhealthy foods are, and to guide them to eat the right foods, but not as a purpose unto itself. The reason why we need to keep our body healthy is because it is the *kli* (vessel)

which contains our *neshamah*, and we need to maintain our “vessel” and keep is strong, so that the light of our *neshamah* can shine properly within us.

If a Jew does not have this perspective towards health and he\she is a health practitioner, then his attitude towards health is no different than a gentile’s outlook, for a gentile can give over the very same health education. If a person teaches other people about how to stay healthy, he\she must be clearly aware of the reason of why he\she practices this: the Torah’s view of health is that our body needs to be a proper vessel to maintain the spiritual effects of our *neshamah*. When the focus is purely on physical health and there is no awareness that we are a *neshamah*, this is purely the gentile attitude towards living, and it is not the way for the Jewish people.

**Q4: *In today’s generation, where food is out of control and people overeat, just for the sake of taste and enjoyment and for no other purpose, how can we raise our children to make sure that they shouldn’t eat too much nosh and candy? Are there guidelines of nosh that we should try to formulate, like what to give out and what not to give out to them, and what the limitations should be?***

**A:** This is a very good question. In today’s generation, you can find no less than 1000 different types of candy in the stores, all with a *hecsher*. It is a giant ocean of desires. To simply tell a child, “Don’t eat all of this stuff!” will not do much for the child. There is really a deeper issue we need to address when it comes to all of this. We need to train a child to understand that we have a body as well as a *neshamah*, and that our need for taste is actually a spiritual need that comes from the *neshamah*, only, it is often channeled in the wrong direction; and that when we pursue physical tastes, we prevent ourselves from tasting the spiritual. The same is true vice versa – the less we pursue physical taste, the more we can taste of what is waiting for our *neshamah*.

Therefore, our task in *chinuch* (child education) is really a task to bring to them to live more spiritually, and part of this includes experiencing spiritual enjoyment and tastes. To tell our children not to eat so much is perhaps a little bit helpful, but it will not do much for them. Instead, we need to emphasize to our children what a life of *ruchniyus* (spirituality) is like, and to explain to a child that pursuing physical gratification prevents us from experiencing the taste and enjoyment of *ruchniyus*.

We must know that there is a spiritual kind of taste, which is pleasurable to our *neshamah*, and there is also physical enjoyment and taste, which prevents a person from tasting the spiritual. A person has the free will on this world to choose what kind of taste he wants to have – either to taste of the spiritual, which is of the higher realms of our existence, or to taste the physical, which is of the lower realms. That choice is what we need to convey to our children.

Understandably, we will not be able to convey this information 100% to our children. We are only speaking of percentages. It is an inner way to live life, which we can bring our children into slowly, but this does not happen in a day or two. It is also not just about the issue of food, but about

how to live life in general. We need to train ourselves, and our children, to live a more inner kind of life. We need to slowly show a child how he needs to choose between pursuing the physical vs. the spiritual. The point is not to tell him what to eat and what not to eat. Rather, we need to convey the message to the child that it takes several years to work on ourselves when it comes to this, and to deepen our sense of taste, so that we can reveal a taste in the spiritual. If the child gets the message correctly, we can then do appropriate *chinuch*.

So it is really a very good question, and it is a big problem which our generation struggles with, where there are so many different kinds of indulgence everywhere we turn.

**Q5: So is the Rav saying that there is nothing we can practically about this, and it is just that we need to have the proper hashkafah (perspective) about it?**

**A:** A young child is not at the point of desiring so many candies and nosh, but as a child gets a bit older and he begins to want things, we can start training him to choose between living a more hedonistic kind of life versus a more spiritual kind of life. Again, it is not about telling him what to eat and what not to eat, but to help him decide and make the right choice, of what kind of life he wants to live.

How should we help him choose? This is what we should ask him: “Do you want to live a life of *gashmiyus* (pursuing physical gratification)? Or would you rather live a life of *ruchniyus*? Do you want to be a person who chases after *gashmiyus* or do you want to be a person of *ruchniyus*?” If he says that he does want *ruchniyus* over *gashmiyus*, then we can guide him slowly and in steps from there.

For example, on Shabbos when giving out candy and sweets to the children, we can tell a child to put aside one candy and not eat it. If he gets a full bag full of nosh, tell him to put aside one candy that he won’t eat. Don’t tell him not to want it. Instead, train him into the inner perspective that we have described here. Again, the point is not to tell him how to behave. The point is to bring him to a certain awareness, a more mature perspective towards life, where he thinks about the spiritual and he chooses between *gashmiyus* and *ruchniyus*.

**Q6: Can we also get others to follow these principles, and not just to use them for our own children?**

**A:** If a person is in charge of a shul or school, where children bring in nosh and candy, the person in charge can try to set guidelines about what can be brought in to *shul* school and what should not be brought in. It’s really impossible to control this, though, because there are so many children in these places, and we can’t control all the *nosh* that comes in. But it would be good if one community would set guidelines about these things. The message behind it, though, should be clear: Life is not

meant to be *hefker* (free to pursue whatever desires we want). The fact that everything today has a *hecsher* on it is a lifestyle that is totally *hefker*, and it doesn't make sense.

**Q7: *If a person feels hungry, could it also be because his soul is feeling hungry, and the body intercepts this message and translates it into a hunger for food?***

**A:** That can certainly be possible, but in order to discern this, we would have to explain this point more in-depth. Most people are not aware to the messages that their *neshamah* is sending them. In order for a person to recognize if a desire is coming from the *neshamah* or not, he would have to know how to identify that the desire is coming from the *neshamah*, and that the desire of his *neshamah* for more spirituality is merely being clothed under the “garment” of a physical desire for food. But I did not speak about this point in this class, because most people do not pay attention to the sounds of their *neshamah*. It is certainly possible, though, for a person to identify his hunger as a spiritual hunger that is coming from his *neshamah*, and that it is being translated by the body into physical hunger; but this is a much higher level of *avodah* than the level that was discussed in this class.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The Rav has also spoken about how to elevate our eating in the shiurim of Fixing.Your.Water.005 and Tefillah #081 – Eating With Holiness.

## *12 / Adar – The Depth Behind Laughter*

### *Sechok – Holy Laughter*

The *halachah* is that “when the month of Adar enters, we increase our happiness”.

Each month of the year has its own unique Avodah (way of serving the Creator) special for that month. The month of Adar is a time of *simcha* happiness, which the holy *sefarim* say is the type of *simcha* known as *sechok* -- “laughter”. Our Avodah in the month of Adar is to have *sechok* – “laughter.”

When a person laughs, what he is basically doing is revealing his happiness outward. When a person is happy inside but he doesn't laugh, his happiness remains in his heart and it isn't expressed outwardly. But when a person laughs, he has an outward expression of happiness – he brings up the happiness from inside his heart to his mouth, where he laughs from.

*Simcha* is of happiness which has more to do with the heart. We find *simcha* associated with song, which is a really an inner expression of happiness. “There is no song except over wine.” Wine is also associated with happiness, because it is written, “*And wine gladdens the heart of man.*” *Simcha* is an internal happiness, an inner song, which is not expressed outwardly.

But *sechok* is through the mouth. “It is prohibited for one to fill his mouth with *sechok* (laughter) on this world.”

The increase of happiness during the month of Adar is to reveal the happiness outward from within our heart. This is *sechok* – laughter, which is an open revelation of our happiness.

What exactly is our power of *sechok*? How do we serve the Creator using laughter? Usually it is only foolish and immature people who we can see laughing all the time. But laughter can also be used for holiness.

### *Making Fun of Idols and Heresy*

What is this holy kind of laughter? An example of this is what the Gemara says that is permissible to make fun of idol worship.

On a simple level, it appears that when we are supposed to make fun of something, such as scoffing at idol worship and heresy, that we are using the same laughter we all know of, but that we are just using it for a holy purpose. But on a deeper understanding, the holy kind of laughter is a whole different kind of laughter than the one we know of.

There is holy laughter, and there is the laughter of fools. In the future, the non-Jews will want to keep the *mitzvah* of *sukkah*, but they will kick it over; Hashem will laugh at them. This is the root of the holy kind of laughter – Hashem Himself laughs.

### *Evil Laughter*

But the foolish kind of laughter is a base kind of laughter, in which a person just laughs in order to nullify someone else. This is because *sechok* comes from the word *soichek*, “grinding”. When a person grinds something, he is trying to nullify it and erase its existence.

People who laugh at others for the wrong reasons are laughing at them in order to nullify them. This is the evil kind of laughter, which is the laughter of fools. The Gemara also states that the “spleen laughs.” The base kind of laughter which is used to hurt other people is rooted in the spleen inside the body; the holy kind of laughter does not come from this.

### *Laughing Upon Seeing The Future In The Present*

What is the depth of holy laughter? There is a story in the Gemara (*Makkos 24b*) that Rebbi Akiva and his colleagues were walking on the site of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. Every one cried – except for Rebbi Akiva, who was laughing! They asked him why he is laughing. He said that he is laughing because just as the prophecy of the destruction was fulfilled, so will the end of the prophecy be fulfilled – that the *Beis Hamikdash* will be rebuilt.

This is the holy kind of “*sechok*” – a holy kind of laughter. It is a laughter upon being content, specifically because a person sees the future in the present and thus has no reason to be sad.

Here we see what holy *sechok* is. Laughter\ *sechok* can be identified with seeing the future in the present. This causes a reason to laugh – when one sees the future right now, he sees that there’s nothing to be sad about because it will turn out good anyway, so he just laughs.

Since Rebbi Akiva saw the how the future was being fulfilled, he was able to be happy now even in the present moment – and thus he laughed. This is really the depth behind the laughter – it is to feel the future in the present, which makes a person content and laugh off the problems.

### *Purim Is Redemption Now*

This is also the happiness of Purim and the month of Adar – that the future Redemption is already taking place in the present. When the Jewish people thought it was their end, it was a really a continuation of their survival. This is the laughter of Adar and Purim – what we think is the worst thing possible is actually our salvation.

Haman tried to destroy us using the evil kind of *sechok* -- trying to nullify our existence. On Purim, we use the holy kind of *sechok* and laugh at this.

The depth behind the happiness in the month of Adar and Purim is that the future good which we will have is really happening right now. During the rest of the year, we are within the bounds of time – there is a past, present and future. But in the month of Adar, there is a unique revelation taking place: there is no time! It’s all happening now – the past, the present and future are all contained in right now.

Thus, we have a reason to celebrate the future Redemption even now. Purim is a taste of the future Redemption, and thus Purim is to essentially experience the future Redemption even now -- causing reason for happiness.

Now, we can really understand the depth behind *sechok*, the power of holy “laughter” in our soul.

The Gemara (*Megillah 14a*) states that “we are still slaves of Achashveirosh.” What is the whole redemption of Purim if we were still considered enslaved to Achashveirosh?!

The answer is the following deep point. On Purim, we experienced a whole different kind of redemption than the redemption we experienced from Egypt. On Pesach, we left Egypt. On Purim, we left the present moment – even though the redemption wasn’t here yet. We experienced the redemption even in the present!

On Purim, there is a redemption taking place in the present moment. It is *sechok* – that even though it appears to us that we are not yet redeemed, we really are. There is a *netzach netzachim*, an eternity, that we can experience right now in the present moment – on Purim.

### *Drinking On Purim – Outwardly Showing the Happiness*

*Sechok* \laughter is to be so elated that one wants to express the happiness outward. When a person laughs, he is so happy that he reveals it outward.

This is the happiness we reach on Purim -- *sechok*, an open kind of happiness which we express.

On Purim, we accepted the Torah again, and this time it was willingly. “They kept and accepted what they already accepted.”

Purim is a time to make a new commitment to the Torah, to accept it out of love.

A very famous aspect of Purim is to get drunk on Purim, until one does not know have any *da’as* anymore. How do we come to a new acceptance of Torah on Purim if we are drunk??

The answer is that because we are so happy, we want to express it outwardly, in the form of *sechok*. This is why Chazal commanded us to drink on Purim – so we should express openly our happiness and reveal it outward.

## *13 / Adar Aleph – Increasing Happiness*

### *The Month of Adar – A Time of Happiness*

With the help of Hashem, we are in the month of Adar. (In a leap year, we merit to have two months of Adar). It is well-known what power is revealed during the month of Adar: it is the month where there is more *simchah* (happiness). The Sages state, “When Adar enters, we increase happiness.”<sup>37</sup> To be more specific, the power which describes the month of Adar is known as “*sechok*” (laughter)<sup>38</sup>.

Let us reflect, with *siyata d’shmaya*, into what the roots of sadness are, so that we can learn how to remove sadness and reveal happiness in our life.

### *Reflecting On the Roots of Sadness*

In whatever we think about, we can always discover details and roots. Either we can see the details involved in a matter, or we can see the roots of the matter. So when it comes to analyzing sadness, either we can think into the many different details that can cause sadness, or we can look into the roots of sadness, and see what the roots are that bring a person to sadness.

Here we will try to analyze the roots that cause sadness, as opposed to studying the many ‘branches’ that can bring on sadness. There are several “root” causes for sadness.

### *Two Sources of Sadness – In the Body and In the Soul*

Man is comprised of four physical elements: fire, wind, water, and earth. These four elements are in all of Creation, and they are in man as well. Earth is the heaviest of the elements, and when it is left unbalanced by the other elements, the element of earth will weigh a person down with its heaviness, which ultimately causes a person to feel sadness.

Thus, sadness can stem from the heaviness that is found in our physical body, in our body’s element of earth. Our body was fashioned from the earth. Man comes from dirt, and the heaviness in this dirt that is part of his physical makeup can breed sadness, when one’s element of earth is

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37 Talmud Bavli Taanis 29a

38 Sefer Yetzirah 5:5 [see Rosh Chodesh Avodah\_013\_The Power of Laughter, for how to use the power of sechok/laughter in the month of Adar].

imbalanced and it is weighing the person down. This is the first source for sadness: the element of earth, which is contained in the physical body.

When a person commits a sin (Heaven forbid), and certainly if he commits more sins, his soul becomes sad from this, because it does not want to be in a situation of sin. When a person sins and he does not immediately do *teshuvah*<sup>39</sup> for it, the soul becomes sad at this, and when this is the case, the sadness that a person feels is stemming from the soul.

### *Solving Sadness Due To Heaviness*

Generally speaking, a person needs to get used to eating a lighter diet, as we discussed in the month of Shevat. Our body becomes heavy from the “earth” in us, so we need to be careful with what we eat. When we overeat, this makes us feel heavy, and heaviness causes us to be sad, since heaviness is a trait of earth, the root element for sadness. So we should get accustomed to eat light foods that won’t make us heavy.<sup>40</sup>

In addition, when someone is drawn very much towards lethargy, he needs to get used to doing things enthusiastically, which will combat the nature of the ‘heaviness’ within him that is causing him to be sad. He should mainly work on this by practicing doing things energetically. For example, he should resolve upon himself that for 3 times a day, he will do something quickly and with enthusiasm.<sup>41</sup>

This is the two-part solution that solves sadness that comes from feeling physically lethargic and sluggish. The first part of the solution is, to get used to a lighter diet. The second part of the solution is, to try to do 3 things a day with enthusiasm. This will enable a person to acquire the trait that described in the *Mishnah* in *Avos*, “as light as an eagle”, and to avoid the lethargy and sadness that is produced from the ‘heaviness’ in the body.

### *Solving Sadness of our Soul*

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39 repentance

40 This was discussed in the shiur of Rosh Chodesh Avodah\_011\_Elevated Eating; see also Fixing Your Earth\_010\_Counteracting Laziness

41 Editor’s Note: It is said about Reb Yeruchem Levovitz zt”l that he would practice doing things against his will for 5 times a day, in order to counter the nature of laziness (and another note, the Rav explained this in terms of getting used to bittul haratzon (nullifying one’s will). Perhaps the reason for the Rav’s recommendation of doing this 3 times a day, as opposed to 5 times a day as Reb Yeruchem did, is so that even simpler people (like us), who are not the level of Reb Yeruchem Levovitz, can also practice it, on our own level.

The second source for sadness that we mentioned is, when sadness comes from the soul. The soul becomes sad when a person commits sins. The solution for this kind of sadness is to do earnest *teshuvah* from the depths of the heart.

Our Sages wrote that there are four main times to do *teshuvah*: before going to sleep at night, on Erev Shabbos, on Erev Rosh Chodesh, and on Erev Yom Kippur (which is the most important time to do *teshuvah*). These are the “general” times to do *teshuvah*, but if a person lives a more inner kind of life, he does *teshuvah* whenever he feels inner sadness coming from his soul, and he does so from the depths of his heart.

The *teshuvah* should not be done monotonously, but truthfully and earnestly, until a person feels that his *teshuvah* was genuine, to the point that “The One who knows all secrets (Hashem) can testify on him that his *teshuvah* is truthful.”<sup>42</sup>

This is an internal way of living, in which a person trains himself to react to any time that he feels inner sadness by concentrating deeply and resolving to live like a more truthful kind of Jew: to resolve that one will truly submit oneself to the *Ribono Shel Olam*<sup>43</sup>.

If one does *teshuvah* earnestly, he will find that his sadness will subside, either totally, or at least to a very large extent.

### *Identifying Your Sadness*

From the two above possible reasons for sadness (feeling heaviness of the body, or feeling sad due to sins), a person should try to identify which kind of sadness it is when he’s feeling it.

If a person feels a sense of ‘heaviness’ in his body, if he is feeling somewhat sluggish and lethargic, then this stems from the body’s element of earth, and the solution for this kind of sadness as we said is, to get used to a lighter diet and to do things enthusiastically. But many times a person will feel that the reason for his sadness is deeper than just a general sense of feeling lethargic. Such sadness is not stemming from heaviness of the body, but from a deeper source. It is coming from the depths of the *neshamah* (the soul), due to sins, which feels painful to the soul. When that is the case, the solution is to do earnest *teshuvah*.

If a person reflects a little and he has become a more internal kind of person, he will be able to keenly identify if the sadness he’s feeling is coming from heaviness of the body (the element of earth in the body), or if it’s coming from sins. And after identifying which kind of sadness it is, he should use the solutions above, accordingly.

We have so far mentioned two root causes for sadness, and how they can each be rectified, and how a person should go about identifying them.

### *A Third Cause for Sadness: Lacking a Sense of Purpose in Life*

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42 A quote from the Ramban

43 Master of the world

Until now we have explained, with *siyata d'shmaya*, about two kinds of sadness - a sadness that comes a feeling of 'heaviness' in the body, which is rooted in the body's element of earth; and sadness that comes from the soul, due to sins and improper actions. Now we will speak about a third kind of sadness, which is very common. This is when a person is living without any sense of direction in his life, when he doesn't know what he wants from himself, what his purpose is, and to where he is heading in his life.

Many times, when a person is having various failures in the external aspects of their life, or when one has time to think quietly about his personal situation, he will discover that he has no clear-cut direction in life. When a person is living without a sense of clear direction in his life, he is filled with all kinds of doubts about what to do and what not to do, and in a broader sense, he is filled with doubt about his entire life in general. This is the main kind of sadness which we see by most people, and the world is full of much of this kind of sadness in people.

We have so far given a general description of it, and now let's explore this deeper so that we can have a clearer understanding of it.

There is a well-known statement, written by the Rema, who says, "There is no happiness like the clarification of doubts."<sup>44</sup> These words imply that when there are no doubts, there is happiness, so if there are doubts, there cannot be happiness present, thus there will be sadness whenever a person has doubts. When a person is trying to make a decision but he is filled with doubt about how he should decide, his soul becomes sad, from this very state of being in doubt.

(A hint to this is that the Hebrew word for sadness, which is *atzvus* (עצבות) is from the word **עצב** (*etzev*), which is from the words **עץ ב'**, which hints to the term "two options of advice (because the word **עץ** is also from the word **עצה**, advice) – in other words, when a person faces two conflicting paths of advice to take, he has *atzvus* \sadness.)

Sometimes a person is sad due to a particular doubt about something that he is going through, like if he isn't sure about whom to marry, if he doesn't know which house to buy and where to live, or if he's not sure about what kind of job he needs to work in. In these cases, a person can know clearly of the doubt that is plaguing his happiness. But in many cases, a person cannot name exactly a particular doubt is bothering him. He is just feeling doubtful about his entire life in general and which direction it is taking, and he feels a general lack of clarity towards his life. These are the kinds of doubts that fill the lives of many people, and therefore the world is full of this kind of sadness.

### *Lack of Centeredness*

If we ask any believing Jew, "What are you living for?" he will surely answer that he is living in order to do the will of Hashem and fulfill the *mitzvos*. But if we look deeper into what's going on inside many people, we would discover that most people - while certainly saying that they this is what they live for, and that they know in their minds what they must do - their souls are not directed towards any one point that they are striving for. Their souls are scattered over many

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44 Toras HaOlah

different points that they are involved with. When the soul is so spread out like this, and it is not aiming towards any one point in particular, this lack of direction towards anything clear results in a deep kind of sadness to the soul.

We can see that there are many people who are working towards a goal. Sometimes they have materialistic goals, and sometimes they have spiritual goals, but in either case, they are heading towards one point that they strive for. They are centered and focused on attaining a particular goal that they have, and this keeps them largely from falling into the pit of sadness.

Based upon this observation, we can uncover the solution for the deep sadness that fills most of the world – sadness that stems from lack of clarity and direction in life – by learning how to stay focused on a particular goal in life that each person can strive for. Our goal we want to develop, however, will be of a spiritual nature, and not of a materialistic concern. Yet, we can still learn a lesson from the goal-oriented people of the world and use their method of success, when it comes to our own spiritual potential. With the help of Hashem, we will explain this.

### *Having a Spiritual Goal*

There are many observant Jews who go to learn a profession today, whether it is to become a doctor, lawyer, or whatever profession they choose. They are juggling many different aspects in their life, yet they are focused on attaining a certain goal, by going to school to learn about the profession that they are trying to attain, and this helps them stay centered as they aim for that goal. The fact that they are working towards a goal gives them a sense of happiness, from the mere fact that they know that they are heading towards a goal – whether the goal is a worthy one, or not.

Just as actively striving towards a particular goal can work for success in the material world, so can it work when we have a spiritual goal to strive for. There are some people who have spiritual goals, and they gain satisfaction and happiness from it whenever they are actively pursuing it.

For example, there are some people who feel that doing *chessed* for others is their spiritual goal in life. They open up a *gemach* or an organization that helps people, they are focused on what they are doing, as opposed to being not spread out over many different goals they want; they are involved solely in one goal that they are aiming for. Some people help others with money, some people help others with their advice, some people help others by lending their possessions to others, and there are many other ways as well how people help others. In all of these scenarios, the person is focused on a spiritual goal of *chessed* that he is aiming for.

Whether the goal is materialistic or spiritual, as long as person can stay focused and concentrated on pursuing his goal, his soul feels connected to something. He will be less prone to sadness, and he will find it easier to be happy.

Most people are usually doing many good and wonderful things, but they are not aiming for any one goal in particular that they are striving for. For example, if a woman is a housewife, she does many good things every day; she takes care of the house, she is constantly nourishing her husband and children with meals, and each of these acts involves countless achievements. In addition, a woman does many constructive acts each day besides for this. Yet, this doesn't necessarily make her happy, even though she is doing all of these good things.

Why? It is because she doesn't see how it all connects. She may feel very 'spread out' all over the place with all of these things that she does, and she does not feel that she is aiming towards anything in particular that she is living for. She would be very happy if she would just consider how all of these acts really connect into one piece. She could focus on the fact that all of these things are *chessed*, and then she would derive happiness from this – that is, if she considers *chessed* to be her goal. But when a woman doesn't consider all of what she does as part of a general goal that she is striving for, then in spite of all her many actual achievements, she will not be happy.

Every Jew, man and woman alike, needs to have a spiritual goal in his life to aim for. No matter how much countless wonderful acts a person is doing each day, a person will not actually be happy from all of this unless there is a particular spiritual goal that he/she is striving for.

Each person can have a different unique goal to strive for; it is not the same for all people.

### *Figuring Out Your Personal Spiritual Goal in Life*

In the secular values of the material world, people are seeking wealth, status, and nice houses to live in, and that is what drives them to stay focused on their goals. But when we speak about the inner, spiritual world, the focus must be on a spiritual goal, on a certain inner point which we would want to aim towards, as we go about our day-to-day living.

Every person will have to sit with himself in a quiet place and try to figure out, as best as he can, of a spiritual goal that will speak to him and which he feels is closely attainable. A person needs to wonder: "What is a worthy, spiritual goal that I would want to aim towards and direct my whole life towards?" The point is to be focused on you can utilize your own potential, which lays dormant within you.

Once again, let us emphasize that there is a difference between how the secular world pursues their goals, with how a Torah Jew needs to pursue his goals. When a gentile speaks of having goals in life and on being focused and concentrated on working towards a goal, the attitude is to lay down the desire that you really want and how to get to what you want the most; how to attain that which you want badly. But when we speak of spiritual goals, the goals that a Torah Jew needs to have, which utilize the potential of our *neshamah* (Divine soul), the way of knowing our goals is a different process.

It is about how to actualize my actual potential that is within me, as opposed to getting what I want out of life. It is about figuring out which point speaks to me and is close to home by me, as opposed to something that my *nefesh habehaimis* (external, animalistic layer of the soul) wants, which are expressed in the gentile world. It is a clarification about the innermost point that I currently identify, which speaks to me. It is that point which a Jew needs to strive for, and to figure out how to actualize this potential.

If a person succeeds at uncovering the spiritual point that speaks to him the most right now at his current level, he is engaged in utilizing his potential, and he will succeed at removing the deep sadness of the soul, the pain of the soul when there is a lack of clarity and direction in life.

However, in order to figure out what the goal will be, it is not an easy thing to figure out so quickly, and it will not take a few minutes. A person needs to sit with himself quietly and try to go

deeper into himself and recognize himself better and better, until he can get to know what his deepest spiritual ambition is. Often a person will need to speak to someone else for help with this.

A person will also need to *daven* to Hashem for help with this, that he should merit to discover a spiritual goal that he wants to aim for. If he can get himself to cry to Hashem for this, he should do so. But even more so, we must understand that we will not get to it so fast. We don't immediately see what our deepest spiritual desire is. But at one's own current level, one can try to figure out a spiritual goal that speaks very much to him, and to aim towards it in his day-to-day life.

Slowly as time goes on, a person will gradually be able to uncover an even deeper spiritual goal that he will want, and then direct himself accordingly to actualize that goal.

### *The Prerequisite to Happiness*

We need to understand the following point, which is a prerequisite to *simchah* (happiness). It is a very root and essential point to be aware of: *simchah* is not just based on that which I want to attain but haven't yet attained. It is mainly based on whatever I have attained thus far.

If a person is not focused on any one goal in particular, he will not be clear of what he wants to reach, and he will not either be clear of what he has already reached thus far.

These two points are unclear to a person when he doesn't have a goal. Upon having a goal, a person first needs to clarify what he wants to reach, but at the same time, he must also be aware of what he has already attained thus far. He needs to always remind himself of this: to be clear in what he wants to reach, and to be clear in what he has gained so far. That which you have already attained is actually the root of your *simchah*, and that which you are aiming for, which you haven't yet gotten, is the factor that takes away sadness.

Thus, *simchah* is comprised of two factors: the removal of our sadness, and the revelation of happiness itself. Anything you have attained thus far is included in your aspect of "*someach b'chelko*", "being happy with one's lot" (which is the revelation of happiness), and anything which you haven't gotten but which you are aiming to get, is what takes away sadness, when you are involving yourself in trying to get there.

Let's review this again so that we are clear about it: there are two parts to *simchah* – the removal of sadness, and the revelation of happiness. When I am focused on attaining a certain goal, this removes my current sadness [because the soul will feel like it is moving towards a certain direction]; to be more specific, it removes the doubts that create sadness. And where do I derive *simchah* from in the present? From that which I have attained thus far; this is the "*someiach b'chelko*" that reveals happiness in one's present state.

Now we can understand the following. We mentioned earlier the difference between the gentile and Torah approaches of being goal-oriented. The way of the gentiles, which is especially the case in our current generation, focuses on what you should want out of life, and how to get it. It is about "getting what you want". When you get it, you are happy, because that was what you wanted, you aimed for it, and you got it. That is Western mentality. By contrast, the Torah has a different approach to being goal-oriented: it is about actualizing the "I". For we need to wonder: What is the "I" in us that wants things?

If “being happy with my lot” means that I got what I wanted, that would mean that I partially have what I want and I partially don’t have what I want. There is a rule, “He who wants a hundred, will want two hundred.” We are never completely satisfied when we attain what we want, because the next day we will want something else, and then we are back to where we started. There is no “lot” to be happy with here.

But if I tried to reach something which my “I” wanted – if it came from a very deep inner drive – then when I do attain that which I want, it is not simply that I have gotten what I wanted, but it is a part of my very “I.” If I wanted something that was a part of my “I” and I reach it, then I have attained a revelation of my “I”, something that is part of me. The happiness that results from that is coming from the actualization of the “I” – the happiness that comes when one utilizes his potential. When the “I” is brought out from its potential state and it is actualized, there is resulting happiness.

We need to understand this deep point, which is very clear. When a person wants something, and he attained it either partially or even completely, the happiness that results from this is just superficial; it is an incomplete happiness. The happiness will be fleeting, and sadness will soon follow.

The only genuine happiness which exists is not when I simply attain what I want, but when I reveal my “I”; when I actualize the potential of my “I”. That is *simchah*. For if something is not a part of me and it is only on my outside, reaching it will not give me true and inner *simchah*, even it is a wonderful thing to attain; whether it is a physical attainment, or even if it is a spiritual attainment. By contrast, if I achieve something that is small but it actualized my “I” in the process in getting there, then the happiness I will experience is coming from my “I” when I get it. You can only have real *simchah* in something that is a part of your “I.”

The meaning of “*someiach b’chelko*” (being happy with one’s lot) means that even if my “lot” is small - like when I compare myself with others and I see that others have more than me - I can still be *someiach b’chelko*.

How indeed can one be happy if he sees that others have reached more than him? The depth of this is because *simchah* does not come from what I acquire. If it would come from what I acquire, then I can never be happy, because in comparison to others, I may have acquired very little. *Simchah* rather comes from actualizing the potential of my “I.” When my “I” is actualized, when I have reached something which is “me”, there is resulting *simchah*.

For this reason, if a person does not have true self-recognition, he is not aware of any actualization of his potential, and he finds nothing to be happy about. If he hears the words here that have been explained until now, he will not be satisfied, and he will feel, “In the end of the day, I don’t have much to be happy about. Even the things I do have in my life are minimal compared to what others have. Others have much more than me to be happy about. So how can I be happy with what I have, when I see that everyone else around has more than me [both physically and spiritually]...?”

When a person finds it impossible to be happy with what he has, it can only be because he is out of touch with his “I”. He is unaware that the only thing which truly gives us happiness is when one utilizes his personal potential. If he would be aware of his “I” and he would be aware that only

actualizing his potential is what provides happiness, he would have a whole different perspective towards life, and he wouldn't need answers to his question, for he would be above this question.

When a person lives only superficially, he will remain with the question, and it pains him. He will not be able to be happy with what he has. But when a person comes out of superficiality and he realizes that happiness does not come from acquiring things, but from actualizing the "I", he will feel that everything he attains is a part of his "I", and the *simchah* that he experiences will be a happiness in his very "I" as it is.

We are speaking about a totally different perspective of *simchah* here! It is not a *simchah* that comes from getting what you want, where you remain unsatisfied by the things you haven't yet gotten to. It is a *simchah* that one has in his very "I".

It is difficult to explain it any more than how it has been explained here, but herein lays an entirely different and deeper perspective of *simchah* - for anyone who understands what we mean here.

### *Summary*

In summary, we have explained three main underlying reasons for sadness.

The first source of sadness comes from our body, when we have a feeling of 'heaviness' that dominates us and makes us lethargic. This can be counteracted with watching what we eat, together with doing things enthusiastically each day.

A second source of sadness comes from our soul, when there are sins that we haven't done *teshuvah* about yet. The solution for this is to train oneself to doing *teshuvah* on a regular basis, from the depths of the heart. A person should awaken himself to *teshuvah* for every time that he feels a deep and inner sadness.

The third cause of sadness, which is the most common kind of sadness that people have, is when people don't feel fulfilled in their life, and they lack a sense of direction in life. The solution for this is two-fold: to realize what we have already gained so far in our life, as well as to be focused on a certain spiritual goal that speaks to us. Unfortunately, most people in the world are suffering in their souls from this kind of sadness – they feel like they are not aiming for any particular goal in life.

### *In Conclusion*

All that we have explained here until now, understandably, is but the introduction for one to get to the complete and true *simchah*, which is described in the verse, **שמחו צדיקים בה'** - "*The righteous rejoice in Hashem.*" We did not speak here about this kind of *simchah*, but that is the desired goal of all that has been explained here.

May we merit from Hashem to feel true happiness in our life - by being happy even with even the parts of ourselves that we haven't yet actualized, as well as by being happy with the parts of ourselves that we have actualized; and that all of us together should rejoice, in the Creator – as it is written, "*The righteous rejoice in Hashem.*"



*Questions & Answers with the Rav*

**Q1: Does this idea (of being focused and connected to one spiritual goal in our life) also apply to other areas in life, such as marital peace, children, and livelihood, and other areas of our life?**

**A:** This question stems from living a superficial kind of life, where a person is experiencing life from outside of himself/herself, and not from the inside. When a person lives inwardly, all of these aspects mentioned (marital peace, children, livelihood) are placed in secondary focus to the main point that he is directed towards. When one is not directed towards any one inner point in his life, he will go through the motions, and sometimes his focus will be on his marriage, sometimes on his source of livelihood, and sometimes on his children. But when there is one inner point that he is directing himself towards, none of these things will take over his focus, because he is heading towards a larger picture than any of these aspects.

**Q2: Can the Rav give me specific questions that I can ask myself in order to get clarity in what my main point is that I should be focused on in life?**

**A:** This is a very fundamental question to ask, which is hard to answer in a brief amount of time. To put it forth in general terms, every person needs to know: (1) The strongest positive quality that he possesses, (2) and after that, he should know what the “deepest” thing is that he experiences in his soul. (3) After a person knows both of these factors and he has the combined knowledge of both of these factors together, he should then reach a third stage: the deepest part of himself that he currently

However, this is really a very big question, and it is like the request of the person in the *Mishnah* [in the times of Hilel and Shammai] who asked, “Teach me the entire Torah on one foot.”

**Q3: How does this idea of ‘figuring out our main point’ fit into our general goal of life, which is to learn Torah and do mitzvos? Are there really two goals in life – our personal goals, and then our general goal in life (which is Torah and mitzvos)? How do we integrate the goal of keeping Torah and mitzvos with having my own personal spiritual goal?**

**A:** Torah and mitzvos are the purpose and goal that applies to all of *Klal Yisrael*, and in that aspect, all of our goals are equal. But within our general goal of Torah and mitzvos, there is also the individual and private goal that each Jew must strive for. The Sages say that everyone is different and that everyone thinks differently (Berachos 57a). Each person contains a point which no one else has. The private goal of each Jew is not meant, *chas v’shalom*, to take away from the general goal, which is keeping Torah and mitzvos. Rather, each of us needs to bring out our individual point and fulfill our own private and unique mission.

Our personal goals in life are not to be viewed as a ‘separate’ goal that we have other than Torah and mitzvos; rather, our personal goals in life are a goal within our general goal, which is Torah and mitzvos, which enables us to have a connection with Hashem. The individual mission of a Jew is within the general goal of keeping all of the Torah and *mitzvos*, and it can be a particular *mitzvah* or *middah* (character trait) that he is meant to perfect; so it is all within the general goal of Torah and mitzvos.

Each person has a point where his stronger in than others; within Torah and mitzvos, there is also a person's individuality. The purpose of one's individuality and unique strong point is a path for him to get to the goal of Torah and mitzvos, and not as a purpose unto itself. Rather, utilizing our unique potential and individuality is our own way of how we can connect ourselves with Hashem, which is our general goal in which we are all the same in.

**Q4: *Isn't the fact that we are all created with a "tzelem elokim" ("in the image of G-d") also a point in which all Jews are the same in?***

**A:** When Hashem created people, did He create them all with the same height, looks, natures and personality? Are we all the same, or are we different? We are all created different from each other. We each look differently, we each have different *middos*, we each have different ways of thinking, and we are different from each other in many ways. Why did Hashem make us differently? It is to show us that we each have a unique aspect – within the path of Torah and mitzvos - in how we can each come to recognize the Creator. Our individuality is a detail contained with a larger whole. It is not excluded from the whole, rather, it is within it. Each person needs to reveal his individual, unique point – and each person's unique point is different from anyone else's. Although Torah and mitzvos are the general goal of *Klal Yisrael*, within Torah and mitzvos there is also each person's individuality.

**Q5: *Would learning about the "Ten Sefiros" help a person reach his/her particular strong point in life?***

**A:** How did you hear about the *Sefiros*? There are two ways how this knowledge is learned – either in a holy manner, or in a manner which creates confusion.

**Q6: *Assuming that we learn this information from a Rav who is knowledgeable in these things....?***

**A:** If you find a person who is far removed from materialism of this world and he is a reliable and trustworthy person who can teach Kaballah to women, then yes. But this has to be researched well. Usually when people start studying Kaballah, they become very confused. If you go to learn Kaballah, you are entering into something where there is a possibility of becoming very confused.

**Q7: *Is there a particular sefer the Rav can suggest that one can learn which will help him understand himself?***

**A:** There is no one way to take; there are many *sefarim* like this. I can't say which particular *sefer* to learn. If you are used to listening to our *shiurim*, then you can try learning sefer "*Da Es Nafshecha*" ("Getting To Know Your Soul", of this author). But there are other *sefarim* too which can help you understand yourself.

**Q8: *Are there are other sefarim that the Rav can suggest we should learn, in order to understand ourselves?***

**A:** Let me explain what the difficulty with this is. Most of the sefarim\books which are being written today are taking ideas from gentile authors, and people are attempting to convert these ideas into *kedushah*\holiness. There is no *sefer* [about self-knowledge] being produced today that is entirely based on Torah and with no traces of non-Jewish ideas. Therefore, it is hard to know which parts of new *sefarim* are appropriate for us and which parts are not appropriate, because we don't know if it's taken from secular knowledge or not. That is why I can't recommend any on *sefer* [about self-knowledge] to learn - I do not know if everything that is written there is appropriate for a Jew to look at. Some of the *sefarim* being written today are borrowed from gentile thinking and the authors are trying to bring it into Judaism, and that is why I can't say to learn them or not to learn them; for this reason, it is a complicated matter to address.

**Q9: Are there no sefarim written by our Rishonim (earlier sages) and Acharonim (later sages) which can help us understand ourselves? Aren't those sefarim entirely sourced in kedushah?**

**A:** The *sefarim* written by the *Rishonim* were not written in an orderly style that speaks to our own language, so they are not that accessible to our generation. There are only a few parts in these *sefarim* which are written clearly, and they are hard for someone in our generation to go learn and come out with anything concrete from it.

As for the *sefarim* written by our later *gedolim*, such as the *sefarim* of the Alter of Kelm ["*Chochmah U'Mussar*"], the *sefarim* of Reb Yeruchem Levovitz zt"l ["*Daas Torah*" and "*Daas Chochmah U'Mussar*"] and the *sefarim* of Reb Chatzkel Levenstein zt"l ["*Ohr Yechezkel*"] – in order to know how to learn these *sefarim* properly, one needs to be a great *bar daas* (a very knowledgeable, wise, and sensible person) to learn these *sefarim* in a clear manner, to know when and where to apply the lessons.

There are those in our generation who do try to learn these *sefarim* in a clear manner, but at the same time, they are also learning non-Jewish books along with it. But when learning gentile ideas, one would have to be an even greater *bar daas* to know which parts of it are appropriate for a Jew and which parts should be discarded. And it indeed hard to know which ideas are taken from Torah and *Chazal* and which parts are being taken from gentiles, in the books and *sefarim* that are being learned today.

Therefore, it is difficult for me to answer this question.

**Q10: If I am into my health or I am a healer who makes others healthy, is this considered to be using my strongest point for a spiritual goal, or is it just an external factor in my life which is not part of goal in life as an individual?**

**A:** If a person identifies his field of practice as being the strongest innermost point that he is focused on – in this particular case, health - what will happen one day when he eventually takes leave of the world, where the soul leaves the body? What does a person remain with? We all leave the world one day, and our health isn't here anymore. Health is not part of who we are. But if you are concerned about health because you like to help others, that could be a very big lead to part of who you are, because then it is a spiritual goal. Meaning, if you are a healer because you want to do *chessed* to others – and you consider this your goal in life – then this is a spiritual goal, and this will

make you happy. But if you're not doing it for a spiritual reason, and it's just because you are "into health" and you 'also' happen to do *chessed* with it, then it's not a spiritual goal in your life, and it won't give you happiness.

## *14 | Adar Beis – The Power of Laughter*

### *Adar – The Month of Laughter*

With the help of Hashem, we are now in the month of *Adar Beis*. Here we will continue what we began to discuss last month in *Adar Aleph*, where we spoke about the power of *simchah* (happiness). Now we will speak about another power found in the month of Adar, "*sechok*" (laughter)<sup>45</sup>, and how we can use this power with our soul.

### *Holy Laughter and Evil Laughter*

The power of laughter, as with every other power in the soul, can be used for either good or evil.

On one hand, we find that Sarah Imeinu named her son "*Yitzchok*" because she had *t'zchok* (laughter) when she first heard that she would have a child; she was laughing that she had a child in her old age. This was a holy kind of laughter. On the other hand, there is also an evil kind of laughter, as one of the prophets lamented about: "*I have been made into laughter all along, and of what is this festivity about?*"

Thus, we find *sechok* (or *tzechok*) *d'kedushah* (holy laughter) by Yitzchok Avinu, and there is also evil *sechok*. What is holy laughter, and what is evil laughter?

First of all, before we explain when laughter is holy and when it is evil, it is hard to understand in the first place of how laughter can be holy. Laughter is usually associated with lightheadedness, which causes us to stop being serious; it is something that cools us off from being focused on our inner, spiritual world. It prevents us from the levelheadedness that is required for having *yiras shomayim* (fear of Heaven). How can laughter be holy, then? And how can it be that Yitzchok Avinu's name comes from the term *tzechok*, laughter?

Let us therefore see what the role of laughter is.

### *An Antidote for Anger and Sadness*

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45 Sefer Yetzirah (5:5) lists "*sechok*" (laughter) as the defining characteristic of the month of Adar.

There are two positive ways to use laughter.

(1) Laughter can take away a person's sadness. Sadness can also be solved through the power of *simcha* happiness, which we spoke about last month; but another power which can counter sadness is through *sechok* laughter, which is the other aspect that is contained in the month of Adar. (We will soon explain what the difference between *simchah* and *sechok* is.)

(2) Another positive use of laughter is that it can counter anger. When a person is angry and we get him to laugh, we can see that his anger immediately cools down and he is calmed. There is something about laughter that dissipates anger.

### *Using Laughter to Calm Down Our Anger*

We will explore here the second positive use of laughter: its power to calm us down when we are angry.

Rav Yitzchok Kaduri zt"l was an elderly *Gadol* in Eretz Yisrael who was *niftar* recently. He lived to be over 100 years. When he was asked how he merited to live so long, he answered that it was because every time he was about to get angry, he laughed instead, which made his anger subside.

When a person is angry, his heart is filled with what the Gemara calls “boiling of the blood” (*resichas damim*). Through laughter, a person cools off the “boiling of the blood” which fuels anger. Let's explain how, indeed, laughter can calm anger.

### *The External Use of Laughter: Remembering Something Funny*

First of all, we should know that this is not the only technique we can use against anger. There is an external way to use laughter and an internal way to use laughter, in order to deal with anger. The external way to use laughter, which we are about to explain, is one of the solutions brought in the works of our Rabbis.

How can a person use the external method of laughter to calm his anger? The advice is that when a person is about to get angry, he should imagine a situation which gets him to laugh. Remember something funny you once saw, heard, or read about, which made you laugh; and imagine it strongly as you find yourself about to get angry about something. You will find that this calms the soul.

### *The Internal Use of Laughter: Awakening Your Emunah*

The internal way to use laughter to counter anger is to remind ourselves of *emunah*, when we remind ourselves that everything that happens is from Hashem. When we realize that we were wrong in how we originally thought, and we realize that we were incorrect for thinking that we had it all right, we are able to laugh about it.

This is the inner way to use the power of laughter. You thought it was supposed to be a certain way, and now you realize that it's not how you thought, because Hashem planned otherwise. "*My thoughts are not their thoughts.*" Anytime that a person wanted something and he thought that this was the logical course to take, and it didn't end up happening as he thought it would - he can remind himself of *emunah* that Hashem is in charge and that Hashem knows better than him, and this can get a person to laugh.

Such laughter will be stemming from *emunah*. One can laugh at the very fact that he had thought that things should be a certain way, and then he realized that Hashem had other thoughts in mind for him. He realizes, "Hashem is running the world, not me!" It can actually bring you to laughter – a holy and deep laughter that stems from a realization of *emunah*.

We will give a parable that illustrates this idea. If a lion and a cat get into a fight [and the cat got away alive], should the cat feel bad that the lion defeated it, and cry about this? Instead of crying, it should laugh, because it is laughable for the cat to want to win a fight with a lion. Why is this laughable? Because when things don't go our way, this was how it was supposed to happen, so there is no reason to cry; instead, it can awaken us to laugh.

The lesson we can take out from the parable of the cat and lion is: Why should we cry when things don't go our way? Whatever happened to us was supposed to happen, because Hashem runs the world. Instead of being angry that something didn't go our way, we should laugh. This laughter can calm down our anger.

However, in order to use laughter in an inner way to calm down our anger, one needs clear *emunah* and to feel *bittul* (self-nullification), to Hashem. If one does not have clear *emunah*, he will only get angrier when he reminds himself that things didn't go his way. Thus, the clearer one's *emunah* is and the more one agrees to submit his will to Hashem's will, the better he will be able to laugh at himself when things don't go his way. This is a very deep way to use the power of holy laughter.

### *Holy Mockery: Making Fun of Your Anger*

*Chazal* say that "all *leitzanus* (mockery) is forbidden, except for mocking *avodah zarah* (idol worship)." Besides for the simple meaning of this, which is also true, a person can also mock the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) which is present inside his heart - for the *yetzer hora* is called the "strange god that resides in a person", it is called "a spark of idol worship" inside the person, and a person can make fun of the *yetzer hora* inside himself, the "internal *avodah zarah*" - when he reminds himself of *emunah*.

It is permissible to "make fun" of one's *own yetzer hora* – i.e. his anger - when his will doesn't happen; and one should indeed do so. This is the concept of *leitzanus d'kedushah* (holy mockery), which can remove anger.

### *Using Both Kinds of Laughter At Once*

To summarize thus far, there are two ways to calm ourselves down when we are about to get upset – an external way to use laughter, and an inner way to use laughter. The external way is to remind ourselves of something funny. The second way to is to summon forth our *emunah* and laugh at ourselves that Hashem had different thoughts and plans than we did.

We must emphasize that the external method (remembering something funny) should be used only in tandem with the inner part of the solution (reminding ourselves of *emunah*). Every matter has an external layer and an internal layer to it, and we need both of these aspects; therefore, we need to make use of both the external and internal aspects, when we use the power of laughter. If one just uses the external part and he doesn't use *emunah*, this is like a body without a soul, and it is the way of the gentile nations of the world, not the way of the nation of Yisrael. The balanced approach is to use both of these methods together in our laughter. Through that, we can merit with Hashem's help to weaken anger, by using this *leitzanus d'kedushah* (holy mockery) and *sechok d'kedushah* (holy laughter).

### *What Is Simcha, and What Is Sechok?*

Let us continue to discuss now how we remove sadness, which is through *simchah* (happiness) and *sechok* (laughter/mockery). Firstly, let us understand the difference between *simchah* (happiness) and *sechok* (laughter).

*Simchah* means that I have a genuine reason to be happy. We can find *simchah* both in the spiritual as well as in the physical areas of life. A Jew can feel happy when he thinks about the fact that he is a Jew, or when he merits helping others and being kind to others, etc. Even physical accomplishments make us happy: we are happy when we buy a house, or when we get married, or when we find something that was missing, etc. Thus, *simchah* is when I am happy with something that's here, and it's tangible.

*Sechok* (laughter), though, comes from something that *isn't* – not about what is. The word “*sechok*” is come from the word “*shechok*”, which means to “grind” (from the term ‘*shechikas samimanim*’, “grinding of herbs”), and when you grind, you are making something that “is” into something that “isn't”. This is also the root behind *leitzanus* (mockery) – when a person mocks something, he is nullifying its important and to make it into something that “isn't”.

Thus, *simchah* is when I am happy with what is, and *sechok* is when I am happy with something I have nullified, not with something that is here.

With *sechok*, a person is happy with something that is non-existent, because the very concept of *sechok* is that it attaches a person to a non-existent world. *Simchah* connects me to that which exists, while *sechok* brings a person into the non-existent (even when it is holy). *Sechok* (laughter) is the

synonymous with *leitzanus* (mockery and joking), which is rooted in the word “*tzeil*”, “shadow” - a lack of light - an absence of something that is, and instead something that isn't.

Therefore, when we laugh or when we hear laughter, we are connecting ourselves to a nonexistent world. We don't think about what we are laughing about, we just laugh. That itself is an attachment to the nonexistent. Now let us learn about how this power is used in the side of evil and how it can also be used in the side of holiness. Whether it is used for holiness or for evil, however, *sechok* is always about becoming attached to that which doesn't exist.

### *Holy Laughter: Using Humor to Loosen the Body's Hold*

We find in the Gemara that some of the Sages would begin their lessons with a *milsa d'bedichusa* – with something humorous. What was the purpose of this? It is because every person has a body and a soul. Our body covers our soul, and therefore there are many physical aspects of our being which prevents us from getting into the inner, spiritual light that is our soul. One of the ways to shed our physical layers is to use the power of *sechok\leitzanus* (laughter\mockery) for holiness.

How does it work? Laughter connects us to the nonexistent, which in turn sheds our physical layers. We can then immediately return to our inner world afterwards, the world of our *neshamah* (Divine soul), which is our inner reality. This is the purpose of holy laughter: it can help us free ourselves, to have “*purkan*” (freedom) from our normal physical restraints, and connect us better to our inner world.

Soon we will see how this is also used for evil and how it is used for holiness; but this is the concept of how laughter works. It loosens up our physicality, and when used for holiness, it enables us to go free from our physical restraints and to enter into our inner world of the soul.

Based upon this, let us understand the following. If someone is already connected to his inner world and he is solidly anchored there, using laughter can help him get past his physicality, and to enter into his inner world more. But if a person is not yet in touch with his inner world, or if he has a very minimal revelation of it, laughter will disconnect him from physicality, and where does he return to afterwards? He returns to the materialism where he is found in. Laughter doesn't help him at all, and it even damages him internally, because he gets used to lightheadedness and it leads him towards sin, and he gets used to connecting to the nonexistent.

This is the depth of the difference between holy laughter and evil laughter. Holy laughter was used by the Sages when they began their lesson, and it is used by a person who is already connected to his inner world, where he can use laughter in order to enter more inward into their souls; after laughter, this kind of person can maintain his connection to his inner world. But those who have no inner world to connect to are not using laughter to enter into their inner world. They are using laughter simply to escape sadness, and when they are done laughing, they return to where they were before – and their laughter did nothing for them.

Take sleeping, for example. There are two general reasons why people sleep. A person who has no connection to his inner world sleeps because he loves to sleep. An inner person sleeps to energize his body so that he will be able to get up the next day refreshed to serve the Creator. There are some people who sleep because they want to feel the lethargy of it, which further attaches them to the heaviness of materialism and physicality. On this it is said, “*Lazy one, until when will you sleep?*” But a person who cares about his spiritual state will go to sleep because he needs to refresh his body, so that he can serve Hashem properly. He enters into sleep so that he can return to his inner world afterwards.

The same is true for laughter and mockery. Most people enjoy mockery because they enjoy the humor for its own sake and they get a kind of vitality from it. This is the evil use of laughter and mockery. But if a person uses mockery in order to free himself from the body’s hold, through using humor, such humor is “holy laughter”, because it is calming the body and helping him reveal his inner world of the soul. Thus, if a person is connected to his inner world and he uses humor to loosen up his body, this is “holy laughter”.

How indeed can we know if we used laughter for the right reasons or not? He should see what happens afterwards. What was he like before the laughter, and what is he like afterwards? If a person finds that he is more frivolous about his *ruchniyus* after he is finished with his fit of laughter, it is a sign that he didn’t laugh for the right reasons. But if a person is able to return to being serious about his *ruchniyus* even after laughing, it is a sign that he has laughed for the right reasons, and then his laughter was holy.

### *A Dose of Humor in the Home*

There is another important point to mention about this. The Chazon Ish wrote that there must be a pleasant atmosphere in the home, and that a little bit of humor is necessary for this. We need to create a calm atmosphere in our homes, because there are many stressful situations that arise in the home with our spouse and our children. With a good dose of humor, these stressful situations become easier to deal with – both for ourselves and for the rest of the family. This is a more basic level which can be worked upon, whether one has reached holy laughter or whether he hasn’t.

It takes wisdom to know exactly how much humor is needed in the house – what to joke about, and what not to joke about. This requires some thinking. But the point is that we need to induce some amount of humor into our home, and we need to figure out how much humor we need in the home, as well as where to draw the line.

### *The Laughter of Purim*

Now that we are approaching the day of Purim, we need to reflect: what kind of laughter should we have on Purim, and what kind of laughter should we avoid?

The holy laughter that is contained on Purim represents the second kind of holy laughter we described here, which is when we use laughter to ward off anger when things don't go our way. Through the story of *Megillas Esther*, we keep seeing how everyone's plans were foiled. Achashveirosh wanted to have his way, Vashti wanted to have her way, and Haman had all his grand plans of destroying all of us. But in the end, Hashem's plan prevailed over all of their plotting. This is the deep laughter we can laugh about on Purim.

We should draw forth our holy laughter on Purim from the story of the *Megillah*, and after that, we can access this power of laughter in our own souls. When one reaches this deep place of laughter in his soul after studying the events of Divine Providence in the Purim story, this is the holy laughter of Purim, where we use external characters as a way to enter inward.

But if a person does not draw his laughter on Purim from this source, and he just laughs on Purim like everybody else found in our streets on Purim, who are laughing an evil kind of laughter – such laughter is rooted in the terrible *kelipah*<sup>46</sup> that is Amalek, because it is nothing but evil *leitzanus*. Amalek's defining trait is *leitzanus*, as the verse describes about Amalek: "וְדַיְהִיר, לִץ שְׂמוֹ" – "A rebellious, arrogant one; a scoffer is his name."

To our chagrin, most of the laughter on Purim that takes place is not "erasing" Amalek – it is instead the very laughter of Amalek, who laughs an evil, mirthless laughter. Only after revealing deep *emunah* can a person laugh on Purim in a way that erases Amalek. But if a person is 'connected with Haman' [through frivolous laughter that doesn't emanate from *emunah*] on Purim, his laughter on Purim is not being "moche" (erasing) Amalek, and he is rather being *mechayeh* (sustaining) Amalek, *chas v'shalom*. Therefore, as Purim draws closer, we should reflect into what kind of laughter we want to have on Purim. Do we want inner laughter or do we want superficial and evil laughter?

The holy kind of laughter which brings a person to have more *emunah* is the laughter that brings a person to the true *simchah*. It is when one laughs at himself, by nullifying his own will to Hashem's will, where he makes *leitzanus* out of his own "inner *avodah zarah*" – and then he comes to experience *simchah* in *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, as it is written, 'שִׂמְחוּ צְדִיקִים בָּה', "The righteous rejoice in Hashem."

### *In Conclusion*

May we merit from Hashem to avoid the evil kind of laughter, all of us together, and to instead reach the holy kind of laughter, which erases our anger and sadness - and through this, we should be *zoche* to connect ourselves to Hashem Himself, in these times of celebration and *simchah*. Amen, and Amen.

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46 kelipah - impure spiritual "husk" or "shell" which conceals holiness

### *Questions & Answers with the Rav*

**Q1: How can Yitzchok Avinu have both the middos of “gevurah” (restraint) and “sechok” (laughter)? Why isn’t this a contradiction?**

**A:** Excellent question. *Chazal* say that “Who is strong? The one who overcomes his inclination.” When a person overcomes an aspect of his character, any emotion or thought, he gets rid of the inner “*avodah zarah*” within him – the spark of idol worship which is the antithesis to *emunah* in Hashem, the “other gods” which a person serves within himself: the drives of his *yetzer hora*. Thus, Yitzchok Avinu overcame these “other gods”, and this was his *gevurah*, which revealed the depth of *sechok*.

**Q2: Does it start with gevurah (restraint), or with sechok (laughter)?**

**A:** Without *gevurah* a person wouldn’t be able to have *sechok*. But it is *sechok* which enables a person to have *gevurah*. Without *gevurah*, a person cannot persevere. Through *gevurah*, a person is able to have *bittul* (self-nullification), which is also known as *yiras shomayim* (fear of Heaven). The depth of *gevurah* is for one to be prepared to nullify his will, which brings a person to have *sechok*, and *sechok* brings a person to *simchah*. So *gevurah* brings a person to *sechok*, and when *sechok* is actualized, this is the depth of *gevurah*, and this brings a person to complete *simchah*. The *sechok* is the completion of the *gevurah*.

**Q3: Can the Rav explain what the “sechok” will be in the future when Moshiach comes, which is what we say in the possuk, אז ימלא שחוק פינו (“Then our mouths will be filled with laughter”)?**

**A:** The *sechok* of the future will be that there will be no more free will, and then we will realize that all the things that ever happened in history the world are all a joke, because we will see that it was Hashem who made it all happen. This will be the complete, ultimate laughter which will emanate from our *emunah*.

**Q4: How do we balance seriousness (working hard on ourselves) and laughter (based on emunah that everything is in the hands of Hashem) in our life?**

**A:** That is a very good question. It is complicated. To give a brief answer to this, there is a verse, לאדם מערכי לב ומה' מענה לשון (“*To a man belongs the arrangements of his heart*”); the depth of our power of *bechirah* (free will) comes from the heart’s search for the truth and from the will for holiness. The rest is up to Hashem. Our entire *avodah*, from a deeper understanding, is to perform deeds that purify our heart which brings us to the greatest possible purity of heart we can reach. All

that we can do is to choose to act correctly when we access the depth of our heart, and that is our role in *bechirah*. When a person truly purifies his heart, his actions will surely be the will of Hashem. But the actions we then do are not really from our own free will; they are done by Hashem, for Hashem “does” everything.

If so, being that Hashem does everything, what is the depth of our *bechirah* and our *avodah* on this world? The depth of our *avodah* is to purify our heart as much as we can, and to perform deeds from a purified heart. But our actual *avodah* is always “מערכי לב” – it is only that part which is “*to man*”, in our hands to do. That is entire role on this world, and it is only this aspect which we can get reward for. Although it is ultimately Hashem Who does all actions, it is still a result of our free will, therefore, we will get reward for it. Therefore, a person has to try his best, and the rest is up to Hashem.

**Q5: How can a person know if his motivations are pure or not?**

**A:** This is a complicated matter, and there are two factors involved with this. Part of our motivations we can clearly identify as holy, and we can clearly identify other motivations that are not holy. All of that is found within our conscious (*muda*, or *hakarah*). However, we also have subconscious motivations (*tat-muda*, or *tat-hakarah*), and even deeper than that layer is the area of above our conscious (*al-hakarah*, or *al-muda*).

The areas of subconscious and above-conscious are hidden from our consciousness and it is subtle *avodah* to get to know them, and there are several methods explained of how to access it. Firstly, though, we need to begin with identifying our conscious motivations. We can know clearly what we want and what we don’t want, what we like and what we don’t like. Using this area of our consciousness, we can feel if we are having a pure motivation for something or not.

Now, in order to tap into our subconscious and above-conscious, this is a very deep and complicated matter to know, and our greatest leaders worked their entire lives at uncovering their subconscious and above-conscious. In general terms, Rav Dessler zt”l explained that we are able to know what our subconscious motives are by paying attention to our quickly passing thoughts. These include thoughts that we like to push away sometimes because we are uncomfortable with such thoughts. Those thoughts make their appearance sometimes and we tend to quickly push them away, and all of this takes place very quickly and we often don’t register it. But if we pay attention to those quickly passing thoughts, we are able to discover the thoughts that are coming from deeper in our soul – the area of our subconscious. These are thoughts which we usually think have nothing to do with us. They can be either be positive and holy thoughts, or they can be more shameful and evil kinds of thoughts. When we discover those thoughts, we gain an entirely different awareness towards what’s going on inside ourselves.

Most people only recognize themselves from the most superficial area of their conscious. There is almost no one who completely recognizes his true self. However, the more a person goes deeper into

himself, the better he can recognize himself. There are many other ways as well (besides for the one we mentioned here), that are explained by our Rabbis of how a person can get deeper into his subconscious.

There is another way brought by our Rabbis of how one can know his deeper motivations: through our dreams at night<sup>47</sup>, which show a person his deepest desires that he had during the day. This is based on the verse, “*On my bed at nights, I sought that which I loved.*” Dreams show us what we thought about during the day, as *Chazal* state, that a person only dreams about at night that which he fantasized about during the day; and in addition, they show us what our deeper subconscious desires are. Even when we dream at night of total fantasies, those fantasies are like the ‘waste products’ that are produced from our thoughts and desires, so even the fantasies tell us a lot about ourselves. However, getting to know ourselves through dreams requires much specific guidance.

There were other ways as well which our leaders used in order to know their subconscious. Reb Yisrael Salanter writes about several different ways of how to know it. But these are very subtle matters.

**Q6: *If someone is down or depressed, is there anything wrong with trying to get him to laugh?***

**A:** This is a very general kind of question, and generally speaking, the answer is, yes. However, usually when people do this, they end up falling too far into the laughter and then they end up back in depression afterwards.

There is a kind of therapy where people use laughter as a way to heal people from their problems, but the problem with this kind of therapy is that the therapist himself will become too caught up in his own laughter, and in the end he will also need therapy. Only a person who is solidly anchored to his inner world can know how to use laughter to heal others. This is what we find in the Gemara, that there were people who used *badchanus* (Jewish humor and entertainment) to cheer others up, and Eliyahu HaNavi said that these people merit *Olam HaBa*. But with most people, as soon as they use *leitzanus* to cheer up others and make them happy, they fall too much into the laughter, and they have a spiritual downfall from it.

There is a well-known story that once a distraught person came to his Rav to seek advice from him, and his Rav told him that he should go to a *badchan* to get himself cheered up. The person then said to the Rav, “That *badchan* is me.”

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47 See Rosh Chodesh Avodah\_009\_Kislev\_The Meaning Of Our Dreams

**Q7: Can laughter be used to heal people from [emotional] illnesses?**

**A:** I will explain this briefly; this question is really leading to something else. We should understand that there are some people who are very much ‘down in the dumps’, and laughter can help such people. But, everything needs to be used properly and be given its proper boundaries. When people overdo laughter and joking, firstly, they fall too far into their laughter and joking, and in addition, they are getting others to think that laughter and joking should be a basic part of life. They don’t know how to place boundaries on the power of laughter and joking.

If laughter is just being used as a form of therapy to heal someone, that is one thing; but what usually happens? Laughter is made into a part of life itself. When laughter is used within its proper boundaries, it is holy. As soon as it is overdone, though, not only does laughter not help, it is damaging. In a case where someone needs laughter as part of his therapy, if this is the only thing that can help him, then by all means, the person helping him should use laughter to help him, without question.

If someone is in a little bit of a better situation than this and he is only minimally depressed, there are two abilities he can use to be helped: to awaken inner *simchah*, and to also use external *leitzanus* (joking and humor). But when people get used to *leitzanus* as a way to heal themselves from pain, they come to view it as a part of life, and he is brought down from a higher spiritual level into a lower level of living.

Another example is when people rejoice with the *chosson*<sup>48</sup> and *kallah*<sup>49</sup> at weddings. Most of the time, by *simchas chosson v’kallah*, people think that gladdening the *chosson* and *kallah* means to make *leitzanus* in front of the *chosson* and *kallah*. This is not using *leitzanus* as a way to heal people; it is simply an example of how people use *leitzanus* as a basic part of their life, where they bring down people from a higher spiritual level that they could have remained on. When people think that *simchah* (happiness) means *sechok* (laughter) and *leitzanus* (joking), it is because they don’t know when and where the power of *sechok* should be used. Once people engage in *leitzanus*, there are “no strings attached” anymore, and then people think that *simchah* means *leitzanus*.

The common denominator between the scenarios of laughter therapy, gladdening a groom and bride, and *simchas Purim*, is that many people erroneously think that “*simchah*” means to act with *leitzanus*.

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48 groom

49 bride



*Part Two:  
Essence  
of the  
Month*

## *15 / Nissan - Speech and Prayer*

### *Nissan – ‘Head of the Months’*

Of the month of *Nissan*, the Torah writes, “*This month is to you, as the head of the months, the first of the months of the year.*” The month of *Nissan* is called ‘head of the months’; it is the time of the year when the Jewish people left Egypt. This has ramifications both in time as well as in our own personal soul.

We will try to explain the roots of this matter: what exactly the “head” of the months is that *Nissan* personifies.

### *The Twelve Months of the Year: The Roots of Our Soul*

In our soul, there are three [active] elements – wind, fire, and water. (Earth is the element which holds them together, but it is not active). There are also seven powers which branch out from the soul. The Vilna Gaon says that these seven powers are not intrinsic of the soul, and therefore it is possible for a person to part from them at times; whereas there are ‘intrinsic’ abilities of the soul that a person cannot part from [which includes 12 roots].

The seven [branching] abilities of the soul are: 1) *chochmah* (wisdom), 2) *oisher* (wealth), 3) *zera* (offspring), 4) *chaim* (life), 5) *memshalah* (dominion), 6) *shalom* (peace), and 7) *chein* (grace).<sup>50</sup>

Here we will not discuss these seven abilities; instead we will focus on the twelve essential roots of the soul, which are represented by each of the twelve months that span Nissan through Adar.

Furthermore, the Vilna Gaon lists a unique attribute to each month of the year: (1) *Nissan* is the month of *sichah* (speech). (2) *Iyar* is the month of *hirhur* (thinking). (3) *Sivan* is the month of *halichah* (walking). (4) *Tamuz* is the month of *re’iyah* (seeing). (5) *Av* is the month of *shemiah* (hearing). (6) *Elul* is the month of *maaseh* (action). (7) *Tishrei* is the month of *mishush* (touch). (8) *Cheshvan* is the month of *re’iach* (smell). (9) *Teves* is the month of *rogez* (anger). (10) *Kislev* is the month of *sheinah* (sleep). (11) *Shevat* is the month of *l’itah* (chewing/eating). (12) *Adar* is the month of *sechok* (laughter).

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<sup>50</sup> In different terminologies, the seven powers of the soul are known as *chesed* (kindness) *gevurah* (restraint) *tiferes* (harmony) *netzach* (eternity) *hod* (beauty), *yesod* (foundation), and *malchus* (royalty). In a different system, the seven are known as *chesed\ahavah* (kindness\love), *gevurah\yirah\din* (restraint\awe\judgment) *rachamim* (compassion), *nitzuach* (victory), *hodaah* (nullification), *hiskashrus* (connection) and *shiflus* (lowliness).

These are the words of our holy Sages, and it gives us the general picture of the 12 months of the year.

### *Nissan: The Month of Speech*

*Nissan*, the first month, is the month of *sichah*, speech. The month of Nissan is called “first”, which implies that it is the root of all the other months; if so, speech is the root of all the other abilities contained in the rest of the year.

We can see how speech is a common theme that runs throughout Pesach. On Pesach, we went free from Pharaoh. The word *Pharaoh* is from the words “*peh ra*”, “evil mouth”, implying that we were redeemed from evil speech [and gained the holy kind of speech]. *Pesach* is from the words *peh sach*, “a mouth that speaks.” There is also a *mitzvah* on Pesach to tell over the story of the exodus, which uses our power of speech.

This is a month all about using the power of speech - and it is not a coincidence that it is like this.

Man is called “*medaber*”, a social creature, and this is what sets him apart from other creations. The Jewish people in particular are called “*medaber*”, for the Sages state that the Jewish people are called “*adam*” (man), whereas the other nations of the world are not called “*adam*”; and “*adam*” is synonymous with the term “*medaber*”, being that “*adam*” is called “*medaber*”. The month of Nissan, which contains the festival of Pesach, builds the particular aspect of the Jewish people that is “*medaber*”: the power to speak.

It is written, “*And man became a living spirit*”, and *Targum* translates this to mean that he became a *ruach memalelah*, a “talking spirit.” This is referring in particular to the soul of a Jew, whom the power of speech is mainly manifest with, in contrast to the other nations of the world.

“*Yisrael v'oiraisa*” – the Jewish people are interconnected with the Torah; the two of these uphold the world’s existence. The connection between the Jewish people and the Torah is through the power of speech. The *mitzvah* to learn Torah is specifically “*And you shall speak in it*”.<sup>51</sup> It is a verbal kind of *mitzvah*, unlike all of the *mitzvos* which are fulfilled through an action.

The Jewish people personify the aspect of man that is *medaber*: the power to speak. There were Ten Commandments said by Har Sinai, where the Torah was given, parallel to the Ten Utterances of Creation.

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<sup>51</sup> Editor’s Note: We also find that the *mitzvah* to learn Torah is fulfilled mentally, when one “thinks in learning”, and indeed, thought is the essence of Torah, as the Rav explains in many places. (See Getting To Know Your Thoughts – Chapter 3). However, there is also a specific command of the Torah to not only learn the Torah and to delve in it, but to speak of it.

Thus, the root of the entire year for the Jewish people begins with the month of Nissan. Nissan is the month of the conception of the Jewish people. Although the month of *Elul* is also considered the beginning of the year, that is true with regards to our actions; with regards to our speech, it is *Nissan* which is the root of the year, for the Jewish people.

Within the month *Nissan*, there is the festival of Pesach, which contains the words “*peh sach*”, “a mouth that talks”. It is the time of the year which builds each of the souls of the Jewish people, each of us on a personal level, with specific regards to our power of *medaber*/speech.

### *Three Kinds of Speech: ‘Amirah’, ‘Dibbur’, and ‘Sichah’*

We find several terms for speech in the Torah. There is *amirah* (to speak softly), *dibbur* (to speak harshly), and *sichah* (conversation).

It is written, “*So shall you say to the house of Jacob [the women] and so shall you speak to the children of Israel [the men].*” *Rashi* explains that the women needed to be addressed in a softer manner, *amirah*, whereas men need to be addressed in a harsher manner, *dibbur*.

We find the difference between *amirah* and *dibbur* with regards to the difference between Creation and the Torah. The world was created through Ten Utterances, “*maamaros*”, which is from the word *amirah*, whereas the Torah was given through Ten Commandments, “*dibros*.”

A third form of speech is called *sichah* (conversation). The word *sichah* is contained in the word Pesach, which is from the word “*peh sach*” (a mouth that talks). The Gemara says that “There is no *sichah* except in prayer<sup>52</sup>, for it is written, “*Tefillah l’oni, ki yaatof, v’lifnei Hashem yishpoch sicho*” - “A prayer for the afflicted man when he swoons, and pours forth his supplications before Hashem.”<sup>53</sup>

Thus, different kinds of speech are used, depending on the situation. The term “*dibbur*” is used in reference to Torah, whereas the term “*sichah*” is used in reference to *tefillah*, prayer.

Being that Nissan is called the month of *sichah*, it follows that it is a month of *sichah/tefillah* – times of speaking with Hashem, in prayer, in conversation.

What is the depth that lies behind this?

### *‘Sichah’: When There Is No ‘Daas’*

In the Gemara, there is a *halachah* of ‘*masiach l’fi tumo*’, “conversing casually”: if two people are overheard talking with each other, and in midst of their casual conversation they mention certain facts about someone, we can rely on what has been overheard during this conversation and accept it

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52 Berachos 26b

53 Tehillim 102:1

as testimony in *Beis Din*, because there is no reason to assume that they are lying. The concept of *masiach l'fi tumo* is rooted in the term *sichah*.

Elsewhere, the Gemara says that ten measurements of *sichah* (talking) descended onto the world; nine of these measurements were taken by women.” Here we also see a usage of *sichah*.

What is the depth behind this matter? It is because there are two kinds of speech [as we are about to explain].

The Gemara says that an impoverished person is one who lacks *daas* (knowledge of Torah).<sup>54</sup> There, the Gemara says, “*Dida bei, kula bei, u'do lo da bei, ma bei?*” - If one knows the Torah, he has everything, through it; and if he lacks Torah, what does he have?” The Gemara brings proof to this from the *possuk* we quoted before: “*A prayer for the afflicted man, when he swoons, and pours forth his supplications before Hashem.*”

So it is a lack of *daas* that epitomizes *oni*/poverty; and that being the case, the impoverished man, the *oni*, pours forth his *sichah* (supplications) in front of Hashem. Thus, we learn from this that ‘*daas*’ is the opposite of ‘*sichah*’ [so when there is no *daas* (knowledge), a person is left with nothing but *sichah* (conversation)].

We have learned thus far that *daas* is used in reference to knowledge of the Torah, whereas *sichah* does not flow from one’s *daas*. In learning Torah, the mitzvah to speak of Torah is *dibbur* (“And you shall speak in it”) which comes from one’s ‘*daas*’; as it is written, “*For the lips of the Kohen, guard daas*”. This is referring to the Torah learning, which stems from his ‘*daas*’. The term ‘*daas*’ is also associated with the concept of *hanhagah*, to lead [for Moshe Rabbeinu it is the epitome of *daas*, and he was granted the power of *hanhagah* over the Jewish people]. Thus, *daas* is the power of Torah, and it is the power which “leads”; and from *daas*, comes our *dibbur*, an orderly kind of speech which is fused by holy intellect of the Torah.

*Sichah*, however, is the lack of *daas*; as we brought before from the Gemara, an impoverished person is defined as someone has a poor amount of *daas*.

### *Sichah: Speaking From the Heart, To Hashem*

If *sichah* doesn’t stem from one’s *daas*, where does it come from? The answer lies in the term, “*masiach l'fi tumo*” – “casual conversation” – it stems from ‘*tumo*’<sup>55</sup>. This does not stem from one’s *daas*.

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54 Nedarim 41a

55 Editor’s Note: Later in this shiur, it will be explained that “*tumo*” is referring to “*temimus*” – “earnestness.” It will also be explained that *temimus* does not stem from our *daas*, and it is rather ‘above’ our *daas*.

*Sichah* does not come from *daas*; it comes from the *lev*, the heart. The Sages said that “Words that come from the heart, enter the heart.” This is the essence behind the power of *tefillah*/prayer. In contrast, learning the Torah uses a completely different ability: the ability of *daas* (knowledge). Torah is all about *daas*, whereas *tefillah*/prayer is all about an absence of *daas*.

*Sichah*, the power of the month of Nissan, is the concept behind its festival, Pesach. Leaving Egypt (Pesach) was the beginning of our path, and we ended it when stood at Har Sinai to receive the Torah (Shavuos). So our path began with *sichah*, with Nissan/Pesach – a month in which our power of *tefillah* was revealed – and it ends with *daas*, with the giving of the Torah/the festival of Shavuos, in which we received the Ten Commandments, the *dibbur*/speech that stems from *daas*.

The exodus from Egypt did not take place due to the merit of the Torah, for the Torah was not given yet. It was entirely achieved through prayer! Of course, they had Torah learning as well, for the Sages state there was a *yeshivah* in Goshen. But there was no giving of the Torah yet, so there wasn't enough of a level of Torah for them to be redeemed. It was prayer which redeemed us from Egypt: “*And their supplications arose.*”

When Moshe told the people that they would be redeemed soon, they did not listen, from their “*koitzer ruach*” – they were “short of breath.” In other words, they were not yet connected to *daas*; they could not yet connect to the words of Moshe, who is *daas*, for they had not reached *daas* yet.<sup>56</sup> They were at the level of *tefillah l'oni*, “A prayer for the afflicted man.” Although they certainly possessed *dibbur*/speech, it wasn't a *dibbur* of the giving of the Torah yet, and instead all they had in them was their ability to cry out to Hashem in prayer: “*And their supplications arose.*”

Every year, when the month of Nissan returns, this power of *sichah/tefillah* (earnest prayer and conversation with Hashem) comes back with it. It is the power which brings us redemption; it returns to us every year, enabling us a new chance each year to merit redemption.

### *Telling Over the Story of the Exodus: The Power of 'Sichah'*

In the *Hagaddah*, we say, “Even if we were all wise sages, even if we were all understanding, it is an obligation to tell over the story of the exodus from Egypt.” There are many explanations of this matter, but we will present an explanation of this according to the lines of our discussion.

Telling over the story of the exodus – *sippur yetzias mitzraim* – is not a *mitzvah* accomplished through the powers of our intellect. It is very unlike the *mitzvah* of learning Torah, in which we use our powers of the intellect, *chochmah* and *daas*. The *mitzvah* of *sippur yetzias mitzraim* it is reminiscent of the concept we brought earlier from the Gemara: the idea of “*masiach l'fi tumo*” –

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<sup>56</sup> Editor's Note: This is in line with the words of the Arizal, that the Egyptian exile was an “exile of the *daas*”. In Pesach #002 (Redeeming Our Soul), the Rav elaborates further upon this concept of “exile of the *daas*.”

“casual conversation”. It is a kind of simple speech, which flows from pure earnestness in ourselves, and not from the area of the rational intellect.

“Even if we were all wise sages, even if we all understand, it is an obligation to tell over the story of the exodus.” This *mitzvah* is not dependent on being a Torah scholar or not! It is not about wisdom. It is about being able to tell over the story just as when you are having a casual conversation, simply, earnestly – ‘*masiach l’fi tumo*’.

### *Nissan, the Tribe of Yehudah, and Temimus/Earnestness*

The month of Nissan is explained in our *sefarim hakedoshim* as being represented by the tribe of Yehudah<sup>57</sup>. Upon the birth of Yehudah, our matriarch Leah expressed her gratitude to Hashem, “*This time I thank Hashem.*” [We will explain the depth behind this matter].

There are two roots of the twelve tribes: Rachel and Leah. Yaakov Avinu possessed two uniquely different qualities: he is called the ‘*ish tam*’, (wholesome man), which refers to his power of *temimus*/earnestness, and he is the one whose “hand grips onto the heel of Esav”, which refers to his power of destroying Esav in the future. The two main wives of Yaakov Avinu, Rachel and Leah, received one of these two powers.

Yosef, the son of Rachel, received Yaakov’s power to destroy Esav in the future. In one of the prophecies about the future, Yosef is compared to a fire that will destroy the “straw” that is Esav. This is not the *temimus* of Yaakov Avinu; it is Yaakov’s other power, his power to destroy Esav, and it is essentially this power which Yosef received from the Torah that he learned from his father Yaakov. It was Yehudah who received the *temimus* from Yaakov Avinu. His mother Leah thanked Hashem upon his birth, which hints to the *sichah/temimus* which she connected to in Yaakov and received from him.

So Yosef received the *chochmah* (wisdom) from Yaakov Avinu, while it is Yehudah who received the *temimus* (earnestness) from Yaakov Avinu. Yosef received the Torah from his father Yaakov Avinu, through *daas*. This enabled him to receive the *chochmah* of Yaakov Avinu. But Yehudah received from Yaakov Avinu the power of *temimus*.

The power of *temimus* is a whole different kind of understanding. It is written, “*Toras Hashem Temimah, meshivas nafesh*” – “the Torah of Hashem is complete, it settles the soul.”

This concept does not mean to imply that Torah/*daas* and prayer/*temimus* are separate from each other, *chas v’shalom*. Rather, it means that there is a part of Torah which is attained through *daas*, and there is a part of Torah which is attained through *temimus*.

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<sup>57</sup> There is an entire series devoted to explaining the avodah of the 12 months of the year based on each of the 12 tribes; see Tribe of Rosh Chodesh #001 – Nissan -Yehudah

The power of the month of Nissan, which is *sichah*, is essentially the power that is identified with “*temimus*” (earnestness). [Thus, *sichah* flows from our *temimus*.]

### *The Holy and Evil Uses of ‘Temimus’*

The power of *temimus* exists both in the side of holiness as well as in the side of evil. So there is a good and holy way to use *temimus*, and there is also a negative connotation of *temimus*.

The negative implication of *temimus* implies a lack of *daas* when it is detrimental to the person. Chazal say, “Women have light *daas*”, therefore, women naturally have more *temimus*, because they are less inclined towards *daas*. But when there is a lack of *daas*, a person will develop an uneducated and foolish kind of earnestness, [“pseudo-*temimus*”], such as becoming naïve and other negative attributes. This is an evil [and undeveloped] kind of *temimus*.

In contrast, the holy kind of *temimus* is to be an “*ish tam*”, as it was said of Yaakov Avinu - which implies *shleimus*, wholesomeness and completion. A *tam* is an unblemished animal, whereas a *baal mum* is a blemished animal; thus the term “*tam*” implies being whole and perfect.

Many people think that *temimus* is a negative term, something that implies foolish naiveté. But *temimus* is an entirely different idea than how most people think of it. *Temimus* is indeed superficial when it stems from a simple lack of *daas*. Such *temimus* flows from incompleteness. It is holy when it stems from the power to be wholesome and perfect, and to be earnest from that place in oneself; such *temimus* is stemming from completion.

It is brought in the words of the Sages that Yaakov Avinu’s ‘wholesome image’ is carved into the Throne of Glory. Elsewhere, the Gemara says that the beauty of Yaakov Avinu was reminiscent of the body of Adam *HaRishon*. The meaning of this is that Yaakov had reached *shleimus*, completion, which was symbolized through his trait of being an *ish tam*; in that way, he resembled Adam *HaRishon*, the epitome of perfection [before the sin].

### *Prayer - Standing Before the King: A Glimpse at Shleimus/Completion*

The Sages said that “There is no *sichah* (conversation) except prayer.”<sup>58</sup> Prayer is to “stand before the King”. All creations are lacking; no one is complete. There is only One who is complete: *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. When one truly stands before Hashem in prayer, he is coming into contact with a *hakarah* (recognition) of what it means to view *shleimus* (completion). In contrast, one who does not “stand in front of the King” is one who does not have any recognition of *shleimus*.

When one truly senses that he is before Hashem as he prays, he recognizes the reality of Hashem's existence. His heart is alive and awake to the fact that Hashem resides in his heart. That is the true, inner definition of “standing in front of the King”. He can then feel what *shleimus* is.

Of course, even with this perception, that doesn't mean that the person has reached *shleimus*. There is no such thing as a perfect person, so it is impossible to actually reach *shleimus*. But at least one can have a recognition of what it is.

When one is engaged in prayer, he is aware that he is lacking, and that the Creator is the complete One who can fill whatever he lacks. In *Shulchan Aruch*, it is brought that one should reflect upon the greatness of the Creator and on the lowliness of man, as a prerequisite to prayer. However, this does not mean for a person to simply compare his lowliness to that of the greatness of the Creator (which is also true, on the simple level). It is deeper than that: it is for one to realize that Hashem is perfect and complete, while I am lacking and incomplete. That is the perception which must accompany one's feelings as he prays.

This is the true depth of “standing in front of the King”: to recognize that I am lacking, while Hashem is complete. This is the depth behind all of prayer.

When a person is praying with this perspective, his prayers to Hashem are not stemming from a mere will to complete what he lacks, for that would not be '*sichah*.' Rather, '*sichah*' is to be like “*the afflicted man when he swoons, and pours forth his supplications in front of Hashem.*” It is to recognize that “I am lacking, for I recognize that I am in front of Hashem – Who is perfect”, because that allows me to recognize what *shleimus* is.

*Sichah* is to be '*masiach l'fi tumo*'. The more a person is lacking, the more he will pray to Hashem, and that is true; but this is not yet the depth of prayer. The depth of prayer is for one to recognize that he stands before Hashem, and from that perception, one prays. This is the *sichah* that is *tefillah*: “*masiach l'fi tumo*”, to be able to let the words flow casually and freely, in recognition of the perfect *temimus* of Hashem.

### *'Temimus' Stems From 'Shleimus'*

So we must not have the mistaken notion that *temimus* is to simply lack *daas*. It is rather to recognize what *shleimus* is; out of a recognition that I stand before Hashem, aware that He is complete and perfect, which means that I am not complete.

When *temimus* does not come from this perspective, such *temimus* is the kind of *temimus* that came about after the sin of Adam, a *temimus* which connotes deficiency, and such *temimus* is not holy. Only the *temimus* that stems from “*In front of Hashem, he pours out his supplications*”, is the *temimus* which comes from the depths of [recognizing] *shleimus*.

### *The Incomplete, Facing the Complete*

When we were enslaved in Egypt and we cried out to Hashem to be saved, such prayer stemmed from how we felt lacking in our situation. Therefore, it did not represent the depth of our salvation from Egypt. The redemption from Egypt is rather epitomized by the possuk, “*I, Hashem, am going out, amidst Egypt.*” When Hashem revealed Himself at the end of the plagues, this was the apex of the exodus; it was what made that night into Pesach. From this episode came our redemption.

Egypt is *Mitzraim*, from the word *meitzar*, “confinement”, which implies a situation in which we are missing and lacking. When Hashem revealed Himself in Egypt at the end of the plagues, this was the revelation of perfection amidst all that was lacking. It was the revelation of the Endless amidst the limited and confined. It was the stark contrast of the absolutely complete against the backdrop of the utterly incomplete.

It is not by coincidence that Hashem chose to reveal Himself in that manner. It was to show us that as we are aware of our own incompleteness, we need to view what Completion is. On one side of the coin, we must be aware of our deficiencies, and on the other side of the coin, we must be aware of the great Perfection that exists: the perfection of the Creator. This is the depth behind prayer.

It is not Torah which reveals this perspective; it is only prayer where this concept is revealed. Torah is all about perfection, for it is perfect and complete, whereas prayer is all about the incompleteness of man. In the exodus of Egypt, we were utterly incomplete and lacking, and we came into contact with perfection: the revelation of Hashem, amidst all the incompleteness we were in. It was not about just revealing the state of perfection or about showing us how incomplete we are. None of these alone is the lesson. Rather, the purpose of it was to show us how the incomplete must recognize that which is Complete.

In the laws of telling over the story of the exodus, the *Rambam* writes that we must “begin with disparage, and end with praise.” [We begin the *Hagaddah* by saying how dismal the Jewish people had become, and we end with praise, describing the greatness which we became.] This is the idea of the concept we are describing, in which perfection is revealed amidst incompleteness.

This idea is what lies behind prayer: for one to recognize that because Hashem is perfect, I am lacking, as I stand before Him. It is that perception which truly enables one to pray and pour out his heart to Hashem. It is not simply for one to feel that he is lacking; although it is certainly true when one prays, he needs to feel that he is lacking. It is to recognize that because *Hashem is perfect*, I am not, therefore, I pray. [Thus, the main emphasis of a person during prayer should therefore be, on the fact that “Hashem is perfect”, as opposed to dwelling on one’s own imperfections].

For this reason, the entire *Shemoneh Esrei* is composed as a public prayer, and not in the private and individual language. It is because prayer is not about turning to Hashem from my own personal imperfections; rather, it is that because we turn to Hashem, from there, we recognize how lacking we are.

*The Difference between “Daas” and “Temimus”*

During this time of the year – the month of Nissan, and on Pesach specifically, we can reach the depth of the power of *sichah*.

*Sichah* is also from the word ‘*shach*’, to bend, to be lowered. The Gemara learns out that *shechitah* (ritual slaughter) on animals is the place of the body which is “*shach*”, a part of the body which bends over, which is the neck<sup>59</sup>. We also find this term with the word ‘*shiach*’, a burrow in the ground, which is a low place. *Sichah* is thus about lowering oneself and being subservient. The Sages praise one who lowers himself “like an animal” and is able to engender high qualities of character because of this. This is referring to the trait of *temimus*. It does not come from a lack of *daas*; to the contrary, it comes from *shleimus*, from perfected character.

*Shleimus* – self-perfection – is not able to be achieved through *daas*. Our *daas* is limited. Even Moshe Rabbeinu, who achieved the highest level of *daas* possible, was only able to comprehend as far as his *daas* could understand. It was his *daas*; it was not the *daas* of the Creator. *Daas* can understand only so much, but it cannot grasp the plane of *shleimus*. Only through *tefillah*/prayer, which stems from *temimus*, can a person reach *shleimus*. This is because *temimus* is above *daas*. It can be said that at the point where *daas* ends, that is where *temimus* begins.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, one’s *temimus* can grasp perceptions that his *daas* cannot grasp. The Egyptian exile is called the “exile to our *daas*.”<sup>61</sup> It follows, then, that the redemption from Egypt meant that our *daas* had been redeemed. Yet, besides for this aspect, there was even deeper revelation: the revelation of our power of *sichah/temimus* - which is higher than *daas*.

### *Telling Over the Story of the Exodus, All Night Long: The Power of “Sichah/Temimus”*

The *mitzvah* to tell over the story of the exodus, ideally, is meant to span the entire night of the *seder*, for as long as one is capable of doing so. This is the spiritual light that is *temimus*: the state of perfection that was revealed from Hashem’s Presence appearing in Egypt, the peak of our exodus. The *mitzvah* to tell over the story of the exodus is not something you read, hear, or merely “learn”. It comes from a deep recognition in our souls of “*I, Hashem, will go out, in the midst of Egypt.*” The deeper the recognition of this, the deeper the *mitzvah* of telling over the story of the exodus will become.

### *From Pesach to Shavuos: From “Temimus” To “Daas”*

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59 Chullin 27a

60 Editor’s Note: This statement is reminiscent of a statement of Rav Dessler, “In the place where seichel (intellect) ends, that is where emunah (faith) begins.”

61 A statement of the Arizal. For further elaboration of this concept, see Pesach #002 – Redeeming Our Soul

These days of the month of *Nissan* are days in which we have the special opportunity to acquire the power of *sichah*. Through our power of *daas*, we cannot reach anything perfectly, because *daas* cannot reach *shleimus*, as we explained. *Shleimus* can only be reached when a person has a recognition of it, which comes from his *temimus*.

When Shavuos comes, it is the time to accept the Torah, and the Torah is a “*Toras Hashem Temimah*”, a Torah that requires *temimus*. It is written, “*Wisdom, from where is it found?*” The possuk is saying that the source of all *chochmah*/wisdom is *ayin*, “nothingness”, which is really referring to the *temimus* that must precede all of the *chochmah* of the Torah. It is *temimus* which is the deep source of all *chochmah*. If one has reached *temimus* on Pesach, he has the prerequisite to be able to receive the Torah on Shavuos.

The next month, *Iyar*, contains the power called ‘*hirhur*’, deep and reflective thought. If *hirhur* is not preceded with this *sichah*, though, then *hirhur* becomes superficial: one will only be thinking about various personal issues that are not of real importance.

The true way to prepare to receive the Torah is only through *temimus*: to recognize the *shleimus* of Hashem. “*Remember the day in which you stood before the mount of Sinai*” – the deeper meaning of this is that Torah must first be nursed from an inner source: from “standing at Har Sinai.” In other words, in order to accept the Torah and learn its wisdom, one must first have some recognition of perfection: to view the perfection of the Creator.

“*Follow after Me, into the desert.*” This is referring to the *temimus* which a Jew must have towards Hashem: to realize that Hashem is perfect and complete, so I will follow Him, wherever He takes me and wherever I must go.

The essence of Pesach, besides for its many other aspects and *halachos* which are also important, is this concept: to be ‘*masiach l’fi tumo*’, to let our conversations with Hashem flow, freely and naturally, from our point of *temimus*.

## *16 / Iyar – Thought and Visualization*

### *Preface*

With the help of Hashem, we have concluded the festival of Pesach, and now we are in the month of *Iyar*.

Our Sages state that the twelve months of the year are parallel to twelve abilities (or senses) of the soul. Each month contains a unique ability that reflects the nature of the month, which is manifest in the soul of man.

There is a dispute about the abilities which each month reflects, but the main view of our Sages is as follows: (1) *Nissan* is parallel to the ability of “*sichah*” (speech), (2) *Iyar* is parallel to the ability of “*hirhur*” (thought), etc.<sup>62</sup>

### *The Concept of ‘Hirhur’: Mental Speech/Thoughts of the Heart*

The month of *Iyar* contains the ability called *hirhur*, thought. The rule is that everything has a holy use and an evil use, so there is a way that *hirhur* is used for holiness, and there is a way how *hirhur* is used for evil.

The holy kind of *hirhur* is ‘*hirhur b’divrei Torah*’, ‘thinking into the words of Torah’ - when a person’s thoughts are immersed in Torah. The evil kind of *hirhur* is “*Do not follow after your eyes and after your heart*”; when the heart has thoughts of heresy or sin.

The Gemara<sup>63</sup> says that one of the things that a person cannot avoid each day is *hirhur aveirah* (thoughts of sin).

Before we try to understand what good *hirhur* is and what evil *hirhur* is, let us first understand the very concept of *hirhur*.

The *Vilna Gaon* lists five layers of the soul: *ratzon* (will), *machshavah* [thoughts of the brain], *hirhur* [thoughts of the heart], *kol* (voice), and *dibbur* (speech). Everything begins from the point of *ratzon* (the will): the *ratzon* of a person is found in the essence of the soul, for *ratzon* is identified

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62 [(3)Sivan is the month of halichah\walking, (4) Tamuz is the month of reiyah\sight, (5) Av is the month of shemiah\hearing, (6)Elul is the month of maaseh\action, (7) Tishrei is the month of mishush\touch, (8)Cheshvan is the month of reiach\smell, (9)Kislev is the month of sheinah\sleep, (10) Teves is the month of rogez\anger, (11) Shevat is the month of le’itah\eating, and (12) Adar is the month of sechok\laughter.]

63 Bava Basra 164a

with the very *nefesh* (soul) of a person. *Machshavah* is found in the mind, and *hirhur* is found in the heart. [*Kol* is in the throat, and *dibbur* is in the lips].

What exactly is *hirhur*? The Vilna Gaon describes it as *'dibbur b'machshavah'*, “mental speech.” What is the difference between a *hirhur* and a *dibbur*? *Hirhur* is what a person ‘says’ in his mind and heart. We find that “*Haman spoke in his heart.*” It is a kind of speech which takes place in the heart. *Dibbur* is when the speech exits the mouth.

There is a *halachah* that if one is not allowed to say *Kerias Shema*, he may mentally imagine the words, *'meharher b'libo'*, and he fulfills the mitzvah of *Kerias Shema* in this way<sup>64</sup>. The person ‘says’ the *Kerias Shema* in his heart. So *hirhur* is essentially a kind of mental speech: when a person speaks inside himself.

When the prophetess Channah (mother of Shmuel *HaNavi*) prayed, the *possuk* says that she “spoke on her heart”. She was speaking with her heart - meaning, she spoke with herself. Eli HaKohen saw her talking to herself and therefore assumed she was drunk. It appears strange when you see a person talking to himself; but in essence, every person talks with himself.

There is a *mitzvah* of “*And you shall speak in it*” - to speak words of Torah - and the Sages expound, “Speak words of Torah, and not idle words.” The Gemara brings a *halachah* that it is forbidden for a Torah scholar to walk in an unclean place, because a Torah scholar is always thinking of Torah, and it is forbidden to think Torah in unclean places<sup>65</sup>. The *Acharonim*<sup>66</sup> dispute if a person fulfills the *mitzvah* of speaking words of Torah through thinking. The more simple view is that thinking of words of Torah is considered like speaking words of Torah; “*hirhur* is like *dibbur* (speech)”.

But there are two kinds of speech: speech of the mouth, and speech of the heart. Whether one says the words or whether one thinks of the words, in either case, he first ‘speaks’ with himself, in his mind. So *hirhur* is when speaks within himself. One thinks *to* himself - and *with* himself.

What is the reason that we were given such a power as *hirhur*? The abilities of regular thought and speech make sense: we need to think, and we need to tell others what we are saying in order to have conversations; we cannot survive being a mute our whole life. But in between the faculties of thought and speech is the process called *hirhur*: speaking with oneself. Of what use is it? Why must our thoughts pass through the stage of *hirhur*, before they are released by our mouth in the form of speech?

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64 Berachos 20a

65 Tractate Berachos, Chapter II

66 “Later Sages”, the great Torah scholars spanning from the 15th-19th centuries

Another question we can ask is that we see that Eli HaKohen thought Channah was insane for talking to herself. So why is it a good thing to speak to oneself?

Our first task with this is to identify in the first place that we have such an ability called *hirhur*. When we identify it in ourselves, it will then be much easier to realize its purpose. Let us think about the great wealth that is contained in the power of *hirhur*.

### *Hirhur: The Ability to Lead Oneself*

What is the purpose of speaking to others? When two people wish to bond, they speak with each other. However, *Chazal* say there is a deeper reason: “*Daber echad l’dor*” – there is ‘one leader per generation’, who speaks to them. One leads himself - as well as others - through speech. Sheep are guided through the command of their shepherd, just as humans are guided by speech.

There are two “kings” that reside within man: the brain, and the heart. The heart is the king that presides over all the parts of the body. If someone is not in the category of *tzaddik*, he is ruled by the left chamber of the heart [which contains the evil inclination]<sup>67</sup>. With *tzaddikim*, “their hearts are in their control”, whereas with the wicked, their hearts rule them.

Speech is both in mouth as well as an ability of our heart. What is speech of the heart? It is the ability in oneself to rule the rest of himself, just as a king rules his country. *Hirhur* is found in the heart, as the Vilna *Gaon* writes, and it is a kind of speech. So it is a kind of speech in which one speaks with himself, and through this internal kind of talking, he leads himself. When one wants to lead others, he speaks to them and commands them. So too, when one wants to lead himself, he speaks within himself, so that he can lead himself.

There is a possuk, “*I believed, for I spoke.*” If one wants to acquire *emunah* (faith in Hashem), he must speak words of *emunah*. This is a revelation of the concept of *dibbur* (speech): one leads himself through speaking with himself. Without speaking with oneself, one is not able to lead himself.

### *“Hirhur”: The Power to Internalize Our Knowledge*

It is written, “*And you shall know today, and you shall let the matter settle on your heart.*” We might know what the truth is, but our heart contains certain desires which are preventing us from subordinating ourselves to what that knowledge will demand.

We all are familiar with this [inner contradiction in ourselves]. A person can *know* what the truth is very well, but he wants the opposite of the truth. He *knows* he must learn Torah, but he *wants* to chat or waste his time. One might *know* very well that he needs to disconnect from indulging in

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67 Sefer Tanya

worldly pleasures, but his *heart* still desires This World very much. The distance between what we know and what we want is like the distance between the sky and the earth.<sup>68</sup>

So the knowledge that our mind is aware of is not strong enough to subordinate our heart. Our mind, our *daas*, is aware of the ‘X’, for example, while our heart has a desire for the opposite of what ‘X’ will entail....

This is true with all people, but the difference between knowledge and internalization is not the same distance with each person. In some people, the contradiction is greater, and in others, the facts are closer to the heart. But every person contains in himself a distance between his mind and heart, creating a contradiction between what he *knows* with what he *wants*. In all people, the mind is more mature than the heart, and therefore, the heart isn’t capable of understanding what our mind knows.

How, indeed, does a person ‘download’ the information of his brain into his heart? How do we internalize in our hearts, the knowledge that we know of in our brains? What is the language that speaks to our heart?

It is called *hirhur*. It is the ability to speak to ourselves and within ourselves, using our heart.

### *‘Thinking in Learning’: Through Our Brain, Or Through Our Heart?*

The *mitzvah* of learning Torah is “*And you shall speak in it*” – it is essentially a *mitzvah* for our heart to think the words of the Torah and reflect into them. Learning Torah, which requires us to speak in learning, is not simply a *mitzvah* to ‘talk in our learning’ using our physical mouth. It is a *mitzvah* that involves the use of our heart to *think* about the words of the Torah.

Thus, if one is thinking about words of Torah using his brain alone, this is not the ideal kind of learning Torah! In order to speak of the Torah, one needs to speak of it using his mouth or his heart, but what kind of speech must it be? If the brain is thinking about Torah but its knowledge is not yet in the heart’s reach, it is not the ideal form of the *mitzvah* of learning Torah.

A wise person, a *chacham*, is called *chacham lev*, one who has ‘wisdom of the heart’. It is when one’s *chochmah*/wisdom that he learns is on the level of *hirhur*; when it has become speech of the heart.

When wisdom remains in his brain and it doesn’t reach his heart, *Chazal* refer to this as one whose “wisdom is greater than his actions”. He knows a lot, but it doesn’t affect him enough. Wisdom is only called wisdom when it is in his heart.

*Shlomo HaMelech* is the epitome of a *chacham*, for he was the wisest person who ever lived, and he himself was the one who said, “*My heart has seen much wisdom.*” True wisdom is when the heart is

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68 A statement of the Alter of Kelm

aware of the wisdom, and it is beyond the intellectual understanding contained in the brain. The heart's wisdom is not called *machshavah* [brain-thought]; it is rather called *hirhur* [heart-thought] – the “speech of the heart”.

A Torah scholar is defined as one who “sits and thinks (*‘meharber’*, from the word *‘hirhur’*) of it constantly”; the way of a Torah scholar is to always use his ability of *hirhur*, in thinking about Torah. If one finds that he cannot think about Torah all the time, it must be because he only knows how to ‘think’ in Torah using his brain, and the wisdom of Torah he learns is not yet in his heart. But when he has reached his heart, he is able to always speak words of Torah, and he is able to always think of Torah; this is the level of *hirhur b’divei Torah* that is reflected in the ideal Torah scholar.

The difficulty which many people have is that they are either involved in the “world of action” or in the “world of thought”, whereas the “world of speech” is often misunderstood. Speech is mainly used by people either towards others, or in praying and speaking to Hashem; but when it comes to the idea of speaking with *oneself*, most people cannot identify with this. With regards to oneself, we can relate very well to either actions or thoughts that we do with ourselves, but who can relate to speaking to himself? A person almost never speaks with himself.

But this is a problem. The structure of our soul is generally composed of action and thought, and in between these two faculties, is our speech: the ability of *hirhur*, to speak to ourselves. Thoughts are the highest layer of the soul, with our actions being the lowest layer of our soul. Our ability to speak to ourselves is the middle layer. It is the design of Creation.

How did Hashem create us? Through His word. We were formed through His speech. The world was created with His Ten Expressions. First Hashem had the thought of creating man, then He formed Creation and made man – but in between the stage of “thought” and “action”, came His speech: the Ten Expressions. So speech represents the idea of Creation itself that we live in. In addition, the Torah was given through speech: the Ten Commandments.

On a deeper level, the ability to speak to ourselves is an ability that is rooted in Hashem's act of speaking with Himself, as it were, when He commanded each creation to come into being. When Hashem said, “Let there be light”, of what use did He say this for? He could have created it without saying it. But it is to show us that even Hashem speaks with Himself (so to ‘speak’).

Thus, when we speak to others, it really begins in our ability to speak to ourselves. Those are the words of the Vilna Gaon, that *hirhur* precedes *dibbur*. But this is true with all kinds of speech that exist: speaking to others, speaking to the Creator, and speaking to ourselves.

### *Identifying “Hirhur” In Your Thinking Process*

Although we are always speaking to ourselves before we talk, we are not consciously aware of it, because it is a very quick internal process. In order to become aware of our *hirhur*, we need to consciously become aware of the five stages of speech, as the Vilna Gaon lists them, in this order:

our *ratzon* (will), our *machshavah* (thoughts), *hirhur* (speaking to ourselves), *dibbur* (speech), and *kol* (audible voice). The crucial stage we need to become aware of is *hirhur*, because it is often overlooked.

When a person is unaware of the stage of *hirhur* – the fact that he talks to himself in his mind/heart – his speech will be external. It will not be “Words that come from the heart, enter the heart.” When *Chazal* tell us that our speech comes from our heart, this is not simply to dismiss the notion that perhaps speech comes from other parts of the body. Obviously, speech stems from our heart. So why are *Chazal* telling us that words must come from the heart? It is to hint to us that we need to think before we talk, of the words that we are about to say.

The *Ramban*<sup>69</sup> writes that one should think about the words he is about to say, before he utters them with his mouth. This is more than just to think *what* you will say and formulate the words in your mind. It is to think *about* what you will say, before you say them.

When one skips over the *hirhur* stage [subconsciously], he lacks the proper structure of the soul, and has omitted one of the essential stages of the mental and verbal process. In fact, when one skips over *hirhur* [by not consciously being aware of it], he has omitted the basic and root faculty of the entire thinking process.

This is not a mere intellectual discussion. It is the entire secret of all inner work we must do with our soul! It is based on the words of the *Vilna Gaon* quoted earlier.

### *‘Hirhur’ – The Expression of the Heart’s Thoughts*

Man is called *medaber*, a social creature. The Sages state that the animals, trees, and birds can also converse with each other. If so, why is speech considered to be the defining nature of man? There are many explanations given, but we will say the answer that pertains to our discussion. It is because “*medaber*”, which is our trait of *dibbur*, is not simply to say words using our mouth. It is preceded with the stage of first speaking with our heart. This is unique only to humans.

By contrast, animals and trees do not have the heart as a factor in their speech. There is only speech, with no heart involved. When speech only comes from the mouth and it does not first pass through the heart, it is not called *dibbur*. Thus, animals and trees are not called *medaber*, even though they converse. The title of ‘*medaber*’ refers to the inner essence of speech: the speech that takes place in the heart, before the words leave one’s mouth. The superficial layer of speech is the words that exit the mouth, but the essence of speech is the speech that takes place in the heart, before the words exit. This is the unique ability of man, who is called *medaber*, one who can speak: only man has the ability to speak with himself, to speak in his heart, before he speaks with his mouth.

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69 Iggeres HaRamban

Furthermore, man is also called *maveh*, which is identified with prayer<sup>70</sup>. Prayer is called the ‘service of the heart’<sup>71</sup>. Prayer is not simply when the heart concentrates, nor is it limited to being an expression of the heart’s desire; although this is all true, it is not the essence of prayer. Prayer is the speech that flows from the heart. It expresses the *hirhur*, the thinking process, of the heart.

### *Thought vs. Visualization*

Let us think into the depth of the concept of *hirhur*, the ability of man to think before he talks.

The *Gemara* states that a person dreams at night about what he thought about during the day. Because of this fact, elsewhere the Sages warn that a person should not entertain lewd thoughts during the day, so that he won’t become contaminated at night<sup>72</sup>. This is because our heart imagines what we thought about during the day. A person dreams about things that he has [mentally] visualized during the day, not about things he has merely ‘thought’ about. The heart imagines various fantasies.

At night, when imagination is more dominant, a person will fantasize about what he imagined about during the day. And if a person has a very imaginative nature, he will fantasize like this even during the daytime, when he is perfectly awake. At nighttime, when people have dreams, there is a kind of ‘videotape’ that a person visualizes as he’s dreaming, which is experienced as a visualization, not a mere abstract thought. That is essentially the dreaming process: it is the imaginative faculty presenting various visions to the mind. When we dream at night, these are not simply thoughts – they are visions which we can palpably experience.

Being that a person dreams at night about what his heart imagined about during the day, *Chazal* warn that a person should not look at improper sights during the day. Our heart is full of visions, whereas our brain is filled with thoughts; there is very big difference. The heart’s ability to imagine, *tziyur*, can have a mental picture of things; whereas our brain can only conceptualize a thought, and it cannot conjure any kind of mental image. These are two distinct mental abilities: *choishev* (or *machshavah*), and *tziyur* (visualization)<sup>73</sup>. To give a simple example of the difference, if you think about an apple, you can either ‘think’ about what it is, or you can envision what it looks like. They are two different kinds of thoughts. [The first kind of thought is called *machshavah*, and the second kind of thought is called *tziyur*.] The Torah says that those involved in building the *Mishkan* were

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70 Bava Kamma 3b

71 Berachos 31a

72 Kesubos 44a

73 For more on the difference between thought and imagination, refer to Getting To Know Your Thoughts\_05\_Intellect and Picture, and the Hebrew audio file of (מדמה) 036\_ כוחותיך דע את כוחותיך and 039\_ כוחותיך דע את כוחותיך (מחשבה)

called “*chacham lev*”, those who possessed ‘wisdom of heart’. It refers to those who were able to envision – the ability of *tziyur*.

### *When There Is a Disconnection between the Mind and Heart in Learning Torah*

When one is ‘thinking’ in learning, using only in his brain, and not his heart - this will mean that his mind can be immersed in Torah, but his heart is entrenched in the desires of This World at very same time! These words are deep and penetrating to anyone who understands them.

It is possible that a person is regularly involved in learning Torah, *davening*, and doing all the right actions he needs to do, but it’s all in his brain, and his heart is disconnected from all of this. His *heart* might be filled with all kinds of fantasies about This World even as his *brain* is immersed in Torah and in doing *mitzvos*!

And even worse, his heart might very well be filled with sinful thoughts and images that are outright forbidden by the Torah to think about, even though his *brain* is immersed in Torah.

The brain of a person might be thinking about Torah, but at the very same time, his heart might be filled with fantasies of This World; some of these fantasies are simply vain, while other fantasies are worse than just fantasies: they are sinful and evil.

If one wishes to truly purify his heart, his only weapon against this problem is to develop an imagination for holiness [as we will soon explain].

### *The Imagination Process*

As we explained, the brain thinks about thoughts in the form of abstract conceptualization, whereas the heart imagines, in the form of mental pictures.

The Torah commands us not to stray after our hearts and eyes. The Sages learn from this that the heart desires what the eyes see, and this leads a person to the act of sin. Let us think into these words of the Sages. The heart has desires for certain things which are improper. How does it desire? It imagines something.

It uses the ability of *tziyur*, visualization, and not the ability of *machshavah* that’s in the brain. The heart can only imagine what the eyes have seen, however. It can only receive images from the lens of the eye. It is not capable of thinking in the abstract.

Thus, even if a person is very accustomed to ‘thinking in learning’, this might only be involving his brain’s thoughts; his heart remains empty from any content of visions that are holy. As we explained earlier, there is a huge distance between the brain and the heart. The brain is thinking about Torah, and at the same time, the heart is immersed in a fantasy; sometimes the heart is completely visualizing a sinful image even as the brain is thinking in learning.

What is the remedy to this problem?

### *Method 1: Holy Visualizations*

One method, brought in the works of our *sefarim hakedoshim*, is for a person to imagine holy pictures. Examples of this include looking at pictures of *tzaddikim*, imagining what the *Beis HaMikdash* looked like, or to imagine the song of the angels on High.<sup>74</sup>

### *Method 2: Picturing the Letters of the Gemara*

However, there is an alternative method brought, which is even clearer and simpler to implement, as a means of purifying the heart. It is as follows.

All of the letters of our *Aleph Beis* are essentially pictures. Each letter of the *Aleph Beis* is a *tziyur*, a visualization, of the letter that you see or read. The Sages state, “*Oisiyos Machkimos*” “Seeing the letters [of the *Aleph Beis*], brings wisdom.” To view the letters of the *Aleph Beis* is to view a holy kind of vision. In every letter of the *Aleph Beis* that you read, there are two aspects contained in it: the thought or idea that it tells you, as well as the holy image that it appears in. The letter of the *Aleph Beis* that you see is its *tziyur*, and the information it imparts to you is its *chochmah*/wisdom.

When a person does not see letters of the *Aleph Beis* in front of him, all he views is the *chochmah* that is contained in the letters and words he is reading. He can comprehend the meaning of the words, and he will understand the message that the letters and words are forming, but he is missing a vision of holiness that he could have seen in it.

That is the “*hirhur*” stage of learning Torah, and if it is skipped over, a person is lacking a holy visualization of the words of Torah he has learned. He might have gone through the other stages of *ratzon*, *machshavah*, *dibbur* and *kol* in his Torah learning, making sure to ‘think in learning’ and ‘talk in learning’, but he is missing the stage of *hirhur*. An important element of the process has been missed. His thoughts and his speech have touched holiness, but his actual heart is still far from the words of Torah he has learned.

It is written, “*The inclination of man is evil from his youth.*” The evil inclination from youth refers to the evil desires that are present in the heart. A person’s brain might think of Torah and the person’s mouth can speak Torah (and other words of holiness, such as prayer), but if one’s heart is not included in the process of one’s Torah learning [when *hirhur*/visualization is skipped], then his heart remains at its initial and immature state of fantasizing the desires for This World,

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74 Mentioned in Sefer Chovas HaTalmidim of Rav Kolonomis Kalman zt”l, the “Aish Kodesh”

But if one makes sure to build his soul in the order of the stages presented by the *Vilna Gaon* (*ratzon*, *machshavah*, *hirhur*, *dibbur*, and *kol*) – in particular, when he makes sure to think of what he will say, before he says the words – this is “*hirhur*”.

### *‘Hirhur’: Using Our Heart’s Visualization, As We Learn Torah*

How, indeed, does one use the power of *hirhur* [in his Torah learning]? He can use his heart to imagine the holy letters of the *Aleph Beis* of the words he is reading. This internal process is what cleanses and purifies the heart from within.

This is really the secret behind learning Torah. Our entire *avodah* is “*And purify our hearts, to serve You in truth*” – and how, indeed, is the heart purified? We know that the mitzvah to learn Torah is the greatest mitzvah, equal to all the other *mitzvos*; and *Chazal* state that “Hashem wants the heart.” How do we reconcile these two facts? Does learning Torah have anything to do with our heart? It would seem that they are two completely separate issues, and that they have no relation to each other. After all, we can all see that there are many people who spend a lot of time learning Torah, but it doesn’t purify their heart.

But the truth is that the *mitzvah* of learning Torah, and the fact that Hashem wants our heart, are interdependent on each other. When a person learns Torah in the true manner, (which is to go in the order of the *Vilna Gaon* (first *ratzon*/will, then *machshavah*/brain-thought, then *hirhur*/heart-thought/visualization, then *kol*/sound, and then *dibbur*/speech), then it can be said of his Torah learning that “It [the Torah] is life, to those who verbalize it with their mouths.” We just have to make sure that we do not skip over the crucial stage of *hirhur* as we learn Torah. When we are in touch with ‘*hirhur*’ in Torah as we learn the words of Torah,

*Hirhur* in our Torah learning means that the words of Torah we are learning are passing through the visual lens of the heart, [which pictures the holy letters of the *Aleph Beis* contained in the words what we are learning]. This in turn weakens the evil and forbidden images that have become stamped onto our psyche. As we get used to this holy visualization technique more and more, it slowly weakens and conquers the improper images which our heart contained.<sup>75</sup> It is then that it can be applied the concept of “*Oisiyos Machkimos*” - “Seeing the letters [of the *Aleph Beis*], brings wisdom”.

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<sup>75</sup> Editor’s Note: As explained before, however, the heart only ‘contains’ what the eyes have laid sight upon; it does not conjure any images on its own. According to the approach here, we have a way of uprooting the evil images that our eyes have seen and, in turn, what our heart has desired.

In this way, we arm ourselves with the power of *tziyur d'kedushah*, holy visualization, which can counter the images of *tziyur d'kelipah* (fantasies that are improper or evil).

If one is not aware of the stage of *hirhur* in his Torah learning – in other words, if he is not using his heart to visualize the letters of the words he is learning – what will happen? He only remains with thoughts of Torah, which are conceptual and abstract, and he does not palpably envision them. His brain has learned Torah – but his heart did not.

### *Concentration in Prayer*

The same problem exists with *davening* as well. A person might be thinking of the words he is saying as he's *davening*, and he's concentrating on the meaning of the words, but his heart is fantasizing about all kinds of things.

The *Nefesh HaChaim* writes that the main “*kavanah*” (concentration) we need to have when we daven is to think of the meaning of the words. This does not simply mean to mentally think of the meaning of the words. Thinking of what we are saying is *machshavah* (thought), but it is not yet the heart. We can call it ‘*iyunah shel tefillah*’, ‘analyzing the prayers’, which is certainly an accomplishment, but it is not yet called having “*kavanah*” when we *daven*.

Real “*kavanah*” in davening, as the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes, is to vividly picture the words of what we are saying, in our heart. When the words of prayer then exit the mouth, it is called prayer, which is called the “service of the heart.”<sup>76</sup>

### *Tziyur D'Kedushah: Infusing the Heart with Holy Images*

When a person learns Torah in this way, making sure to use his heart's power to visualize the letters, his heart becomes filled with the holiness contained in the 22 letters of the *Aleph Beis*. These 22 letters were used by Hashem to create the heavens and the earth. It brings wisdom into the heart, transforming it into “*The heart of the wise person, is to his right.*”

What does it mean that the “*heart of the wise person, is to his right?*” It means that his heart is filled with visualizations that are holy. By contrast, the “*heart of a fool is to his left*” – when the heart is not fused with holiness, it is filled with all kinds of unholy images.

We cannot live [spiritually] without the ability of *tziyur d'kedushah* (using our heart to envision holiness images). Generally, women are stronger when it comes to the area of the (spiritual

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<sup>76</sup> For more on this concept, see Tefillah #0137 – Inner Prayer

dimension of the) heart, and therefore, they are naturally more inclined towards using their imagination and mental visualization.

But every person has the *bechirah* (free will) to choose what kinds of images will fill his heart – if he will be filled with holy images, or with unholy images.

### *The Avodah of the Month of Iyar: Gaining Control Over Our Imagination*

The [previous] month of *Nissan* contained the power of *sichah*, conversing; to tell over the story of the exodus to our children. The month of *Iyar* contains the power of *hirhur*, to think. [We have explained that *hirhur* refers to the thoughts of the heart, which mentally visualizes something].

It is harder to gain control over our thoughts than what comes out of our mouth. We have an easier time restraining our speech, but restraining what we will think is quite difficult. When our mind is filled with fantasies, it is very hard to stay focused on what we are doing at the time, even for a timespan of one minute. This is because it is very difficult to fight the fantasies of our heart.

Animals can communicate, but they have no *bechirah* (free will). They do not decide what they are going to say. But people have *bechirah*. We have two “hearts” to decide between, whenever we are about to talk: a ‘right side’ of the heart, and a ‘left side’ of the heart. We have the *bechirah* to transform the visualizations of our heart from evil images to holy images.

We can transform the heart from its initial state of “*the inclination of the heart of man is evil from his youth*” - the heart ruled by the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) - into a heart that can conjure images of holiness, *tziyur d’kedushah*, the heart that is ruled by the *yetzer tov* (the good inclination).

Both the *yetzer tov* and the *yetzer hora* are from the word *yetzer*, which is from the word *tziyur*, to visualize. The *yetzer tov* in our heart can visualize images that are holy, and our *yetzer hora* is the source of fantasies (*dimyonos*) that strengthen the hold of This World on us. When a person’s imagination dominates, the root of the problem is that his heart needs fixing; as *Chazal* say, “The wicked are ruled by their hearts.”

The “wicked” refers to those who are not in control of their hearts, and it is rather their hearts which control them; they are stuck in evil kinds of fantasies.

The *Vilna Gaon* says that the month of *Iyar*, which contains the power of *hirhur*, has the power of rectify the trait of *taavah* (indulgence in desires). As we brought earlier from the words of *Chazal*, Desire begins in the eyes and continues into the heart, and the heart continues to visualize the image more and more until a person eventually sins. But our heart also contains an ability to counter this: *hirhur*, or *tziyur d’kedushah*.

*Hirhur*, the ability of our heart, and the special power of the month of *Iyar*, is the ability to receive visualizations of holy images; it is the power that can essentially help us eliminate improper desires.

### *In Conclusion*

This concept is really describing the inner root behind the purpose of Creation, which is, “Hashem wants the heart.” It is how we can reach, “*And purify our hearts, to serve You in truth.*”

The genuine kind of *Yiddishkeit* (religious Judaism) is to live a sanctified kind of life. It is not just actions that we do. And it is not just about going to *shiurim*<sup>77</sup> (which is of course commendable). It is mainly about being able to use our heart to visualize images that are holy!

May Hashem merit us to turn our hearts and visualize the truest image of all: “There is no Rock (*tzur*) like our G-d.” Our Sages expound this to mean, “There is no artist (*tzayar*) like our G-d.” Then we can come to the truest possible recognition: to recognize Hashem, in the depths of our heart. *Amen*, and *Amen*.<sup>78</sup>

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77 Torah lectures

78 For more on the topic of imagination and how it relates to the brain and the heart, refer to Getting To Know Your Imagination\_05\_The Heart’s Imagination

## *17 / Sivan – Walking Towards The Endless*

### *Sivan – “Walking”*

The month of *Sivan* is the month when we received the Torah. Each month contains a special power, as our Sages taught; the power of Sivan is called “*hiluch*”, “walking.”<sup>79</sup> What is the connection between *hiluch*\walking and with the giving of the Torah? And what exactly is the power of “*hiluch*”, “walking”?

### *The Constant Spiritual Progress Of A Torah Scholar: Where Is His Serenity?*

The *Gemara*<sup>80</sup> says that Torah scholars have no *menuchah* (serenity), not on this world and not in the next, for it is written, “**יֵלְכוּ מִהֵיל אֶל הֵיל**”, “*They go from place to place.*” If Torah scholars have no rest on this world or in the next, what kind of situation are they in?

They are always in a state of *hiluch* – they are always ‘walking’, going, progressing.

However, there seems to be a contradiction. A Torah scholar, our Sages say, is the epitome of *menuchah* (serenity). The Torah says about the Yissocher, who is blessed with Torah scholars as his descendants, that “*he saw that serenity is good.*” The wisest of all men, the greatest Torah scholar ever, was Shlomo HaMelech, yet he is called ‘*ish menuchah*’, a ‘man of serenity’. But the *Gemara* we brought above says that a Torah scholar has no *menuchah*, not on this world and not on the next! How do we reconcile these two statements?

Making the question stronger, there’s another statement of our Sages that says, “A Torah scholar is called *Shabbos*.” *Shabbos* epitomes the concept of *menuchah* – serenity and rest. Here again we see that a Torah scholar is the epitome of *menuchah*.

Therefore, the statement of our Sages that “A Torah scholar has no *menuchah* (rest\serenity), not on This World, and not on the Next World” is a matter which needs understanding. If they are always progressing and moving forward, when do they ever get to have *menuchah*?

And if a Torah scholar is the epitome of *menuchah*, why does he keep aspiring for more and more spiritual levels?

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79 Sefer Yetzirah 5:5

80 Berachos 64a

### *Defining The Concept of Hiluch \ Walking \ Progressing*

In order to know this, we will first need to understand what the concept of “*hiluch*” (“going”) is. What does it mean that Torah scholars are in always in a state of “*hiluch*”, that they are always ‘going from place to place’?

The way that a Torah scholar progresses and ‘goes’ [from one spiritual attainment to another] is not in the same way that we understand how a person simply ‘goes’ from one place to another. It’s not the same kind of “*hiluch*”. The Sages make a contrast between angels and Torah scholars: an angel is always standing, whereas a Torah scholar is always ‘walking’. In this statement, the Sages are revealing to us that the Jew has the special power in his soul to keep progressing to higher levels; to constantly be in a state of “*hiluch*”. In that sense, there is no *menuchah* (serenity), because there is always more spiritual growth for a person to reach.

There are two types of *hiluch*\walking. One way is when a person ‘goes’ from one place to another, and another case is where he leaves his own “*daled amos*” (four cubits); the Torah defines a person’s *daled amos* as his actual *makom*, space. In other words, one kind of person will go from place to place by simply leaving his place, while another person can move from place to place while still being able to remain in it – he can move around within his own space of *daled amos*, and it is not considered as if he is gone anywhere.

On Shabbos, it is forbidden to leave the *techum* (boundary of the settlement). Within one’s own *techum*, though, one is allowed to move around in on Shabbos. It would seem that moving within one’s own bounds is the same kind of movement as moving past one’s bounds, but they are actually two different kinds of movement. Understanding this deep difference will help us understand what the *hiluch* of a Torah scholar is.

One kind of *hiluch* is where a person moves from one place to another and as a result, he loses his *menuchah* (serenity). This is where a person leaves his place, and he goes to another place. When a person is always going from place to place, he cannot have *menuchah*. But when a person is remaining in his space, even as he’s moving within it, he can have a degree of *menuchah* there.

Avraham Avinu left for Eretz Yisrael, and Yaakov Avinu was promised Eretz Yisrael, when Hashem folded the entire land of Eretz Yisrael and placed it under his head. In both of these situations, they were staying within one “place”. Yaakov clearly had the entire place of Eretz Yisrael, but even Avraham was remaining in the same place the whole time; he was not actually leaving one place to go to another place. How?

When one walks in Eretz Yisrael, it is as if he is staying in one place the whole time, whereas walking outside of Eretz Yisrael is considered going from one place to another. What is the difference? Of Eretz Yisrael it is said, “*From beginning of the year, until the end of the year*”. The entire land of Eretz Yisrael is considered to be one “place”. The Sages teach that Hashem is called the

“Place” of the world.<sup>81</sup> When one feels this perspective, even as he walks from one place to another, he does not feel like he is leaving one place and going to another. Rather, he knows that he is always found in the same place – for the only “place” of the world is Hashem.

When one walks within his own property, we say that he’s walking within his own place and that he hasn’t left his place. But if one leaves his property and goes to another person’s property, we say that he has gone from one place to another. We can learn from this that if a person views two different places as one place, he is not leaving that place, wherever he goes. When a person understands that only Hashem is called the “Place” of the world, he sees every place in the world as all one place – Hashem’s.

Based upon the above, we can understand the difference between the “walking” of a Torah scholar, with the “walking” of one who is not a Torah scholar, an ignoramus. To a Torah scholar, every place is all one place, for only Hashem is the “Place” of the world. In his perspective, he is never leaving one place and going to another, because every place is really Hashem’s. But someone who does not have the perspective of the Torah scholar thinks that he goes from one place to another, and that is why he will not have *menuchah* (serenity), because according to his perspective, he’s always on the go.

*“By the mouth of Hashem they shall journey, and by the mouth of Hashem they shall camp.”* The Gemara says that from this verse, we learn that only Hashem is called the “Place” of the world, for wherever we go, we must follow Hashem; that makes every place into Hashem’s place. This is how a Torah scholar progresses – he has the perspective that every place where he goes to is really all one place. It is all Hashem’s place. It is like when the entire land of Eretz Yisrael was folded and placed under the head of Yaakov Avinu, and it is like walking in Eretz Yisrael, which is entirely one place – *“By the mouth of Hashem they shall journey, and by the mouth of Hashem they shall rest.”*

### *Hiluch \ Walking – Uncovering More Depth In The Same Area You Are In*

Now let us explain this in terms that apply to our own personal souls.

Every person goes through all kinds of situations in life, where they are moving and progressing from one area to another. Some people are progressing in their spiritual attainments, whereas others are making progress in areas that are spiritually harmful (may Heaven save them). The Vilna Gaon says that a person is either ascending or descending, in his spiritual progress. No one stays in one place for long; either a person is rising, or falling.

*Sivan* is the month of *halichah \ hiluch* (walking \ progressing). The Torah is the revelation that whenever I go, I am in a place where Hashem is. “Hashem looked into the Torah, and created the world” – from the Torah, it is revealed that all of Creation is really one “place”: it is all Hashem. The

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81 Nefesh HaChaim, Gate III

Sages said this explicitly of Eretz Yisrael (that anyone who walks in it is walking in Hashem's place), but it also applies anywhere outside of Eretz Yisrael, except that there it is more hidden.

The Torah is all one unit. There is no such thing as two different versions of the Torah, *chas v'shalom*. We find that a "place" can be divided, such as how the land of Eretz Yisrael is divided amongst the portions of the twelve tribes. But at the root, all is one. When a person sees the world through an inner lens, when he sees the root of this Creation, what does he see in the world? All he will see in the "world" is "Torah", for that is what the world was created from, and therefore only the "Torah" is the "world" (when one has the inner perspective).

If a person sees the world through superficial vision, however, he has the perspective that one can move from place to another, that he can be uprooted from his place and find rest in another place. With such a perspective, he has no real stability, so he will never have *menuchah* (serenity). But if a person only sees "Torah" in Creation (for "Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world"), he will see all places of the world as one single place.

Thus, the meaning of "Torah scholars have no *menuchah*, not on This World and not in the Next World" is that they don't stop moving within the place they are in. They are not moving out of one place and into another. Rather, in the very place they are in, they keep moving. In that respect, they don't have *menuchah*.

What does it mean that Torah scholars keep progressing, from one spiritual attainment to another, *לילכו מהיל להיל*? Does it mean to finish all of *Talmud Bavli* and then *Talmud Yerushalmi*? Along the lines of the same question, what essentially is the difference between a Torah scholar and an ignoramus?

The true Torah scholar is always revealing more depth to the very same verse of Torah he is learning, or in the very same page of Gemara he is learning. He keeps progressing spiritually within the same place, and that is he is always in movement, but without leaving the place where he is, by revealing more depth within the place where he is at.

Thus, the special ability of the Torah scholar is that he can keep "walking" \ progressing in the very area of Torah he is learning, by seeing another angle of understanding to it, another layer of depth to it, endlessly.

### *Hiluch \ Walking \ Progressing – The Way To Receive The Torah*

What is the connection, though, between this concept of *hiluch* \ walking \ progressing and receiving the Torah?

It is because the Torah is the revelation of the very idea that a person can keep walking \ progressing, endlessly, within the very same place that a person is in. One can keep revealing more depth to the same verse of the Torah he is learning, to the same Mishnah he is learning, to the same subject of Gemara he is learning. The amount of depth one can keep uncovering is infinite.

### *The Menuchah (Serenity) of Learning Torah In-Depth*

To illustrate the concept, Rav Chaim of Brisk told his students to spend 40 days learning the same page of Gemara. It is because one can keep uncovering more and more depth within the very same area of Torah he is learning about, without moving on to a different area.

Now we can also understand how this also provides a Torah with *menuchah*. The soul cannot have true serenity when it keeps viewing a different page of Gemara every day; it never finds any place to rest in. But if it has 40 days to keep seeing the same words of the Gemara, it can be serene there. This is on condition, of course, that a person keeps studying the words with the intention to uncover more depth of understanding.

The *menuchah* in learning Torah comes from spending time learning the same page of Gemara for a while, getting yourself deeper and deeper into it. Compare this to digging a pit in the ground in order to lay a foundation to build a home upon. The deeper you dig into the ground, the more stable of a structure it will be, because the foundation is stronger when it is placed deeper. This is the meaning of true “*menuchas hanefesh*” (serenity of the soul).

A Torah scholar therefore does not simply ‘go’ from one subject to another in Torah. Rather, in the same subject of Torah he is studying, he keeps revealing more and more depth in that area. Now we can understand why Shlomo was called “*ish menuchah*”, a man of serenity. He was the one who built the *Beis HaMikdash*, the deepest spiritual place that there is in Creation. It was the gate to Heaven that was on this world of action, and it was a gate that led to the most absolute spiritual place [and since he uncovered the most depth, he attained serenity].

### *Reaching The Infinite*

At Har Sinai, Hashem opened up all of the heavens and showed them “*Ain Od Milvado*”, that there is nothing else besides for Hashem. What was the reason for this? It is because the Torah enables a person to reveal more and more depth, until a person reaches *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, which is the recognition of “*Ain Od Milvado*”.

That is what it means to have “*hiluch*” (walking) within Torah; it means to keep “walking” and moving within one place, within the very same area he is thinking about, until one reaches the Infinite - the deepest place possible to reach.

*Sivan* is the month when the Torah was given. The Torah is “*longer than the earth and wider than the sea*”, but besides for this, the Torah also reveals a power to keep “going” within the same place where one is, to keep revealing more and depth within the place that one is, until he reaches the *Ein Sof*, (the Infinite).

This is not a matter which comes by itself to a person [as an automatic byproduct of learning Torah]. Rather, it is a matter which needs to be acquired, and it is the meaning of what it means to be a “Torah scholar.”

In order for a person to see the depths of the Torah, when he sees the “deep waters” that the Torah is, he must become an “*ish tevunah*”, “a man of understanding”. This refers to the concept of the “50 Gates of Understanding”.

### *The Depth of Sefiras Ha'Omer: Getting Deeper Into The Gates of Understanding*

There are “50 Gates of Understanding” to the Torah. There are 50 days of *Sefiras Ha'Omer*, and the inner reason for counting each day of the *Omer* is so that one can keep entering deeper and deeper into the spiritual realm within him; until the innermost gate is reached.

The Vilna Gaon says that each of the 50 gates of understanding contain 50 levels, so when one reaches the 50<sup>th</sup> gate, he will find himself before another 50 gates to traverse. Thus, the depth of *Sefiras Ha'Omer* is to keep entering deeper and deeper into one's inner spiritual realm, until one gets to the “giving of the Torah” that is reached when one gets to the recognition of *Ain Od Milvado* (“There is nothing besides Him”).

Counting *Sefiras Ha'Omer* is therefore not just a verbal act of the mouth, but a matter of the soul. When the Torah says, “Count fifty days”, the intention is to keep entering deeper, past another gate and another gate, into one's inner spiritual dimension.

That is the depth of the concept of “*hiluch*”. It is about digging deeper and deeper, into everything. In everything we encounter, there is always more depth to uncover, because there are always “50 gates of understanding” in everything.

The first 49 days of *Sefiras Ha'Omer* represents the external part of our task in preparing to receive the Torah. What is the preparation that we need to make in order to receive the Torah? To reveal more and more depth in whatever we see! *Sefiras Ha'Omer* is about revealing depth, to enter into another gate and into another gate.

### *Reaching The “50 Gates of Understanding” – Through Exposing The Heart*

The *Nefesh HaChaim* explains that the root of Creation is that the Torah reveals all of Creation. The depth of this matter is that Torah can be found in any place where one is; it is not limited to any one place. A Torah scholar can see, in everything he comes across, the “50 gates of understanding”. He doesn't only see it in one particular place; he can see it in any place, in anything he sees.

In order to reveal the depths of the Torah, one must reveal the “50 gates of understanding” in his own heart. The heart contains 50 gates. When one reveals his heart, he can enter into the 50 gates that are within the heart. Shlomo HaMelech said, “My heart has seen much wisdom.” The 50 gates of the heart became opened to Shlomo, and that is how he was able to reach the 50<sup>th</sup> gate of the Torah, for his heart became a proper vessel that could receive the 50 gates of understanding in everything.

In order to see the 50<sup>th</sup> gate of understanding in anything, one cannot reach it through his intellect. The intellect is not capable to reaching the 50<sup>th</sup> gate of understanding in anything, because the 50<sup>th</sup> gate is always beyond intellectual comprehension. Only the heart, which contains 50 gates of understanding, can reach it. The Torah speaks of those who are “wise of heart”, and this is not referring to intellectual wisdom, but “heart” wisdom. Only with this “heart wisdom” can a person reveal the depths of understanding in something.

### *Purifying The Heart – Through Revealing Depth Within The Heart*

It is written, “*A pure heart you created me with.*” If a person wants to comprehend the Torah, he first needs to go through an inner process, of revealing the depths of his heart.

The spiritual structure of the heart is a complicated to know, because it is not one single layer. The “heart” itself is not the emotions of a person; it is a deeper dimension than just emotion, and there is depth upon depth to it. If a person has not yet purified his heart, he will only feel the outer dimension of his heart, which is the emotions, and if he stays that way his entire life, he will remain at the same emotional level of a child, yet he will feel certain that he’s using his heart.

When a child feels happy, or when he feels sad, he feels that this is all there is to his heart. All of his recognition is based on the level he is at. But true “heart recognition” is only when one reveals new depth within his heart; one can keep entering deeper and deeper into it, traversing through the 50 gates that are hidden in his heart. That is where a person receives the “wisdom the heart”.

This is the meaning of Shlomo HaMelech’s words, “*My heart has seen much wisdom.*” The wisdom he uncovered was the depths of the Torah, and he saw more and more depth in everything in the Torah.

The level of one’s Torah learning will depend on the level he has reached in his own heart. When a person truly comprehends anything in Torah, it is not reached due to any intellectual prowess. If one is intellectually gifted when it comes to Torah learning, that is only the external part of Torah learning. One reaches true understanding in Torah only to the degree that he has revealed the depth within his heart. The more one uncovers the depth of his heart, the more understanding he will reach in Torah. The highest point one can reach is the “heart” itself. Beyond that, we are not able to know.

### *In Conclusion*

And so, preparing to receive the Torah is through *hiluch*, “walking.” It doesn’t mean to “go” from one “place” to another “place”, which is the perspective of the ignoramus. Rather, it means to keep walking\going further and further into our own depths; to the depths of recognition in our heart. That is the vessel that one needs in order to contain the depths of the Torah’s wisdom.

*“My heart has seen much wisdom”* – to the degree that one has purified his heart, that is how much wisdom he will reach in Torah. Any of our previous sages and Gedolim who merited to receive much wisdom did not reach this from any of their intellectual abilities, but according to the degree that they purified their hearts. They therefore merited to become a *“maayan hamisgaber”* (mighty wellspring) that can reach understanding in Torah.

May Hashem give us the ability to go from one spiritual accomplishment to another, to reveal more and more depth in the Torah, and the Creator Who lays hidden in it.

## *18 / Tamuz – Holy Imagination*

### *The Month of Tamuz: The Power of “Sight”*

The month of Tamuz contains the especial power of *re'iyah* (sight). A hint to this is because each of 12 months is parallel to one of the 12 tribes, and the tribe represented by the month of Tamuz is Reuven, whose name comes from the words, “*Reu, ben*” (“See, that I have a son”). So the month of Tamuz is connected with *re'iyah*, with “seeing”.

Let's try to understand how this is a power of the soul as well, and what we do with this power.

### *Inner Sight: The Heart's Power to See*

The Gemara says, “A *dayan* (judge) only sees what his eyes see.”<sup>82</sup> A *dayan* determines a case according to how he “sees” it – meaning, according to what he feels and discerns the information. So seeing doesn't just mean to see in the plain and simple sense. It means to discern, and it involves the heart's feelings.

Our eyes can see the physical, whereas our heart can see a deeper dimension into the physical. Shlomo HaMelech said, “*My heart has seen much wisdom.*” The heart “sees” – it can discern things. *Chazal* say that “the eye sees, the heart desires, and the actions complete”. It seems from this statement that sight is only with the eyes, and not with the heart. But the real understanding is that *the heart sees* from the eyes. Thus, when the heart desires that which the eyes see, it is really seeing that which the eyes see.

The Sages state, “The evil inclination rules only where the eyes see.” When the eyes see something, the heart desires it and thus “sees” what the eyes are seeing. Chavah desired the *Eitz HaDaas* as soon as she saw it; the possuk says, “*And the woman saw that the tree was good for consumption.*” How did she ‘see’ that the tree tasted good, before she even ate it? It was because her *heart* saw the tree and thereby desired that which her eyes laid sight on.

Thus, there are two places from which we “see” in ourselves. One place is the eyes, and the other place is the heart. What does it mean that the heart can “see”? Firstly, we need to know what the nature of the heart is.

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82 Sanhedrin 6a

The heart is the seat of emotion in us. It is the source of both positive and negative feelings we experience: hatred, joy, sadness, etc. It is also the source of our various desires, motivations, and yearnings. But besides for this, there is another dimension to our heart: its power to “see”.

What does the heart see? When a *navi* (prophet) is young, he is called a *chozeh* (seer), before he actually sees prophecies. A prophecy is an interpretation of Hashem’s word, but it is a kind of vision. The prophet would see things from his heart. A prophet was at a purified internal state, where his heart could see a clear vision. The prophets reached the total level of this kind of vision (the heart’s sense of sight), but each person as well can also reach it on his own level.

It is written, “*In the hands of the prophets, I appear.*” The visions of the prophets were seen through the lens of a purified kind of imagination (*dimayon*). When most people hear of this concept, they react skeptically: “Prophecy involved imagination?!” But this reaction is only possible when a person is not aware of the concept of a holy kind of imagination. The prophets saw a holy and purified kind of imagination. Since most people have not reached a level of a purified kind of imagination, most people identify imagination as nothing but fantasy. But when imagination is pure, it is the level of prophecy.

Currently, we do not possess the level of prophecy. But we are still capable of traversing the very way that the prophets took to see their prophetic visions: the power of holy imagination.

We aren’t referring to the kind of imagination techniques which the secular world presents. We are speaking here about the way of our forefathers; we are trying to return to their footsteps.

### *The Heart Needs to Picture Information*

What exactly is the power of imagination which the heart is capable of?

Our intellect can think, scrutinize, build, take apart, decide, etc. Our heart, however, cannot relate to abstract information. It must be able to receive some kind of image, and then it can work with the image to understand it. If something cannot be imagined, it can be perceived rationally, by the intellect; but it cannot pass into the heart. The heart will not register any information that has no mental picture to it. If something can be pictured, it is perceived by the heart.

Our rational intellect is aware that two plus two is four. The heart, though, can only understand this if there is a picture of this. For example, if two books are placed next to two books, the heart can perceive that there are four books. There is now a picture here being given to the “two plus two”, it can be imagined and thus the heart can register it. Thus, our intellect works with the abstract, whereas the heart needs some kind of picture of the information.

### *Mashal V’Nimshal – A Parable and Its Lesson*

Shlomo HaMelech said, “*My heart has seen much wisdom.*” Of Shlomo HaMelech, it was also said that he “established many parables.” The concept of a *mashal* (parable) speaks to the heart, for it is a way to envision the information.

Shlomo HaMelech spoke in the form of parables. Why was this necessary? What is the idea of speaking in parables? It is because when our intellect is not capable of understanding things, we need to give it some kind of wrapping, like a parable, that will help us perceive it. Our heart will visualize the information being conveyed through the parable, and then the heart can understand.

Shlomo HaMelech spoke in parables, so that the wisdom he is imparting will be perceived by our heart.

### *The Difference Between Hirhur (Visualization) and Re'iyah (Inner Sight)*

Generally speaking, there are two ways how the heart visualizes things.

One way is through envisioning it in letters of the *Aleph Beis*. This is also called *hirhur* (visualization), which is an ability of the heart, for we find that a person can fulfill *Kerias Shema* through ‘*hirhur b'libo*’, through thinking of the words in his heart. This is the idea behind the month of *Iyar*, which we explained in the past.<sup>83</sup>

The month of *Tamuz*, however, is about *re'iyah*, “sight”. It is the idea of perceiving things in terms of parables; to draw lessons from what we observe on this world and to understand the *nimshal* (lesson) that the *mashal* is teaching. The heart fantasizes the information, which makes use of the imagination, and in that way, it can use *mashal* to reach the *nimshal*.

### *Imagination: A Tool*

The heart imagines something, and this forms a *kli*, a spiritual ‘container’, to hold the information. What will enter this ‘container’? A true and tangible vision (*tziyur*) can enter it and be contained in it. That is the purpose of using imagination: it is a tool that allows us to receive a great vision that will become contained in us.

Thus, if one simply remains with the fantasies alone, he lives in his imagination. The ‘guided-imagery’ techniques of today therefore are not using the higher purpose of imagination, and they are causing people to become immersed in fantasy. It is a way meant for people who are very ill in their souls. The true way to use the power of imagination is to always see the *nimshal* (lesson) of the *mashal* (parable) that we are processing.

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83 See Essence of Rosh Chodesh #02 \_Iyar \_Thought and Visualization

Guided imagination, which has been devised by gentiles, is placing too much emphasis on the ‘container’ (the imagination). Imagination is but a tool we can use to receive something greater. It is a tool to receive a true vision.

The prophets reached the highest level of this, for they were essentially receiving the spiritual light of the *nimshal* contained in the *mashal* they were seeing. In the broader sense of things, man is an entirely a *mashal* (parable) of how to receive a *tzelem elokim* (image of G-d) and have it shined upon him – which is the *nimshal*.

### *Tziyur (Visualization) and Dimayon (Fantasy)*

There are two powers related to the imagination. One is called *tziyur* (visualization) and the other is called *dimayon* (fantasy).

*Dimayon* is for a person to imagine something which a person cannot understand rationally. It is used a *kli* (tool) to contain the vision which we want to put into it. *Tziyur*, though, is to imagine something which the person already knows of.

### *Feeling Hashem: Through Holy Imagination*

We must use our imagination for holiness, so that it will become a container for the *tzelem elokim* (image of G-d) or the *tzurah elyonah* (heavenly image) that we want to put into it: a spiritual vision of a reality that is palpable.

It is written, “*And I will dwell amongst them*”, and the Sages explain, “In the hearts of each and every one of them.” Hashem dwells in every person’s heart. How can a person grasp such a thing? How are we to relate to such a thing? One of the ways that can help us understand this is through using the power of holy imagination. Through using the power of imagination for holiness (to envision spiritual realities), we build in ourselves a container that can hold onto the spiritual. That is what allows us to experience G-dliness in ourselves.

### *Holy Imagination vs. Unholy Imagination*

However, there is a fine line that differentiates between holy imagination and unholy imagination. When a person uses imagination as a purpose unto itself, with no greater goal in mind, than imagination is unholy. By contrast, when imagination is used as a tool to reach a greater purpose, it is holy.

### *How Do We Internalize?*

It is written, “*For the inclination of the heart of man is evil from his youth.*” How, indeed, does a person change and purify his *yetzer hora* (evil inclination)? The tool we can use this is the power of holy imagination, which our heart is capable of.

Our intellect is not capable of this; our intellect cannot tell our heart what to do and rationalize with it. Even if a person could live for 1000 years, his intellect would not be able to change his heart. This is because the intellect and the heart are polar opposites. The intellect rationalizes and brings proof, while the heart needs some kind of picture or vision of the information in order to be affected. The heart speaks a different language than our intellect.

For this reason, although many people know in their heads what the right thing is, their hearts remain unaffected by this knowledge. The *Ramchal* writes that if a person would know what a sin is, he would never sin. We all know what a sin is; our minds are aware of right and wrong. So why is sin so common? The *Ramchal* says that it’s because the knowledge in the mind isn’t in the heart.

How, indeed, can we internalize our mind’s knowledge into our heart? One of the ways is through the power of *hirhur* (to visualize the letters of the *Aleph Beis* of things), which we explained about in the month of *Iyar*. But another way is through *dimayon d’kedushah*, holy imagination – in which we can use our imagination as a tool to receive the spiritual.

The power of holy imagination was a power that many of the leaders of the past used. It is the heart’s power to “see”: the heart in us can see holiness. The tool and container we use for this is the vision of holiness, and the spiritual light that can enter that container is the actual spiritual vision.

### *The Powers of Ahavah and Yirah*

There are two parts to seeing the spiritual. These are really well-known matters, and here we will attempt to understand these concepts.

The heart can “see”. What can it see? What does it envision?

As the Sages tell us, there are two *chalalim* (spaces) in the heart: the *chalal hayemini* (the right side of the heart) and the *chalal hesemali* (the left side of the heart). It is written, “*The heart of the wise is to his right, and the heart of a fool is to his left.*” A heart that is “to the right” is referring to the “right side of the heart”, and a heart that is “to the left” is referring to the “left side of the heart”.

Our *avodah* (task) on this world, simply speaking, is to bring our *yetzer tov* (good inclination) into our heart, and drive away the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) from the heart. This is true, but there is more depth to the matter.

Everything in Creation is two-sided; there are always two opposite aspects which we need to utilize in order to reach our desired purposes. There are two abilities which we can use in order to work with our heart. The Sages call them the “right side of the heart” and the “left side of the heart”;

and the *yetzer tov* and *yetzer hora* are found in them. But let's speak here about the actual different *spaces* of the heart, rather than the forces present inside them.

They are really two different abilities of the heart – the “right” aspect of the heart, which is otherwise known as *ahavah* (love), and the “left” aspect of the heart, which is otherwise known as *yirah* (awe).

We have a *mitzvah* to love Hashem as well as a *mitzvah* to fear Hashem. Our heart can “see”, and we can “see” from the place of *ahavah* that is in our heart. But we can also “see” from the place of *yirah*; the word *yirah* is related to the word *re'iyah* (seeing).

What are the abilities of *ahavah* and *yirah*? It seems the *ahavah* and *yirah* is simply a *middah* (character trait), and this is true, but from the fact that the heart can “see” we learn that there is a way to “see” from the place of *ahavah* in our heart, and there is a way to “see” from the place of *yirah* in our heart. What does it mean to “see” from *ahavah*, and what does it mean to “see” from *yirah*?

Reb Yisrael Salanter would mainly use the power of *yirah*, and there was a lot less emphasis on *ahavah*. He would mainly practice envisioning thoughts that inspired *yirah*, such as imagining the fire of *Gehinnom*. This was the way of the great leaders of the *Mussar* movement. However, this is not yet the stage of purifying the heart. It is the tool to get there, but it is not yet the goal.

Thus, the method which Reb Yisrael Salanter and the *mussar* movement used was the power of *tziyur* (visualization) present in the “left side of the heart.” This was the path of *yirah*, and it is one side to the power of *tziyur* which the heart is capable of.

There are many ways to use the heart's power of *tziyur*. If someone has a hard time imagining what *Gehinnom* is like, one of the methods written about in the *mussar sefarim* is for a person to place his hand in a physical fire, so that he can get some kind of *mashal* (parable) of what *Gehinnom* is like. In any case, the heart's power of *tziyur* uses the “left side of the heart”.

The other power of *tziyur* in the heart, the “right side of the heart”, is totally different. It is to imagine something that is loving and embracing. One example of it is to try to imagine the reward in the World To Come. In *Michtav M'Eliyahu*<sup>84</sup>, it is explained how a person can vividly see this world as a *mashal* to the reward of the World To Come, such as by trying to imagine how many drops in the ocean there are and how this mimics the magnitude of the reward that awaits a person in the World To Come. This is a loving kind of vision, not a fearful one, and it is experienced through the “right side of the heart” (also called “*kav hayamin*”, the “right line”).

In summary, we have explained the two general kinds of *tziyur* in the heart: to imagine a vision that conveys *yirah*, and to imagine a vision that conveys *ahavah*.

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In recent generations, our *Gedolim* realized that people today are weaker when it comes to *yirah*; for example, most people have a hard time when trying to imagine *Gehinnom*. Therefore, the *Gedolim* wrote that we mainly have to make use of thoughts of *ahavah*, and deal less with thoughts of *yirah*. However, they never meant that *yirah* should be abandoned completely. We need both *ahavah* and *yirah*. The only question in our *avodah* is where to begin: Should we begin with *ahavah* or should we begin with *yirah*? But it is impossible to have one without the other.

### *Seeing Everything In Terms of Parable and Lesson*

When we use the heart's power of *tziyur*, this surely has a positive effect on our heart, and it purifies the heart to a certain extent. Yet it is not enough to connect a person to the reality of the spiritual. With the power of *tziyur* alone, a person will only live in the *mashal* of life, but he will never get to the *nimshal*. He will still remain connected to the materialism of This World.

What a person needs to do is to try to get to the *nimshal* (lesson) of the *mashal* (parable), and then he will leave the ideal kind of life, in which he will be truly connected with the spiritual. When a child hears a story, he is only hearing of a *mashal*; he does not hear the *nimshal*. In every story we hear as well, it's possible that we are just hearing the *mashal* alone, without ever grasping the *nimshal*.

The Chofetz Chaim would hear an inspiring message in every event. He saw and heard events as entirely being a *mashal*, a parable, to something greater; he saw the *nimshal* of each *mashal*. He saw all of reality as a *mashal* against the backdrop of a greater reality. He realized that everything on this world can be seen as a *mashal* that leads to a *nimshal*.

The idea of this is not simply to see everything as parables and to remain there. Seeing everything as a parable is but the first step, but the second step, which is the goal, is to see the lesson behind the parable. For example, when a person sees snow, he can see it as being an example of Hashem's power. He sees the snow as a *mashal* of Hashem's power. But he has not yet reached the *nimshal* of this *mashal*. When one sees the *nimshal* behind each *mashal*, he reaches purity of heart.

But one cannot jump to the *nimshal* unless he has first seen the *mashal*; the *mashal* is needed in order to relate to the *nimshal*. *Sefer Shir HaShirim*<sup>85</sup> is entirely a *mashal* of a loving relationship between husband and wife, and the *nimshal* of this is the relationship between the Jewish people and Hashem. Yet many people have heard and read *Shir HaShirim*, but they never see it as a *mashal* to the *nimshal*. They are aware of the *nimshal*, but they skip over the *mashal* stage.

Everything you see on this world is all a *mashal*. If you get used to seeing the world like this, you have a tool to get the *nimshal* of each *mashal* you come across. Your eyes will see something, and your heart will see the *mashal* that is behind what you are seeing, and then your heart will search to understand what the *nimshal* is.

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85 Song of Songs

Hashem did not place in Gan Eden. He placed on this world. What do we do with everything that we see on this world? If we do not think into the reality we see before us, we never see the *mashal* of life. All we will see is the *nimshal*, and if we remain at this thoughtless stage, the *nimshal* we will see is nothing but the materialism of this world. But if we get used to seeing everything as a *mashal*, then everything we see can become a tool that we can use to connect to the spiritual.

### *The Heart Sees Reality*

Thus, the abilities of *tziyur* and *dimayon* which are in our heart are both representing one *avodah* we have on this world. Our heart's ability of *tziyur* (or *dimayon*) can conjure realities we have never seen, and we have explained that there are two kinds of holy imagination which accomplish this: thoughts of *yirah* [i.e. imagining *Gehinnom*], and thoughts of *ahavah* [i.e. imagining the reward in the World To Come].

This is the inner essence that is behind the heart's power to "see". The depth of it is because our heart is capable of grasping reality. Our eyes see things objectively, but our heart sees the reality behind what we see; it sees into the inner dimension of what we are physically seeing.

### *A Life Ruled By Fantasies*

Everyone has the power to imagine. Most people only know of it from the fantasies of dreams, and many people fantasize during the day as well; in fact, many people are immersed in imaginative thoughts during the day, ruled completely by their imagination; some more and some less. The problem with this is not the fact that people are immersed in fantasy. The problem is that it negatively affects the heart.

When imagination dominates a person, the heart will imagine various fantasies, and it will not imagine spiritual realities. It will be the kind of heart of which it is said, "The eyes see, and the heart desires" – the heart will fantasize about unholy and evil thoughts. As the Sages say, "If a person wants one hundred, he will want two hundred." Everything physical that we see will then turn on the imagination, and then our heart will do nothing else except fantasize of various, worthless desires.

It's even possible that a person's head is immersed in thoughts of Torah, yet his heart is immersed in childish fantasies. Just because a person isn't consciously aware of this doesn't mean that it is not the case. A person can have a highly developed intellect yet his heart still remains at the level of a child. As long as a person has not yet worked to purify his heart, his heart lives in various fantasies.

This is the depth of the contradiction between our intellect and our heart. It is not simply because the heart doesn't feel the knowledge present in the intellect. That is also true. But it is a much deeper contradiction. It is because the heart's role is to grasp reality, whereas the intellect

knows rationally what the right thing is, but it doesn't grasp that knowledge as a reality; what results from contradiction [when it is left unresolved]? The heart is left with nothing but fantasies.

Fantasy dominates over any person who has not had enough involvement with a Torah scholar to learn from, even if the person has learned a lot of Torah in his life. When the heart is left unchanged as it is, it will desire what the eyes see, and it will fantasize over worthless pursuits. The *Sforno* says that the desire to eat from the *Eitz HaDaas* was essentially the power of imagination.

Not only will the heart desire and fantasize about things that are not good – it will completely immerse a person in a pursuit of fantasy. The person will live a fantasy kind of life, and he will never live reality. Reb Yisrael Salanter wrote of the woes of imagination: “Man roams around freely in his imagination.” This is because when the heart remains at its initial and immature state, it fantasizes.

But if a person learns how to see the *mashal* of each thing, and he also searches to understand the *nimshal*, he lives in the reality, and he leaves imagination behind.

### *In Conclusion*

Thus, the depth of our *avodah* on this world is not simply so that we should “*purify our hearts, to serve You in truth.*” That is what we should aim for, but it does not define our actual *avodah*. Our actual *avodah* is to leave imagination, and enter into reality - namely, the ability to palpably feel Hashem as an existing reality.

Why is it that a person doesn't feel Hashem as a reality in his life? It is not because his heart isn't pure; it is because his heart is living in fantasies. When a person leaves fantasy behind, he can then feel the simplest reality that exists: Hashem's presence. The more a person leaves behind fantasy, the more he will feel Hashem - in his heart.

When a person sees all of life as a *mashal*, and he searches to get to the *nimshal* of the *mashal* – he is the person who will reach the Creator.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> For more on the concept of seeing life as 'mashal v'nimshal' (a parable and its lesson), see Getting To Know Your Home\_012\_The Lesson of Marriage.

## *19 / Tamuz – Two Eyes To See With*

### *Tamuz, Reuven, and the Sense of Sight*

In our mystical teachings, the five senses of man are listed as sight, hearing, smell, touch, and speech. This order is given specifically. Therefore, our most prominent sense is the sense of sight. It is like the ‘firstborn’ of our senses. It is also at the highest place in our body from all of our senses: it is located in the eyes, which is at the top of the head.

The month of Tamuz is represented by the tribe of Reuven, the firstborn son of Yaakov Avinu. Reuven was named so from the words “*Reu, ben*” which is mother Leah expressed upon his birth, and these words are related to the word *re’iyah*, to see. Thus, the month of Tamuz is connected with the sense of *re’iyah* (sight), and the tribe of Reuven.

A person sees the world through his eyes. The sense of sight is the sense that accompanies man wherever he goes, guiding him and directing him.

The sense of sight is linked with Reuven. Being that Reuven lost his rights to the status of *bechor* (firstborn son), the sense of sight was damaged along with this. Reuven lost the rights to the firstborn status, and it was given instead to Yosef. Reuven was originally called the ‘*raishis*’ (beginning) of Yaakov’s children, but it was taken away from him, due to the episode with moving Bilhah’s bed out of Yaakov’s tent; he was cursed for being too impulsive. The ‘beginning’ was thus ruined, and he is no longer considered the firstborn of Yaakov Avinu.

We have no comprehension of the greatness of our *Avos* (the forefathers) and their children, the *shevatim* (the 12 tribes), but what can we learn from this? It shows us what damages the sense of sight, and it shows us what causes the sense of sight to lose its ‘firstborn’ status from us (thus the sense of sight is no longer the initial guiding sense in man).

*Chazal* say that “a *dayan* (judge) does not see except that which his eyes see.”<sup>87</sup> There are people who go to *Beis Din* and they witness an argument erupt between the *dayanim* there, and they become terrified at this sight; they watch in horror as the heated *machlokes* (argument) takes place. But the truth is that *machlokes* amongst the wise people of *Klal Yisrael* has always been around. The Sages record that the very first *machlokes* between the sages was the argument between the sage Yoezer with Yochanan *Kohen Gadol*, regarding what the *halachah* is if one may perform *semichah* (anointing) on an animal on *Yom Tov*. Ever since then, there has been *machlokes* amongst the Sages

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87 Sanhedrin 6a

about what the *halachah* is. [We will try to understand here the deeper meaning behind why this is so.]

### *The 'Right Eye' and The 'Left Eye'*

We have two eyes – a right eye and a left eye. Each of them are two different lenses that view the physical world. From a deep understanding, every person contains two different ‘eyes’ which see different views on reality - and it is our head which connects our two eyes together and unites them to see only one view. The *sefarim hakedoshim* write that we have a ‘right eye’ and a ‘left eye’ which each see different perspectives on a situation. With most people, they see two different perspectives on things, and they do not see the same exact thing. Therefore, every person sees things differently.

It is explained that the ‘right eye’ sees the *hekef* (general picture) of things, while the ‘left eye’ sees the *peratim* (details) of things. The true perspective on things is to see the totality: to see its *hekef* and to see its *peratim* together with it. But most people are “either, or.” Either a person will be the type to focus on the general picture without paying attention to details, or a person will get too focused on a particular detail of a situation and thus he misses the bigger picture.

*Chazal* say, “Who is wise? One who sees what will come.” This is not referring to the ability of *Ruach HaKodesh* (the holy spirit); it is referring to a far simpler level. It is referring to the ability of seeing the *hekef* of a situation. A person tends to only see the moment and be in the moment, but he usually cannot see further. As a person matures spiritually, he begins to see a bigger picture that goes beyond the present moment. As an example, in regards to the timespan of Creation, the *hekef* is a timespan of 6,000 years (And in the mystical teachings, it is also brought that there will be a total of 10,000 years).

So the ‘right eye’ in us sees the bigger picture of things, while the ‘left eye’ in us sees only details, such as the current moment. The more a person matures spiritually, the more he can see from his ‘right eye’, which sees the bigger picture.

Reuven was punished for removing Bilhah’s bed from his father Yaakov Avinu’s tent. We can now have a deeper understanding of this: he was too focused on a particular detail. As the Sages state, he did this in deference to his mother’s honor, for he felt that his mother Leah should not have the same status as the maidservants. Although he acted for the sake of Heaven, he could not see beyond this particular detail; he did not see the bigger picture. In his mind, though, the detail that he saw was a representation of the bigger picture. His father Yaakov saw the real bigger picture of this episode; he saw that it reflected a flaw in Reuven’s nature and thus he knew that Reuven cannot be of the firstborn status.

If we try to understand this episode in the Torah from *seichel hayashar* (straight, human logic) alone, Reuven is definitely right. He had a very good reason for how he acted. But Yaakov saw beyond that reason; he saw a bigger picture.

The *chachamim* (the sages) are called ‘*einei haeidah*’, eyes of the congregation, because a truly wise person sees not only the current moment, but the bigger picture that goes beyond the current moment, and he fuses the two views together. The *Gemara* says that the definition of a *chacham* is one who can answer a question on any area of Torah he is asked; so a *chacham* is one who sees the big picture. The numerical value in Hebrew of the word ‘*chacham*’ is ‘*chaim*’, life, for a truly wise person sees what life is all about. He sees something from its beginning to its end – “One who sees what will come.”

Seeing the *hekef* (bigger picture) of things is the power of *chochmah* (wisdom); the view of *chochmah* sees an all-inclusive view which goes beyond the amassment of many details. This is also the concept behind *emunas chachamim*, believing in the Sages. In order to believe in the words of our Sages, one has to see the bigger picture of a situation. It is the power to believe that the Sages can see things which I cannot see.

This is not a power that comes from our logical and deciding power of *da’as*. It is not simply to believe in the “*Daas Torah*” of our Sages. Although that is also true, it is deeper than that. It is because the Sages see a larger view towards the Torah and towards life.

Adam *HaRishon* was given a light that could see from one end of the world to another; Hashem hid this light away because He saw that mankind will not know how to use this light properly, and it will be revealed in the future. This is otherwise known as the *Ohr HaGanuz* (the hidden light). But the Baal Shem Tov revealed that this hidden light was hidden away into the Torah; therefore, through learning Torah in the right way, a person is able to gain an all-inclusive view on things. Thus the meaning of a ‘*chacham*’ (wise person) is one who receives the hidden light from the Torah he learns.

We have outlined the concept, and now we will try to draw this concept closer within reach of our souls.

### *The Right Eye Sees Past and Future; The Left Eye Only Sees The Present*

What does it mean to see the bigger picture of things, and what does it mean to see the details?

From all of the senses, the sense of sight contains a drawback, with the fact that it cannot see except what it is directly in front of it. A person can only see what’s in front of his eyes, but he cannot see behind him. By contrast, our other senses can sense both what’s in front us and what’s behind us. We can speak to someone who is in front of us or behind us. We can smell something that is in front or behind. We can hear and touch something that is either in front us or behind us. But we can only see what’s in front of us, and we cannot see behind us.

This is because, as we brought earlier from the words of our Sages, that the sense of sight has become damaged (ever since Reuven lost his status of the firstborn). Therefore, we start out in life with an initially damaged ‘sense of sight’, which can only see the present moment and not beyond.

Obviously, we are referring to our spiritual sense of sight, not our physical sense of sight. We are explaining the depth of our spiritual sense of sight. We start out with a limited kind of view that cannot see the bigger picture of things; the ‘left eye’, which only sees details.

The Gemara says that a person is apt to forget the words of Torah he learned the day before. (But the fantasies of yesterday, that he remembers...). This is an example of the ‘left eye’ – where a person only lives in the present moment; he does not recall past nor can he see beyond the present. He only sees what’s in front of him, right now, but he cannot see ‘behind’ him – he doesn’t see his past. He doesn’t connect the present day with yesterday.

By contrast, the ‘right eye’ can see both yesterday as well as the morrow, within the present moment. This is the deeper meaning of “Who is wise? One who sees what will come.”

The hidden light which Hashem created on the first day of Creation was a kind of view which man could use to see from one of the world to the other. It could see both the present moment and the past and the future - within the present. It was the original sense of sight of man in its pure form: the ‘right eye’, which saw the totality of things.

In contrast, when Chavah laid eyes upon the *Eitz HaDaas* and desired it, she only saw what was in front of her, and she did not think about the consequences. It was her ‘left eye’ dominating her. When the faculty of desire dominates, a person is so immersed in the present moment that he cannot see beyond the desire. The desire continues to pull the person after it because the person is not seeing past it. He is only seeing this very moment that is taking place right now.

The ‘right eye’ though sees the past and the future within the present. It is aware of the statement of our Sages, “Know from where you come from...and to where you are going” even as it views the present moment.

Reuven lost his firstborn status; the deeper understanding of this, as we explained, was that he lost his ‘sense of sight’. And on a larger scale, mankind in general has a damaged sense of ‘sight’, ever since Chavah laid eyes upon the *Eitz HaDaas* and desired it. She was immersed in her *taavah* (desire) for the *Eitz HaDaas* and she could not see beyond it; this represents the depth of the trait of *taavah*. Indulging in a *taavah* makes a person focus only on the present moment, on the *taavah* itself, and the person loses sight of his past and future.

We find in *halachah* that there are certain sights which are forbidden to stare at. For example, it is forbidden to stare at the rainbow. If one does so, he is spiritually damaging his eyes by laying his physical eyes on it. However, there is also a concept of damaging one’s eyes on a more inner level: when a person fantasizes about what he sees and he is pulled after his vision. Ever since the sin of Adam with the *Eitz HaDaas*, man initially sees an incomplete and disparate picture of something, and his imagination can lull him after this disparate view that he sees. Man initially sees things now based on how desirable it is to his eyes, reminiscent of the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas*.

“Who is a wise person? One who sees what will come.” A truly wise person sees the beginning, middle and end of the picture. Thus he is able to be drawn after the inner essence of life.

### *Changing Our Perspective*

The view from the ‘right eye’, the ability to see the bigger picture of things and see beyond the present moment, is essentially the view that comes from our pure and higher *seichel* (intellect).

An example of this would be if a person on his wedding day can remind himself of his day of death. (There is indeed a *minhag* by some people to remind themselves of death on the day of their wedding). It is an example of having a totally different view towards life; to be in the moment yet not to become too caught up in it, so that a person is still aware of the larger picture of life even as he’s in the moment.

The Sages state that at the time where the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) is present, there is no mention of the *yetzer tov*.<sup>88</sup> This can also be explained in terms of the ‘right eye’ and the ‘left eye’. When a person is stuck in the vision of his ‘left eye’, he cannot see beyond the fragmented pieces of reality that lay before him. What is our task when we are faced with improper desires and sights? Our task is not simply that we must try to overcome the difficult temptation. Rather, our task is to gain a new view towards the situation; to leave the view of our left ‘eye’ and instead see it through our ‘right eye.’ If we accomplish that transition, our difficulties with temptation will become greatly weakened. The change of perspective will give us entirely new strength to deal with it.

When a person only sees through his ‘left eye’, all he sees is the desire of his eyes, and there is no way for him to succeed in overcoming the desire and to stop lusting after his eyes. What is really needed is a change of perspective towards the situation, and then the person will have a much easier time with the struggle.

Compare this to a child who has developed the bad habit of overeating. The parents tell him, “Stop eating already!!” but he continues to eat and eat, because he doesn’t know how to control himself. But if they tell him, “This snack has been set aside specifically for Shabbos”, then the child understands that he cannot eat it, for it is specially set aside for Shabbos. He has a change of perspective towards the food now, so he doesn’t touch it.

When a person fails at his *nisyonos* (difficulties) with temptation and lust, the true perspective is not to feel “I just couldn’t withstand the temptation...I failed....”; rather the perspective needs to change entirely.

The *Gemara* says that if a person is coming towards an immodest sight and there is an alternative route to take, he should take the alternative path; but the *Gemara* says that even if he takes the alternative path, it is still very difficult for him to avoid the immodest sight, because the temptation

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is very strong. What, indeed, is the ‘path’ that a person must take? It is for a person to acquire a change of perspective towards the situation.

So, how does a person acquire a change of perspective? It is through looking into the Torah.

The Torah gives a person a new perspective entirely towards life; through viewing the situation through the lens of Torah – through an all-inclusive view that sees beyond the current moment.

### *Leaving the Narrowed View of the ‘Left Eye’*

Every person has many failures and difficult tests on this world. Usually a person begins to seriously deal with his problems only when the problems become very extreme. A person is usually complacent with his issues, and he only gets nervous when the issues become extreme. Compare this to a person who hears about a fire. He is relatively calm when he hears the news. Then if he hears that the fire is getting near his house, now he begins to worry.

Another example: a person hears that another person has become ill, yet he remains calm, and he doesn’t think that maybe it can happen to him too. He thinks, “Only other people get sick. These things don’t happen to someone like me....”

It is like the verse, “*Seeking desire, breeds separation.*” When a person lives apart from others and he never empathizes with others’ pain, he thinks “I am okay, *Baruch Hashem*. As for others, *rachmana litzlan* (may Hashem have mercy on them)...” And then if he himself receives the very same *nisayon* which he thought only happens to other people, he reacts with negativity: “This is so not fair! Life is so difficult!”

This is all the view from the ‘left eye’. The ‘left eye’ immerses a person into a self-absorbed kind of existence. In contrast, the view from the ‘right eye’, the view of the wise, is the view that can bring a person to get to where must get to.

The Sages state that “all of the world has the status of a blind man, until Hashem comes and opens up the eyes.” Everyone must understand that he is like a blind person who cannot see properly. (This is referring to our inner sight, not our physical sense of sight.) When a person really feels in his heart how true this is, he will then seek how to come out of his narrowed perspective, and receive a new way to view situations.

“Woe is to the creations, who see and do not know what they are seeing.” This is referring to people who remain at the view of their ‘left eye’.

It is indeed a challenging *avodah* (task) upon us to develop our ‘right eye’. But for this, we are given an entire lifetime to work on this; an average lifespan of 70 years. We are given an entire lifetime to work on drawing ourselves closer to gain the view that is *einei haeidah*, ‘eyes of the congregation’.

Here is an example. Whenever the Chofetz Chaim felt that he needed to strengthen himself and improve, he would look to strengthen his *emunah*, by reviewing the story of *Beraishis*. (Yes, even our *Gedolim* had ups and downs in their *ruchniyus*, and they needed to strengthen themselves). The depth of this was because whenever a person has a struggle or difficulty, he should remember where he comes from. When a person simply remembers his beginning, this itself can be a remedy to his problems.

All of our great forefathers, sages, and leaders of the past had difficult lives. But they saw life through the lens of their ‘right eye’, thus they saw the bigger picture of things, and that was how they got through life. They saw past their private existence and were aware of the bigger picture of Creation that goes beyond oneself.

This does mean to say that all of a person’s problems are coming from a previous *gilgul* (incarnation). We are trying to explain a far deeper perspective than blaming it on a past *gilgul*. We are speaking about a perspective that comes from the power of *emunah*.

Hashem says, “*I am the First, and I am the Last.*” This describes our *emunah*. With *emunah*, we can see the path of things from beginning until end. And ultimately, the beginning and end of each thing is Hashem.

To illustrate, Rav Dessler would say that at a wedding, the boys dance so much and are very joyous, because they are immersed in the present moment and they aren’t thinking about the totality of life. He saw a wedding much differently. On a similar note, many people think that the world begins with them and ends with them.

### *Gaining the View from the ‘Right Eye’*

These words are not mere ideas. It is a way to view life.

To practically actualize this concept, get used to thinking into the beginning and end of each thing, and realize that everything begins and ends with Hashem. When you get up in the morning, think: “What is the beginning of the world? The fact that “*Hashem is One, and His Name is one*”. What will be at the end of the world? “*On that day, Hashem will be One and His Name will be one.*”

This is what it means to get used to the view of our ‘right eye’, to the hidden light of Creation which saw from one of the world to the other. What does it mean that the hidden light could see from one of the world to another? Did it mean that a person could see the entire universe all at once? It means that a person was able to always see the beginning of creation and the end of creation: Hashem.

### *The Complete View: Bigger Picture and the Details Together*

In actuality, we were given both a ‘right eye’ and a ‘left eye’, so we need to make use of both. We need a ‘right eye’ because we need to see the bigger picture of things, but we also need a ‘left eye’ which can see details. We need to fuse both perspectives together.

If a person only sees the general picture of things, he never sees details, and this is obviously detrimental. If a person only sees details and he never sees the bigger picture, he will think that a particular detail *is* the bigger picture of things; this resembles a person who is mentally deranged. Yet if a person tries to only see the bigger picture of things without seeing the details, he lives a delusional kind of existence.

We need both the right eye and the left eye; we need to see both the *hekef* (bigger picture) and the *peratim* (details). A wise person sees a situation through both of these lenses; he is aware of the general picture of the situation as well as the details, and he knows how to avoid getting caught up in either one of these views.

This is what it means to possess “*einei haeidah*”, “eyes of the congregation” – it means to see the all-inclusive view on things. Not only did the wise sages of the past see the general picture of what was going on in their own generation, but they were able to connect all the details together and see how it formed the general picture.

May Hashem give us the strength to acquire the perspective that comes from both seeing the general picture of things as well as seeing the details, and to be able to combine these two views together: as one of the sages prayed, “That we see the qualities of our friends, and not their faults” – to view Creation through a true lens.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> For more on this topic, see Tefillah #0117 – The Big Picture and The Details; and see also Getting To Know Your Thoughts, chapters 06-09.

## *20 / Av – Hearing Hashem*

### *The Month of Av and the Sense of 'Hearing'*

The month of Av, as we know, is the root of all tragedy and suffering in our history.

There are twelve months of the year, and each month contains a special power. The power contained in the month of Av, our Sages explain, is the power of *shemiyah* (hearing).

### *The Spies' Evil Report Was 'Heard' In the Month of Av*

The Vilna Gaon explains that in the month of Av, the *bnei Yisrael* heard the accounting of the Spies about the land of Israel, where the Spies spoke disparage about the land. Instead of listening to Yehoshua and Calev's report, who spoke in praise of the land, the *bnei Yisrael* instead chose to listen to the other eight Spies, who spoke negatively about the land.

There is a power to use our ability of hearing for good, and there is a way how our hearing is used for evil. Our Sages explain that our ears contain an extra piece of skin underneath them, so that we can we block out our ears from hearing something evil<sup>90</sup>.

During the month of Av, the power of hearing was used for evil, when the *bnei Yisrael* listened to the Spies' report about the land, and they came to cry 'tears in vain'. Because they cried 'tears in vain', Hashem declared that day, the ninth day of Av, as "a day of crying throughout the generations".

When we stood at Har Sinai, we used our power of hearing for good, where we heard the voice of Hashem. This was where our power of hearing was used in the most elevated way possible. But in the month of Av, where we cried futile tears, the ears that heard at Har Sinai were damaged. At Har Sinai, we were freed from all forces of impurity and evil, and we returned to the level of perfection.

When we heard the Spies' report and we cried, the month of Av became a month of mourning for all generations to come; it was like a form of death that came to mankind.

There is personal mourning in each person's life, and there is mourning on the collective level of the Jewish people, which is when we mourn over the loss of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Let us try to understand, with the help of Hashem, what good listening is, and what evil listening is. Let us see how we can use the power of hearing for holiness - which will merit us to hear the sound of Mashiach's *shofar*.

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### *Hearing and Understanding (Da'as)*

Firstly, we need to know what the sense of hearing is about. The Sages state that there are four senses (contained in the parts of the face): sight, hearing, smell, and speech. What is the essence of the power to 'hear'? We can know what it is by analyzing its opposite. The opposite of a listener is a deaf person (in Hebrew, "*cheiresh*").

The Gemara defines a *cheirish*/deaf person as one who is born with the inability to hear and talk. If he can talk, he is not considered to be "deaf" according to the Torah. The Gemara also says that a *cheiresh* has no *da'as* (sensible understanding), just like a minor or mentally ill person has no *da'as*. Elsewhere, the Gemara says that he has 'weak' *da'as*. But either way, there is something missing from his *da'as*.

Thus, one who can hear, one who has "a heart that listens", is one who has *da'as*. There is an expression in the Gemara, "You do not listen to me, you do not understand me." Being a listener doesn't just mean to use your physical ears to listen to the other person. It means to listen with your heart; to have a "*lev shomea*", a heart that listens, or a "*lev meivin*", a heart that understands.

Thus, hearing implies the ability to both hear and talk, and it also includes the ability to have *da'as* (sensible understanding). What is the explanation of this matter?

### *The Ability to Hear the 'Word of Hashem'*

If we want to understand the essence of any matter, we need to examine where it appears the first time in the Torah. The first time the Torah speaks about the idea of hearing is by Adam *HaRishon*, when he heard the voice of Hashem calling to him in Gan Eden.

From where does a person get his power to talk from? It is because Hashem breathes into a person His word; the "*dvar Hashem*" (word of Hashem). Our entire speech gets its vitality from the "*dvar Hashem*" that empower it. The entire Creation is supported and sustained by the *dvar Hashem*.

This is also why the Sages say that we are commanded to always speak words of Torah, and to avoid speaking words of idle chatter. It is because we have to use our power of speech to emulate the *dvar Hashem*, and such speech contains true vitality that comes from Hashem. By contrast, when someone speaks meaningless words, and surely when he utters forbidden speech such as gossip and other forbidden forms of speech, he is speaking words that are empty from vitality.

Man is called "*nefesh chayah*" (a living soul), and *Targum* says that this means man is a "*ruach memalelah*" (a talking spirit), thus our entire ability to talk is due to the word of Hashem that was breathed into us.

When Hashem created the universe, He created it with ten expressions, but there was no man yet to hear it. Man was created last, and he didn't hear the *dvar Hashem* that said "Let there be light" and "Let there be a firmament." Until we received the Torah at Har Sinai, no one ever heard the

actual *dvar Hashem*. For twenty-six generations, no one heard Hashem's voice. Although our *Avos* kept the entire Torah, and there was Torah learning in the yeshivah of Shem and Ever and in the yeshivah in Goshen, there was not yet a revelation of the *dvar Hashem* which a person could hear. Only at Har Sinai did we hear the voice of Hashem.

This is also the depth of the declaration of “*Naaseh V'Nishma*” (We will do, and we will hear), when we stood at Har Sinai. It was because we received a new kind of hearing, a new set of ears: the ability to hear Hashem's voice. The ears we had before we stood at Har Sinai were not the same ears we had after Sinai. The ears we received at Har Sinai enable us to hear the *dvar Hashem*, to hear the Ten Commandments of the Torah, which commands us to speak the words of Torah. Ever since then, a person is able to remember Har Sinai – he is able to connect to the word of Hashem, which he heard at Har Sinai.

The Gemara defines a deaf person as one who is born as both deaf and mute; he cannot talk because there are no words which he has ever heard, to talk about. This is true about the physically deaf person - but there is also spiritual deafness (as we will soon explain).

When a person hears a spiritual message, he is connecting to the “*dvar Hashem*” that was heard at Sinai. Every single Jew received that ability.

The giving of the Torah was essentially a conversion process to Judaism, and it is also called a birth. The Sages said that a deaf person is one who is born deaf and mute, but if he can hear from birth, he is not called a deaf person according to *Halacha*. The birth of the Jewish people, which was at Har Sinai, meant that we were all on the level of hearing from birth. So we were all ‘born’ with the ability to hear the *dvar Hashem*, and ever since then, we have the ability to speak words of truth: the words of Torah, which is the word of Hashem.

The giving of the Torah at Sinai enabled us to receive a new kind of listening and speaking, in contrast to the person who is born deaf and mute, who cannot hear nor speak. This ability was only given to the Jewish people, for only the Jewish people stood at Sinai. It is forbidden to teach Torah to a gentile, nor may a gentile learn it; he is liable to capital punishment if he does so. This is because a gentile doesn't view Torah as the *dvar Hashem*; he only learns it for the sake of knowing its information. But the Jewish people's view towards the Torah is to learn it with the understanding that it is the *dvar Hashem*.

This is what it means to truly “hear”. A *lev shomeia*, a “heart that listens”, is a power exclusive to the Jew's soul, who stood at Har Sinai. It is spiritual hearing; to hear the voice of Hashem – to hear the *dvar Hashem* in each thing.

Now we can understand what evil hearing is. When a person doesn't hear the *dvar Hashem* in something, he has misused the power of hearing.

*Hearing Hashem*

Our *Gedolim* would often view the people who told them news as messengers of Hashem to let them hear what they needed to hear. They would hear Hashem talking to them within the information. But even a person who is not a *Gadol* can hear the messages of Hashem through the things he hears, for it is said that every Jew can hear the Heavenly “*bas kol*”.<sup>91</sup>

### *The Destruction of the Beis HaMikdash: What We Lost*

Yirmiyahu HaNavi warned *Klal Yisrael* that if they don't repent, Hashem will come and collect His debt. He said, “*Hear, O heavens, and listen, earth.*” When *Klal Yisrael* didn't listen to the Navi, it was not only because they didn't repent, but because they lost the ability to listen with their hearts. By refusing to listen to the Navi, they lost their listening heart. The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* was because *Klal Yisrael* wasn't listening to what they needed to hear. Hashem speaks to a person all the time, but if someone doesn't hear His voice, he does as he pleases and thus he never repents.

Yerushalayim, and specifically the *Beis HaMikdash*, was the place where the voice of Hashem would go out from to the rest of the world. “*For from Zion goes out Torah, and the word of Hashem from Jerusalem.*” The voice of Hashem was heard at the giving of the Torah, and then it was no longer openly heard. But it continues to be heard in the Torah, in the “word of Hashem” - and it was heard in the *Beis HaMikdash*. The *Beis HaMikdash* was a place where a person could always hear the word of Hashem. Whereas the giving of the Torah was only a temporary time to hear the word of Hashem, the *Beis HaMikdash* was a place where it was heard constantly. Thus, when we lost the *Beis HaMikdash*, we lost that ability to always hear Hashem's word.

### *The Loss of the Shirah (Song)*

Let us try to understand more what the deep power of “hearing” is. The *Gemara* says that two voices cannot be heard at once. However, the *Raavad* writes that we can hear two tunes at once. This is because *nigun* (tune) is a higher kind of sound than hearing words. A person can also hear the *taamim* (sounds) and *nigun* (tune) contained in the Torah, the *shirah* (song) of the Torah, as he hears the words of Torah. In the *Beis HaMikdash*, the Kohanim would do the *Avodah*, and the Leviim sang the *shirah*; this was together with the “*dvar Hashem*” that went out from there.

We still have the Torah, even after the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed. What is missing now from the Torah, then? What Torah did we lose with the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*? We lost its inner song, its *niggun*, its *shirah*.

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<sup>91</sup> A statement of the Baal Shem Tov. See Getting To Know Your Hisbodedus #010 – Inner Listening, and Reaching Your Essence #003

This is the depth of why the Sages wanted to forbid *shirah* after the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed. The *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed because of *sinas chinam* (baseless hatred); the *shirah* is the opposite of the concept of *sinas chinam*. Whereas *sinas chinam* causes disparity, *shirah* comes to unify. It unified sound with word and enables us to hear two sounds at once.

In addition to the reason of *sinas chinam*, the *Beis HaMikdash* was also destroyed because of *lashon hora* (evil gossip). *Lashon hora* is also a kind of speech that causes disparity. *Lashon hora* is at its name implies – it is ‘*lashon ra*’, evil speech, because it is not true speech. It is far removed from the concept of *shirah*. One who speaks *lashon hora* about his friend is not unified with him and separates himself from him. He is missing the *shirah* of the Torah.

It is forbidden to hear *shirah* during the Nine Days, and the depth of this is because we lost the *shirah* of the Torah. We are missing the true *shirah*, and thus it is forbidden for us to take our minds off this loss; that is why we cannot listen to music during these days.

A *cheirish* (one who is born both deaf and mute) has no *da’as*, and the depth of this is because he cannot connect to others. He doesn’t hear and he doesn’t talk to others, so he cannot connect with others. Thus he has no *da’as*. If he can hear others or if he can talk to others, he is not considered by *Chazal* to be “deaf” according to *Halacha*, because he can at least connect to others.

### *Our Avodah: Hearing the Word of Hashem in Everything We Hear*

Now we can better understand what our *avodah* is during these days. The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* was rooted in the fact that *Klal Yisrael* heard the Spies’ evil report. In addition, *Klal Yisrael* didn’t listen to the prophets who warned them of the impending destruction. The *avodah* of these days is thus to access and regain the power of *shemiyah*, inner listening.

Our ears heard the word of Hashem when we stood at Har Sinai, and this ingrained in us the power to hear the word of Hashem in each thing. One can hear the *dvar Hashem* in each thing he hears. In this way, everything that a person hears can bring him to the state of oneness with Hashem.

When one doesn’t hear the word of Hashem in each thing, and instead he simply hears the events of the world without connecting it to the *dvar Hashem*, he is listening to this “world of disparity” (as it is called by our Sages), instead of listening to the *dvar Hashem*. He hears the sounds of This World, not Hashem. This will also cause his own words that he speaks to be disconnected from the *dvar Hashem*.

But if one hears the *dvar Hashem* in each thing that he hears, he hears His one voice in everything. He only hears “one” voice alone. When he hears that “one” voice, he will find that his speech only can speak of only “one” thing....

### *In Conclusion*

May we merit from Hashem that the impurity and blockages be removed from our ears, that instead of hearing the nonsense of this world, we should instead hear the word of Hashem. When we are hearing the word of Hashem, we can then speak of one thing alone, a kind of speech will unify all of *Klal Yisrael* together and turn us into one unit again. And through this we will merit, with the help of Hashem – may it come speedily in our days - the rebuilding of the complete *Beis HaMikdash* and the coming of *Mashiach*. Amen.

## *21 / Elul – Action*

### *Elul – The Month of Maaseh/Action*

With *siyata d'shmaya*, we are nearing the month of Elul, may it come upon us for good tidings. Let us try to understand a little, with the help of Hashem, the *avodah* upon us during these days, and hopefully we will each merit to also act upon these words, each on his own level.

Each month contains a special power that is connected to the particular time of the year that it is found in. The power of Elul is called *maaseh*, action. The power in man to “act” is especially manifest in Elul.

The Sages state (according to one opinion) that the world was created on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Elul. The Creation is called the “handiwork of Hashem”, His *maaseh* (action), thus the month of Elul is rooted in the original *maaseh* of Creation. Hashem revealed the power of His *maaseh* in Elul, so to speak; He “made” the heavens and the earth, which is all in terminology of “*maaseh*”.

When Elul arrives each year, the power of Hashem’s *maaseh* returns each year, as it were. Being that man has an *avodah* to resemble Hashem (as the Sages say, “Just as He is merciful, so should you be merciful; just as He is compassionate, so should you be compassionate”), there must also be a power of *maaseh* on man’s own level, in some small resemblance to Hashem’s power of *maaseh*. What exactly is that *maaseh*, though, that we must perform?

The Gemara says that “the purpose of Torah is *teshuvah* (repentance) and *maasim tovim* (good deeds).” The simple meaning of this is that these are two different things the Torah leads to: repenting, and good deeds. It seems as if these two matters bear no connection; simply speaking, if a person commits a bad deed, he must repent over it, and thereafter he must perform good deeds. But the depth of the matter is as follows.

When Hashem created the world, He made it over the course of six days. This was an utterly pure and holy action, but even more so, Hashem created it with His ten expressions; His *dibbur* (word). He said “Let there be light” and there was light. He told the heavens to be created, and they were created. All of Creation is thereby powered by His word. When people perform an action, we usually attribute it to ourselves, thinking that it is our hands which do things. Our hands are the

symbol of human action. But the symbol of Hashem's actions is His word, for it is His word which created each thing.

Elul are days of *maaseh*, but it is hard to understand how exactly these days are days of *maaseh*. The *Tur* says that Moshe Rabbeinu stood for 40 days to receive the Torah, and the first 30 days of this were in Elul. The 40<sup>th</sup> day was Yom Kippur. Where is the 'action' in these 30 days of receiving the Torah? Moshe stood there for 40 days to receive the Torah, but how was this "action"? In truth, however, it shows that Elul is both a time of action and a time of receiving Torah. It is just hard to understand how exactly it is a time of action. What we need to understand is that these days are of a different kind of action that the usual kind of "action" that we are familiar with.

This is a deep concept, so we will need to explain it very thoroughly.

### *Action/Building in Elul: Using Our Power of Speech in Selichos*

The Gemara says that Torah scholars are called builders<sup>92</sup>, for it is written, "*And all your builders are those who learn [the Torah of] Hashem*". How is something built? The power to 'build' [in the spiritual dimension] is not like how we build physically, which is through our hands, but through speaking words of Torah. A Torah scholar spends his day speaking of Torah, and that is how he builds the world.

This power is also given to all of us as well: we can build and perform deeds, through our power of speech. Just as Hashem created the world through His word, so did He give us the power to build, through words.

Where do we see this kind of 'building' take place, though? In Elul and in the Ten Days of Repentance, we make heavy use of our power of speech. There is *Selichos*, where we repeatedly ask Hashem for mercy. This is surely connected with the fact that we must increase our good deeds during Elul; but we just need to understand what exactly the connection is.

The way we know the answer to this depends on knowing what our soul's power of *maaseh* is. What does it really mean to 'do' something? In the spiritual dimension, how can we 'do' something? We can understand that our body 'does' something, but how does our soul "do" something? If we understand what it is, we can understand what the *avodah* of "*maaseh*" in in Elul, but if not, then perhaps we will be able to increase our good deeds in Elul, but we will not have succeeded in developing the soul's power of *maaseh*.

Let us reflect into the soul's power of *maaseh*. The body performs actions, and it is our words which execute actions. Man is called "*nefesh chayah*" (living spirit), and Targum translates this to mean "*ruach memalelah*", a talking spirit; man's power of speech is essentially his spiritual power to

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92 Berachos 64a

“do” things. Thus, our power of *dibbur* (speech) is the source of our power to perform deeds (*maaseh*).

To illustrate this [on a deeper level], a Torah scholar lives in the realm of Torah words. He is constantly accessing his spiritual power of *maaseh*. In contrast, someone who does not live in the realm of Torah is not making use of the spiritual power of *maaseh*; the only *maaseh* he performs are physical actions with his hands,

Being that *dibbur* (speech) is identified with man’s title of *nefesh chayah* (living spirit), *dibbur*/speech is the source of all our spiritual actions. In Elul where we use the power of *dibbur* a lot [through prayer and *Selichos*], we are thus involving ourselves in a *dibbur* that leads to *maaseh*; we are involved with a kind of *dibbur* that is all about *maaseh*. Soon we will explain what it is, but this is the outline of the concept.

### *Action Is About Completion*

What exactly is the soul’s power of *maaseh*/action that is contained in the power of *dibbur*/speech?

The Gemara says that one should perform that which he says. Otherwise, he has not completed that which he spoke about. We can learn from here that an “action” implies the *completion* of something. [On a deeper level], the “world of action” we live in is the finalized and completed form of all the higher worlds which precede it. What we “do” here on this world is the last step of everything that emanates from the higher worlds; it all ends here. Hashem intentionally created an imperfect world - and it is “completed” in the world of action we live in. We were created imperfect, and it is our task to complete ourselves, here on this world, this world of action.

A person thinks, then he says what he is thinking, and then he acts upon what he says. The action is the final step of the thinking process; it is the final step of everything. So action is not just an action – it is the completed and final step of a process.

What is the soul’s power of *maaseh*, then? It is essentially the *completion* of the soul. Our body completes an action when it finishes “doing” some kind of labor or work, and our soul “does” something when it has completed its spiritual work on this world.

### *The Depth of Teshuvah: Uprooting the Reason to Sin*

Let us try to understand a little more about the concept of *maaseh*.

Elul is the time where the world began (according to one opinion in the Sages, as mentioned earlier), but in the order of the months, it is the final month of the year. This shows the connection between Elul and *maaseh*: because Elul is the completion of the year. This is not because it is the ‘last month on the Jewish calendar’; it is the time of the year where *our soul has finished its work* for this past year.

*Teshuvah* (repentance) includes regret and confession, and the Ramban famously writes that Hashem knows what the person is really thinking as he does *teshuvah*, if he is earnest or not. The depth of his words is because *teshuvah* is about putting an end to the sinful action. If one continues to sin, his “action” continues, thus he has not reached completion. If one confesses the sin but he continues to sin, he has not yet ended his sinful action. He is missing his soul’s completion. But if he does *teshuvah*, that means he has put an end to the sinful action; he has reached completion.

Thus, the soul’s power of *maaseh* is to put an end to things; for one to place boundaries and limitations on himself that he will not cross.

Elul, the days of *maaseh*, are also days of *teshuvah*. The connection between these two facts lies in the understanding of the earlier-quoted statement of our Sages, “The purpose of Torah is *teshuvah* and good deeds”. It is because when we do proper *teshuvah*, we access the power of *maaseh*. The concept of *teshuvah* is thus connected to the soul’s power of *maaseh*, which is essentially the idea of putting an end to things, to place boundaries and limitations on any sinful acts which we were doing, so that the sinful actions won’t continue to spread any further.

There are some parts of the soul which do not need boundaries to be placed on them. The desire in our soul to learn Torah, to *daven*, and to do *mitzvos* are all holy desires, which should only be increased, not decreased. But there are parts to the soul which we need to place limitations on. That is the idea of *teshuvah*.

*Teshuvah* is about returning the soul after one has sinned, not just to stop sinning. In order to do *teshuvah* in which one will not return to the **sin**, it is not enough to do *teshuvah* over the act itself, but to do *teshuvah* over the reason that motivated the person to sin. Often we are used to doing *teshuvah* over the sinful act, but not over the reason that caused us to sin. For this reason, the *teshuvah* of many people does not last. The depth of *teshuvah* is to stop the particular aspect in the [external layer of the] soul that is being motivated to sin.

Whenever our Sages said their words, they were not speaking to our bodies. They were speaking to our souls. The language of the soul is different than the language that the body understands. Of course, our body is a factor; much of keeping *Halachah* affects our body, not just our souls. But *teshuvah* is about returning the soul, not just to stop sinning. When one sins, the action is no longer here, but the motivation to sin is still here. We aren’t supposed to do *teshuvah* just on the mere actions that we did; we are meant to do *teshuvah* on the motivations to sin, which remains on this world long after the sin is over. That is how we return our soul when we do *teshuvah* - and that is the depth of *teshuvah*.

### *To Feel Complete*

Let’s attempt now to explain this in clearer terms. We will ask: Why does a person sin? What is the internal source in the person that causes a person to do the opposite of Hashem’s will, *chas v’shalom*?

In the blessing of *Borei Nefashos*, we say, “*Borei Nefashos rabbos v’chesronam*” –the Creator of many souls and their deficiencies.” A person sins when he feels deficient about something and he seeks to fill that deficiency. If he would feel filled, he would not seek to fill himself with anything from the outside, and he would never commit the sin.

Thus, we can now understand better how the depth of *teshuvah* is not merely about stopping to sin, but about uprooting the reason that caused the sin in the first place.

For example, if a person spoke *lashon hora* about someone, why did he speak *lashon hora*? He was jealous of him, or doesn’t like him. What is his *teshuvah*? To stop talking *lashon hora* about the person? Or to uproot his negative emotions towards him? The only reason why he spoke evil speech about the person was because he had an evil ‘eye’ towards the person. Every sin stems from some deficiency in the soul. That is where the main aspect of the *teshuvah* lies.

The main *avodah* of a person in doing *teshuvah*, besides for avoiding the sin, is to do “complete *teshuvah*” – to uproot the inner reason that caused one to sin. Incomplete *teshuvah*, by contrast, is to repent over the evil deed that was committed, without regretting the evil motivation that caused it. *Teshuvah* is therefore about returning the soul’s abilities to their pure source, after they had been used for evil.

For example, when a person steals 100 dollars, not only should he return the money; his *teshuvah* should be about regretting the desire he had to steal. If he would have been “happy with his lot” as the Sages teach, then he wouldn’t have come to steal. He only stole because he felt deficient about himself. Had he felt complete within himself, he never would have come to sin. The main part of the *teshuvah* is thus to return the soul from its deficient state into its original, complete state.

This is the meaning of “complete *teshuvah*” which we daven for in *Shemoneh Esrei*, and this is also the idea behind the soul’s power of *maaseh*.

Now we can understand better what the power of *maaseh* is. *Maaseh* is to feel complete and to feel that we lack for nothing; to feel complete within ourselves.

Of course, this is a power that needs to be used in its proper time and place. It does not mean that one should not have aspirations for holiness. If one learned a page of Gemara, he must certainly want to learn more pages of Gemara and he must not remain satisfied with the page of Gemara he learned. The power of *maaseh*, to feel complete, is only referring to being at peace from avoiding materialistic desires, not spiritual desires.

If a person is jealous of another person, if a person lusted after something, it was because he felt deficient about himself. The root of sin is always about some kind of deficiency the person felt. Thus the depth of *teshuvah* is to nullify the very desire for the sin, not just to regret the act of sin itself.

The days of Elul are called *yemai ratzon*, “days of will” – for it is the time to get in touch with our innermost will; to uproot the negative desires we have. This is what lays in the power of *maaseh*.

When I don't feel a necessity to pursue a desire, because I feel complete within myself, this is called *maaseh* – the “action” is complete.

### *The Deep Source of Teshuvah*

This is a subtle and deep approach towards *teshuvah*. We all know we must do *teshuvah*, we all resolve to be better this year, but there is much more to *teshuvah* than this!

*Chazal* say that *teshuvah* was one of the things that existed already before Hashem created the world. Why was there a need for *teshuvah* if nothing was missing at that point from Creation and there was no possibility of sin? It is to show us that the level of “complete *teshuvah*” is only when one connects to his deep inner source which lacks nothing.

If we do not know this deep source of *teshuvah*, it is very hard to actually do *teshuvah*. We all know what *teshuvah* is, we all want to *teshuvah*, but if we do not understand the deep source that it comes from, we cannot really do *teshuvah*.

The Sages said (concerning physical action): “The eyes sees, the heart desires, and the actions complete.” Not only does the body complete and “do” action that begins in the eyes and the heart (this was said in the context of physical desire), but so does the soul contain the power to “do” actions that complete: by feeling complete within itself, with no need for anything else outside of it. In this way, a person will never feel deficient, and he will never come to sin.

On *Rosh HaShanah*, it is brought in *Halacha* that one must rejoice<sup>93</sup>. How can we rejoice on *Rosh HaShanah*, when Hashem is judging the world? It is because if one doesn't rejoice on *Rosh HaShanah*, it is because he feels deficient. If he is incomplete, he cannot come to do real *teshuvah*.

So we must really know what *teshuvah* is about. *Teshuvah* is not only about regretting the sin and resolving not to sin again. The depth of *teshuvah* is to reach the deepest part of our soul, where we feel complete. When we feel that completion, we will find there that we have no desire to sin.

“One who is greater than his friend, has a greater *yetzer hora* than him.”<sup>94</sup> Why is this so? Compare this to a person who has a hundred dollars, who wants two hundred dollars. The more one has, the more he wants. But how indeed does one get rid of all his extraneous desires? By accessing the power of *teshuvah* that came before Creation. (In spirituality, we must aspire endlessly and always want more. But when it comes to materialistic desires, we must nullify all of these desires.)

That is complete *teshuvah*: to return to the deepest part of ourselves, where there are no desires. In that place in our soul we find the deeper power of *teshuvah* that has been around before Creation.

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93 Tur: Orach Chaim 597:1

94 Sukkah 52a

The *teshuvah* in Elul leads to Rosh HaShanah, the beginning of the year; thus the *teshuvah* in Elul leads to a new beginning. It is not simply leaving this past year (5771) and entering the new year (5772). It is about reaching an entirely new beginning.

Elul are days of *maaseh*. It is not about simply doing more good deeds, although that is also true that we must increase our goods. It is about reaching the completion of our soul, where we feel complete inside ourselves, where we are so attached in closeness to Hashem that we feel the greatest sense of completion from this.

Elul is depicted as “*Ani L’Dodi V’Dodi Li*” (“I am to my Beloved, and my Beloved is to me”)—one who does not feel this in Elul cannot feel completion, and then he will be missing the true depth of *teshuvah*. But if one feels the meaning of “*Dodi*” (“my Beloved”) in Elul – that Hashem is our Beloved companion Who fills all of our life – this enables him to feel completion at this, and from that place in himself, he is spurred on to do “complete *teshuvah*”.

### *The Deep Source of Our Completion*

Thus, we can now understand that “Torah scholars are called builders” in the sense that they build from a place of completion in themselves, not out of deficiency. They build the world through their words of Torah, and the Torah is complete; thus they are building the world from a complete source.

The more a person is attached in closeness with Hashem, he is connected to completion and perfection, and he lacks for nothing. It won’t be possible for him to sin, because there is no more reason that motivates him to sin. Of course, we are human and imperfect. But when one is close to Hashem, he receives a special spiritual light of completion, which makes him feel complete and doesn’t allow him to sin.

In the days of Elul and *Yomim Noraim*, we should know that these are not just days to increase Torah learning and to do more mitzvos, although that is certainly truthful to do; it is not the purpose. The purpose of these days is to enter the depth of this time, to enter the deepest part of our own souls, where our soul is connected to the reality of Hashem. It is a place in the soul which is attached to perfection, and when we connect to this place in our soul, we are connected to completion and perfection, and there is then no possibility of sin there, with the more we are connected to that place. It is there that we can do complete *teshuvah*.

### *In Conclusion*

We ask Hashem in *Shemoneh Esrei*, “Return us, in complete repentance, before You.” To do *teshuvah* “before Hashem” is to do *teshuvah* and become closer to Hashem through it. If the *teshuvah* doesn’t bring one closer to Hashem from it, it is not “complete” *teshuvah*.

May the Creator merit us to reach this perfection in our souls and to connect ourselves to the reality of the Creator, and to do His will always, throughout every day of the year.

## *22 | Elul – Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li*

### *The “I” That Connects To “My Beloved”*

Elul/אלול is an acronym for “Ani L’Dodi V’Dodi Li” (אני לדודי, ודודי לי), (“I am to my Beloved, and my Beloved is to me”).

There is “Dodi” (“my Beloved”/Hashem) - and there is our “ani” (the “I”). But what exactly is that ‘ani’ that bonds with our ‘Dodi’?

Let us reflect on this. When Elul comes, every Jew feels somewhat inspired; we all feel some level of spiritual awakening. But is that inspiration on a level of “ani” (“I”)? There is no Jew in Elul who does not feel inspiration (as long as his soul contains a bit of holiness). Everyone feels some kind of awakening. But the question is, if this inspiration translates into the level of “*Ani L’Dodi V’Dodi Li*.” Has the inspiration become a part of one’s ‘ani’ - a part of his “I”?

### *Going Beyond Inspiration*

The word for “inspiration” in Hebrew is “hisorerus”, which is from the word “raua”, “shaky”. This implies that all hisorerus/inspiration is a shaky foundation to build upon. Although inspiration is better than nothing at all, and it is certainly important, we cannot [only] build ourselves on inspiration. We need something more than inspiration in order to build ourselves. When we rely on inspiration to do it for us, we are on a shaky foundation. But if we make something a part of ourselves and we allow it to become our actual level, we are connected to it on an ongoing basis.

Inspiration to do something nice does not come from the deepest part of our existence (our *havayah*). If it would be a part of our essence, then it wouldn’t be inspiration. “*Ani L’Dodi V’Dodi Li*” is describing the bond we can reach with Hashem in Elul which can only come from being in touch with our “ani”, with our “I”, our inner self. If it is not coming from one’s ‘ani’, then there is no “*V’Dodi Li*” that follows.

### *Defining the “Ani” (Our “I”)*

So what is the ‘ani’? Similarly, what exactly is the “Li” (“to me”) that is in the words “*Dodi Li*”?

It is definitely not referring to inspiration, as we explained above. It is much more than inspiration. Inspiration is wonderful, but it does not lead to “*Ani L’Dodi, V’Dodi Li*”. So we first must understand what the “ani” is.

We are used to assuming that our “*ani*” (our “I”, our self) should become dedicated to our *Dodi* (“My beloved”/Hashem), and that all we have to do is direct our *ani* to our *Dodi*; to become closer to Hashem. But it is more than that: our *avodah* begins with the getting in touch with our “*ani*” in the first place.

Rav Chaim Vital said that the “*ani*” of a person is not defined by his physical flesh, but by the *nefesh*, the spiritual life-force of man.<sup>95</sup> Yet, there is even more depth to the “*ani*” of a person than this.

There are three letters contained in the word “*ani*” (אני) – the letters *aleph* (א) *nun* (נ) and *yud* (י). There is a rule taught by Sages [in the *sefarim hakedoshim*] that the letters of *Lashon HaKodesh* (the Hebrew alphabet) which describe a word are really the very essence of the thing being described. The “I” of the person is called “*ani*” in *Lashon HaKodesh*, which will mean that the Hebrew letters *aleph*, *nun*, and *yud* are describing our very essence.

This “*ani*” of ours must become dedicated to our “*Dodi*”, but we first must know what the “*ani*” is. What is the “*ani*” in us? [Now the question has become clearer and deeper]: What does it mean that the Hebrew letters *aleph*, *nun*, and *yud* form our actual essence?

Someone who doesn’t like to think deeply will balk at this question. “What do you mean, “*Who am I?* I am who I *am!* That is who I *am.*” But if a person has never thought deeply about his *ani*“I”, it means that he has never reached his “*ani*” yet - and he definitely won’t be able to connect his “*ani*” with Hashem.

Returning to the original question: What is the significance that our “*ani*” consists of the letters *aleph*, *nun*, and *yud*?

### *The Concepts of Aleph, Yud, and Nun*

The letter “*aleph*” represents beginnings; it is the source. *Aleph* is the first letter of the *Aleph Beis*, and Hashem created the world from the letter *Aleph*.

Where do the letters *nun* and *yud* come into the picture?

The Sages say that “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world”. The Ramban says that “the Torah consists entirely of names of Hashem”. Although Hashem has many “names”, He has one name which is His main name: the four-letter name of *havayah*, which contain the letters *yud*, *hey*, *van*, and *hey*. Within Hashem’s name of *havayah*, the letter “*yud*” is the first and root letter; thus the letter *yud* represents a higher kind of beginning that precedes all.

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95 Shaarei Kedushah 1:1

The letter *nun* is equal in numerical value to the number 50, paralleling the concept of the “50 Gates of Understanding” which the world was created with.

At first these concepts will appear abstract the first time we hear them. We hope to explain these concepts more clearly as we continue. At this point, all we can understand is that these three letters of *aleph*, *nun*, and *yud* (and the concepts they represent) form our “*ani*”, our “I”; and when we have these three aspects integrated, we can then connect our “*ani*” to our “*Dodi*”, to Hashem. If we are missing the integration of these three aspects, there is no formation of our “*ani*” - and then there is no “*ani*” to connect with to our *Dodi*.

### *“Aleph” – Getting To the Root/Source of Things*

We encounter many things each day. Do we ever look into the source of each thing we encounter? For example, when learning a *halacha*, does a person make sure to look up the source of the *halacha*?

One kind of person learns the *halacha* because he wants to know what to do, but another person will not only learn the halacha to know it, he also looks into the source. He wants to understand it at its root. This is a power in the soul to search for the root of things, and it is a very deep power. One can keep looking further into the root of things, then into the root of that root, then into the preceding root, until he reaches the very Root itself.

Of course, if we ask any person what the very source and root of each thing is, every person will say, “Hashem.” But is that perspective carried over into our own soul as well?

Everything is rooted in the Torah. Does a person see how something is rooted in the Torah? To give another example, does a person ever wonder what the source of the word “Elul” is? Where does it come from? **We speak of Elul, Elul, Elul – but what is the word “Elul” and what does it come from? Do we ever think of this?**

This is just one example, but there are many more examples as well, of this idea. The point is not to amass knowledge. The point is to uncover the source and root of the things we come across.

This puts us in touch with the power in our soul to see beginnings. This is a unique ability to the Jew’s soul, called “*raishis*” (beginning; the power to see the beginning). The Sages state, “Yisrael is called “*raishis*” (the beginning)”, because a Jew’s soul has the special ability to get to the “*raishis*”/beginning of things. A Jew has the ability to see the “*raishis*” of each thing – to see the root of each thing, and at a deeper level, it used to get to the very Root of all: Hashem. A Jew can get to the *raishis* of the *havayah* (essence) of each thing.

The “*aleph*” of our “*ani*” is to get to the beginning of each thing, and then we have the power to connect to the Creator. This is one aspect of how our “*ani*” can connect to our “*Dodi*”.

*“Yud” – Reflecting Into the Chochmah (Wisdom) Of Everything*

The second aspect of our “*ani*” is the letter *yud*, which hints to the root of the four-letter name of Hashem. The letter *yud* represents the higher beginning of Creation – a beginning that came before the ‘beginning’ of Creation. We say how “*All of them You made with wisdom*” - Hashem created the world with His *chochmah* (wisdom); all of the creation stems from Hashem’s *chochmah*/wisdom. The inner essence of each thing is thus the *chochmah*/wisdom of Hashem which empowers it.

The “*yud*” aspect of our “*ani*” is thus referring to searching for the *chochmah*/wisdom that is found in each thing we encounter. The creation in front of us is not simple; it is very complex and deep<sup>96</sup>. You can see wisdom in each thing in Creation. If a person only sees what his eyes see, he only sees the superficial layer of what he is seeing. If he is seeing the G-dly wisdom in it, he is seeing its essence, its reality.

Thus, the second aspect of our “*ani*” is to think deeply into things. It essentially refers to our true *seichel* (intellect). This is not referring to normal level of human logic, which even the gentiles possess (and *Chazal* say that we can even trust this basic level wisdom found in the gentiles). It refers to a higher kind of *seichel* which comes from the Creator - a “G-dly” kind of intellect that is poured down into the soul.

To give an example of it, if a person eats bread every day, he should reflect on the concept of bread. He can think: Where does the Torah talk about bread? What is the purpose of bread according to the Torah? What is its concept? In this way, you gain doubly: you see its source in the Torah (which is the first aspect of our *ani*), and you also see the *chochmah* in it (the second aspect of our *ani*).

*“Nun” – Expanding Upon Our Thoughts (Binah)*

Now we will explain the third aspect of our “*ani*”, which is the letter *nun*.

The letter *nun* is equal in numerical value to the number 50, corresponding to the “50 Gates of *Binah* (understanding)” that Hashem created the world with. *Binah* is the power we have to reflect deeper and expand upon our original thoughts, which gives us greater understanding [of the matter at hand].

Thus, in summary, our ‘*ani*’ is meant to look for the root of each thing in the Torah (this is the ‘*aleph*’ aspect of the ‘*ani*’), it can see the G-dly wisdom found in each thing (this is the ‘*yud*’ aspect of the ‘*ani*’), and it then reflects deeper into those thoughts (the ‘*nun*’ aspect of the ‘*ani*’).

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<sup>96</sup> Editor’s Note: Elsewhere, the Rav has quoted the statement of the Chazon Ish that “There is no such thing as something in Creation that is not complicated – everything in Creation is complex and deep.” (See Getting To Know Your Thoughts\_01\_The Basis of Thought). In other places, the Rav has quoted the teaching of Rabbi Nachman of Breslev that there is an avodah to see the *seichel* (G-dly wisdom and intellect) in each thing.

This parallels the statement of the Sages that “Hashem, the Torah, and Yisrael are one” – the “*ani*” of the Jew’s soul (Yisrael) is a part of the Torah (by seeing how the source of each thing is in Torah), and the Torah is connected with Hashem.

### *Reaching Our “Ani”*

Thus, when one reflects into the root of each thing and into the wisdom of each thing, he reaches his “*ani*”. After reaching his “*ani*”, he can then dedicate his “*ani*” to Hashem: “*Ani L’Dodi, V’Dodi Li.*” How many people think they are already in touch with themselves, and they think that all they have to do is become closer to Hashem...? They are really missing their connection to their “*ani*” to begin with!

One’s awareness towards his “*ani*” is usually very superficial, shallow, and shaky. When one tries to connect to “*Dodi Li*” when he hasn’t yet reached his “*ani*”, he will try to ‘inspire’ himself, but as we can all see, this inspiration does not last for very long. It usually lasts until a little bit after *Simchas Torah*, and then people quickly return to the routine of the year. In most instances, inspiration usually does not last. It is all because the person did not really use his “*ani*”. If he would have, it would have become “*Dodi li*”; the person would have felt that Hashem’s presence has become more permanent in his life.

“*Ani L’Dodi*” is not a perception that is reached through waking up one day and learning a *mussar sefer* or a *sefer on chassidus*, and to suddenly feel inspired and feel, “*Ani L’Dodi!*” There is a structure that must precede it; it is only reached through a certain approach towards life from during the rest of the year. When a person has the proper approach during the rest of the year, he gains a holy intellect from this, which enables him to come to the understanding of “*Ani L’Dodi*”, during Elul.

### *Removing Extraneous Desires From the Heart*

In order to get to this understanding and live in this way, one needs to improve his spiritual heart. If one’s heart is not pure and it is full of desires for This World and it contains unfixed *middos*, the heart will block the true *da’as* (awareness) from the mind and it will prevent a person from accessing his higher intellect.<sup>97</sup>

Dovid *HaMelech* said, “*My heart is empty within me.*” One must empty out the heart from all traces of evil, and then there is space in his heart to allow his *da’as* to settle there. The truth of Hashem’s existence can then be internalized there. Then one can attain a bond with Hashem.

But if the heart remains unfixed, a person will continue to have desires that are for other things, and it will be like a “strange god” living inside the person. It will prevent his mind from having the

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97 Refer to “Getting to Know Your Thoughts”

clarity to see truth. One needs to uproot his desire for This World and the worldly desires which are not truthful. When one yearns instead for Hashem, this is “*Ani L’Dodi*”.

Yearning for Hashem needs to be accomplished both through our mind (which contains our *neshamah*/Divine soul, also known as the power of “*seichel d’kedushah*”, holy intellect), and through our heart (which contains our *Ruach*, the “G-dly spirit”, contained within man). These two parts (the mind and the heart) comprise our true “*ani*” that enables us to reach “*Dodi Li*.”

### *Why Inspiration Often Doesn’t Last*

Inspiration as well stems from our heart, but it first has to pass through the various desires that are in our heart, and if there are still unholy desires in our heart, the inspiration wanes. There are many desires in the heart, in quality and in their magnitude, so if a person feels awakened to desire something holy, it is quickly washed over by the many desires in the heart that contradict it. For this reason, inspiration is usually gone as soon as it appeared.

What was missing from the person? Did he not have a desire to improve? He surely had a holy desire; we aren’t arguing with that. But the problem is that he didn’t uproot the other many desires of his heart, so his one desire to improve didn’t stand a chance, against all those many desires.

The days of Elul are called “*yemai ratzon*”, “days of will”. The simple meaning of this is that Elul is when Hashem’s desire for the Jewish people is more revealed and He draws us closer to Him. But it is also because these are days where we can reveal one *ratzon* (will) alone: “Our desire to do Your will.” The *Gemara* says that we all want to do Hashem’s will, but the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) prevents us. So what, then, is our *avodah*? Our *avodah* is to get rid of the unholy desires in the heart.

Practically speaking, one cannot uproot all negative desires at once. They must be uprooted slowly and in steps.

### *Improving the Mind and the Heart*

Our *avodah* in Elul is really two-fold. We need to gain a holy mind and a holy heart, and integrate them.

We gain a holy mind by thinking into the source of each thing. One can keep probing into the source of each thing, more and more, until he discovers its beginning in the Torah.

We gain a holy heart by getting rid of our unholy desires. We cannot do it by simply trying to want the right thing, as many people think. This won’t do much; at best we will be able to inspire ourselves for some time, and it will not last beyond Elul. It is of course a wonderful thing to desire holiness, but it will not be enough to implement change; we will also need to get rid of the other desires in ourselves, if we are to really change. This is because as long as the unholy desires remain in our heart, they prevent us from holding onto our holy desires.

*Inspiration Vs. Lasting Change*

The Ramban says that one must be able to turn inspiration into lasting change. From this we can see that inspiration itself is temporary and it doesn't have much value. It can definitely get a person started on the path towards change, but after inspiration goes away, it is very difficult and unrealistic for a person to keep it up. Often when a person is inspired he makes resolutions to change in certain areas, but soon after he is back to routine.

Instead, a person needs to accept upon himself something that he can never veer from, long after the inspiration is over. If inspiration has caused a person to take upon himself an absolute change which he never reverses, then the inspiration has served its purpose. But if the inspiration is just something that came and went with time, such inspiration is not describing Elul.

Thus, the point of this time of inspiration is so that we can resolve to make *absolute changes* in our life; *decisions*, and not merely to feel spiritual awakening. It must cause a person to feel obligated to change and to accept himself a certain change that he will never veer from.

That change, as we explained, consists of two parts. We need to make use of our mind (holy intellect) and our heart for it. As we explained, these changes must be gradual and in steps. When we attempt to remove our unholy desires,<sup>98</sup> this must not be done rapidly and in an extreme manner, but slowly and in steps. We must slowly eliminate each desire, one by one.

If this is what our inspiration in Elul leads us to, the changes are permanent; our mind and heart is changed. This enables us to truly build ourselves, to build our own inner worlds, to reach our true “*ani*”, and it is that *ani* which can become the “*Ani L'Dodi, V'Dodi, Li*” (“I am to my Beloved – and my Beloved is to me”).<sup>99</sup>

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98 See the author's sefer, Getting to Know Your Thoughts

99 For more on how to maintain our inspiration, see Tefillah #0119 – Inspiring Ourselves Vs. Building Ourselves

## 23 / Tishrei – Tangible Spirituality

### *Tishrei – The Month of Spiritual “Touch”*

We are now with *siyata d’shmaya* in the *Yamim Noraim*, in the month of *Tishrei*, which is called *Yerach Aisanim*, “the month of giants”, due to the many festivals in this month – Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, Succos, Simchas Torah.<sup>100</sup> There is surely one point, however, that connects all of this together, which describes the very essence of all these days.

Our Sages teach us that each month contains a special power, and that the month of *Tishrei* especially contains the power of *mishush*, the sense of “spiritual” touch.<sup>101</sup>

We have five senses, and according to the Vilna Gaon, it really extends into twelve senses. The five senses are sight, hearing, smell, speech, and touch. When we see something from in front or behind us, we do not come into actual contact with what we are seeing. When we hear something or when we smell something, we also are not coming into actual contact with it. But when we touch something, we can feel its very existence. Thus, the sense of touch puts us into direct contact with the essence of something.

Our body can feel things by touching them, and our emotions can feel things. If we get even more specific, touch is mainly accessed through our fingers, especially through the very endpoints of the fingers. On a more subtle level, the sense of touch is represented by the *Bris Kodesh*,<sup>102</sup> which enables man to achieve connection. Touch enables man to connect outward; not only does he touch what he is touching – he can connect to it. Touch enables a person to feel the essence of something, and this enables a person to connect to the essence of something.

Being that the Ten Days of *Teshuvah* are in the month of *Tishrei*, it follows that *teshuvah* is connected to the concept of touch, the ability to feel the essence of something. Thus, when we embark upon doing *teshuvah*, we must come to feel the essence of our actions - and this is what enables us to do *teshuvah*.

Physical touch enables us to feel and touch things that are outside of us, but the soul’s power of touch feels things that are within the soul. The eyes, ears, and nose can sense things from the outside, whereas the soul’s power of touch is the power to feel things from within ourselves. When

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100 Rosh HaShanah 11a and Rashi ibid

101 Sefer Yetzirah 5:3

102 Bris Kodesh – the male reproductive organ, the sign representing the guarding of the Holy Covenant

one feels something from within himself, he is enabled to feel the essence of that which he comes across.

### *“Aisan” – Sensing The Spiritual*

The month of *Tishrei* is called “*Yerach Aisanim*”. The word “*aisan*” (giant) connotes “might”. The simple understanding of why it is called *Yerach Aisanim* is because these are days of judgment, *middas hadin* (the attribute of justice). But this is just the external meaning.

The inner implication of “*aisan*” is that there is a power in the soul to be strong and mighty; it is in fact the strongest and innermost power of the soul.<sup>103</sup> The Sages describe a concept of the “*aisan*” in the soul as being the inner power in the soul which all other powers in the soul stem from. *Aisan* exists both in the planes of time and soul. In time, it is found in the month of *Tishrei*: the month of “*Yerach Aisanim*”. In the soul, it is the power of “*Aisan*” in the soul. The power of “*Aisan*” in a Jew’s soul is essentially the power to feel the essence of something. The word for touch is *mishush*, similar to the word *mamash*, actual, because when a person feels something, he can feel how it is tangible and actual.

### *Using The Soul’s Sense of Touch To Feel Our Beginning State*

Everything in time also exists in the soul. If there is a beginning of time, there is also a beginning of the soul. What is the beginning of the soul? It is the ability to feel something, tangibly.

Rosh HaShanah is called *HaYom Haras Olam*, the birth of the world. It is a day which reveals beginnings, a power to reach the beginning of everything. Hashem created the world, and in the beginning of Creation, there was no man yet. First He created the heavens, earth, the skies, etc. Man was created on the sixth day and was given the power to reach the beginning of Creation even though he wasn’t there. That is the power of touch in the soul – the power to actually feel a spiritual reality, to feel the reality that one came from, which was his very beginning state on the sixth day of Creation, when it was before the sin and man fully sensed the Creator.

It was for this reason that Hashem gave man the power of touch in his soul. All other powers in the soul are meant to help a person tangibly feel the Reality, that there is a Creator, Who is the Root of all reality.

How can man connect to this Reality? There are many ways, but it not only about praying to Him, crying to Him, or learning His wisdom [Torah]. The depth of connecting to the Reality of the Creator is for one to **feel this reality, in his heart**. The month of *Tishrei*, the beginning from which the world was created, contains the power to feel reality. One can feel closeness to Hashem where He is found, meaning, Hashem is found with one who feel Him as reality, in his soul.

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103 See Tefillah #0149 – The Source of Your Strength

The soul's power of touch is given to a Jew so that he can feel the essence of reality, which is our complete *emunah* that there is only One Reality. We can all say it with our mouths, but the true, complete *emunah* is to feel this reality in our heart, to feel it absolutely and tangibly. We can only feel it in our heart, not with our hands. The month of *Tishrei* is a month of spiritual touch, because without this ability to feel, we wouldn't be able to become close to Hashem. Our purpose on this world is become attached to the Creator, and for this, we need to feel a closeness to Him.

We may all able to say this and think about this, but we must feel it, in order for our *emunah* to be complete. The intellect of man cannot grasp the Creator, but our hearts can feel Him very strongly. That is the soul's power of touch. Any person can feel that his feet are standing on the ground, even though the feet are the least feeling part of the body. In the soul, in the heart, a person can feel as well, the reality. This is a gift from Hashem given to man, as soon as he was created, on the first day of *Tishrei* – the power to feel the reality. It is a very part of his creation to feel this reality.

If one doesn't merit it, his power of touch can only feel the sensory and the fantasies, which remove him from the spiritual. But one merits to touch holiness, and he sanctifies his senses, he can then always feel Hashem, at all times.

To all of us, it was given the soul's power of touch. Why is it that we naturally don't feel Hashem, if this is such a simple reality? Why is this so difficult to attain, if it is such a simple truth? Ever since Adam and Chavah touched from the *Eitz HaDaas* and ate from it, the sense of touch has been damaged, and it cannot always feel the truth, that there is only one Reality, Hashem. The sense of touch became callous to the spiritual, and ever since, it can only feel physical things. It doesn't easily feel the spiritual, matters of the soul, and certainly it doesn't feel *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

### *Depth of Teshuvah In Tishrei – Returning To Our Simple Sense For Hashem*

Each person on his own level can reflect what the root all ruination is, so that he can properly do *teshuvah*. Surely each person needs to do *teshuvah* over his various sins, but the main *teshuvah* should be over the root of all sin, when Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*. We all ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*; we all lost our spiritual sense for touch. We each have our own private sins which we need to do *teshuvah*. But there is a root, general *teshuvah* which applies to every Jew – we all need to do *teshuvah* over the root of all sin, which is that we ate from the *Eitz HaDaas* and thereby lost our spiritual touch.

Our *avodah* now is to return to a clean, pure state where we only feel the Reality of Hashem. We cannot reach it completely, because we currently found after the sin. Before the sin, Adam could naturally feel Hashem's reality, without any deep thinking or feeling. Currently, this has become very concealed from our awareness. It is written, "*And you will know today, and you settle the matter*

*your heart*<sup>104</sup> - we have an *avodah* to internalize our mind's knowledge of Hashem into our hearts, because our hearts cannot naturally feel it in our current state, and it takes a lot of reflection until it sinks into our hearts and internalizes.

One of our principles of faith is that we believe in the coming of *Mashiach*, even though he tarries. This can only be possible if a person acquires a simple sense of feeling the Presence of the Creator. *Mashiach* is from the word *masiach*, as in the term *masiach l'fi tumo* (conversing casually), which is when talks naturally and simply.

It certainly takes effort to reach this simplicity. But our point here is to know where we must return to, when we do *teshuvah*. We lost our simple sense for Hashem ever since the first sin, and our *avodah* to find Hashem in these days is mainly to return to this simple sense, through the soul's power of touch. That is the holy sense of touch in the soul.

One who guards this ability in his soul, making sure to sanctify his ability of touch, both through guarding his speech and guarding his *Bris Kodesh* – his senses become safeguarded and sanctified, and he will feel spiritual realities, such as the difference between truth and falsity is. Such a person will clearly sense that only Hashem is the true Reality. All of the *tzaddikim* throughout the generations had a clear sense of Hashem and that was how they were able to reach all of their high levels.

### *Rosh HaShanah - Yearly Return To Original State of Simply Sensing Hashem*

Rosh HaShanah is the first day of the Ten Days of Repentance, it is the day of judgment, but why is it also the first of the days of *teshuvah*?

It was the day Adam sinned, and it was the day where *teshuvah* first took root. (On a subtler note, the moon was the first to sin, and the earth also sinned. But here we are talking about the first sin of man). It is a day of *teshuvah*, of seeking closeness to Hashem, of declaring Hashem as the King, and it is the day of judgment. These are not four separate aspects of our *avodah* on Rosh HaShanah – rather, they are all one. There is only one point on this day of Rosh HaShanah: it is the day when Hashem made man, and the Sages<sup>105</sup> explained that Adam fully sensed Hashem until he sinned.

Every day on Rosh HaShanah, this point in time returns, where he can simply feel Hashem. During the rest of the year, this sense of Hashem comes only through exertion to most people (some rare individuals can sense Him simply, because they acquired this ability through *mesirus nefesh*, an intense level of devotion to Him). But on Rosh HaShanah, every person can feel simply the reality of Hashem, as a natural ability, just as one can feel something with his body, as long as he has opened his soul even a bit.

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104 Devarim 4:39

105 Sanhedrin 38a

“One cannot come to the king in sackcloth” – how must we come before Hashem on Rosh HaShanah, when we declare Him as our King? It will not suffice by declaring Him as King with our mouths alone, or with our minds alone, but with our heart - from a simple sense that He is the King. Only from that depth, can we truly accept Him as our King.

This is the depth of the judgment on Rosh HaShanah, besides for the simple meaning that all is written and sealed for a good year. One is judged on how much he has accepted Hashem as King, from a simple sense of the heart.

### *The Depth of Being Sealed For A Good Life – A Life of D'veykus In Hashem*

Three books are opened on Rosh HaShanah, and the *tzaddikim* are written in the book of life.<sup>106</sup> What is the meaning of a *tzaddik*? Is it someone who doesn't commit sins? The depth of this matter is that a *tzaddik* is one who has *d'veykus* in Hashem. The spiritual sense of touch is the natural level of *tzaddikim*, who feel the reality of Hashem.

This is the secret of the “personal *Beis HaMikdash*” which one can build in his heart.<sup>107</sup> It means to “see” and sense, palpably, the Reality that is Hashem.

This is what “seals” one in the book of life. The word “seal” is the word *techum* (domain, or boundary), which implies that one needs to “stay in the *techum*” of Hashem, permanently, where one becomes part of that *havayah* (reality), of being connected to Hashem all day, amidst *d'veykus*. That is the deeper meaning of being “sealed for a good life”.

### *In Conclusion*

We are far from the birth of the world. But we see from the concept of the exodus that one must view himself as if he is leaving Egypt, as if he is there. So too, each and every one of us must try, as much as he can, to feel what he was like at the time of the birth of the world, when he did not know of any reality other than Hashem, and he felt this simply. The more we draw ourselves closer to this inner place, of our very beginning - we cannot reach it completely, but we can reach it to some level, of our beginning – in turn, we merit to be signed for a good year.

May Hashem merit us that we should feel, for at least one moment of our life, to feel simply the Presence of Hashem. And may we merit to submit all our actions, feelings and thoughts to this simple recognition. Then we will merit to be written - whether we are like “sons, or like servants” - permanently, for a good year.

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106 Rosh HaShanah 17a

107 Editor's Note: Refer to Nefesh HaChaim 1:6



## 24 / Cheshvan - Scent

### Introduction

The Sages state that each of the twelve months of the year contains a unique spiritual concept (power).<sup>108</sup> No month is exactly the same in concept as the month before it or after it. Therefore, each of the months contains a certain renewal, a new facet, which the other months do not have.

The power of the month of Cheshvan is called the sense of smell (*rei'ach*).

### Mar-Cheshvan: "Bitter" Cheshvan

The month of Cheshvan, as is well known, is called "*Mar-Cheshvan*" ("bitter" Cheshvan). Rochel Imeinu passed on in the month of Cheshvan<sup>109</sup>, and the *Midrash* states that she weeps bitterly for her children in exile, as it is written, "*Wailing, bitter weeping, Rachel weeps for her children*".<sup>110</sup> The word "bitter" in Hebrew is "*mar*", hence the connection between Rochel Imeinu and *Mar-Cheshvan*.

Bitterness is usually associated as a bad thing. The waters of the *Mei Merivah* were bitter, and our people in the desert could not drink it.

The bitterness associated with the month of Cheshvan, however, is only one side of the coin. The holy power found in Cheshvan is that the future *Beis HaMikdash* will be built in this month. The Sages state that in the month of Cheshvan, Amalek will be destroyed, and then Hashem's Name will be complete, which will allow for the third *Beis HaMikdash*. Additionally, it is the month which comes directly after the holy month of Tishrei.

Therefore, the month of Cheshvan is double-sided. It is "*Mar-Cheshvan*", so it has bitterness in it, but it is also the month when the future *Beis HaMikdash* will be rebuilt, and then it will be turned from a bitter month into a month of rebuilding the *Beis HaMikdash*, may it come speedily. It will be turned from *Mar-Cheshvan*, "bitter" Cheshvan, into the opposite of *mar*\bitterness – for it will be turned into "*Rom*"-Cheshvan, which means "elevated" Cheshvan.

The bitterness in Cheshvan is symbolized by the bitter waters of the *Mei Merivah*, which were bitter waters that miraculously turned sweet. Since the month of Cheshvan contains the spiritual concept of *rei'ach*\smell, this means that the bitterness of Cheshvan is coming from a foul-smelling

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108 Sefer Yetzirah 5:4

109 The yahrtzeit of Rachel Imeinu is 11 Cheshvan

110 Yirmiyahu 31:14. See Rus Rabbah 7:13

odor, which is called *rei'ach ra*. It is like a carcass that gives off a foul smell, and like a tanner who works in a foul-smelling place.

From a spiritual viewpoint, a sin also emits a foul-smelling odor. Sin is described as a foul, rotting, and bitter smell. This is the implication of *Mar-Cheshvan* – the bitterness of this month stems from the foul smell of sin. (In the future, this bitterness will be turned to sweetness, where instead the good smell of Cheshvan will be revealed.)

The only sense which the *neshamah* (the Divine soul) enjoys is the sense of smell, as our Rabbis revealed regarding smelling the *besamim* on Motzei Shabbos, which gives enjoyment to our soul.<sup>111</sup> Scent is experienced through the nose, which is called *af*, and the term *af* can also mean *charon af*, the wrath of Hashem. This further implies that the bitterness in the month of Cheshvan is because of the *charon af* of Hashem that is still present in our times.

Although there is bitterness in Cheshvan, there is also the revelation of the sense of smell in Cheshvan - the sense that the *neshamah* enjoys. So there is both a 'bad smell' and a 'good smell' of Cheshvan. The 'bad smell' in Cheshvan is like the foul-smelling odor [of sin], like the odor which is emitted from a tannery, where animal hides are burned.

Animal hides are called *ohr* (עור) spelled with the letter *ayin*. In contrast to this, the good smell of Cheshvan comes from *ohr* (אור) spelled with an *aleph*, as in the original *kosnos ohr* which Adam and Chavah wore, which the Torah first spells with the letter *aleph*, before the sin of Adam and Chavah. The blessing over a good smell (*birkas harei'ach*) which is recited over fresh *hadassim* corresponds to this original smell of before the sin, which comes from *ohr* spelled with an *aleph* (אור).

An imprint, a "*roishem*", is also known as a *rei'ach*, the "smell" of something. When something isn't here and only a mark of it remains, this is called its *rei'ach*, its smell - or its *roishem*, its imprint. It is also described as the concept of *achor*, "indirect" - when we only sense a matter in an indirect manner, from behind it, and not its actual essence, just a mark of it.

In contrast to this, good smell is also called *rei'ach*, such as the *rei'ach nichoach l'Hashem* (a pleasant smell to Hashem) which emanated from the burning of the *korbonos*. When something has been elevated, such as an animal that has been offered as a *korbon*, it leaves behind a *rei'ach*, a good spiritual smell. To understand this deeper: When something becomes elevated, its essence is revealed. Thus, a *rei'ach* reveals the essence of something. When the *korbon* is elevated to Hashem, its true essence is revealed, which is to give a *rei'ach nichoach to Hashem*. It is when the physical is transformed into the spiritual, into *ruach* - which is also from the word *rei'ach*.

The word *Cheshvan* contains the letters of the word *nachash* (Serpent), which is equal in value in Hebrew to the word *Mashiach* (the Messiah). In the side of evil, the *Nachash* (Serpent) is associated with the *kosnos ohr* spelled with an *ayin*, the animal hides worn by Adam and Chavah after the sin. It

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111 Berachos 43b

represents the foul smell, the *rei'ach ra*, of sin. On the other hand, we also find that Mashiach is associated with the sense of smell, more than with any of the other senses. The verse says, “*Ruach apeinu, Mashiach Hashem*” – “The breath of our nostrils, is the messenger of Hashem.”<sup>112</sup> This is the good smell, the *rei'ach* associated with the *ruach apeinu* that is Mashiach. This is the *rei'ach* that is associated with the spiritual term *ruach*, which is from the word *rachamim* (mercy), and also from the words “*ruach Elokim*”, the spirit of G-d that hovered over the face of the water before Creation.

### *Evil Smell and Good Smell In Creation*

We find that there is both evil smell and good smell.

When people in previous times would practice idol worship, they would inhale the scent of the fires by the idol worship. This was an evil, sinful use of smell.

There is also the “good smell” of Shabbos, for Shabbos is the day when the *neshamah* is more revealed - which means that the *neshamah* soul enjoys the “good smell” of Shabbos. How does Shabbos reveal the holy sense of smell? Shabbos is the revelation of the root of everything, and when the root is revealed, there is *menuchah*, serenity, because there is *menuchah* whenever the root has been found. That is where the “good smell” of Shabbos comes from: the *menuchah* of Shabbos. Hence, Shabbos is a time when the evil smell in Creation is removed, which is the smell of sin, and instead the good smell becomes revealed - the scent of Mashiach.

The Sages state, “I created an evil inclination, and I created the Torah as its *tavlin* (remedy).”<sup>113</sup> A *tavlin* is a pleasant smelling spice. The *yetzer hora* is foul-smelling, whereas the *tavlin*, the pleasant smelling spice, is the Torah, which is the remedy for the *yetzer hora*. The good smell, of “the Torah given on Shabbos”, is what counters the foul smell of sin. The *tavlin* of Shabbos and Torah, together, remove the foul odor of the original sin, and reveal a holy light (and everyone agrees that the Torah was given on Shabbos...). This is the “good smell” of Creation.

The first time the Torah mentions smell (*rei'ach*) is by Noach, when he offered a *korbon* after the *Mabul*, and he gave a *reiach nochach to Hashem*, and then Hashem promised that He would never bring a *Mabul* again. In other words, the promise was that He wouldn't return Creation to any “bad smell” again. Once the good smell was revealed, there would be no more bad-smelling Creation.

When Creation “smelled” bad, Hashem had to destroy it. The entire Creation exists due to the Torah, which gives off a pleasant smell, a *reiach nichoach*, to Hashem. The *charon af* of Hashem comes when there is bad smell of sin, and it destroys Creation. *Charon af* cannot come when there is a good smell in Creation. When Hashem promised He won't bring the *Mabul* again, on a deeper level this was a promise that He wouldn't return the Creation to its ‘bad smell’ again.

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112 Eichah 4:20

113 Kiddushin 30b

The study of Torah protects a person from the *charon af*, because the Torah is the “good smell” in Creation that protects Creation from Hashem’s wrath. This is also the depth behind smelling the *besamim* – it represents the good smell of the Torah, the good smell in the Creation, which protects from *charon af*.

We also find that Mordechai & Esther are both called “good smelling spices” [Mordechai’s name is from the word *mor dror* (myrrh), and Esther’s name was “Hadassah”, from the word *hadas* (myrtle). In the merit of these two “good-smelling spices”, Mordechai & Esther, the Jewish people were saved from destruction [They were like the good smell of the Torah that protects from *charon af*].

### *The Month of Cheshvan Corresponds To The Tribes of Levi, Yosef, and Yissocher*

The 12 months also parallel the 12 tribes. The month of Cheshvan, according to the *Raavad* and *Vilna Gaon*, is parallel to three of the 12 tribes.

According to one approach, the month of Cheshvan corresponds to the tribe of Levi, who bring the *Ketores* (the incense offering), and specifically the *Kohanim* who come from Levi, since they bring the good smell of the *korbonos*.

Another approach is that Cheshvan corresponds to Yosef HaTzaddik. When he ran away from Potiphar, a “good smell” came upon him, and due to this action, a good smell came upon the world as well.

According to a third approach, Cheshvan corresponds to Yissocher, because Yissocher was born as a result of the *dudaim*, the pleasant-smelling flowers, which Reuven brought to his father Yaakov, and therefore Yissocher is a result of this good smell.

Clearly, these are three different kinds of “good smell”. There is the “good smell” of Levi, a “good smell” of Yosef, and a “good smell” of Yissocher. Let’s try to understand each of these.

### *The Good Smell of Levi: The Rectification of Sin*

There are two kinds of good smell we find in the *Beis HaMikdash*. There was the good smell of the *Ketores* (the incense offering) and the good smell of the *korbonos* (sacrifices). These scents served to rectify evil.

The Sages state that the *Ketores* comes to rectify the foul-smelling spice called *chelbanah* (galbanum). The whole concept of *Ketores* is to turn a foul smell into a good smell. This represents the idea of how the bad smell of Cheshvan is turned into a good smell. There are eleven spices in the *Ketores*, and the main spice is the *levonah* (frankincense), which has the most pleasant smell, and the lowliest of the spices is the *chelbanah*, which has a foul smell. In the *Ketores*, the foul spice of *chelbanah* becomes connected with all the other good spices and thereby receives its *tikkun*.

(rectification). This symbolizes the rectification of all evil [including Amalek, the root of all evil, who is called “rom”, “haughty”, and also a rearrangement of the letters of the word “mar”, bitter].

*Korbonos* come to rectify sin. Sin produces a bad smell, hence, the good smell of the *korbonos* also rectifies the bad smell of sin. This is the “good smell” of Levi, who has the *Kohanim* and who bring the *Ketores* and *korbonos*. When Noach brought a *korbon*, this gave a *rei’ach nichoach* to Hashem, and this was the good smell brought by the *Kohanim* and *Leviim*, who came from Levi. This rectifies the “*achor*” aspect of *rei’ach*, turning it into *rei’ach tov*, a good smell - it turns the “bad smell” of Cheshvan into a “good smell” of Cheshvan.

### *The Good Smell of Yosef: The Prevention of Sin*

The “good smell” of Yosef came from withstanding the test of the wife of Potiphar. Here the evil didn’t get a chance to become actualized. Before he could sin with her, he ran away from her. This is a different rectification for evil – it causes that the evil shouldn’t be actualized in the first place. He almost fell to the sin, but he ran away at the end, and this produced a good smell. This is Yosef’s good smell.

### *The Good Smell of Yissocher: The Totally Pure Mind*

The “good smell” of Yissocher is, as the Vilna Gaon explains, because Yissocher has the power of *hirbur*, thinking, to think in Torah, also known as the power of *binah*, contemplation. Yissocher reveals the good smell which comes from *dudaim*, and the Sages state that the *dudaim* correspond to the *bochurei Yisrael* who never sinned yet.<sup>114</sup> This is a level where even the thoughts aren’t tainted by evil.

Yosef HaTzaddik fell to impure thoughts, but he ran away before committing the action of sinning. In contrast to this, Yissocher represents a level where a person doesn’t even have sinful thoughts. That is Yissocher’s power of *hirbur*, of *binah*, and this is his good smell, the good smell of the *dudaim*, which correspond to *bochurei Yisrael* who didn’t sin.

Those are the three levels of “good smell”: Levi, Yosef, and Yissocher.

### *The Smell of the Esrog: The Smell of Before Sin*

We find another dimension to the good smell. These are the good smell of *hadassim*, which come from a tree. There is also a good smell that is higher than this level: the smell of an *esrog*, which are the fruit of a tree.

The *esrog* is unique in that it is a fruit which tastes like the bark of its tree.<sup>115</sup> The holy sense of smell is represented by the tree which produces fruit that taste like it, which was how trees were before the sin of Adam. The sin of Adam ruined the sense of smell.

There is the foul sin which is emitted from actual sins, and there is also the foul smell of conceitedness, as in the well-known story with Eliyahu HaNavi (where he met a conceited person, who had a foul smell to Eliyahu HaNavi, because of his spiritual malady of conceitedness). Good smell, the *rei'ach nichoach*, is where there is *Shechinah*. Foul smell is where there is conceitedness. Hashem says of a conceited person “I and him cannot dwell under the same roof.”<sup>116</sup> Before the sin, and by the *Beis HaMikdash*, there was a good smell. A conceited person cannot dwell with Hashem because he has a bad smell coming from his conceitedness. The good smell is rooted in the trees and fruit of before the sin, where the bark tasted like the fruits. Barren trees which do not produce fruit are a result of the sin.

Therefore, *hadassim* and *besamim* contain holy smell, and one recites the blessing of *atzei besamim* on *hadassim*, for it has a good smell. This is in spite of the fact that the *hadassim* grow from a barren tree which does not bear fruit, which is a result of sin. In the future, smell will be on a level that is above the “barren trees” in our current era. In the future, there will be a smell in both the fruit and the tree. All scents in Creation, even the loveliest scents, are not equal to the tree’s taste. They are on a level after the sin. The only true scent in Creation is when the tree and fruit smell and taste the same, and this is only with the *esrog*.

Therefore, even Yissocher’s smell is incomplete, because only the scent of the *esrog* remains as it is from before Creation: a fruit that tastes like its bark.

### *The Scent of Mashiach: The Neshamah’s Sense*

This perfect kind of smell is also called *ruach shel Mashiach*, the spirit of Mashiach<sup>117</sup>, which is also called *reicho shel Mashiach*, the scent of Mashiach. What is the “scent” of Mashiach? It is the smell that comes from “a fruit which tastes the same as the bark of the tree” – the same scent as the *esrog*. This is also the judgment of Mashiach: he will judge each person based on how he “smells” [spiritually]. This is the essence of the person, his root, as opposed to his branches. The smell of something is determined by its essence.

Mashiach is anointed with oil, and he is also anointed with the *rei'ach shel shemen*, the smell of good oil, an entirely good smell. The Gemara says that the *Kohen Gadol* is anointed first on his head, then his face, and further downward. Thus, the *rei'ach* smell of the oil begins from the highest point

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115 Eruvin 35a

116 Sotah 5b

117 Beraishis 2:4

of the head, the hair, which is the part of the body that begins from the outside of a person. The *shemen hamishchah* is first placed above the hair, meaning that all the rectification begins from outside of the person, from outside of the senses, from above the senses. Mashiach will judge through his scent of smell, meaning that he will judge from the *neshamah's* sense, and this is above all the senses and above the hair.

The sense which the *neshamah* enjoys, which is the revelation of Shabbos, is smell. The depth of the sense of smell is the inner essence which is above all the senses, above even the hairs which represents the inside that goes to the outside.

This is the depth of how *Mar-Cheshvan* will be turned into *Rom Cheshvan*, an “elevated” Cheshvan, which is when Mashiach will come. The sense of smell enables a person to sense that which he cannot see or hear. **When the world will be filled with the future “*besamim*”, the ‘good-smelling spices’ of the future, one will be able to sense that which he cannot see or hear.** The sense of smell enables a person to feel the intangible. Whereas the rest of the senses can only feel that which is tangible, through the sense of smell a person can sense the intangible.

### *The Soul's Sense of Smell Can Sense The Spiritual*

The depth of this is, that **although Hashem is hidden from all creations, and we have no grasp or understanding of Him, we still have the sense of smell, an imprint left of the state before the sin, which enables us to sense the intangible presence of Hashem.**

**The *Beis HaMikdash* is destroyed - it is not here - but through our soul's sense of smell, we can sense it.** We cannot see it, but through our soul's sense of smell, we can sense it even though it is not tangibly in front of us. For through [the soul's] sense of smell, we can sense that which exists which is currently hidden, concealed, and intangible. **Through [the soul's] smell, we can sense that which is the subtlest and most hidden in Creation. Through [the soul's] smell, we can smell the state of before Creation.**

This is the “scent of Mashiach”, the *ruach* (spirit) and *reiach* (scent) of Mashiach: **to smell the inner point which hasn't yet gone outward into our external dimension.** It is to smell something which we cannot intellectually comprehend.<sup>118</sup>

The revelation of *Mar-Cheshvan* comes after the month of Tishrei, the month when the moon is covered, whereas Cheshvan is a month of revelation. The moon dims and comes back into light, in a cycle. That is the *Beis HaMikdash*: we can keep returning to it, even after it has become concealed. Through smell, a person can connect to anything. **One can connect to anything hidden, through the soul's sense of smell, and thereby live it, and he can even connect to the state of before**

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118 Editor's Note: The Rav explains more about the “scent of Mashiach” in Torah Way To Enlightenment chapter 017: Bonding With The Creator Through Scent-Movement

**Creation.** Through [the soul's sense of] smell, we can sense how “*Hashem will Be One and His Name will one*”, even though currently His Name is incomplete and His Throne is incomplete due to the presence of Amalek.

This is the depth of why the sense of smell is also called “good from the start” (*tov m'ikara*). The sense of smell became damaged from the sin, and therefore there is *Mar*-Cheshvan, bitter Cheshvan, because now that the original good smell of Creation is no longer here, this is the root of all bitterness. But when smell connects me to that which used to be here – to the state of before the sin, when the sense of smell was undamaged - this is the “good smell” of Cheshvan, where it was good from the start.

***In Conclusion***

May we merit from the Creator that the month of *Mar*-Cheshvan (bitter Cheshvan) be turned into *Rom*-Cheshvan (elevated Cheshvan), and may we merit the complete revelation, speedily in our days. Amen.

## 25 / Kislev - The Depth Behind Sleep

### *The Month of Kislev – The Power of “Sleep”*

*Our Sages* state that the month of the Kislev contains the power of “sleep”.<sup>119</sup>

This concept needs understanding. How is “sleep” an *avodah*<sup>120</sup> for us?! True, the winter is a time where people sleep more, so we see that there is a connection between sleep and the winter, where the month of Kislev falls out in. But how does that make “sleep” into an *avodah*?

When we learn Torah or when we *daven*, it’s clear that we’re doing an *avodah*. When we eat, we are able to elevate this act for *Avodas Hashem*, because we can sanctify our eating, in various ways.<sup>121</sup> But how can sleep raise us spiritually? How can sleep be a holy *avodah*?

The simple answer that people say to this is because when we go to sleep, we can have the intention that we are refreshing ourselves to be able to serve Hashem better. Although this is true, this is only the superficial answer, and it does not explain the depth that is behind the *avodah* of “sleep”.

### *The Beis HaMikdash and Sleep*

The *Vilna Gaon* explains that sleep is an *avodah*, because since the *avodah* [of the *Kohanim*] was performed in the *Beis HaMikdash*, and we find that the *Beis HaMikdash* was a place of “sleep” [soon this will be explained], therefore, sleep is an *avodah*. Those are his words, and here we will try to understand this ambiguous and difficult statement; and through this we will see how sleep can be an *avodah*. If the *Beis HaMikdash* was a place that epitomized “sleep” [at this point we do not understand what it means, and later we will explain], it must be that sleep is not just something we do to refresh ourselves to serve Hashem better; it is something that reveals spirituality.

The *Beis HaMikdash* was a place where there was a revealed spirituality. If the *Beis HaMikdash* is a place of “sleep”, it must be that our sleep somehow serves to reveal something in our own spirituality.

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119 Sefer Yetzirah 5:1, as explained in the commentary of the Gra (the Vilna Gaon)

120 form of service to Hashem

121 The *avodah* of “eating” is the idea of the month of Shevat; see Rosh Chodesh Avodah\_011\_Shevat – Elevated Eating

Before we explain how sleep can be an *avodah*, let us try to understand this statement of the Vilna Gaon that the *Beis HaMikdash* is a place of “sleep”. First of all, how can this be? Doesn’t the *Gemara*<sup>122</sup> state that on Sukkos, everyone stayed up all night from all of the festivities of the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*, and they were fending off sleep, so that they shouldn’t fall asleep in the *Beis HaMikdash*? How then can the *Vilna Gaon* say then that the *Beis HaMikdash* is a place of “sleep”?

### *Prophecy and Sleep*

All of the prophets, except for Moshe *Rabbeinu*, received their prophecies in their dreams, as they slept. Prophecy could only come when there is sleep; this shows us that sleep is a time in which a person can reach a very spiritual high level. Prophecy is the highest level one can achieve, so there must be something very special about sleep, if prophecy only happens during sleep. It shows us that sleep is not just something we do to refresh ourselves to serve Hashem better; sleep itself has its own purpose.

What is the loftiest *avodah* that we have? A person can attain certain high levels of closeness to Hashem through his *davening* (prayer) which he doesn’t get through learning Torah; this is more known to us. Yet, even *davening* isn’t the highest level we can reach. Prophecy was attained precisely through sleep, not through prayer. How, indeed, does sleep raise a person to such high spiritual levels? How can it be more spiritual than prayer?!

The *Arizal* and the *Vilna Gaon* both wrote that sleep is a time in which a person receives the highest comprehensions, even more than during the daytime. However, although this is true in concept, we still need to know how exactly we make sleep can be an “*avodah*” for a person. What exactly is so special about sleep?

What’s even harder to understand about this is that the *Vilna Gaon* writes that when a person sleeps, he loses his *seichel* /intellect, and instead his imagination takes over. What then is so spiritual about sleep? A person loses his *daas* (his rational thinking abilities) when he sleeps. Man is gifted with the quality of *daas*; man has the title of “*bar daas*” and that is his greatness. But when we sleep, we lose our *daas*; our intellect is not working and instead our imagination is dominant. It is thus very hard to understand how sleep can give a person more spiritual comprehension.

### *Sleep – A “Sixtieth of Death”*

The answer to this lies in a statement of *Chazal*, that sleep is called a “sixtieth of death”. This hints to us something special about sleep. It is a time where the soul leaves the body; we leave our body’s hold upon us when we sleep. In this sense, sleep is an opportunity for us to become elevated

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122 Sukkah 53a

spiritually. Soon we will soon explain how exactly sleep can elevate us, but this is the outline of the concept.

Earlier, we brought from the Vilna *Gaon* that the *Beis HaMikdash* was a place of “sleep”. We raised the question that this is very difficult to understand. Making the question stronger, it is written, “*For from Zion comes forth the Torah, and the word of Hashem from Jerusalem.*” The *Beis HaMikdash* is known as the place where the Torah rulings issued forth from. How, then, can the Vilna Gaon say that the *Beis HaMikdash* is a place that epitomizes “sleep”?

The answer lies in the following.

### *The Beis HaMikdash, Binyamin, and “Sleep”*

The *Vilna Gaon* wrote that the month of Kislev is the revelation of the power of “sleep”, which was epitomized through the *Beis HaMikdash*. The site of the *Beis HaMikdash* was in the tribe Binyamin’s portion of land. This shows us that there is a connection between sleep, the *Beis HaMikdash*, and the tribe Binyamin. What, indeed, is the connection between these three?

The Torah recounts how Rachel *Imeinu* died in childbirth as she gave birth to Binyamin. *Chazal* state that the birth of Binyamin was very difficult for her and it depleted her all of her strength, and that is why she died in childbirth. But there is more to this matter. It wasn’t simply that Binyamin’s birth simply drained her of all her physical strength. It was really because it took *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice, or altruism) on Rachel *Imeinu*’s part to give birth to Binyamin. Therefore, Binyamin represents the power of his mother’s *mesirus nefesh*.

If the *Beis HaMikdash* is in Binyamin’s portion, and Binyamin represents *mesirus nefesh*, it shows us that *mesirus nefesh* is required in order to acquire the *Beis HaMikdash*. We also know that *Yitzchok Avinu* showed *mesirus nefesh* by being willing to give up his life for Hashem at the site of *Akeidah*<sup>123</sup> which was at the future site of the *Beis HaMikdash*. The hint of this is because *mesirus nefesh* is the power that is necessary to have the *Beis HaMikdash*.

Now we can understand the mysterious words of the Vilna Gaon that the *Beis HaMikdash* is a place of “sleep”: it is because **when a person goes to sleep, he is exercising the power of *mesirus nefesh* – by giving his soul back to the Creator. The soul leaves the body when we sleep, for sleep is a “sixtieth of death”, thus, sleep is a manifestation of the power of *mesirus nefesh*.**

### *The Avodah of Mesirus Nefesh – Before We Go To Sleep At Night*

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<sup>123</sup> *The Altar on “Har HaMoriab” (Moriab Mountain), where Avraham Avinu performed “the binding of Yitzchak”*

Now that we have explained that the *avodah* of “sleep” is really a use of *mesirus nefesh*, what we need to understand is how we show *mesirus nefesh*. When do we ever exercise *mesirus nefesh*?

When we recite the *Shema*, which is twice a day, by the prayers of *Shacharis* and *Maariv*, it is brought in *Halacha* that a person should have the intention of *mesirus nefesh*, that he is willing to die for Hashem, upon finishing the word “*Echad*”.<sup>124</sup> However, this is still not yet an **active** use of *mesirus nefesh*; it is only **potential** *mesirus nefesh*. The only time that a person **actively** has *mesirus nefesh* is when he goes to sleep, for sleep is when we give back our soul to the Creator.

In the *Kerias Shema Al HaMittah* (the recital of the *Shema* which we say before we get into bed at night), a person says the verse, “*Into Your hand, I give over my spirit.*” When a person is going to sleep, he is giving over his soul to Hashem – he is actually giving it away! We should be aware of this before we go to sleep. When we are saying *Kerias Shema al hamittah*: “*I am giving away my soul to Hashem!*”

This opportunity usually goes lost. Usually when people go to sleep, they get into bed very tired and exhausted, and sleep is usually viewed as just a means to relieve tiredness. But sleep is really an *avodah*. It is an *avodah* of actively having *mesirus nefesh* for Hashem: to feel that we are giving away our soul to Him for the night.

During the rest of the day, we do not have this opportunity. Even if we had the intention of *mesirus nefesh* as we say *Kerias Shema* during the prayers of *Shacharis* and *Maariv*, it is only a potential kind of *mesirus nefesh*, and it is not active *mesirus nefesh*. The only time during the day that we **actively** exercise *mesirus nefesh* is by the *Kerias Shema Al HaMittah*, at night, before we go to sleep.

Animals also sleep, but they sleep only because they’re tired. A Jew, however, is able to sleep with a higher intention, *mesirus nefesh*, by being ready to give away his soul to Hashem for the night, before going to sleep. Of course, our body needs to sleep because it is simply tired and exhausted. But if a person goes to sleep just because he’s tired, then his sleep is no different than how an animal sleeps. Our existence is that of a body and a soul; our body needs sleep so it won’t be tired, but our soul needs sleep for a different reason – so that it can have *mesirus nefesh*.

Thus, even our soul “sleeps” at night. How can our soul sleep? Don’t we know that there is no sleep in *Gan Eden*? Is there such a thing as sleep in the spiritual realm? Our soul “sleeps” by giving itself away to Hashem, when our bodies go to sleep.

This is the ideal intention to have in mind before we go to sleep at night: “I am really giving away my soul to Hashem”. It is the opportunity we have once a day to be able to have *mesirus nefesh* for Hashem!

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124 Shela HaKadosh

(This is also the depth behind the *mitzvah* to sleep in the *sukkah*. We aren't just sleeping in the *sukkah* in the physical sense. We are sleeping in the *sukkah* because we are giving ourselves away to Hashem in the *sukkah*, and that is the message of taking shelter in the *sukkah*).

Now we can understand why prophecy could only happen during sleep. It was because only someone who is willing to really give himself up for Hashem can attain prophecy, for sleep is the act of giving oneself away to Hashem.

Now we can also understand why the *Beis HaMikdash* was a place of “sleep,” as the Vilna *Gaon* says. It is because *mesirus nefesh* was required in order to have the *Beis HaMikdash*, and our sleep is a time in which we can reveal our power of *mesirus nefesh*. The *Beis HaMikdash* served this entire purpose: it showed us that a person has to dedicate his entire life to Hashem - to have *mesirus nefesh* for Hashem.

### *In Conclusion*

We should realize that once a day, we have the opportunity to have active *mesirus nefesh*: before we go to sleep at night, each night, we can utilize *mesirus nefesh*. It is active *mesirus nefesh*, as opposed to potential *mesirus nefesh*; thus, right before we go to sleep at night is the prime time where we can utilize the power of *mesirus nefesh*. One should feel then that he is actually giving himself away to Hashem.

If a person lives like this, his whole life will change – he will go to sleep very differently, and he will wake up an entirely different person.

When Yitzchok *Avinu* had *mesirus nefesh* by the *Akeidah*, he was clearly not the same Yitzchok as before the *Akeidah*. He was not the same person anymore, after he utilized *mesirus nefesh*. Using the power of *mesirus nefesh* transforms you into a whole new person. Thus, if we go to sleep at night with the intention of *mesirus nefesh* beforehand, we will wake up in the morning an entirely new person.

Each person, according to his own level, needs to absorb this point, and to feel before he goes to sleep at night that he is giving himself away to Hashem.<sup>125</sup>

May we all receive the strength to do this and merit the future, when all death will be removed from the world, where the dead “will get up and rejoice.”

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<sup>125</sup> For more on this avodah of practicing “mesirus nefesh” before going to sleep at night, see Tefillah #0141 – The Fear of Death and Its Purpose, and Tefillah #0153 – Protecting Our Souls From Harm. For more on the avodah of “sleep”, see Tefillah #0154 – Society and Your Self. On another occasion, the Rav has explained the avodah of “sleep” in the context of analyzing our dreams – see Rosh Chodesh Avodah\_009\_Kislev\_Getting To Know Your Self Through Dreams

## *26 / Teves – How To Get Angry*

### *Studying Every Concept In-Depth*

Whenever we start a *sugya* (discussion), we need to learn it in all its details. Just like a person who is learning to become a doctor learns about all the details of health before he starts his practice, so must we learn about all the details of something when we want to know what it is. When a person tries to understand something, he has to see how it will affect him on a personal level, how it will affect the way he relates to his family and how he relates to the rest of the world.

Everything is made up of many details. For example, we find ten expressions of *tefillah*/prayer. This shows us that *tefillah* has to be to us a carefully built structure – made up of ten floors. All of these floors need to be climbed.

The same goes for every *sugya*. It is not enough just to focus on how something applies to us *l'maaseh* (practically). We are not supposed to simply be looking for advice on things. “An ignoramus cannot be a devout person.” We must build a plan for ourselves.

“*The world is built on kindness.*” First we must always build our plan, and then we can implement it and be affected. But we can’t jump to the “doing” part unless we first study the background of it. Inspiration and ideas are not either enough to be able to know how to act properly. In order to act properly, we need to study the background properly.

We first need to tackle the root information of a concept, in anything we learn.

### *Anger Destroys Our Structure*

Each person is a microcosm of the entire universe. Whenever we build and develop anything, it is a part of our growth. But there is something in particular which can uproot whatever we are building: the trait of anger.

Anger is the destructive force in Creation. *Chazal* say that one who gets angry experiences all kinds of Gehinnom. An angry person also breaks things; anger is the antithesis to building and developing, because it comes and destroys things. Anger can destroy not only the person himself and his family, but it can even destroy the world, similar to how the Flood came and destroyed the world.

### *Different Kinds of Anger*

Every person knows what anger is, but only in general terms. There is much more to anger, however. Just as the body can get sick in many different ways, so are there many different forms of anger. *Chazal* list ten kinds of anger. Therefore, when we attempt to work on uprooting anger, we must know from which source the anger is coming from, and after we know that, we can then attempt to correct the anger.

We must each know the different kinds of anger that exist, and each person has to find his personal kind of anger that he sees manifest in himself most often, and which kinds of anger he does not have. After figuring this out, one can then attempt to begin weakening his unique anger.

The *Gemara*<sup>126</sup> lists six kinds of anger. However, before one tries to figure out which kind of anger he has the most, we need to get to the root of anger.

There are four elements in our soul – earth, water, wind and fire. Rav Chaim Vital writes (in *sefer Shaarei Kedushah*) that each of our *middos* (character traits) stem from one of these four elements. Sadness and laziness are rooted in our element of earth. Desires are rooted in water. Evil speech is rooted in wind, and anger is rooted in – fire. Thus, the root of anger is always the element of fire.

Therefore, if a person has a problem with anger, it shows that his element of fire is getting out of hand. Anger is an internal illness – it comes from a defected element of fire in the soul.

The *Gemara*<sup>127</sup> says that “*the liver gets angry.*” However, the *Gemara* elsewhere says that anger is found in the heart; “*the heart gets enraged.*” We also know that anger is called “*charon af*” – wrath – and *af* means nose. Simply speaking, anger manifests physically in our nose. So where is our anger located? Is it in our liver, in our heart, or in our nose? We need to know where the source of our anger is coming from, because if we don’t know the source of the anger, we won’t be able to treat it.

We are not merely asking an intellectual kind of question here. We are not having a biology discussion on where anger is in the body! Anger is a bad character trait, and it is present in a layer of our soul. We need to locate where it is, and then we can know how to remedy it.

Let us try to understand this.

### *Fire Rises*

Each of the four elements has their own unique nature. Water by nature descends, while fire’s nature is to rise. Anger is rooted in fire, and thus anger is a power to want to “rise.”

When something rises, it starts from a lower point and works its way upwards. If fire/anger rises, then it must be that the anger is beginning from a lower point in the body, and then it rises higher

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126 Shabbos 55a

127 Berachos 61a

and higher. This explains to us the mystery of where the source of anger is. It starts in the liver, and this is the kind of anger of which *Chazal* say, “All kinds of Gehinnom control him.” Gehinnom can be found in a person – when he gets angry! Gehinnom is not simply a place to get punished. It is an existing reality exists even inside a person – and it exists in the liver. Thus, the root of anger begins in the liver.

The anger of the liver, when it continues to burn, rises its way upwards to the heart. It then becomes the “heart’s anger.” If the anger continues, it goes all the way to the nose, and if it is released through the nostrils, where it becomes *charon af* – wrath.

When a person gets angry, *Chazal* say that his entire body feels the anger. The anger acts very much like a fire, which eats everything in its path - destroying the entire equilibrium of the body.

### *Holy Anger: “Charon Af”/Hashem’s Wrath*

*Chazal* also say that Hashem has a moment a day in which He has anger. This is obviously a holy kind of anger, and it is not destructive. We will soon explain what it is. Since we are all created in His image, then we have somewhat of Hashem’s anger in us as well, which is an anger that we can use to fix our own anger.

Hashem’s anger is called *charon af*, “wrath.” Humans also have *charon af*, and therefore, the holy kind of *charon af* can be found in our own *charon af*. Hashem overcomes His own anger each day, and this shows us that there is a holy kind of anger that exists – an anger that is restrained. Hashem has *erech apayim*, the trait of “being slow to anger”, and He uses this to cancel out His wrath toward us.

Hashem’s wrath is called *charon af* – it leaves His nostrils, so to speak. This shows us that we can use *charon af* to fix our own anger. Usually when a person gets angry, the anger will show up in his hands, and when he bangs down with his hand or strikes something in anger, the anger will get released. But the correct way to release anger is to release it from the nose – to use the holy kind of *charon af*. When the anger is coming from the nose and then it settles upon the heart, this is the correct kind of anger. When the anger rises from liver and then to the heart and then gets released from the nostrils, this is the evil kind of anger.

Using the *charon af* of Hashem is the holy kind anger. We need holy anger sometimes – otherwise, we wouldn’t be able to tolerate life. It’s impossible for a person to be perfect on this world when it comes to having good *middos*, and this applies especially when it comes to anger. Even Moshe *Rabbeinu* got angry. Why is anger so hard to avoid?

It is really because anger is an inherent part of our existence. The deep meaning behind this is that our soul is really angry that it is confined to the body. It is written, “There is no righteous person on the earth who does not sin.” Since no one is perfect and everyone has sins, there is always an anger from Hashem upon all Creations, even His greatest tzaddikim. But this is a kind of anger

that is already built into Creation. It is a holy kind of anger – the anger of the Creator. The *Gemara* says that Hashem’s anger only lasts for a moment. This shows us what holy anger is: when the anger is restrained and under control.

Since we are all created in the image of Hashem, our *middos* bear somewhat of a resemblance to the *middos* of Hashem, and therefore, we are able to access a power in our soul to have holy anger.

### *Holy Anger vs. Evil Anger*

When a person goes against Hashem’s will, Hashem is angry with him – but for how long? Only for a moment. This shows us what evil anger is: anger is evil whenever a person feels that something or someone didn’t do like what he wanted – his *ratzon*/will got opposed. When we feel overridden by someone else, we get angry, because our *ratzon* was opposed.

Holy anger is thus when I am upset that something was done against *Hashem*’s will, not against my will. Evil anger is when I am upset that something was done against *my* will.

Anger is always a sign of pain about something. Whenever a person is angry, it is rooted in the fact that something pains him, and he is releasing the pain. The only question is what bothers the person. If it bothers the person that something was done against his own will, then his anger is evil. If it bothers the person that something was done against Hashem’s will, then his anger is good.

### *“Charon Af”: Angry On the Outside, Calm on the Inside*

*Charon af* is the holy kind of anger. When a person is calm even as he’s angry, he resembles then the anger of Hashem, Who remains calm even as He is angry, for His anger only lasts for a moment. It is for one to only show anger on his outside<sup>128</sup>, on his face; but on his inside, he is calm. *Charon af* is thus a balanced kind of anger – to be “angry” only externally, but to remain calm inside.

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128 Editor’s Note: The Alter of Kelm zt”l is known to have said that anger is a mask that one should put on his face when it needs to be worn, and after the situation ceases, the “mask” should be taken off.

## 27 | Eating & Tu B'Shevat

### *Shevat – A Month of Rectifying Our Eating*

The months of Teves and Shevat in the winter are similar to the summer months of Tamuz and Av. Just as Tamuz and Av are termed as “the most difficult months of the year” regarding the summer, due to the tragedies that took place during those months, so are Teves and Shevat “the most difficult months of the winter” in the wintertime.

The month of Teves contains the power of *rogez*, “fury”, whereas the month of Shevat contains the power of *le'itah*, which means “chewing” (or “slow eating”).<sup>129</sup> Thus, in Shevat, there is a concept of eating slowly.

The Vilna Gaon says that the two root evil forces in the soul are anger and desire. Anger is represented by the month of Teves, while the month of Shevat represents the trait of desire [hence the *avodah* of the month of Shevat is to fix the trait of desire, namely, the desire for eating food].

We will try to here to explain, with the help of Hashem, the power in the month of Shevat, which is about the concept of *le'itah*, slow eating.

Eating slowly is called *le'itah*, whereas regular eating is called *achilah*. We find one place in the Torah where the word *le'itah* is mentioned: when Esav demanded that the red lentils be poured down him, he said, “Pour me, now, from this red stuff.”<sup>130</sup> The Torah’s word for “pour me” is *hali-tei-ni*, from the word *le'itah*.

The act of *le'itah* found by Esav was the evil kind of eating, in contrast with the holy power of *le'itah* that is in the month of Shevat for the Jewish people.

The root of this matter is when Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V'Ra* (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil), which contained in it both good and evil. When Adam ate from the tree, a mixture of good and evil entered the world. The Jewish people have the power to sift out the evil from the world and cling to only the good parts. When our eating isn’t sifted out from evil, the eating remains entirely evil, resembling the kind of eating that Esav demanded. When Yaakov bought the firstborn rights from Esav after Esav demanded to be fed, Yaakov was essentially sifting out the good from evil. He sifted out the good of this food, and fed the unwanted bad parts (the *pesoles*) to Esav.

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129 Sefer Yetzirah 5:4

130 Beraishis 25:30

In clearer language, it is sin that caused death to come to the world, and Yaakov gave “death” to Esav by feeding him the lentils. Esav said “*Behold, I am going to die*” and he demanded to be fed the lentils, so when Yaakov fed him the lentils, he essentially fed “death” to him. *Chazal* teach that Esav committed five sins on that day, and Avraham Avinu lost five years of his life. On a deep level, the five years which Avraham lost from his life were due to Esav’s five sins. Death began from Adam’s sin, and Yaakov was sorting out the effects of sin and death, by keeping the good parts of the food and giving the unwanted parts to Esav. Esav’s blessing is “*By your sword you shall live*”, and it was Esav who demanded to be fed. Thus, the act of *lei’itah* of Esav was an act of eating that was entirely evil.

What happens in the process of eating? The teeth transform the food from a hard substance to a soft substance. This represents the idea that eating can sort out the good from the bad, by turning evil (hardness) into good (softness). We can also see this by the fact that in the future, “*The house of Yaakov will be like a fire, and the house of Yosef will be like a burning flame, and the house of Esav will be like straw.*”<sup>131</sup> In the future, the combined holiness of Yaakov and Yosef will destroy the evil of Esav. The holiness of Yaakov and Yosef will turn Esav into straw, meaning that Esav’s hardness will be turned into a soft substance, straw.

### *Eating The Seven Species on Tu B'Shevat Is Like Eating From The “Eitz Chaim” – When We Eat With Presence of Mind, As Opposed To Bodily Desire*

As mentioned, the month of Shevat corresponds to the power of *le’itah*, chewing, or slow eating.<sup>132</sup>

Clearly, on the day of *Tu B'Shevat*, which is called the “Rosh HaShanah of the trees”<sup>133</sup>, where there is a custom to eat the seven species of Eretz Yisrael<sup>134</sup>, it is a day to clarify the power of *le’itah*/slow eating, which personifies the essence of the month of Shevat.

Why is *Tu B'Shevat* called the “*Rosh HaShanah* of trees”? It means the beginning of trees, hence, *Tu B'Shevat* represents a beginning point. The beginning point, the root of each thing, is always good and holy. In every concept we find, there is always a root as well as branches. The root is always good.

A clear example of this is Esav. The head of Esav is buried in the holy Cave of Machpeilah, because Esav’s root, his head, was good. Therefore, Esav’s head deserved to be placed in the holy

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131 Ovadiah 1:18

132 Sefer Yetzirah 5:3

133 Rosh HaShanah 2a

134 Magen Avraham to Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 131

Cave of Machpeilah. When Esav demanded to be fed, the Torah uses the term *le'itah*, when he said, “*Haliteini*”, “Feed me now this red stuff.” Esav’s act of eating, which the Torah uses the term *le'itah* for, would have been a holy act of eating, for *le'itah* is holy at its root. However, the rest of Esav’s bodily senses became involved in this eating. Once the food entered his throat, he lost his presence of mind as he ate, and his eating was no longer holy.

Tu B'Shevat is the “beginning” of the trees, meaning that it is a day which returns something to its beginning state.

What was the ruination of Esav’s demand to be fed quickly, which was the impaired use of *le'itah*? What was essentially wrong with the way he ate? Isn’t it the way of *tzaddikim* to eat in a rush?

It was because it reflected the act of eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*, which was a desire to eat “*for the tree was desirable to the eyes.*”<sup>135</sup> In contrast, holy eating is when one does not eat out of lust for the food, but out of clarity, presence of mind. Eating is impaired when it stems from excitement and lust for the food, from *taavah*. Eating is holy when one remains with clarity of mind as he eats. When the mind is present, one’s beginning point is still present. Esav’s problem was that he didn’t eat with presence of mind, and instead he ate from his body’s desire.

Thus, eating with clarity and presence of mind is like eating from the *Eitz HaChaim*, whereas eating from desire is like eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*.

The head of Esav was buried in the Cave of Machpeilah because when the food first came into his mouth, this was a proper act of *le'itah* eating, and for this reason, his head deserved to be buried with the *Avos*. But after the food entered Esav’s throat, Esav was eating the food out of a desire for it, and this was an impaired act of *le'itah* eating.

Had Adam desired to eat from the *Eitz HaChaim*, he would have been eating from a desire for wisdom, for the *Eitz HaChaim* symbolized the wisdom of the Torah, of which it is said, “*And wisdom sustains her owner.*”<sup>136</sup> But instead, Adam desired to first eat the *Eitz HaDaas*, which was a desire to eat it simply for the sake of eating it and tasting of its pleasure, rather than to desire it for its wisdom.

On our own personal level, eating from the “*Eitz HaDaas*” place in ourselves is when we eat with a physical desire and yearning for the food. Eating from the “*Eitz HaChaim*” place in ourselves, in contrast to this, is when we eat with an awareness and presence of mind. That is how the act of eating becomes holy.

Esav, who said, “*Feed me from that red stuff*”, could have elevated the act of eating, had he eaten using out of a desire for wisdom. Therefore, the “head of Esav” is buried with the *Avos*, because in

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135 Beraishis 3:6

136 Koheles 7:12

potential, Esav's mouth (which was part of his head) could have repaired the act of eating, had he eaten with the right intentions. Instead, it was simply his physical body which ate the food, out of a lust and a desire to simply eat the food. On a deeper level, this was desire for the *pesoles* (unwanted spiritual parts) of the food, as opposed to the good parts of the food, the “wisdom” that can be imbibed from the food – which Esav was not interested in.

### *Our Practical Avodah In Shevat: Eating Slowly, With Presence of Mind*

The holy power in the month of Shevat of *le'itah*, “swallowing/eating”, is accessed on a practical level when a person eats *le'at, le'at* – slowly.

In this month, we have the power to sanctify our eating by separating the good from the bad in this act, using the awareness and presence of our mind, when we eat the seven species of Eretz Yisrael on this day. Eretz Yisrael is called *Eretz HaChaim*, “land of the living”. It contains *chaim*, life. It is the land that Hashem's eyes were on.

When one removes himself from this life, there is [spiritual] death. Egypt was a land of spiritual death, desolate from any holiness. That is the situation of exile. In contrast, Eretz Yisrael was the land of the living, a land of presence of mind.

### *Eating The Seven Species on Tu B'Shvat: Eating With Presence of Mind*

Eating the seven species that the land of Eretz Yisrael is blessed with is, on a deeper level, a kind of eating which involves the presence and awareness of our mind (*mochin*).

The seven species of Eretz Yisrael represents the revelation of the holy mind of a Jew. As a hint, the head contains seven openings in it (the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, and mouth). Each of these places reveal the mind. The eyes reveal the mind's wisdom, for it is written, “*My heart has seen much wisdom*”.<sup>137</sup> The mind is also revealed through the hearing of the ears, the ability of smell of the nose, and through the act of eating of the mouth.

The seven species which we eat on Tu B'Shevat each correspond to the seven openings in the head which reveal the mind's wisdom. Thus, our eating on Tu B'Shevat is a way to eat from the “*Eitz HaChaim*” [within our souls], otherwise known as “eating of the *Eretz HaChaim*, the land of the living.” Of such eating, it is said, “*And you shall eat and you shall be satisfied and you shall bless Hashem your G-d.*”<sup>138</sup>

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137 Koheles 1:16

138 Devarim 6:11

The Hebrew word for “satisfying”, which is “*soveia*”, is from the word “*sheva*”, which is equal to the number 7, corresponding to the 7 species of the land of Eretz Yisrael which we eat on *Tu B'Shevat*.<sup>139</sup>

### ***Repairing The Act of Eating***

When one eats because his body desires to eat, this is like Esav’s act of eating, when he said, “*Feed now of that red stuff.*” This is the impaired use of *le’itah*. When one eats purely out of physical desire for the food, the body takes the food and absorbs it into the blood, and the red color of the blood is symbolic of Esav, who is called *Edom*, which also means “red”. The *pesoles*, the undesired parts of the food, are absorbed by the blood. However, the higher aspect contained in eating does not become absorbed by the blood. It is like the *manna* which fell from Heaven.

When Esav ate and he said, “*Feed me now of that red stuff*”, he used the word “*haliteini*”, “feed me”, which is a quick, rushed eating. In contrast to this, the act of eating becomes holy when one breaks up the “*haliteini*” and instead he eats *le’at le’at*, chewing his food slowly. We rectify the act of *le’itah*, eating, when we leave Egypt in a “haste”, to transform our eating into an eating with presence of mind.

Eating slowly is one part of this rectification process, but it is not yet the complete rectification of the act of eating. The complete level of rectifying the act of eating will be at the complete Redemption, when Hashem’s name of *havayah* will be revealed and complete, when it shall be revealed that “*He was, He is, and He will always be.*”<sup>140</sup>

### ***In Conclusion***

The complete level of rectified eating can be reflected during these days of the month of Shevat: When we eat with presence of mind, as opposed to eating purely out of a physical desire for food.

May we merit to leave unholy eating and to enter into a holy eating, and then we will merit the revelation of “fire that consumes fire”<sup>141</sup>, the revelation of Hashem’s Presence, which is called a “consuming fire”.

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<sup>139</sup> The seven species are: wheat, barely, grape, fig, pomegranate, olive, date

<sup>140</sup> Zecharayah 14:9

<sup>141</sup> Talmud Bavli Yoma 21a

## 28 / Adar - Laughter

### *Sechok – Holy Laughter*

The *halachah* is that “when the month of Adar enters, we increase our happiness”.

Each month of the year has its own unique *avodah* (way of serving the Creator) which is the special spiritual power of that month. The month of Adar is a time of *simchah*/happiness; the holy *sefarim* say that it is the type of *simchah* known as “*sechok*” - “laughter”. Thus, our *avodah* in the month of Adar is to have “*sechok*” – “laughter.”

*Sechok* is not the regular kind of happiness which we identify as simply “*simcha*”; we will explain the difference between them.

The meaning of *simchah* is: “happiness that comes from heart”. We find *simchah* associated with song (*shirah*), which is a really an inner expression of happiness, as *Chazal* say that “There is no song except over wine.” Wine is also associated with happiness, because it is written, “*And wine gladdens the heart of man.*” Thus, *simchah* is an internal kind of happiness, an inner “song”, which is not expressed outwardly.

When a person laughs, though, he is revealing his happiness outward. When a person is happy inside but he doesn’t laugh, he has *simchah*; his happiness remains in his heart, and it isn’t expressed outwardly. When a person laughs, he has an outward expression of happiness – he brings up the happiness from inside his heart to his mouth, where he laughs from. This is “*sechok*” - when our happiness is revealed outward.

*Sechok* is when the happiness is revealed outward, through the mouth. We find this in the statement of *Chazal*, “It is prohibited for one to fill his mouth with *sechok* (laughter) on this world.”<sup>142</sup>

The increase of happiness during the month of Adar is meant for us to reveal the happiness outward from our heart. This is the meaning behind *sechok*/laughter, which is to have an open revelation of our happiness.

What exactly is our power of *sechok*? How do we serve the Creator using laughter? Usually it is only foolish and immature people who we can see laughing all the time. But laughter can also be used for holiness, as we will see.

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142 Berachos 30a

### *Making Fun of Idols and Heresy*

What is the holy kind of laughter? An example of this is what the *Gemara* says that it is permissible to make fun of idol worship.

On a simple level, it appears that when we are supposed to make fun of something, such as scoffing at idol worship and heresy, we are using the same laughter we all know of, but that we are just using it for a holy purpose. But on a deeper understanding, the holy kind of laughter is a whole different kind of laughter than the one we know of.

There is holy laughter, and there is the laughter of fools. In the future, the non-Jews will want to keep the *mitzvah* of *sukkah*, but they will kick it over; Hashem will laugh at them. This is the root of the holy kind of laughter – Hashem Himself laughs.

### *Evil Laughter*

The foolish kind of laughter is a base kind of laughter, in which a person just laughs in order to nullify someone else. This is because “*sechok*” comes from the word *soichek*, “grinding”. When a person grinds something, he is trying to nullify it and erase its existence.

People who laugh at others for the wrong reasons are laughing at them in order to nullify them. This is the evil kind of laughter, which is the laughter of fools. The *Gemara* also states that the “spleen laughs.” The base kind of laughter which is used to hurt other people is rooted in the spleen inside the body; the holy kind of laughter does not come from this.

### *Laughing Upon Seeing The Future In The Present*

What is the depth of holy laughter, *sechok d'kedushah*?

There is a story in the *Gemara*<sup>143</sup> that Rebbi Akiva and his colleagues were walking on the site of the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. Everyone cried, except for Rebbi Akiva, who was laughing! They asked him why he is laughing. He said that he is laughing because just as the prophecy of the destruction was fulfilled, so will the end of the prophecy be fulfilled – that the *Beis HaMikdash* will be rebuilt.

This is actually the holy use of the power of “*sechok*”, laughter. It is laughter upon being content, specifically because a person sees the future good already in the present moment, and he thus has no reason to be sad. Here we see what holy *sechok* is. Laughter/*sechok* can be identified with seeing the future in the present. This causes a reason to laugh – when one sees the future right now, he sees that there’s nothing to be sad about because it will turn out good anyway, so he just laughs.

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143 Makkos 24a

Since Rebbi Akiva saw the how the future was being fulfilled, he was able to be happy now even in the present moment – and thus he laughed. This is really the depth behind the laughter – it is to feel the future in the present, which makes a person content and laugh off the problems.

### *Purim: Redemption Now*

This is also the happiness of Purim and the month of Adar: It is recognize that the future Redemption is already taking place in the present. When the Jewish people thought it was their end, it was a really a continuation of their survival. This is the holy “laughter” of the month of Adar and the celebration of Purim: What we think is the worst thing possible, can actually be our very salvation. Haman tried to destroy us using the evil kind of *sechok*, because he was trying to nullify our existence. On Purim, we use the holy kind of *sechok*, and we laugh at this, at his ruined plans; at how the tables turned on him instead.

The depth behind the happiness in the month of Adar, and on Purim, is that the future good which we will have in the future is really happening *right now*. During the rest of the year, we are within the bounds of time – there is a past, present and future. But in the month of Adar, there is a unique revelation taking place: there is no time! It’s all happening now – the past, the present and future are all contained in the moment of right now.

Purim is essentially a reason to celebrate the future Redemption even now, before the Redemption has actually come. Purim is a taste of the future Redemption, and thus Purim is to essentially experience the future Redemption even now, causing reason for happiness. Now, we can really understand the depth behind *sechok*, the power of holy “laughter” in our soul.

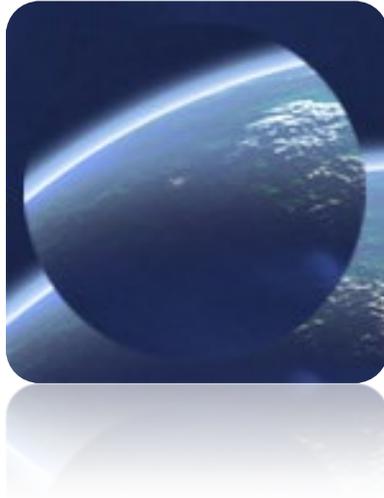
The *Gemara*<sup>144</sup> states that “we are still slaves of Achashveirosh.” What, then, is the whole redemption of Purim, if we were still considered enslaved to Achashveirosh?! The answer to this is the following deep point. On Purim, we experienced a whole different kind of redemption than the redemption we experienced from Egypt. On Pesach, we left Egypt. On Purim, though we left the present moment – even though the redemption wasn’t here yet. We experienced the redemption even in the present. On Purim, there is a redemption taking place in the present moment. Therefore, we have *sechok* on Purim - that even though it appears to us that we are not yet redeemed, we really are. There is a *netzach netzachim*, an eternity, which we can experience right now, in the present moment – on Purim.

### *Drinking On Purim – Outwardly Showing the Happiness*

*Sechok*/laughter is for a person to become so elated that he wants to express the happiness outward. When a person laughs, he is so happy to the point that he reveals it outward. This is the happiness we reach on Purim - *sechok*, an open kind of happiness, which we express.

On Purim, we accepted the Torah again, and this time it was willingly. As the Sages say, “They kept and accepted what they already accepted.” Purim is a time to make a new commitment to the Torah, to accept it out of love – which is an example of an outward expression of our happiness.

A very famous aspect of Purim is that we are commanded to get drunk on Purim, until the point of “*ad d’lo yoda*” - until one does not have any *da’as* anymore. The question that is asked on this is: How do we come to a new acceptance of Torah on Purim, if we are drunk and we have no *da’as*? The answer is that because we are so happy, we want to express it outwardly, in the form of *sechok*. This is why *Chazal* required that one drink on Purim. It is so that we should openly express our happiness, and reveal it outward. And in this way, by outwardly revealing our happiness, we can reach a new acceptance of the Torah on Purim.



*Part Three:  
Mazal  
of the  
Month*

## *29 / Nissan – The Lamb (Part One)*

### *Sanctifying The New Months In Our Times*

“*The head of the months* [Roshei Chodashim], *to Your nation, You gave.*” The concept of *Rosh Chodesh* came into fruition when we left Egypt, whereupon we received the commandment of *Rosh Chodesh* [to sanctify the new month]. The actual names of the months [Nissan, Iyar, etc.] were not formulated until the times of Ezra, but the concept of the 12 months of *Rosh Chodesh* itself was given to us when we left Egypt.

The month of Nissan is called “*head of the months, the first unto you*” – it is the month in which the redemption from Egypt took place. When we left Egypt and we were given the *mitzvah* to sanctify the month, this was not just another detail we received; it formed the roots of the entire structure of the Jewish people.

Nowadays, we no longer have the *mitzvah* of sanctifying the new month. We don’t have a *Beis Din* to sanctify the new month, and we don’t have the ways with which the appearance of the new moon can be recognized, which our Sages established, as the *Mishnah* records. Today, it seems that sanctifying the new month is no longer relevant to us. Is sanctifying the new month still of relevance to us, today? [We will explain that it does].

### *The Twelve Tribes Always Remain*

In the beginning of sefer *Shemos*, the Torah records all of the names of Yaakov Avinu’s descendants who went down to Egypt, which includes the 12 *shevatim* (tribes) and all of their families. When the Jewish people entered Egypt, there were 12 tribes, and when we emerged from Egypt with the exodus, the 12 tribes were still intact. The lesson that this implies is, that no matter how much we go through exile, our 12 tribes always remain.

This is the depth of the redemption from exodus, and this is the inner meaning of the “great possessions” which we left Egypt with. When we left Egypt, we were given the *mitzvah* of *Rosh Chodesh*, and the Torah calls it a “*time of atonement for all their offspring.*” – this was our “great possessions” we left with: *Rosh Chodesh*, the 12 months of the year, which are parallel to each of the 12 tribes, are an atonement for us, for all the generations to come (There are many interpretations of the meaning of “great possessions” that we left Egypt with, but this is one of them).

The 12 tribes are present both in time, soul, and place. They are manifest in time, in *Rosh Chodesh*, the 12 months of the year. And the 12 tribes also exist in the sphere of our own soul. They

also manifest in “place” with the 12 allotted portions of Eretz Yisrael, which are each given to one of the tribes.

The Gemara<sup>145</sup> states that we have a tradition, that never will any one of the tribes be destroyed.” All of the 12 tribes of the Jewish people, without exception, will survive exile. Just as there is no Jewish soul can never be extinguished, so is it impossible for one of the tribes to ever disappear. Of course, a member of a tribe can die, but the tribe as a whole will always survive. So the 12 tribes, which manifest in time, can never cease.

Being that this is so, the 12 tribes form the essence of the structure of the Jewish people. They manifest in the soul as 12 tribes, and they manifest in time as the 12 months of the year – *Rosh Chodesh*.

### *The Mazalos (Constellations) And How They Affect Time*

Time is affected by the 12 months of the year, but besides for this, there is another factor that contributes to time: the heavenly, celestial bodies. These include four factors: the sun, the moon, the stars, and the *mazalos* (the constellations).

The Jewish people are affected by two different systems: the system of the 12 tribes, which are present in time and in soul, as well as by the system of the “7 shepherds” [Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov, Yosef, Moshe, Aharon, and Dovid].

How do they exist in time? The 7 shepherds in time are represented by 7 stars, which are called *kochvei leches* (“traveling stars”); this system begins from the *mazal* (constellation) known as “*maadin\dam*” (red\blood)<sup>146</sup>, and so forth. The other system affecting Creation is the system of the 12 tribes, represented by 12 *mazalos* (constellations) that are in each of the 12 months. To give a few examples, the *mazal* of the month of Nissan is the lamb; the *mazal* of the month of Iyar is the bull, and so forth.

### *Mazal In The Gemara and In Halacha*

Of what relevance do the *mazalos* have to *Halacha*? In the Gemara, there is a dispute if there Jews are subject to *mazal* or not. But do we find *mazal* actually affecting us nowadays, in *Halacha*? We can find many places where *mazal* does affect *Halachah*. It is brought in the Gemara, as well as in *Shulchan Aruch*, that it is better for a Jew to go to court against a non-Jew during the month of Adar, when the *mazal* for the Jewish people is at its best, as opposed to the month of Av, where our *mazal* is at its lowest.

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145in Tractate Bava Basra

146 Editor’s Note: In terms of the Zodiac, Maadin is known as “Mars”

Additionally, the Gemara<sup>147</sup> says that if an ox gores a person, it is contributed to the person's *mazal*. This is referring specifically to a Jew, because the Gemara says that one is liable to pay for damages only when his ox gores the ox of a Jew, not the ox of a non-Jew.

### *'Mazal' As It Applies To The Jew's Soul*

With regards to our own souls, how is *mazal* manifest? There are several terminologies of *mazal* found throughout the writings of our Sages. Rashi<sup>148</sup> says that *mazal* is that “a person is *bar daas* (capable of knowledge) and therefore he knows how to protect himself.”

This needs understanding. What does *mazal* have to do with a person's *daas*? If anything, it should be the opposite; if one knows how to take care of himself, then if he was harmed, it must be because of his bad *mazal*! And if he doesn't, then it's due to his own negligence, not to his *mazal*! This is perplexing. However, as we will explain, this is only a question that stems from a superficial lens. In reality, *mazal* is related to *daas*.

Elsewhere, the Gemara states that if one has a fear which he can't explain, it is coming from his *mazal*, which sees the fearful event of the future and thus causes a person to become anxious. *Rashi* explains that it is an angel who hovers above the person, which shows the person the fear.

In another place, the Gemara<sup>149</sup> states that when the Jewish people stood at Har Sinai, the impurity (*zuhama*) of the Snake that had been on mankind since the sin ceased. The Gemara asks, what about converts? The Gemara answers that with converts, their *mazal* was present at Har Sinai. We can imply from this as follows. The converts were not present at Sinai, but their *mazal* was. Therefore, the entire imprint from Sinai that is on a convert was experienced through the *mazal* of the convert. But the original souls of the Jewish people who stood at Sinai had not only their *mazal* present there, but they were given a special commandment then: “*Serve G-d, on this mountain.*” [So the original souls of the Jewish people received a higher experience of Sinai, besides for what their *mazal* experienced; whereas the converts only received an experience of Sinai through *mazal* alone.]

### *The Two Aspects of 'Mazal'*

What does it mean that the *mazal* of converts was present at Har Sinai? To understand this, in general, we need to know what the term “*mazal*” is, in the language of the Torah.

(Furthermore, when Gad was born to Yaakov Avinu, Rashi states, “*Ba gad, ba mazal,*” – “Gad comes, *mazal* comes.”)

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147 Bava Kamma 2b

148 ibid

149 Shabbos 156a

The matter of *mazal* consists of two parts: (1) *Hashpaah* (emanation), from the word *shefa* (sustenance); being that the word *mazal* can mean “*nozal*”, to “flow”, the term *mazal* implies a ‘flow’ of Heavenly sustenance – *shefa*. (2) *Taharah* (purity).

The first aspect, *hashpaah*, is reflecting one of Hashem’s 13 Attributes of Mercy : “*notzar chesed l’olafim*,” “He lets kindness flow for thousands [of generations]. The second aspect, *taharah*, is reflecting another of the Attributes of Mercy: “*V’nakei*,” “And He cleanses.”

The Gemara says that when the Jewish people stood by Har Sinai, the spirit of impurity that had entered us from the Snake went away. This cleansing process only took place upon the Jewish people, not with gentiles, so the gentiles still remain affected by the impurity of the Snake. As for converts, the Gemara says that since their *mazal* was present at Sinai, the impurity left them. What this really implies is that their *mazal* allowed them to receive the “*taharah*” aspect of *mazal*; being at Sinai removed the impurity of the Snake upon them, a connotation of being “cleansed”, which alludes to the “*V’nakei*” aspect in *mazal*. Those words are explicit in the words of our Sages.

Now we can ask, though: Is there a difference between the souls of the Jewish people, and the souls of converts, being that that they were all cleansed from impurity at Sinai?

According to what we have explained, there is a difference. The converts only received the “*taharah*” aspect of *mazal*, which is “*V’nakei*” – to be cleansed of impurity. In that sense, the souls of converts share the same *mazal* as the souls of all other Jews. But the converts never received the “*hashpaah*” aspect of *mazal*, which is called “*Notzar Chesed L’Alafim*.” That *mazal* was given only to the original souls of the Jewish people.

We can now understand the following. In the Gemara, where there is a dispute if the Jewish people are subject to *mazal* or not, the entire issue is, do the Jewish people possess higher *mazal* than that of the other nations? Are the Jewish people limited to the *mazal* of *taharah*, or do they also possess a higher *mazal* (*hashpaah*)? That is the entire issue of the Gemara.

Thus, *mazal* is not simply a superficial term of ‘*mazal*’ which people call it as. In terms of the Torah, the Jewish people possess two kinds of *mazal*: (1) *hashpaah* and (2) *taharah*.

### *Zuhama (Impurity): Zilzul (Cheapening of Holiness)*

*Mazal* is from the word *mezalzel*, to cheapen. Being that *mazal* is essentially about *taharah* – being cleansed from impurity – it will mean that *mazal* cleanses us from *zilzul* (cheapening). When the Snake coaxed Chavah to eat from the tree and sin, it placed a spirit of impurity (*zuhama*) upon her. What exactly is this *zuhama* that entered mankind since the sin? It is defined as the nature to be *mezalzel* – to cheapen holiness.

When the Jewish people stood at Sinai, they were cleansed from the *zuhama* placed on mankind that came from the Snake: they were purified from *zilzul*. And its place, their holy *mazal* was revealed.

“*V’nakei*” is thus the trait of Hashem which refers to cleansing the Jewish people from impurities placed upon them by outer forces. It essentially cleanses us from the *zuhama* of the Snake, which is the evil habit of *zilzul*. The soul needs to be cleansed from *zilzul*. What does a person tend to be *mezalzel* in? *Chazal* say that that there are “matters which stand at the exalted heights of the world, yet people are *mezalzel* in them”. It is those matters of *zilzul* which we need to be cleansed from.

This is the depth of the festival of Pesach, in which we are cleansed from sin. The *mitzvah* of *Korbon Pesach* has a special *halachah* when carried out by converts: it had to be cleansed from any *chometz*. The *mitzvah* to get rid of *chometz* on Pesach, on its deeper level, is to cleanse ourselves from the *yetzer hora*, who is called the ‘yeast in the sourdough.’ It is essentially meant to cleanse us from *zuhama*.

### *The Mazal of Nissan: “T’leh” – The Lamb*

The month of Nissan, “the head of the months”, is the root of the other months; therefore, its *mazal* is the root of the other *mazalos*.

The *mazal* of the month of Nissan is called ‘*t’leh*’ (טלה), the lamb, which is also called ‘*seh*,’ the calf, the animal used for the *korbon pesach* (paschal sacrifice); it is called *g’di* (the goat). It is written, “*Pull, and take for you*” – the Sages expound this to mean, “Pull away your hands from idol worship, and take a *korbon pesach*”.

The depth of this matter is as follows. The *mazal* of Nissan, which is *t’leh* (טלה), (the lamb), is the opposite of the word לט, *lat*, “curse.” When a person sins, he causes ruination to himself. When man sinned, he ruined the earth. *T’leh* טלה (or the *korbon pesach*) contains the letters ט and ל, which alludes to the ל"ט מלאכות (the 39 forms of forbidden labor on Shabbos); for *melachah* (labor) is a curse placed upon mankind. When the *Bnei Yisrael* left Egypt, they rectified the sin of Adam, who was ruined through the curse of *melachah* (or ‘39 *melachos*’) placed upon him. The exodus from Egypt revealed the aspect of “*V’nakei*”, the cleansing and purification process of the Jewish people, which cleanses mankind from the curse and ruination that was placed upon us from the sin. This was the secret behind the *t’leh* טלה (otherwise known as the *korbon pesach*) – the opposite of the state of being “cursed” (לט).

The word *t’leh* טלה is also related to the word טל *tal*, the dew. The dew has a special nature of transforming curse into blessing. In the future, the revival of the dead will happen through dew, the *tal techias hameisim*, which will transform the ruined into the blessed.

Thus, the exodus of Egypt cleansed our souls. When Adam sinned, mankind fell into a cursed level, to the “yeast in the sourdough” [the evil inclination], the *zuhama* (spirit of impurity) of the Snake. This was what created a need for the subjugation to Egypt: to cleanse us from the cursed state of mankind, from the *zuhama* of the Snake, and to return us to the perfect state of Adam before the sin. The exodus from Egypt began the purification process, and when Hashem said “*Serve G-d, on this mountain*”, this was the complete level of the rectification.

### *Nissan: The Month of Renewal*

The purification process of the Jewish begins, though, with the month of Nissan. The month of Nissan is called “*Hachodesh hazeh lachem*” (This month shall be to you) – it represents the power of *chiddush* (renewal), from the word “*chodesh*” (month).

What is the power of *chiddush*\renewal that is present in the month of Nissan? When Adam sinned, Creation entered a ruined state, it became *lat*\cursed, and in the month of Nissan, we have the power to be cleansed from that cursed state which mankind fell into ever since the sin of Adam.

This is the secret behind the concept of *teshuvah* (repentance), in which a person becomes like a ‘*berya chadashah*’, a new being; the Rambam says that when a person does *teshuvah*, he must view himself as a totally new person, who is not the same person as before.

The power that we have to be cleansed from sin, “*V’nakei*”, to become a new being, is reminiscent of a convert, who is considered to be like a child born anew. When we left Egypt, we gained the status of being a like a newborn child; we became entirely new. And when we stood at Sinai, we were like converts. A newborn child and a conversion to Judaism are both examples of being born anew.

Thus, the month of Nissan, represented by the *mazal* of *t’leh* (lamb), bears the power of renewal to the Jewish people, to cleanse us from the sins of before and to make us completely new. It is the power to begin again anew.

On one hand, there is a continuation in Creation, of the same reality. From that perspective alone, *teshuvah* is not possible. But Hashem gave us the power of *chiddush*, to renew ourselves – to be cleansed from all previous damage.

Nissan is called the ‘head of the months’, the month that is renewal and cleanses us from the past. How does the *t’leh*\lamb [which is the *mazal* of Nissan] cleanse us off from sin? It is through the soul’s power of *chiddush* (renewal), which is alluded to in the words, “*Hachodesh hazeh lachem.*”

When Moshe Rabbeinu was taught about the *mitzvah* of *kiddush hachodesh* (sanctifying the new month), he found it to be difficult. The depth of this is because it was the *mitzvah* about Rosh Chodesh, which is a beginning, and “all beginning are hard”, *Chazal* teach. But the difficulty of the beginning can be mitigated when a person makes sure to begin completely anew.

### *The Depth of Bechirah: Choosing To Begin Anew*

Earlier we brought from the Gemara that man has *mazal*, which *Rashi* defines as being a “*bar daas*”. This refers to man’s power of *bechirah* (free will) – man can choose between good and evil, but on a deeper level, man can choose to begin from a new start, and that is the depth of he we use our *bechirah*. The *Sforno* writes that our *bechirah* is to choose to imitate Hashem’s ways, just as Hashem ‘chooses’, so to speak, to act kind and compassionate.

How does Hashem ‘choose’? He chooses to renew His creation every day. As it written, “*He renews, in His goodness, the act of Creation, every day.*” This is the “*bechirah*” which Hashem chooses, so to speak – He chooses to utilize His *daas*, to begin everything anew each moment.

### *Renewal Is Exclusive To The Jew’s Soul*

This is the depth of the exodus from Egypt: to separate from the previous situation, and to begin from new. When we left Egypt, we were born as a nation, and we received the power from then onward to be able to totally begin again anew, no matter what previous situation we are in.

The nations of the world begin from the new year, but they do not have the power of a new month. Therefore, a gentile does not possess the power of renewal in his soul. Only through conversion, can a gentile ever gain the power to become renewed – and the depth of this is, because only a Jew has the power of renewal.

### *Renewal and Continuation*

There are really two sides to *mazal*. So far, we have explained ‘one side of the coin’: the power of renewal. But there is ‘another side to the coin’: the fact that we descend from the *Avos* (our forefathers), for “the merit of our *Avos* did not cease”. In that sense, we are a continuation of our great past, of the *Avos*. This is the opposite power of renewal: it is the power to continue the past.

So there are really two opposite powers we possess: the power of renewal, to change our situation – and the power of continuation, which is to continue the same situation as before. These two concepts contradict each other, but our soul is built from these two contradictory forces.

[We need both of these powers, renewal and continuation].

If we would only have the power of renewal, a person could come to deny the reality of sin, *chas v’shalom*, by always believing that he can be renew himself after he sins, and he loses his concept of consequence for sin.

Yet, if a person were to only believe in his power of continuation of the *Avos*, and he is unaware of his power of renewal, such a mindset is imprisoning to the soul; if he were to be in Egypt, he would believe that he can never leave it, *chas v’shalom*, because it is an exile decreed from the times of the *Avos*, and there is no way out, no way to be renewed...

Renewal (*chiddush*) is the power that we have which can help us rise from all past failure and sin. However, it needs to be balanced with its opposite power, the power of continuation (*hamshachah*), in order for it to be properly used and not taken overdone. Only if we have already developed the power to continue from the past, can we know how to use the power of renewal properly.

### ***Two Levels of Repentance: Renewal, and Renewal With Continuation***

Based on the above, we can understand a deeper difference between two levels of *teshuvah* (repentance): *teshuvah m'yirah*, repenting out of fear, and *teshuvah m'ahavah*, repenting out of love.

The Gemara says that when a person does *teshuvah m'yirah*, although his sins are forgiven, the sins do not become transformed into merits; but with *teshuvah m'ahavah*, not only is he forgiven, but even his sins become transformed into merits. The understanding of this is that with *teshuvah m'yirah*, a person wants to disconnect from his past sins and move on; he gains the ability of renewal, but he is missing the concept of continuation of the past. But with *teshuvah m'ahavah*, the person is not only forging a new beginning; he is still connected to the past and continues it. Thus, his sins become transformed into merits for him.

### *The Inner Mazal: "Notzar Chesed L'Alafim"*

Thus, there are two aspects of *mazal* in every Jew. There is the aspect of "Notzar Chesed L'Alafim" (or *hashpaah\hamshachah*), and there is the aspect of "V'nakei" (*tabarah*).

The power of *V'nakei\tabarah* is essentially the power of *chiddush*\renewal, to be cleansed and to become new, disconnecting from the past situation. But there is a power even deeper than this: along with becoming renewed, a person also needs to acknowledge his past [the *Avos* that he comes from]. This is the more inner kind of *mazal* [which, as it was explained earlier, is only for the original souls of the Jewish people, and not converts]: "Notzar Chesed L'Alafim". The concept of *Notzar Chesed L'Alafim* implies that Hashem remembers the merits of previous generations, for thousands of generations to come.

If you think about it, we haven't even gone through thousands of generations yet, and this is not even possible within the allotted time span for Creation. So what does it mean that Hashem remembers the merits of our *Avos*, for thousands of generations to come? It means that there is a constant continuation of those merits.

### *The Balance Between Continuation and Renewal*

Nissan is called, "*HaChodesh Hazev lachem*" ("This month shall be to you"), from the word *chiddush*\renewal, which hints to the renewal contained in it. But it is also called "*Rishon hu lachem, l'chol chodshei hashanah*" ("The first it shall be to you, for all the months of the year") – the *possuk* also mentions that Nissan contains a "*shanah*" (year) aspect besides for its "*choidesh*" (month) aspect. The '*shanah*' aspect mentioned in the *possuk* alludes to the other power of the month of Nissan: continuation of the past. It is essentially the power to return to a previous situation.

Thus, we need [a balance of these] two opposite abilities, which are both present in the month of Nissan: the power of renewal, and the power to return to the past.

Understandably, the powers of renewal and continuation (returning to the past) are opposite concepts of each other, and they are in contradiction. If someone is not a *bar daas*, he does not know

how to contain these two opposites. One who possesses *daas*, though, understands the secret of incorporating opposing and contradicting abilities within himself.

So on one hand, we must be able to renew ourselves, which is to change ourselves. On the other hand, we need to be able to attach ourselves with the Reality that never changes. When we have these two abilities together and they are in proper balance of each other, this is the perfection of a Jew's soul.

The *mazal* of Nissan is the *t'leh* (the lamb), which symbolizes the renewal, the ability to disconnect from the past, for as we explained, *t'leh* is related to the word *tal*, the dew, which symbolizes new beginnings; in the future, the dew will revive the dead.

On the other hand, as we explained, Nissan also contains a power that is the opposite of renewal: the power to continue the past, the same-old reality that never changes. This is also known as *sichah*, talking, the ability that is also associated with the month of Nissan<sup>150</sup>. *Sichah* is when a person talks simply about what he enjoys, and he can keep talking about it, continuing his conversation more and more, because he is enjoying the conversation so much.

The non-changing aspect of the soul is a deeper power than our power of renewal. In the non-changing aspect of our soul, we connect to the same-old reality that never changes; to the timeless aspect known as “*Ask your fathers, and they will say to you; you elders, and they will tell you*”. This is what lies behind the concept of “*Notzar Chessed L'Alafim*”, the inner aspect of *mazal*; it is the fact that we received a tradition passed down from our forefathers.

But as we explained, this alone will not suffice. Although we must continue the great past of our *Avos*, which is our power to be connected to the past, we also need the power of renewal, so that we can become a whole new being, and leave past failures behind.

### *In Conclusion*

May we merit from Hashem to connect to *havayah*, to the unchanging dimension of reality [which will be fully revealed in the future], along with the renewal [of the future] in which Hashem will renew His world, with the coming of the complete redemption; may it come speedily. Amen.

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150 For more on “sichah” in the month of Nissan, see *Essence of Rosh Chodesh\_01\_Nissan\_Speech and Prayer* as well as *Rosh Chodesh Avodah\_01\_Nissan\_Speech*

## *30 / Iyar – The Bull*

### *The Mazal of Iyar – ‘Bull’*

The *mazal* (astrological sign) of the month of *Iyar* is called “*shor*”, the bull (or ox).

The *Gemara*<sup>151</sup> says that there are two kinds of bulls (or oxen). One kind of bull\ox is a day-old ox, which is called “*shor ben yomo*”, and the other kind of bull is “*eigel v’naaseh shor*”, when a calf has matured into a fully grown ox. So there is “*shor*”, and there is “*eigel v’naaseh shor*”.

The *Vilna Gaon* says that the purpose of the exodus was to arrive at Sinai, where Hashem said, “*Serve G-d at this mountain*” – the giving of the Torah. After the giving of the Torah, came the sin with the *Eigel*, (the Golden Calf). The sin of ‘serving’ the Golden Calf caused the Jewish people to fall from their level of ‘serving’ Hashem at the mount of Sinai, and it plunged them into ruination ever since then. Ever since that sin, we lost the true level we were at when we received the Torah at Sinai.

The *Vilna Gaon* writes that in the month of *Iyar*, the *mazal* of *Iyar* which is the bull hints to the breach which took place because of a bull. This is referring to the sin with the Golden Calf, which broke our great level of spirituality and made us fall from our exalted level. The *mazal* of the month of *Iyar* is “*shor*”, the bull\ox, a hint to the sin with the golden calf.

Every concept exists both in the side of holiness as well as in the side of evil. Let us try to understand what the holy side to “*shor*” is, and what its evil side is, and then we can draw these matters closer to our soul, so that we can take out the practical lesson to be learned from all of this.

### *The Depth Behind “Shor”\The Bull*

Ever since the sin with the Golden Calf, our exalted state was ruined. At the giving of the Torah, we reached perfection, and after the sin with the Golden Calf, we fell from that perfected level. This all came as a result from the *eigel*, which was a *shor*, a young bull.

In Aramaic, ‘*shor*’ (שור) is called ‘*tura*’ (תורה) - which is the opposite of the word “Torah” (תורה). Thus, *shor\tura* represents the force of evil that fights the level of perfection we reached when we received the Torah. Ever since then, we fell from the level of Torah to ‘*tura*’, to the level of ‘*shor*’; the

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151 Bava Kamma 65b

second set of *Luchos*<sup>152</sup>, which were not on the same level as the first step of *Luchos*. The *shor* of the *eigel* brought us down from the level of receiving the Torah, to a lower level of existence.

The *Gemara*<sup>153</sup> says that there are two kinds of bulls. One kind of bull is a “*shor tam*”, a “tame” bull, and a “*shor muad*”, a wild bull. A *shor tam* gores occasionally, and a *shor muad* gores on an established basis. One is obligated to guard his *shor muad* so that it does not gore, because it has a tendency to gore; one is not obligated to watch his *shor tam*, because there is no reason to assume it will gore. What is the depth behind the concepts of *shor tam* and *shor muad*?

Yaakov Avinu was called an “*ish tam*” (wholesome man), which parallels the concept of the “*shor tam*”. And in the blessings of Yaakov Avinu, it is Yosef who is compared to the *shor* (ox). The *Gemara* derives the *halachah* of *shor muad* from the blessing of Yaakov Avinu that describes Yosef, so Yosef represents a “holy” kind of “*shor muad*”.

Thus, we have two kinds of holy manifestations of *shor* (bull\ox\ox): Yaakov parallels the holy kind of “*shor tam*” (a tame bull, who does not usually gore) and Yosef parallels the holy kind of “*shor muad*” (wild bull). The normal *shor*\ox, or the “*shor tam*”, is for the most part docile, so it does not engage in battle. If it does harm someone, the owner must pay half the damage, but normally, it does not attack. The bull which engages in battle is the *shor muad*, the wild bull, which is likely to gore another and which must be watched.

Yosef represents the *shor muad* in the side of holiness, for Yosef will wage war with the force of Esav in the future. The evil “*shor muad*” is Esav, and in the future, this evil *shor muad* will be fought through the holy *shor muad*, Yosef. Of the future it is written, “*the house of Yaakov will be like a fire, and the house of Yosef will be like a flame, which will burn Esav like straw.*” The power of Yaakov and Yosef together will wage war against the evil wild bull, the wicked Esav, in the future. Bull will be pitted against bull, and we will see who will win. The holy “bull” is Yaakov, who bore Yosef; the evil “bull” is Esav. This is the outline of the concept. Now we will try to understand its implications.

### *The Bull and The Sense of Sight*

The *shor* (bull\ox\ox) is linked with the concept of sight. The word “*shor*” is rooted in the verse “*V'lo yashurenu*”, “And you shall not see”, thus the term “*shor*” is linked with sight. The word “*shurah*”, which means “row”, is related to the word *shor*; in the laws of mourning, the mourners stand amidst a *shurah* (row) right after burial [so that they can be easily seen and deciphered as mourners]. The word “*shor*” is called “*tura*” in Aramaic, and in the Torah’s language, “*tura*” comes from the word “*tor*” (as in the “*tor*” of Queen Esther), which means “order”, which is also another meaning of the word “*shurah*”.

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152 The Tablets

153 Bava Kamma 2b

### *Evil Began With The Sense of Sight*

The root of all *nisyonos* (tribulations) on this world stem from the eyes. Chavah laid eyes on the *Eitz HaDaas* and desired it, and ever since then, the tribulations of mankind began.

The word “*tura*” (תורה) related to the word “*lasur*” (לתור) to “spy”, which is written concerning the Spies, when they wanted to spy the Land and see if it was safe to dwell in. [Thus, *tura\shor* is about seeing, implying the idea of checking and examining, because there is something that seems uncertain]

Earlier, we explained that after the exalted level we were on at the time of the giving of the Torah, when we fell to the sin with the golden calf, we fell because of a “bull” (the calf); it caused us to fall into the level of the “bull”. [Now we will elaborate more on this point].

When we uttered the words “*Naaseh V’Nishmah*” (“We will do, and we will hear”), before we accepted the Torah, we did so without any questioning; we did not examine if it was good or not for us to accept the Torah, because we were on a completely earnest level of having *emunah* in Hashem and in what He was giving us. Unlike the logic of the nations of the world, who considered us foolish for rushing to accept the Torah without first questioning what it was, we instead trusted in the Creator, and we believed wholeheartedly that the Torah was entirely good for us to receive; we had absolute *emunah* that our Giver was giving us something completely good, and we did not question it. It reflected the statement of *Chazal*, “A bride who has beautiful eyes, does not need to be checked.”

But when we fell with the sin of the golden calf, we fell from the “Torah” to *tura*, to the “bull”, represented by the golden calf. We fell to the level of *shor\tura\bull* – a level in which we need to spy on the land of Eretz Yisrael in order to see if it was safe or not; a level in which we lost our earnest level of *emunah*, which caused us to question things and to check things out. Had the Jewish people never sinned with the golden calf, they would have gone straight into Eretz Yisrael, and there would have been no episode of the Spies that were sent into the land to check it out.

At the level of the giving of the Torah, we first said “*Naaseh*” before “*Nishmah*”, because we did not feel a need to question the authenticity of what we were receiving. We knew, with *emunah*, that it was good for us, because we trusted the One who was giving to us. But when the nation grew afraid that Moshe wasn’t returning from Heaven, they lost that *emunah*, and they fell from the perfected level they were at upon receiving the Torah. They fell from the level of total *emunah* in their Giver, and ever since then, there is a nature in people to question and examine things. That was the depth of their spiritual descent.

Hashem says, “*Follow me into the desert.*” When we went out of Egypt to go receive the Torah, we did so with total *emunah* in Hashem. That was the level we needed to be on, in order to receive the Torah. When we fell from that level – due to the sin with the golden calf, a “bull” that caused us so much spiritual defilement – we fell into the level of the “bull”, where we need to examine anything until we can trust it. Ever since then, everything needs to be examined and checked, before we can

trust in it. We lost the level of total *emunah* in our Giver, and that was the depth of the ruination that resulted from the sin with the golden calf.

When one wants to examine something, he uses his eyes. He can continue to feel it with his hands, but he begins to examine something by first seeing it, with his eyes. Chavah first saw the *Eitz HaDaas*, and then she touched it and then she tasted it. In other words, she first examined it with her eyes, in order to think about what it was, and after that she wondered if she should eat it or not. But it all began with her eyes.

Everything that came after that was all but a result of first laying her eyes upon it. The entire sin began with the eyes. Hashem commanded not to eat the *Eitz HaDaas*. Why did she feel a need to check what the *Eitz HaDaas* was? It was because she saw it and laid eyes upon it. When she saw it, she felt a need to check it out, and then she thought about it more, which led her to the rest of the act.

But this was because she fell from her level of complete *emunah* in Hashem. When there is complete *emunah* in Hashem, a person doesn't feel a need to examine anything. It is clear to a person that if Hashem said "Do not eat it", then that is what must be done, and there is no need to question why or why not. The root of all sin therefore began with a need to examine something, to see if it's good or not, instead of relying on Hashem's word that it is indeed not good.

### *"Zuhama" – The Serpent's Impurity That Entered Man After The Sin*

The Gemara says that when the people stood at Har Sinai, the spirit of impurity (*zuhama*) that the Serpent had injected into mankind was now removed. What was this "*zuhama*" that the Serpent had brought upon mankind, which was now being removed?

The *zuhama* was essentially the loss of absolute *emunah* in Hashem, and the subsequent need that man feels to question and examine something, because he doesn't trust enough in Hashem. That was the *zuhama* which the Serpent injected into Chavah. When the Serpent convinced Chavah to eat from the tree, it ruined her pure thinking patterns, and from that moment onward, Chavah began questioning and examining things, and that is what led her to the sin.

This *zuhama* was removed from mankind when we stood at Har Sinai. How did it leave us? It left us when we said "*Naaseh V'Nishmah*", which caused us to return, to the original absolute *emunah* we had in our Giver, when we felt no need to examine anything.

The Jewish people are compared to the bride, and Hashem is compared to the groom, Who took her into marriage, with the Torah at Har Sinai, which was our betrothal to Hashem. We were that "*bride with beautiful eyes*" – we felt no need to examine anything, because we completely trusted in Hashem; unlike Chavah, who "saw" the *Eitz HaDaas* with her eyes and then thought about it, questioned the word of Hashem, and examined what it was. At Har Sinai, we returned to the original perspective, that nothing needs to be examined and checked.

### *The Depth Behind The Concept of The “Tame Ox”*

This is the depth behind the concept of “*shor tam*”, the tame ox. What does the *shor tam* represent? The surface definition of the *shor tam* is that it does not gore more than three times. But why is it called “*shor tam*”?

Yaakov Avinu is called “*ish tam*” (wholesome man), and “*tam*” is from the word “*temimus*” (earnestness); how can a *shor tam* be called a “*tam*” (wholesome) like Yaakov Avinu, just because it hasn’t gored three times? Where is its *temimus*?

The answer lies in the following. The Gemara discusses a kind of ox which only becomes wild on certain occasions; for example, there is a kind of ox which will only gore when it is in certain places, and then it will be wild, so it will need to be watched in those places. Why would an ox act wild only in certain places, and not in other places? If it’s wild, shouldn’t it behave like this wherever it is? It is because when an ox gores, it only gores based upon what it sees.

There are three primary examples in the Gemara of how an ox inflicts damage: through goring (*keren*\its horn); through eating (*shein*\its tooth); and through trampling (*rege*\its foot). The Gemara says that when it eats things, it is doing so out of a desire for pleasure, and when it tramples things, it is doing so because something is getting in its way. But when it gores, it is doing so with “intention to do damage”. What is the depth of this matter, that an ox gores with “intention to do damage”?

When a tame ox gores, it is not goring because it saw something. When it gores, it had no agendas; it had *temimus*. But when a wild ox gores, it gores because it saw something, and then it wanted to do damage.

The *zuhama* began with the Serpent, and the Serpent was the ultimate creature that had “intention to do damage” to man. It wanted to kill Adam and take Chavah for itself, as *Chazal* teach. [Soon it will be explained how the Serpent is therefore like a “wild ox” that gores intentionally, and what the root of its evil is].

We are taught that there is a concept of a “good eye” and an “evil eye”, and this concept is discussed in *Chazal* in a number of places, with various applications. Moshe Rabbeinu was called one who had a “good eye”, whereas Bilaam had an “evil eye”. What, essentially, is the “good eye”, and what is the “evil eye”?

The “good eye” represents a pure kind of vision, where a person is not trying to examine and see something. The “evil eye” is when a person examines everything. A person checks out something and becomes curious about it, and he is wondering: “Maybe there’s something bad here?”

Where did the first suspicion come into Creation? When did man first entertain the thought that maybe there’s something bad in the world? It began with the sin of Adam. Hashem created the world and testified that it was all “very good”; everything was good, in the pure state of Creation. How then did evil enter into Creation? It was as soon as Adam stopped believing that everything was “good”. He then connected himself to the perspective of evil.

This was like the wild ox that gores. When it gores, that is but the result of something that prompted it. The ox is defined as either a tame ox or a wild ox depending on how it sees things. The tame ox sees something in one way, whereas the wild ox sees it in another way. Thus, the deep understanding of the difference between the wild ox (*shor muad*) and the tame ox (*shor tam*) is because the wild ox gores when it has seen bad in something; whereas the tame ox usually sees good in something, and therefore it usually will not gore.

### *The 'Good Eye' (Choosing Not To See Evil) and The 'Evil Eye' (Choosing To See Evil)*

Earlier we mentioned that Moshe possessed the “good eye”, whereas Bilaam had the “evil eye”. When Bilaam said the words, “*I do not notice sin in Yaakov, and I do not see exertion in Yisrael, Hashem his G-d is with him*”, this was really Hashem’s perspective being uttered through him. When Hashem created the world, He testified about it that it was “very good”. Hashem only saw good in it; everything was good.

Adam, in his power to choose (which actually began with Chavah), had the possibility to see evil in Creation. The possibility to see evil in Creation is like the wild ox that gores upon seeing something it didn’t like. The mere fact that a person sees evil in the world is the root of all ruination in Creation!

The Sages state, “The eyes see, the heart desires, and the actions complete.” The simple understanding of this is that when the eyes see what it shouldn’t have, such as a forbidden sight, the heart then obsesses over it and desires it, and this leads to the action of sin. But the depth of this is that the very fact that the eyes can see evil, is already its downfall. It is not about what it has seen.

The sin of Adam and Chavah therefore didn’t begin with seeing the *Eitz HaDaas*. Rather, there was a point that preceded this: the very fact that man chose to see evil. Man has the power to choose what he will see, and if he chooses to see evil in Creation, this itself is the beginning of all ruination.

The simple understanding is that all sin begins in our heart, which can choose to lust after sin or not. But *Chazal* teach us that “the eyes see, and the heart desires”, so the power of choice really begins with the eyes, of what we will choose to see. The first choice in Creation was Chavah’s choice to see the *Eitz HaDaas*. This returned with the sin with the golden calf, a bull, which gores upon seeing something.

Thus, we have learned about what the root of all ruination is (seeing evil), and where our main power of *bechirah* (choice) lies, in each and every one of us. The power of choice does not begin with the passions of the heart, but with our eyes, which see.

### *Our Current Avodah In Rectifying Mankind: Seeing Only The Good In Creation*

What then is our *avodah*, to rectify the “eyes that see”, which are the root of all sin? Simply speaking, our *avodah* now is contained in the words of the verse, “*He closes the eyes from seeing evil.*” This is true of course, but what is the deep meaning of this?

The simple understanding is as the Gemara explains, that if one has an alternate route to take where he can avoid seeing an improper sight, he must take that path, and that is how his eyes can avoid seeing evil.

But the depth of “*He closes his eyes from seeing evil*” is contained in the words, “*I do not notice sin in Yaakov, and I do not see exertion in Yisrael.*” It is when the *soul* of a person only sees good and it does not see evil. This is the meaning of the verse, “*The one with a good eye, is blessed*” – when one has a soul that only sees good - when he has the “good heart” which only sees good - and his eyes will then not see evil in anything. Even if he sees the evil, he chooses not to “see” it. This is also the meaning of the verse uttered by Bilaam, “*I do not notice sin in Yaakov*”, which was really Hashem’s perspective being uttered through him, the pure and untainted perspective which only sees good in Creation.

### *The Loss of The “Good Eye” Perspective*

There is a very deep point here, which one must contemplate. Where does our soul’s power of *bechirah* (choice) begin? Where does our *bechirah* lie?

When the people sinned with the golden calf, it brought them all down to a lower spiritual level, from the level they were at upon receiving the Torah; and ever since, we are currently at that low spiritual level. Where did this originate from? It began when the people did not know where Moshe was, and the depth of this is that they did not where the perspective of the “good eye” was, which Moshe represents, for of Moshe it is said, “*The one with the good eye, is blessed.*” When they despaired from Moshe returning to them, they essentially lost the perspective of the “good eye”. When the “good eye” is lost, that is the entranceway to all evil and ruination.

The sin with the golden calf began with the “ox” that they carved an image of, and the ox\bull is linked with the sense of sight, as we explained above. The eyes can see evil, and that is where all ruination can occur. We can now understand better the difference between the level of the giving of the Torah, with the level we fell to after the sin with the golden calf. At the giving of the Torah, our souls only saw good. We had the “good eye”. After sinning with the golden calf, our nature underwent a change, and ever since then, man sees both good and evil in Creation, and usually, he sees evil, for this world is “mixed with good and evil – it is mostly evil, and partially good.”

“Hashem looked into the Torah, and created the world.” The Torah is called “good”, for it is called *lekach tov*, the “good purchase”, which Hashem gave to us. Hashem created the world from it, so the entire creation was created from something that was entirely good, which has no bad in it. So the Creation was entirely good, in its original state. As soon as Adam sinned, the perspective changed. Now man can see evil in it, and this has become his second nature.

### *The Ongoing Spiritual War Between Yaakov and Esav*

This is the depth contained in the ongoing war that takes place between the forces of Yaakov and Esav, which we began this discussion with.

Esav said, “Behold, I am going to die”, when he demanded to be fed. This can be explained on a deeper level as follows. There is a verse, “A wise person, his eyes are on his head, but a fool walks in darkness.” This is explained to mean that a fool sees only evil in something, whereas the wise person sees the beginning state of everything, which is pure and good.

The war between Yaakov\Yosef against Esav is essentially a war about how to see things, of how to view Creations. Esav says, “Feed me now this red stuff.” He sees what he sees: he sees the red color of the lentils in front of him, the red color of blood, which symbolizes evil. Yaakov, though, was the *ish tam yoishev ohalim*, a “wholesome man, who dwelled in the tents”, whereas Esav is the “*ish sadeh*”, “man of the field.” One of the Sages said “My wife is only called “my home”, and my ox is only called “my field.” The ox is therefore like a field, which Esav hunts in and spends his time in.

Yaakov and Yosef each represent different spiritual powers that can fight Esav. There are two ways to fight the perspective of the “evil eye” (represented by Esav) and to reveal the pure perspective of the “good eye”.

Esav saw the “red stuff” of the lentils and connected with it; he is called Edom, which means “red”, and he only sees evil in Creation. He sees the *adimimus* (redness) in Creation, meaning that he only sees the evil in Creation. Yaakov and Yosef, though, are the opposite of this. They represent the perspective of seeing only good in Creation, and they are each two distinct levels in this. Yaakov is called “*ish tam*”, and this is his power to fight Esav; Yosef though is called *shor*, the ox, and this is a different spiritual force that can wage war against Esav.

Yaakov, the “*ish tam*”, represents the perspective in which a person only sees good to begin with. *Rashi* explains that an “*ish tam*” is “someone who does not know how to swindle” – an *ish tam* is someone who does not know of evil, because he doesn’t see it, and therefore he doesn’t think of how to lie. He is a “*tamim*” (pure individual), meaning that there are no devious thoughts that enter his head at all which would cause him to think about evil. Yaakov’s power to fight Esav is through his power to see only good, and this counters Esav, who sees only evil.

Yosef, though, represents another spiritual power. Yosef was tempted with evil, he saw it and he was aware of it, but he fought it. In the blessings of Yaakov to his children, the verse describes how the young girls of Egypt would climb upon the walls to see him when he passed by them, but he would not lust after them. He saw that there was evil in front of him, but he fought it constantly.

### *The Powers of “Yaakov” and “Yosef” Within*

These are two distinct spiritual powers in our soul, of how to deal with evil. The lower level is “Yosef”, who sees the evil and fights it. The higher level is “Yaakov”, the “*ish tam*”, who also

possessed the trait of *emes* \truth, which enabled him to learn the “*Toras Emes*”, the “Torah of truth”; he had the *temimus* (earnestness) to learn the “*Toras Hashem Temimah*” (the perfect, untainted level of Torah). With *temimus*, a person only sees purity, because his perspective is pure.

In terms of our own personal soul-*avodah*, a person needs to first traverse the level of “Yosef” and then reach the level of “Yaakov.” Yosef saw evil, tried to fight it, and he tried to only see purity and good. Yosef was repeatedly tested with visual temptations, where he had to keep seeing evil and then fighting with it. He had to deal with the struggle of seeing evil. Yaakov reached the deeper place in the soul than this - “*ish tam*”, the quality of *temimus* (earnestness), the perspective in which a person doesn’t even see evil.

### *The Month of Iyar – A Spiritual War Of Our Vision*

The month of *Iyar*, which has the *mazal* of *shor* (the bull), is therefore a spiritual war, with our vision.

All ruination began with the sense of seeing. As is well-known, the word “*Iyar*” (אייר) stands for **אני ה' רופאיך**, “*I am Hashem, your Healer.*” When we *daven* for a recovery from illness, we *daven* for “a healing of the soul, and a healing of the body.” Our body is healed when physical maladies are removed, and how is our soul healed? If there is illness in the soul, how is it healed? What is the root that heals it?

The ruination to the soul began when Chavah’s eyes saw the *Eitz HaDaas*. So when Hashem says “*I am Hashem, your Healer*”, it means that He can heal the root of all illnesses that came upon the soul, which began with an improper use of the sense of sight and the damage that it caused.

### *How We Fight Our Spiritual Struggles*

If we want to make these concepts practical in our life, we should know as follows. All of our struggles on this world, the many “wars” we have to fight on this world in our spiritual task, can be fought with two different methods. Either we can fight with the latter parts of our struggle [which will prove unsuccessful] or we can fight at the beginning point [which is the sensible approach].

“*The wise person, his eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in the darkness.*” The ‘foolish’ perspective is to wage war with the latest stage of war he is in; he fights with evil from a place that he has fallen into. In contrast, the ‘wise’ perspective is to wage war at the beginning point of the war, as opposed to the current and latter point of the war.

All tribulations which we have on this world can be fought either by fighting our current problems, or by fighting the beginning point of all our problems.

If a person is tempted with a sin - for example, he is tempted to speak *lashon hora* – simply speaking, he can fight it by telling himself that it is forbidden, and then try to avoid the act. That is

true, but the Sages said that “When the evil inclination is present, there is no mention of the good inclination.”<sup>154</sup> Once a person is already amidst a spiritual struggle, the evil inclination is dominating. “*The fool walks in the dark*” – and the evil inclination is called an “old, foolish king”; when a person is amidst a test with evil and he is trying to fight from there, it will be a very difficult battle. He is unlikely to succeed. It will not be impossible to succeed, but it will be most difficult.

What is the proper way to wage war with evil forces? When a person lives an inner kind of life, when he lives a life in which he is always purifying his thoughts, as soon as his thoughts begin to steer towards anything evil or improper, he will quickly catch himself and realize that it will take him away from the life of pure thought that he tries to live.

The *korbon olah* was brought in order to atone for any sinful “thoughts of the heart”, and the depth of this is that it rectifies a person who has returned to his beginning point. The depth of how the soul is rectified is when a person thinks about the beginning, pure state of something. When a person does not deal with the beginning of a matter, the matter festers, like a poisonous root that is left untreated.

### *Treating The Root*

The month of *Iyar*, which is the month that contains healing, is a healing that comes through the “wise” perspective, whose “eyes are in his head” – who sees the beginning of a matter and reflects into it. It represents the kind healing that can heal the soul at the very root of whatever evil came upon the soul. Instead of healing all that has resulted from the evil, it heals the beginning point which spurned the evil in the first place.

Adam sinned at the beginning of Creation, on the sixth day, and ever since then, for almost 6000 years, we are dealing with the effects of the first sin; we are at the end of the 6000 year period. How can we deal with the evil? Should we fight the evil that has come upon us for the last 6000 years, including this period of the End of Days? Or should we fight its root, which was the sin that happened on the sixth day of Creation?

When Adam sinned, his original wisdom that he was created with was ruined. The struggles with evil that we have today are all because of the first sin, because Adam and Chavah failed to fight the evil, at the beginning point. This is the general state of mankind, and it applies individually to each soul. Each soul has two ways to fight evil – either to fight the evil where it is currently, or to fight its beginning point.

Esav said “*Behold I am going to die*” - man’s task ends at death, so when must he fight evil? In his lifetime, man must do *teshuvah*, until his last dying day. He must wage war with all the evil which currently surrounds him, and this is true. But if he has the deeper perspective, the perspective of the

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“wise” person, he fights the evil at its beginning point, by quickly gaining control over his mind as soon as there is a slight divergence in his pure thinking process.

If one tries to wage war today in the area of deeds alone, it will be almost impossible for him to succeed, in the spiritual war. But if he is trying to gain control over the thoughts of his mind and the desires of his heart, he is getting to the root, and he is constantly returning to his beginning point, which is the “wise” perspective.

### *Treating The Root of Our Actions – Discerning Our Desires, Thoughts, and Feelings*

We are saying that there are two totally different ways to live life. Naturally, a person tries to deal with the current points that are bothering him. But the higher approach to take is to get to the root of the matter, to the beginning point. When one lives inwardly and not superficially, he lives in his soul, in a world of thought, in a world of feelings, and his struggles will be with the subtlety of his feelings and thoughts.

As an example, there was once a student of Rav Dessler who dreamt that he wanted to kill his son. He was frightened by the dream and ran to Rav Dessler, asking him what it meant. Rav Dessler told the student “Sometimes, when your son is bothering you, you have a fleeting thought that you wish he wouldn’t exist. Because you are able to have such a thought, you are able to dream about killing him.” For every action, there always thoughts and feelings that are behind it.

A wise person’s perspective is that he identifies his deeper motivations, his thoughts and feelings that are behind his actions, and that is how he works on himself. As opposed to working on the level of his actions alone, he gets to the root of the matter, the beginning point, of the problem.

If one works with this approach, he will find that most of his [spiritual] *nisyomos* will disappear. He will be fighting the root of the evil, as opposed to fighting the branches and results of the evil.

### *The “Healing” In The Month of Iyar*

The month of Iyar, of which Hashem says “*I am Hashem, your Healer*” – what is the depth of this healing? And what is the difference between the healing that Hashem Himself gives, with the healing of a doctor, who is given permission to heal?

A doctor cannot heal the very root of the illness. He can only heal a person after he sees symptoms, of how the disease has spreading and what it is causing. But when Hashem Himself heals a person, He heals the very beginning of the problem. On a personal level, when a person reveals G-dliness in his life, it reveals “*I am Hashem, your Healer*”, and then his problems can be treated at their root.

The more a person lives externally and superficially, he will only seek to correct his deeds alone. The more a person lives inwardly, he will wage war against the subtle thoughts and feelings that are

behind his actions. Then he can rectify his actions at their beginning point. A person surely has to wage war with any improper deeds he is doing, but even a gentile can do this. Only a member of *Yisrael*, however, can rectify the beginning point of his deeds. Only the Jewish people are called “*raishis*”, the “beginning”, because the unique ability of the Jewish people is to rectify beginnings. This is a war that is unique only to the Jewish people.

Higher than this aspect is the war that Yaakov (and Yosef) must fight against Esav; Yaakov is the “tame ox” (*shor tam*) on the side of holiness, which must fight the “wild ox” (*shor muad*) on the side of evil. The “tame ox” on the side of holiness is the ability in the soul to be a *tamim*, to be loyal and trusting in Hashem, to see a world in which there is only good.

### *Connecting To The Point of Complete “Good” In Our Soul*

Currently, we do not live in a world where there is only good. We live in a world which is mostly evil and with little good, as *Chazal* state. But in the depths of our soul, there is a pure place which can allow us to see a world which is only good and with no evil in it.

We cannot actually live from this place in ourselves, because that would be denying the world in front of us. But there is a point deep in our soul where we can access this perspective at times, of seeing only good in Creation, which was the initial state of Creation, where Hashem testified that it was all “very good”.

If one connects to this place through learning Torah and through connecting to it in his soul, he lives in a world which is completely good. Of course, when he goes out in the world, he is in a place which is mostly evil. But his soul can be found in a place that is completely good. Of this it is said, “*Your world [the Next World] can be seen in your life.*”

The more a person lives inwardly and he lives this point of seeing a world that is entirely good, he will be able to wage war with the very beginning point of evil, as opposed to the results and the branches of evil, which is like the words of Esav, “*Behold I am going to die.*”

That enables a person to leave the level of existence of the “bull” that we fell to after the sin with the Golden Calf, and instead to return to the holy kind of “bull” - which sees only holiness.

### *Leaving The Fallen State of The “Bull” and Entering Into The Holy “Bull”*

*Chazal* state “the bull is king of all domestic animals, for it is the heaviest of all the domestic animals”. This is referring to the “bull” on the side of evil, for it is referring to the evil trait of heaviness and indifference. How does one come out of this evil heaviness?

One way is an evil way, through becoming conceited. The holy way to come out of the heaviness is through the lesson implied by the *korbon olah*, which atones for lustful thoughts of the heart – in other words, through fixing the beginning point of the evil.

Hashem says, “*I am the First, and I am the Last.*” When a person is living a life in which he is always returning to the beginning, it is revealed to him how Hashem is his true beginning point. He will also have an easier time with spiritual struggles, for he will receive a revelation of “*I am the Last*” when he is faced with the evil inclination, and Hashem will persevere for him. The more a person lives inwardly as opposed to living on his surface, when he is facing struggles outside of him, he will win those battles.

Of this it is said, “If not for Hashem’s help, a person cannot overcome.”<sup>155</sup> But in order to receive Hashem’s help, one needs to reveal “I am the First and I am the Last.”

### *The Power To Deal With Evil At Its Root – Orderly Thought*

When a person internalizes this concept, he will receive an entirely different mindset to live life with; he will receive an inner power of orderliness (*seder*) to deal with anything that comes his way. A hint to this is that the word “*shor*” is from the word “*shurah*”, which means “order”. When one has the power of the *shor* bull\ox on the side of holiness, he receives a special power of inner order to deal with spiritual struggles.

One who does not live inwardly will mainly be fighting external stimuli, and there is no order to be found on the outside world; it is all turmoil. But one who lives inwardly lives in a world of thought, which is an orderly process that keeps him stable.

This is the holy kind of *shor* bull\ox, where a person will have a constant inner order (*shor* ox is from the word *shurah* order) to deal with life. His thoughts will receive order to them and this will help him deal with difficulties.

Without living in a world of thought, a person lives in the world of actions alone, so he will only be able to struggle with actions, because his struggles will be limited to actions alone, and not beyond that. In contrast, when a Torah scholar lives inwardly, he lives in a world of thought, of orderly thought – a life of holy thought (*machshavah*).

This is the meaning of Yaakov’s trait of being an “*ish tam yoishev ohalim*” (wholesome man that dwells in the tents) - when there is orderly thought in one’s mind [for the term “*ish tam*” parallels the concept of the *shor tam*, the tame ox, who represents the “bull\ox” on the side of holiness, which we have explained as an ability of holy sight, and an ability to maintain orderly thought] – from this, one is able to learn Torah properly, because there will be inner order given to all of his soul’s abilities as well.

### *In Conclusion*

May we merit from Hashem the fulfillment of the verse, *“All of the illnesses that I placed upon Egypt, I will not place upon you, for I am Hashem, your Healer.”*

## *31 / Sivan – Twins*

### *Sivan \ Twins – and The Giving of The Torah*

The *mazal* of Sivan is *te'umim* - twins (as is well-known).

That will imply that the receiving of the Torah, which took place in the month of Sivan, is connected with the *mazal* of *te'umim*\twins. In other words, the Torah is [somehow] revealed to us through the concept of “twins” [which we will soon explain].

### *The Jewish People Are 'Twins' with Hashem and with the Torah*

The simpler understanding of this matter is because there is a verse, “Open [your heart to Me], My sister, My dove, My love, My perfection.”<sup>156</sup> The word for “My perfection”, תְּמִימִי, is interpreted by our Sages to mean תְּאוֹמִי, “My twin.” In other words, Hashem refers to the Jewish people as “twins” with Him, so to speak. *Chazal* explain that Hashem is saying to the Jewish people, “I am not greater than you, and you are not greater than Me.” So there is a relationship of “twins” between the Jewish people and Hashem.

In addition to the ‘twin’ relationship that the Jewish people have with Hashem, there is also a ‘twin’ relationship between the Jewish people and the Torah. How do we see this? *Chazal* state the word “*Beraishis*” refers to the Jewish people, who are called “*raishis*”, the beginning; therefore, the world was created for the sake of the Jewish people. *Chazal* also interpret the word “*Beraishis*” to refer to the Torah – “for the sake of the Torah, which is called “*raishis*”, the beginning. So both the Jewish people and the Torah are called “*raishis*”, the beginning, for which the world was created for; in this aspect, we can understand that the Torah and the Jewish people are ‘twins’ with each other.

So there are two aspects of the ‘twin’ relationships between the Jewish people and Hashem: One aspect of it is the Jewish people are called ‘twins’ with Hashem Himself, and the another aspect of it is that the Jewish people are ‘twins’ with Hashem’s Torah.

### *Is Sivan Connected With The Number 3 (The Third Month) Or The Number 2 (Twins)?*

Here is a question. The Gemara explains that the Torah was given in the month of Sivan because it is the third month of the year, for the number ‘three’ represents permanent establishment, thus the Torah was given in the third month of the year to show that it is firmly established into the Jewish

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<sup>156</sup> Song of Songs 5:2 [translation here follows the Artscroll].

people. So the month of Sivan is connected to the number three. But if the month of Sivan contains the *mazal* of “twins”, that would imply that Sivan is linked with the number two, for twins are two people, not three!

This apparent contradiction of what Sivan is about, is a matter that needs understanding. In order to reconcile this matter, let us try to understand a little about the concept of twins, and with the help of Hashem, we hope to draw these matters as close as possible to our own souls, so that we can each practically act upon these matters in our own life.

### *“Twins” In The Side of Holiness and In The Side of Evil*

The first time that the Torah mentions twins is regarding Yaakov and Esav, whom the Torah says explicitly about them that they were *te’umim*, twins. Later the Torah writes about the twins born to Yehudah, who were Peretz and Zorach. However, by Esav, the Torah spells the word *te’umim* without the letter *aleph* (והנה תומים בבטנה), whereas by Peretz and Zorach, the Torah spells it fully, with the letter *aleph* (והנה תאומים בבטנה). The reason for this is to show that Esav was a wicked twin, whereas Peretz and Zorach were both righteous twins.

So there are two kinds of twins mentioned in the Torah – a pair that was a mixture of good and evil, and a pair in which both were righteous. Yaakov and Esav were twins that were a mixture of good and evil. Yaakov was the good part of the pair, and Esav was the evil part of the pair. The twin pair of Peretz and Zorach were both righteous, and they are the root of the revelation of our righteous Moshiach, who descends from their father Yehudah.

Peretz and Zorach represent the holy manifestation of twins. The word *te’umim* (twins) contains the letters of *Urim U’Tumim* [the source of the Divine inspiration contained in the breastplate of the Kohen Gadol]. *Chazal* explain that the ‘*Urim*’ refers to Zorach, and the “*Tumim*” refers to Peretz.

### *Twins (In Holiness) Represent Temimus \Wholesomeness*

What lies behind the concept of ‘twins’ on the side of holiness?

The Gemara<sup>157</sup> explains that the word “*Urim*” refers to a power that would “illuminate” the words of the breastplate (by explaining what it meant<sup>158</sup>), and the word “*Tumim*” refers to a power that would “complete” its ruling (and render if a certain decree was irreversible<sup>159</sup>). The word “*tumim*” is from the word *temimus* (wholesomeness), which implies something that is completed.

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157 Yoma 73b

158 Rashi (ibid)

159 Rashi (ibid)

This is referring to the holy trait of *temimus*, and this is represented by the *tumim* of the *Urim V'Tumim*, which is represented by the holy pair of twins that came from Yehudah.

Yehudah admitted his error about the episode with Tamar, when he said, “*She is more righteous than me*” [This implies the *temimus* of Yehudah and Tamar]. The birth of Peretz and Zorach, who came from the union of Yehudah and Tamar, were the holy pair of twins who descended from Yaakov, who was called *ish tam*, “wholesome man”, referring to his trait of *temimus*. Yaakov is the holy kind of twin; his trait of *temimus* is the holy aspect contained in the concept of *te'umim* twins. Tamar gave birth to a holy set of twins, who had the quality of *temimus*.

So there are two kinds of twins. There is a pair of twins like Yaakov and Esav, a pair that was a mixture of good and evil, where one ‘side’ was good and the other ‘side’ was evil. There is a pair like Peretz and Zorach, where both of the ‘sides’ were good. Tamar’s birth of Peretz and Zorach was the revelation of *temimus* upon both ‘sides’ of the twins. This symbolizes that there are two kinds of *temimus*. There is a higher kind of *temimus*, which is perfected, and there is a lower kind of *temimus*, which is the impaired level.

### *The Root of Twins*

Although the first pair that the Torah mentions explicitly as “twins” was Yaakov and Esav, they were not the first twins in history. The root of all “twins” began with Kayin and Hevel – they were the first twins in history. (There is actually a dispute in the words of *Chazal* if they were twins or not. Here we are going according to the opinion that they were twins).

However, upon deeper analysis, there was actually a pair of twins who preceded them. The Zohar explains, according to one opinion, that Adam and Chavah were originally created back-to-back with each other (*dav partzufin*). According to this opinion, the first pair of twins was actually Adam and Chavah.

The Torah says, “*Man and woman He created them*”, so Adam and Chavah, the very root of all twins, represent the perfected level of twins, where the “two” twins are really one. They are the ‘subtle’ root of all twins.

Based upon this insight, the root of the design of Creation began with twins, for Adam and Chavah (in one unit, in their original form) are the root of all creations. So ‘twins’ are the design of Creation itself. This gives us the key to understanding the matter of twins.

The original pair of ‘twins’, Adam and Chavah, were eventually separated from each other. Adam was put to sleep, and then Hashem split them apart from each other, so they became two separate beings. The fact that Adam and Chavah became split apart from each other was actually the root of how Adam and Chavah later became separated later on, when Adam separated from her for 130 years, after the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas*.

### *Twins Either Complete Each Other (In Holiness) Or Oppose Each Other*

In retrospect, the twins Peretz and Zorach revealed a kind of ‘twins’ who are inseparable from each other. Unlike the twins Yaakov and Esav, who battled each other and went their own separate ways, the twins Peretz and Zorach were a pair of twins who did not separate from each other. Rather, they both completed each other. Peretz and Zorach represent the *Urim V’Tumim*, as *Chazal* explain, and both the *Urim* and *Tumim* are needed to complete each other.

There is no opposition with the *Urim V’Tumim*; they each complete each other. In contrast, the pair of Esav and Yaakov are opposing forces to each other. The Sages said, “It is a well-known *halachah*, that Esav hates Yaakov.” They represent the warring forces of good and evil with each other.

Adam and Chavah were created *dav partzufin* (back-to-back), according to an opinion in the Sages; which made them the first twins in history. Hashem created woman as an *eizer k’negdo*, a helpmate opposite man. *Chazal* explain that if a man merits it, his wife helps him, and if he does not merit it, his wife opposes him. The twins Peretz and Zorach were a pair that helped each other, whereas Yaakov and Esav opposed each other.

The word “Peretz” is from the word “*poratz*”, to break open, and this power exists both for holiness and for evil. The Serpent is referred to as the one who “breaks the fences of the world”, which is evil, but there is also a “Serpent” in the side of holiness, such as the ability of royalty, for “a king can break fences, and no one can protest him.”

Peretz and Zorach were a holy pair of twins, for they were both good; on the side of evil, the “*Eitz HaDaas*” was like a blemished set of twins, for it was good and evil mixed together.

### *Twins: Opposites Born Together*

Throughout the Torah, twins possess opposite natures from each other. In the side of holiness, twins are two opposites of the same root, and when they unite, they reveal their root, which is one [and conversely, in the side of evil, twins oppose each other and they reveal disparity between them].

Yaakov and Esav were opposites of each other. When Rivkah went to acquire about her pregnancy pains to Shem and Ever, she received a prophecy that two nations were growing inside her, who would always oppose each other; when one will rise, the other one will fall, and vice versa. Peretz and Zorach were also opposites of each other, but their opposite natures served to complete each other. *Chazal* also revealed that each of the twelve sons of Yaakov (besides for Yosef) was born with a twin sister, and the Ramban writes that each of the brothers married a different twin sister.

All of these twins (Yaakov and Esav, Peretz and Zorach, and the twelve sons of Yaakov with their sisters) were two people who are born together who have opposite natures. Twins are therefore not just two people who were born together, but two people who are opposites of each other, who are born together. This actually contains the secret of *temimus* [which soon will be explained].

When Hashem told Avraham to offer up his son Yitzchok as an offering, Yitzchok became sanctified with the status of an “*ayil temimah*”, “a perfect ram”. Hashem had said to Avraham, “*Take now your son*”, which symbolized a complete contradiction, for Avraham was being told to give his beloved son as an offering. Since it was a situation of contradiction, it revealed *temimus* [a perfect, simple faith in Hashem], thus Yitzchok became an “*ayil temimah*” from this.

Yaakov is the “*ish tam*” (wholesome man), he was a *tamim* (perfected), whereas Esav was the antithesis of this. For this reason, the Torah spells the word *te’umim* by Yaakov and Esav without the letter *aleph* (תומים), which connotes a breach in their twin relationship; for they were opposing forces of each other, and they did not complete each other. In contrast, Peretz and Zorach were born with opposite natures of each other, but they were two opposites who revealed that they were from one root (Hashem; in particular, the secret of the oneness of Hashem, which binds all of Creation together).

### *When There Is An Absence of Oneness, Darkness Descends*

Man was given woman as an *eizer k’negdo*, a “helpmate opposite him”, to help complete his existence. *Chazal* say that when they merit (to help each other), there is *Shechinah* between a husband and wife, and if they do not merit, a fire consumes them; in other words, when they are just opposing each other, they are missing the oneness between them.

A person must reveal and connect to the oneness of Hashem, in order to connect to the Torah and to the Jewish people, for it is this oneness which is needed in order to bind everything together. Without this element, it is said, “*Those who grasp Torah do not know Me.*” Without connecting to the oneness of Hashem, a person does not merit the benefits of Torah, and instead, the Torah becomes “like deadly poison to him”, similar to how a husband and wife are harmed when they do not reveal the oneness of the *Shechinah* between them.

When a person does “merit” it, though, the Torah becomes to him “like an elixir of life.” This is a person who connects himself to the oneness of Hashem, who reveals this oneness, and then he can have a genuine connection to Torah and to the Jewish people. To be more specific, when a person reveals how all “three” aspects of “Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael” are really all “one”<sup>160</sup> – that is where the true level of receiving the Torah lies.

What does it mean that if a person does not merit it, the Torah becomes like deadly poison to him? How can it be that the Torah, which is called a “Torah of life”, should be the very thing that harms a person? The inner understanding of this matter is because “death” is really a situation of

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<sup>160</sup> Editor’s Note: This seems to be the Rav’s answer to the question brought in the beginning of this *derashah*: Is the power of the month of Sivan because of the number 3 (it is the third month of the year since Nissan) or because of the number 2 (twins)? The ‘twins’ in the month of Sivan really require a third point to complete the pair, for a person must have a connection with Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael.

spiritual descent. The lowest place one can descend to is called the “*tehom*” – the lowest depths, which the Torah describes in the beginning of Creation: “*Darkness that covered the surface of the tehom (deep).*” If one learns Torah but he is not connected to the oneness of Hashem, that is really a deadly poison itself.

When a person learns Torah without reaching the very first root of the Torah, which began from “*Anochi Hashem*”, and instead he is only connected to the second root of the Torah, which is “*Beraishis*”, he will descend to “*the darkness that covers the surface of the deep*” – the “*tehom*”. He will not reach the light of the Torah; he will not reach the “*Toras Hashem Temimah*” (the “Torah of Hashem is perfect”). He will not reach the light that was contained in the “*Urim V’Tumim*”; he will not reach the level of ‘twins’ which Peretz and Zorach were. Instead of reaching a place filled with light, the person [who learns Torah without connecting to Hashem’s oneness] will instead reach a place that is “*darkness that covers the surface of the deep*”!

If a person learns Torah and he does not of the difference between a Torah that is connected with “*Anochi Hashem*” to a Torah that is disconnected from “*Anochi Hashem*”, he is found in the dark, because he has become so dulled from his situation.

Hashem had to force the Jewish people to accept the Torah; He suspended the mountain above them in the air and said, “*If you will accept it, good; if not, there you will be buried.*” This is because the Torah opposes a human being’s nature, when it becomes “deadly poison” to him, when he learns it without being connected to the oneness of Hashem. He doesn’t have the power to accept the Torah when he lacks the connection to oneness. But when Hashem forced us to accept the Torah, we were given the ability to reveal “*Anochi Hashem*” through learning the Torah.

The Jewish people and the Torah are both called “*raishis*”, the beginning. If so, there are two “beginnings” to Creation - and this is a contradiction. There cannot be two beginnings; there can only be one beginning to Creation! After all, if a baby is born with two heads, he will surely die; so too, if the world has two beginnings, it cannot survive. Indeed, if a person thinks that there are “two beginnings” – if he thinks that both Torah and the Jewish people are both beginnings of the world, – this is the perspective which causes one’s Torah learning to become like “deadly poison” to him.

But if one reveals how “*I am the First, and I am the Last, and besides for Me, there is no god*”, this connects him to “*Anochi Hashem*”; and then all contradictions will be answered. He will be able to perceive how the two “beginnings” are not in contradiction with each other [and that they actually complement each other; for they have one root].

The natural, superficial perspective of people is that they feel they can have a connection with Torah without necessarily building a connection with Hashem; they think that a Jew has a connection to Torah even without a connection to Hashem, and that connection to Torah doesn’t require a connection to Hashem. But such a perspective causes one’s Torah learning to become like “deadly poison” to him.

### *Oppositions In Our Life: Dealing With The “Twins”*

Now let us try to make these matters more practical in our life, as much as we can.

Every person goes through all kinds of “contradictions.” People face contradictions in their own personality, between themselves and their spouses, between themselves and their children, and with others. But all of these “contradictions” with others are really like the concept of “twins” [who are born with opposite natures of each other, whose higher purpose is really to help each other and complete each other].

Every contradiction you face is really like a “twin” you are born with, whom you need to reconcile with, who will ultimately help you and complete you, when you are aware that the oppositions that come your way are really helping perfect and complete you. And when a person does not ‘merit’ it – when he doesn’t merit having this perspective - he descends into the “darkness that covers the depths”.

In whatever opposition or challenge we meet up with, either they will be like “twins” to us, who help and complete each other (**תאומים**) or they will be to us like “twins” who oppose each other (**תומים**), who are missing the letter *aleph* in their name [implying a lack of revealing the oneness of Hashem in the situation]; such situations will only oppose us, like the pair of twins in which only one of them is good. Or, even worse, it can be a situation of total “*tehom*” (the depths).

If a person is having a hard time viewing a challenge, he should see how he can go from the lower level of “twins” (**תומים**) to the higher level of “twins” (**תאומים**), which is spelled with the letter “*aleph*” – in other words, he should seek to reveal Hashem in the situation, by trying to see how Hashem is involved in the picture. Then a person can be connected to Hashem in any situation he finds himself in.

This is the secret of the letter *aleph*, which implies *emunah* (faith in Hashem), and the first letter of the words “*Anochi Hashem*”, the very root of the Torah and of Creation. When a person reveals the “*Aleph*” (the One) in his situation, when he reveals *emunah* in the situation, he can then deal with any situation.

### *In Conclusion*

These are surely very deep words, as it always is with the way of Torah. But the perspective has been outlined. How to act it upon practically is a lengthy discussion for itself, but the general idea has been said here.

May we merit to receive the Torah - directly “from the mouth of Hashem”.

## 32 / Sivan – Closer Than Twins

### “My Twin”

The month of *Sivan* contains the *mazal* of *te'umim* (twins). What is the connection between the *mazal* of *te'umim*\twins, and the receiving of the Torah which took place in this month, *Sivan*?

The root of this matter lies in the verse, פתחי לי אחותי, יונתי, רעייתי, תמתי, “Open [your heart for Me], my sister, my dove, my love, my perfection.”<sup>161</sup> The word תמתי, “My perfection”, is expounded upon by *Chazal* to mean תאומתי, “My twin” – thus, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and the Jewish people are called “*te'umim*”, twins, so to speak; *Chazal* explain that Hashem says of the Jewish people, “I am not greater than you, and you are not greater than Me”, as it were. In other words, Hashem considers us His “twin”, as if we share equal status with Him, so to speak. The above words of *Chazal* require understanding. What does it mean that Hashem calls us His ‘twin’?

### The Jewish People Are Above The Level of “Twins”

The Gemara says, “The Torah is not in Heaven.” In Heaven, only *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* decides, but on this world, it is the Sages of the Jewish people who decide, in the rulings given in *Beis Din*. Every Jew contains the power to decide what the will of Hashem is in the Torah. Above in Heaven, Hashem’s will can only be decided by Hashem Himself. Below, on this earth, the will of Hashem is given over to the Sages to decide.

*Chazal* state that “There is no *mazal* for the Jewish people.<sup>162</sup> Therefore, if the month of *Sivan* contains the *mazal* of *te'umim*\twins, that would mean that the Jewish people are above the *mazal* of *te'umim* and whatever it will imply. This really means that even though the *mazal* of *te'umim* is in *Sivan*, *te'umim* does not represent the depth of receiving the Torah. *Chazal* also teach us that “the Jewish people are above time” (*Yisrael l'malah min hazman*)”, which further proves that the Jewish people are above *mazal*, so the Jewish people are above the implications of the *mazal te'umim*.

### Oneness

What will this imply? What does it mean that the Jewish people are above the *mazal* of *te'umim*?

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161 Song of Songs 5:2; translation follows Artscoll.

162 Shabbos 156a

It is referring to the level of “HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Torah, and Yisrael are one (*chad*)”. The Jewish people are not merely “twins” with Hashem, they are “one” with Hashem!

Concerning our “twin” relationship with Hashem, Hashem says to the Jewish people, “I am not greater than you, and you are not greater than me”, but this implies that we are ‘separate’ from Hashem. Thus, the “twin” aspect in our bond with Hashem is actually a lower aspect of our bond with Hashem.

The higher aspect of our bond with Hashem is that we are “one” with Him - where there is no separation at all.

### *Striving To Reach The Da'as (Thinking) of Hashem*

The Gemara says that “Moshe added on a day [to Shavuot] from his own *daas* (thinking), and the *daas* of Hashem agreed with him”. Moshe reached a level in which his own *daas* paralleled the *daas* of Hashem. What is the intended meaning of this teaching? Ever since the receiving of the Torah, the Sages are given power to make decisions in Torah and render rulings. So what was unique when Moshe added on day and Hashem agreed with him? What was different about Moshe’s decision than any other decision that the Sages make?

The uniqueness of Moshe’s ruling was that it took place before the Torah was actually received. That shows us something deeper. It shows us that man was given the ability in which his own *daas* can reflect the *daas* of HaKadosh Baruch Hu!

Whenever there is a *machlokes* (disagreement) as to what the *halachah* is, there is a debate as to what the *halachah* is, but when a person is trying to understand the *daas* of HaKadosh Baruch Hu in the case, when he directs his own *daas* towards the *daas* of Hashem, there is no possibility for *machlokes*. When does a person say an opinion in *halachah* that is not what Hashem says? It is only when he hasn’t yet reached the *daas* of Hashem, so to speak. When a person understands what the *daas* of Hashem is, he understands what Hashem’s will is, and then there is no room for *machlokes* about the issue at hand.

The entire concept of *machlokes* (disagreement) is only possible when people on this lower world aren’t reaching the *daas* of Hashem. However, since the “Torah is not in Heaven”, even if a person would know for sure what Hashem’s opinion is about the issue at hand, the rule is that we must follow the words of the Sages about this matter. Yet, with the more a person nullifies his own *daas* to the *daas* of his Creator, the more he can reach the point in which there is no *machlokes* – the point of which it is said, “Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael are one.”

When a person has a relationship of “oneness” with Hashem, he is aware that just as Hashem learns Torah in Heaven (as the Sages state), so does he learn Torah on this world. It is when a person realizes that he has no *daas* of his own.

The *daas* of people is subject to *machlokes*. But when a person wants his own *daas* to be like the *daas* of Hashem, he is directing his own mind to think like Hashem, as opposed to his own thinking. Such a person will merit a true receiving of the Torah.

Thus, when Moshe decided to add on a day, he was using his *daas*, but he was not using his ‘own’ *daas*. Rather, he directed his *daas* to think like the *daas* of Hashem.

This is the meaning of the concept of “*Torah of truth*” and “*The seal of Hashem is truth.*” When a person truly merits Torah, he merits the seal of Hashem upon his Torah learning, and the seal of Hashem is always the truth. When a person does not reach this, of this it is said, “A judge does not see except what his eyes see.”<sup>163</sup>

The rule is that “When an individual and the majority have a dispute, the *halachah* is like the majority” (*yachid v’rabim, halachah k’rabim*) - this does not necessarily mean that the truth is like the opinion of the majority, and that the individual did not merit the truth.

### *Shavuos & Receiving The Torah – The Power To Go Beyond The Level of ‘Twins’*

*Te’umim* (twins) represent a level in which a person’s understanding is still not yet aligned with Hashem. When a person is only at the level of *te’umim* in his relationship with Hashem, his understanding can be the opposite of Hashem’s will.

The month of Sivan contains the *mazal* of *te’umim*, but we know that the Jewish people are above *mazal*, so there is a point we can reach that is above the level of *te’umim*. The entire concept of *machlokes* in Torah is only possible today because the original pair of *Luchos* were broken, due to the sin with the golden calf. Had the people never sinned with the golden calf, they would have connected completely to Hashem and they would have reached a kind of Torah in which *machlokes* isn’t possible, for everyone’s *daas* would parallel the *daas* of Hashem.

But there is a spiritual light contained in the festival of Shavuos, which returns every year at this time, which is a power that enables a person to accept the Torah contained in the first set of *Luchos*, a Torah without sin. The power available during this time enables a person to truly reach this dimension.

Shavuos gives us the opportunity to reach the power where our *daas* can parallel the *daas* of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, where our own thinking is aligned with His will. When we stood at Har Sinai, we declared, “It is our will to see our King.” The deeper implication of this is that we gave up our own thinking, and we had no *daas* of our own; whatever Hashem said became our own *daas*. It was was the level of “Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael are one”.

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163 Sanhedrin 6b

*Our Personal Avodah In Preparing For Shavuos & Receiving The Torah*

If someone is really searching for truth, he can merit the truth of Torah, from the spiritual power that is contained in Shavuos.

If someone doesn't search for truth, though, he descends from the level of "There is no *mazal* for the Jewish people" and instead he is subject to *mazal*. He will remain at the level of *mazal* of *te'umim* of the month of Sivan, which is the incomplete level of our bond with Hashem, for being "twins" with Hashem is not nearly as close to Hashem as being "one" with Him.

Our *avodah*, then, is to leave the level of *te'umim* - to go beyond it. It is not enough for us to have a relationship of "twins" with Hashem, because twins imply separated beings from each other. We need to have a higher relationship with Hashem, a relationship of being "one" with Him, in which we are never apart from Him.

We must therefore strive to truly receive the Torah, the "seal of Hashem", which is truth. May the Creator merit us to learn the Torah, and that we should align our own *daas* with Hashem, by *striving to reach the truth*, when we learn Torah; that we strive to reach the "Torah of truth."

## 33 / Tamuz – The Crab

### *The Mazal of Tamuz - The Sartan/Crab*

The *mazal* of the month of *Tamuz* is called “*sartan*”, “crab” [cancer]. What is the meaning behind the *mazal* of the *sartan*/crab, and what is the personal *avodah* in our soul that it implies?

### *The Words of Raavad and Rav Saadya Gaon About The Crab's Nature*

Rabbi Avraham ben David (*Raavad*) writes that “the nature of the *sartan* (crab) is that it lives within the water and also above the water... There are waters which cause joy to our eyes, which are tears of joy, and there are waters which hurt our eyes, tears of sadness.” (When a person cries tears out of joy, it is beneficial for his eyes. When a person cries tears in anguish, it is damaging to the eyes.)... “This is the secret of the matter that “Women weep in the month of Tamuz.”<sup>164</sup>

The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, which took place in the month of Av, begins in the month of Tamuz, where our weeping over the destruction begins [with the fast on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tamuz]. *Rav Saadya Gaon* explains that the *sartan*/crab is “a creature that grows in water, which gives healing to the eyes, and it is an ornament placed on the garments of kings, and it can bring things into the water, which we do not find with any other creature.”<sup>165</sup> In these cryptic words of *Rav Saadya Gaon*, we learn that the crab’s special ability is that it can bring things into the water, transporting it from the land into the water.

That is the underlying concept behind the crab, which is the *mazal* of the month of *Tamuz*. Now let us try to understand more about this.

### *The Concept of Dry Land Within Water*

Each of the 12 months of the year is parallel to 12 nations of the world, and the month of Tamuz corresponds to the nation that is called “Armania”. The Torah says that the Ark of Noach came to rest on the mount of “Ararat”, and *Targum Yehonasan ben Uziel* says that the mountains of “Ararat” is the place where the nation of “Armania” dwells.<sup>166</sup>

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164 Raavad to Sefer Yetzirah: 5

165 Peirush HaMeyuchas L’Rav Saadya Gaon to Sefer Yetzirah:5

166 Targum Yehonasan on Beraishis 8:4

[Later, the connection between the month of Tamuz, the ark of Noach, the mountains of Ararat, and Armania will be explained]. Let us now explain this in clearer terms.

*Chazal* state that “Hashem first created several worlds and destroyed them”<sup>167</sup>, until He created our current world. At the beginning of Creation, water filled the entire world, and then Hashem split the waters to allow for the land to exist. Hashem split the waters on the second day, and gathered the waters on the third day, to form dry land (*yabashah*). When Hashem brought the Flood upon the world, it resembled a situation of the world returning to nothingness, for it was a form of destruction to the world.

After the waters of the Flood cleared and subsided, the Ark was able to come to rest on dry land, which the Torah calls “*yabashah*”. This resembled the third day of Creation, when the waters were first gathered to form dry land. The Torah first mentions the term “*yabashah*” (dry land) on the third day of Creation, when Hashem told the waters to gather together and form the *yabashah*, the dry land.

The original “*yabashah*” was the perfected *yabashah* of Creation, which was not preceded by any curse, whereas the “*yabashah*” formed after the Flood came about through a curse of destruction upon the world, hence, it was a cursed form of “*yabashah*”. A hint to this is that the dry land which the Ark came to rest on was the mount of “Ararat”, from the word “*arur*”, “cursed”.

The Sages also find a parallel between the 12 months of the year and 12 of the prophets. The month of Tamuz corresponds to the prophet Yonah, who was swallowed by a big fish. When Yonah lived inside the fish, it was like being on dry land within the water. Yonah was in the water, in the belly of the fish, but he was dry. It was like a situation of dry land within water.

The dove, which informed Noach that there was dry land, is called a “*yonah*”. The connection between the *yonah*/dove, and the prophet Yonah - who corresponds to the month of Tamuz – is that there can be a revelation of a new *yabashah*, dry land within the water.

This is the idea behind the *sartan*, the crab. It is a creature that reveals “dry land” within water. Hence, the deeper meaning behind the *mazal sartan* in the month of Tamuz is that it is a *mazal* which reveals “dry land, within water”. Based upon this, we can now understand the depth of the words of *Rav Saadya Gaon* that the crab is a creature which grows in the water and which transports food from the land to the water. By moving food from the land to the water, the *sartan*/crab reveals how there can be a concept of “dry land”, the *yabashah*, even within the water.

Thus, the crab, which lives from the water and brings food from the land into the water, represents the point where dry land meets water. The *mazal sartan*, represented by the crab, reveals how there can be “dry land” within “water”. The root of this began on the third day of Creation, when Hashem first formed the dry land from the water.

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167 Beraishis Rabbah 3:7

### *The Roots of the Destruction of the Beis HaMikdash*

Let us delve more into the understanding of the words of *Rav Saadya Gaon*, as follows.

There are two kinds of “water” - in the form of tears - which are either damaging, or healing, to the eyes. When a person cries tears of joy, these tears give the eyes a shine and they are healing to the eyes. When a person cries tears of sadness or mourning, these tears are blinding and harmful to the eyes. This is “The secret of the matter that women weep in the month of Tamuz” which the *Raavad* writes about.

What was the root of the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*? It was rooted in the very fact that “Hashem builds worlds and destroys them.” The *Beis HaMikdash* was designed by Betzalel, who “knew the secret of combining the heavens with the earth”.<sup>168</sup> Betzalel knew how to create an edifice on this earth that resembled Heaven, which this world is modeled after. Therefore, when the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, it was really a destruction upon the entire design of Creation, for the *Beis HaMikdash* represented the ideal design of the entire Creation. The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* was therefore a destruction to the *pnimiyus* (inner dimension) of all of Creation.

Destruction was built into the very design of Creation, for “He builds worlds and destroys them”, and this was the very root of all destructions to come after that. The Flood was the first time in history where this concept of destruction actually took place. The waters of the Flood destroyed the world. Later, destruction took place once again when the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, which was as if the world had been destroyed, because the *Beis HaMikdash* was a microcosm of the entire universe in one edifice. Its destruction therefore represented the destruction of Creation. Building the *Beis HaMikdash* was the building of the world, and the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* was the destruction of the world.

The Hebrew for “destruction”, *charuv*, can also mean “desolate land”, as in the term *charavah*, when water dries up and there is parched, dry, and desolate land. The *Beis HaMikdash* was built on a place of *charavah*, on desolate land. The Sages teach that Dovid HaMelech was digging at the future site of the *Beis HaMikdash*, in order to lay its foundation, and the waters of the *tehom* (the depths) where the *Even HaShesiyah* was placed, threatened to rise up and flood the world.<sup>169</sup>

The inner meaning behind this is that the *Beis HaMikdash* is built in the place precisely atop the place where the *tehom* wants to flood the world. Just as the Flood destroyed the world, so did the *tehom* wish to destroy the world again, when Dovid was laying the foundation for the *Beis HaMikdash*. That is the place upon where the *Beis HaMikdash* was built – it was built on such a place where destruction almost came to the world.

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168 Talmud Bavli Berachos 55a

169 Talmud Bavli Succah 53a

The Gemara says that the world will be for 6,000 years, and then it will become *charuv*, desolate.<sup>170</sup> On a deeper level, this means that the first 6,000 years of the world correspond to the period when the *Beis HaMikdash* was built, because the *Beis HaMikdash* was built atop the *Even HaShesiyah*, the stone which blocks the waters of the *tehom* from flooding the world, and the word *Shesiyah* is from the word *shishi*, “six”, corresponding to the 6,000 years of the world. The time period when the world becomes desolate (*charuv*), on a more inner level, is a hint to the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, when the world became “desolate” and destroyed.

The *Beis HaMikdash* was built on a place of *charavah*/desolation, because the waters of the *tehom* underneath the ground of the *Beis HaMikdash* almost rose up to destroy the world. This was a hint that the *Beis HaMikdash* would eventually be destroyed, it would become *charuv*, desolate.

### *Mourning The Beis HaMikdash – Returning To The Point Where No Destruction Is Possible*

Now that the *Beis HaMikdash* has been destroyed, it is as if the entire world has become destroyed. What do we do, now that this has happened? We lament its loss, as in the verse, “*My eyes, my eyes, they flow with tears.*”<sup>171</sup>

However, there is a rule that “From the wound itself comes the recovery”. The Gemara says that “Whoever mourns Yerushalayim, will merit to see it in its consolation.”<sup>172</sup> The depth of this matter is because when one cries over the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, he is essentially revealing the point before the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, when the *charavah* (desolate land) was called *yabashah* (dry land). When the *Beis HaMikdash* is destroyed and I want to repair its destruction, I need to return it to the way it was before it was destroyed, when there was no *charavah* in the world yet.

That is the secret behind crying over the loss of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Through crying over the *Beis HaMikdash*, our eyes are becoming “filled with water”, and this returns us to the state when the world was filled with water, before the six days of Creation. On a deep level, the time period when the world becomes *charuv* (desolate) corresponds to the original state of the world, when the world was filled with water, before the six days of Creation, the point which preceded all destruction, and the point in time where there is no concept of destruction. At that point, there was only water, and no land yet.

This means that there is a very deep point where the world is filled with water. When water first filled the world, this was a repaired world, where there was no destruction yet. Of course, from our current perspective, if the world would return to being filled with water, it would be destruction to

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170 Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 97a

171 Eichah 1:16

172 Talmud Bavli Taanis 30b

the world. But at the root, this is actually a repaired state of the world. In fact, it is only when water disappears from the world that there is destruction. When water dries up, the world becomes *charavah*, desolate land.

The third *Beis HaMikdash*, which will descend from Heaven, will come down in the form of a fire.<sup>173</sup> The third *Beis HaMikdash* will come from Heaven, where water and fire are combined (as a hint, *shomayim*/heaven comes from the words *aish*/fire and *mayim*/water). This will be a revelation of “dry land” within the water. The splitting of the sea was also a point where the dry land met the water.

[Just as there is a concept of “dry land within water” in the side of holiness, so is there a concept of “dry land within water” on the side of ruination.] *Chazal* state that on the day Shlomo married the daughter of Pharaoh, which was also the day the first *Beis HaMikdash* was built, the angel Gavriel laid the foundation in the sea for the land of Greece.<sup>174</sup> Unlike the redemption from Egypt, where the people went from the sea to dry land (at the splitting of the sea), where there was a holy revelation of “dry land” within water, the day of when the first *Beis HaMikdash* was built, when the land of Greece was formed from the water, there was a chilling revelation of “dry land” within water, on the side of ruination.

When there is dry land without water, there is desolation and destruction. The *mazal sartan* in the month of Tamuz – the crab – represents the concept of revealing “dry land within water”. When the Ark of Noach settled on the peak of the mountain Ararat, it was dry land within water. At that time, the entire world was filled with water from the Flood, but the Ark was amidst dry land, on Ararat. Even when there is water everywhere, which destroys the world, there can be a point of “dry land” within the waters of destruction.

### *Summary*

Thus, the idea is that there is either (1) Dry land without water, which brings destruction, (2) Water flooding the world, which is also destruction, (3) Water filling the entire world at the beginning of Creation, which was a repaired state for the world, and (4) “Dry land within water”, a state of repair.

### *Crying In Tamuz: Revealing Tears of Joy In The Tears of Sadness*

By the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, the world became desolate again. It was like having land (the world) without water (our spiritual energy, our sustenance). It totally dried us out. What happens when there is total dryness? A person dries up, becomes thirsty, and longs for water.

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173 Talmud Bavli Succah 39a

174 Talmud Bavli Shabbos 56a, and see Rashi to Megillah 6b

Hagar cried in the desert because she had no water. Hagar was also the daughter of Pharoah (king of Egypt). [This is a hint to Shlomo’s marriage to the daughter of Pharoah on the day when the *Beis HaMikdash* was built, which paved the way towards destruction.] *Rav Saadya Gaon* also says that the month of Tamuz also corresponds to the exile in Egypt. Hence, the crying and mourning which we express in Tamuz, over the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, is a crying that comes from thirst, from having no water.

The *Raavad* furthermore states that the root of crying is in the month of Tamuz, because the *mazal* of Tamuz is the crab, which lives in the water [tears are a form of water]. Thus, our crying in the month of Tamuz corresponds to the crab.

But there are two kinds of crying. There is crying out of sadness, and there is crying out of joy. When a person cries, a person has some revelation of “water” coming forth from him, because tears are a form of water. This is somewhat comforting to a person, because he is not totally dried up. If he is able to cry, he has some “water” in his soul, and he is not totally dry. This is a comfort, on some level. When one cries, one is returning to a state of “water”, through the tears.

Tears are salty, and when a person cries out of sadness, he has “salty” water, so the crying does not completely calm him, just as salty water does not quench a thirsty person. This World is compared to “salty water”, because at first it seems to a person that worldly pleasures are satisfying, but soon a person realizes that he is not satisfied by the pleasures of This World, like salty water, which temporarily quenches a person’s thirst, but which doesn’t truly quench the thirst.

The crying which we express in the month of Tamuz, which is when we cry out of sadness over the *Beis HaMikdash*, is a crying that leaves us saddened and thirsty for something. Although crying is somewhat comforting, it does not completely calm a person, if the person is crying tears from sadness.

Our crying in the month of Tamuz resembles the state of the lower waters in Creation, which cry and yearn to return to above.<sup>175</sup> This is a kind of crying which, although it is coming from a good source, it doesn’t have the power to bring a person yet to completion. It only makes a person thirstier for more, and it leaves a person feeling unsatisfied and unquenched.

When a person drinks salty water, he is not imagining the water. There is definitely water here, and it is not being imagined. But it only quenches his thirst partially, and soon after the person is thirsty again. Crying out of sadness, which is like salty water, can only comfort a person partially, it is some kind of “water” which quenches a person’s longing, but it does not completely comfort the person.

When a person cries tears of joy, the *Raavad* says that this can heal the eyes. An example of crying “tears of joy” would be the crying expressed at finding one’s spouse. The Sages state “Finding a mate

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175 Tikkunei HaZohar 5

is as difficult as the splitting the sea.” By the splitting of the sea, there was dry land within water. When there is a revelation of “dry land within water”, there can be tears of joy, which are coming because of the “water” that is here. But when there is only dry land and there is no water, there can only be tears of sadness.

When a person cries, he is connecting himself to the state of “water”, to his tears, and that is how he can cry. But when a person has “dry land within water”, he is able to cry tears of joy, from finding water within dry land. He is not crying for water - for he has water. He has water within the dry land.

### *Revealing Joy Within The Sadness of Mourning The Beis HaMikdash*

Now that the outline was described, let us bring this down to the realm of our emotions.

Crying out of sadness takes place whenever something meaningful has become removed from a person’s life. In contrast, crying tears of joy is when a person gains something, from a feeling of fulfillment, from the emotion of acquiring and reaching something.

All crying, even crying tears of sadness, really needs to be mixed with joy and sadness. How? On one hand, there is so much to cry for. The spiritual level of the generations becomes worse as time continues, for the Sages state that “There is no day that is not more cursed than the day before it.”<sup>176</sup> There was destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, the place where the glory of Hashem was revealed on this world. Nothing could be sadder. But at the same time, we always have to remember these words: “There is no place that is empty from Him.”<sup>177</sup> Even in the absolutely worst times of destruction, Hashem is present!

On one hand, we are missing the *Shechinah*, Hashem’s presence on this world, and the glory of the Jewish people has disappeared with this as well, ever since the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed. Our souls are in pain over this, and over the absence of the *Shechinah* in the world. But at the same time, we can still apply the verse, “*In any place where I My Name, I will bless you.*”<sup>178</sup> Even as we mourn and cry tears of sadness over our destroyed world, we can also cry tears of joy, because “There is no place empty from Him.”

We are able to leave behind the current state of the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, and enter into the dimension of “There is no place empty from Him.” If we can only cry over the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* and we are only saddened, with no source of joy in our lives, then we truly

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176 Talmud Bavli Bava Basra 74a

177 Tikkunei HaZohar 57

178 Shemos 20:21

remain with nothing except destruction and sadness. But if we can recognize that even in the lowest and darkest point that we can still find Hashem, it is like finding dry land within water.

There are, essentially, two totally different ways in which Hashem's Presence is revealed to us. One way is when it is obvious, such as by the splitting of the sea. This was "water" within dry land, because we walked on dry land where there should have been water. Another way in which Hashem is revealed to us is when there is "dry land" within water: through the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, we can also reveal Hashem, when we find the "dry land within water" – when we manage to find Hashem's presence amidst all of the destruction around us.

### *Revealing Joy On Our Inside Amidst Sadness On Our Outside*

Now let's describe this all in simpler terms which we can apply to our own lives.

All of us, each on his own level, has times of failure, of being pained from our personal past, as well as from the generation level of this generation. Every person is bothered by his own personal shortcomings and failures from his past, and if a person is on a higher level than this, he is pained also from the low spiritual level of today's generation. We can all clearly recognize that we currently live in *hester panim*, where Hashem's radiance is concealed from us, and we feel like we are living in the dark. But even within all of the darkness, can still find Hashem hidden there. He is found there, and we can all find Him, to the extent long as we recognize this truth.

The prophet Yirmiyahu wrote the book of Eichah, which laments the loss of the *Beis HaMikdash*. There is a rule that in order for a prophet to compose any of the books of the Prophets, he had to be in a state of prophecy, of Hashem's Presence resting upon him, which required him to be in a state of joy. The question is, how could Yirmiyahu write Eichah when he was clearly in distress from mourning the *Beis HaMikdash*? The deep answer to this is because even as one is mourning and saddened on the outside, on the inside, he can still find Hashem, in any situation, even as destruction is raging around him.

Tears of sadness are about destruction, whereas tears of joy are about finding "dry land within water", a place of respite amidst all of the destruction. When we are pained in our souls about our losses, both our personal losses and our collective losses, all of this pain can be experienced on the "outside" of the soul, but on the "inside" of our soul, we can find joy! How? When we realize how Hashem is always there with us!

The Gemara says that "On the outer chambers, Hashem weeps, but on the inner chambers, Hashem is joyous."<sup>179</sup> This also applies to us on a personal level, on the level of our own souls. On the "outer chambers" of our soul, we mourn the *Beis HaMikdash*, and we can be profoundly saddened at all that we have lost. But even amidst all of this mourning and sadness, we also need to

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179 Talmud Bavli Chagigah 5b

access the “inner chambers” of our soul, where we can find joy, where we discover Hashem’s eternal presence.

In the month of Tamuz, we begin to mourn. The *mazal* of Tamuz, the *sartan*/crab, reveals the dry land within water. The crab is a creature that is used for healing, as the Raavad says. Its hide is used to beautify royal garments. The deeper meaning of this is that even within the crying of sadness, we can find the constant presence of Hashem, the ever-present reality of Hashem, and that is the “dry land within the water” that we can always find. When one is connected to that, he is only saddened on his outside, but on his inside, he has joy.

If a person can only cry tears of sadness, he lives only on the “outer chambers” of the soul, and he will remain only with the “salty water” that comes from such crying, which only makes him become thirstier. One also needs to cry tears of joy, by finding Hashem’s presence, even amidst the worst times of darkness and destruction.

Of course, we do not mean that a person should not cry over the loss of the *Beis HaMikdash* and that he should only be joyous, *chas v’shalom*. Rather, what we mean is that along with our mourning over the *Beis HaMikdash*, we also need to become connected to our inner dimension, of feeling Hashem’s Presence in all times, where we can always find joy.

Such a person will gain the true “*nechamah* (consolation) of Yerushalayim”, because he will reach the place of “There is no place empty from Him” – in the present, revealed in his soul.

### *In Conclusion*

May we merit the time when the fasts of Tamuz and Av will become turned from pain into joy, when even the outer chambers of the soul will become filled with the revelation of “There is no place empty from Him.”

## 29 | Av – The Lion

### *The Destruction of Jerusalem: When The 'Lion' Attacked*

The *mazal* of the month of Av is “*aryeh*”, the lion.

In this month, the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, by the Babylonian king, Nevuchadnezzar. Our Sages compared king Nevuchadnezzar to a lion, for only a ‘lion’ could have the power to attack the *Beis HaMikdash*, which is called *Ariel*, “lion of G-d.”

It is clear that the *mazal* of the month of Av is tied to the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Let us try to understand a little about what the ‘lion’ is in deeper terms, so that we can understand more about the month of Av, and the *avodah* we have during these days; may it be transformed from mourning to joy.

### *The Lion: The Symbol of Malchus \Royalty*

Our Sages state that each of the animal groups has their respective king. The king of the birds is the eagle, the king of domestic animals is the bull, and the king of the beasts is the lion. The lion represents *malchus* (royalty). Although it is king over the beasts alone, it is considered to be the representation of the concept of *malchus*.

The Jewish people are referred to by seven names, and one of them is “*aryeh*”, “lion”. But more specifically, it is the tribe of Yehuda, the king of all the tribes of Israel and ancestor of the Davidic dynasty, who is compared to the lion.

The *Beis HaMikdash* is partially built in Yehuda’s portion, and the rest of the *Beis HaMikdash* is in Binyamin’s portion. Binyamin attained part of the status of the *malchus* due to the first king appointed in *Klal Yisrael*, who was King Shaul, a descendant of Binyamin. However, Shaul’s status of *malchus* was eventually transferred to David, who descends from Yehuda. The *Beis HaMikdash*, which was called *ariel* (lion of G-d), was a manifestation of *malchus* - represented by the “lion”.

### *The Evil Lion, Nevuchadnezzar*

The Gemara<sup>180</sup> says that a lion does not attack two people; it will only attack one single person at a time. The Gemara asks: don’t we see that a lion does attack two people at once? The Gemara answers that it depends. If the lion thinks that there are two people in front of it, it will not attack them both. But if it thinks that the two people look like two animals, then it will attack them both, because then it doesn’t think of them as people; it thinks of them as animals.

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180 Pesachim 49a

The deeper meaning of this is that when a person sinks to the level of an animal, he can be attacked by the ‘lion’ [on the side of evil]. “*They became comparable to animals*”, the prophet says, concerning the sinful level that the Jewish people sank to, in the era preceding the destruction. When we weren’t sinning, we are called “*adam*” (man); we resemble the perfected level of ‘man’ that we are created to be. But when we sank to the level of sins, we were on the level of animals – and then we were able to be attacked by the ‘lion’: Nevuchadnezzar.

If the *Beis HaMikdash* could be destroyed in the month of Av – the representation of the entire Jewish people together – then it must be because we sank to the level in which we were comparable to animals. Had we been on the level of “man”, then the ‘lion’ that is Nevuchadnezzar could not attack us, for the lion doesn’t start up with even more than one man. If Nevuchadnezzar was able to come and destroy the *Beis HaMikdash*, this could only have been possible because we became like ‘animals’ in his eyes, and when he viewed us as animals, he was thus able to attack us. We lost our original *tzuras adam* (ideal form of man).

### *The Two ‘Lions’: Yehuda and Dan*

In the blessing of Yaakov Avinu, Yehuda is compared to a lion. Yehuda is blessed with the *malchus* (the royal dynasty), the attribute of the lion. Generally speaking, the lion is represented by the tribe Yehuda. But we also find that the tribe Dan is compared to the lion. Yaakov Avinu compares Dan to a serpent, but Moshe Rabbeinu in his blessing compares Dan to a lion.

The Gemara says that the lion has six names<sup>181</sup>. However, there are essentially two roots of where it all stems from: there is a ‘lion’ aspect contained in Yehuda, and there is a ‘lion’ aspect contained in Dan.

The lion that is ‘Yehuda’ represents the concept of *malchus* (royalty), which is Yehuda’s role. Yehuda is the symbol of royalty, for the Davidic dynasty stems from him. The lion that is ‘Dan’, though, refers to the fact that the tribe of Dan is the protectors of the Jewish people, who would guard the borders of Eretz Yisrael from enemy attack; as the tribe Dan is portrayed in the blessing of Yaakov Avinu (as explained according to *Rashi*). This is Dan’s aspect of ‘lion’. Thus, there is a ‘lion’ that refers to royalty (Yehuda) and there is a lion that refers to fighting evil (Dan).

The Sages state, “A king can break fences, and no one can protest him.” This is referring to the power of *malchus* (royalty), which is Yehuda’s aspect. A true king is all-powerful and he can do as he pleases. We also find this concept in the side of evil. The Sages state that the Serpent is one who “breaks the fences of the world.” The Serpent, who represents evil, has the audacity to break the proper rules of the world and trample upon all that is holy.

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181 aryeh, kfir, lehavi, layish, shachal, shachaf

Dan is called the “serpent”, but he is the called the ‘serpent’ on the side of holiness, who can watch and protect the boundaries and fences of the Jewish people. Dan is the opposite of the concept of Yehuda, who is a king who can break all fences. Whereas Yehuda can break through all fences, because he is the king, Dan serves to protect the fences and boundaries within the Jewish people.

### *‘Higher’ Lion and ‘Lower’ Lion*

The *Beis HaMikdash* is called *ariel*, “lion of G-d”. It is clear that the ‘lion’ which the *Beis HaMikdash* is compared to is the lion of Yehuda, an invincible ‘lion’, for he represents the *malchus* of Hashem. The evil ‘lion’, Nevuchadnezzar, came and destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*. How are we to understand this? If the lion of Yehuda cannot be attacked, for he is the king, then how could Nevuchadnezzar attack the *Beis HaMikdash*?

The answer is because Nevuchadnezzar’s ‘lion’ aspect does not draw its power from Yehuda’s ‘lion’ aspect. Rather, Nevuchadnezzar gets his ‘lion’ aspect from Dan. And the ‘lion’ aspect of Dan can be overcome by evil forces.

Yehuda’s ‘lion’ aspect cannot be defeated by Nevuchadnezzar, because the *malchus* of Yehuda cannot be overcome by the *malchus* of Nevuchadnezzar. The ‘lion’ on the side of evil, Nevuchadnezzar, can only attack the ‘lower lion’, Dan. Nevuchadnezzar can’t touch the ‘higher lion’, Yehuda.

Dan is compared to the lion and he is also compared to the serpent. When the Jewish people sank to the level of sinning, they awakened the evil hold of the Serpent, who was responsible for causing man to sin and all subsequent sins after that. Upon sinking to the level of sin, destruction was able to enter. Dan is compared to both the serpent and the lion; on the side of holiness, when we overcome the hold of the ‘Serpent’, the ‘lion’ on the side of evil isn’t able to attack us either.

From the tribe of Dan came the idol of Michah. Because of the tribe of Dan, evil was able to penetrate into the sheltered society of the Jewish people. The tribe of Dan dwelled on the outermost part of the encampment of the Jewish people, thus they were the most susceptible to the forces of impurity that was just outside of them; and therefore it was they who brought in the evil influences of idol worship.

Nevuchadnezzar, the ‘lion’ on the side of evil, was able to attack our *Beis HaMikdash*, which is called *ariel*, “lion of G-d”, only because of Dan. Nevuchadnezzar’s ‘lion’ aspect is really is no match for Yehuda’s ‘lion’. Nevuchadnezzar is only the ‘lower’ lion (rooted in Dan), thus it can only attack our ‘lower lion’; it cannot attack our ‘higher lion’.

The Gemara says that Nevuchadnezzar rode on a male lion, and placed a serpent hanging from his head. This is in line with the concept being described here that his “lion-like” power is really

using the power of the ‘serpent’: Dan. The side of evil connects the ‘lion’ to the ‘serpent’; it is not capable of taking hold of the lion of Yehuda, but it can connect itself to the lion of Dan.

Dan is compared to the serpent, and he is also compared to a lion; therefore, the side of evil can connect itself to the serpent, and from there, it can connect itself to the level of the lion, for Dan is the connecting point between the serpent and the lion. This is what allowed Nevuchadnezzar to be the ‘lion’ that destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*: he connected his ‘lion’ aspect to the ‘serpent’ aspect of Dan. And when the aspects of ‘lion’ and ‘serpent’ are combined for evil purposes, this is what enables the side of evil to attack and destroy the [external layer of the] *Beis HaMikdash*.

We have seen how the side of evil connects the lion and the serpent, for destructive uses. Now we will see how this concept is employed in the side of holiness.

### *Mashiach: The Holy Union of Yehuda and Dan*

*Mashiach* ben David descends from Yehuda. Rashi explains that “his father will come from Yehuda, and his mother will come from Dan”. This shows us that *Mashiach* will be the connecting point between Yehuda and Dan – on the side of holiness. As we know, the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which *Mashiach* ben David will build, will be forever. Let us examine the deep reason for this.

On Purim, we were saved by Mordechai, whose father comes from Yehuda, and whose mother comes from Binyamin. The connection between Yehuda and Binyamin symbolizes the first two *Batei Mikdash*, which was split between the portions of land of Yehuda and Binyamin. The deeper meaning behind this is because the *malchus* was eventually split between Yehuda and Binyamin. That rift essentially meant that there were two kings now. And there can only be one king in order for the king to have true power.

Thus, the very fact that the *malchus* was split between Yehuda and Binyamin was already a damage to the *malchus*. Because the *malchus* was damaged during the first two *Batei Mikdash*, it would follow that these two *Batei Mikdash* would ultimately be destroyed. This is because there can only be one *malchus* [under the same roof] - not two.

By contrast, the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which will be built by *Mashiach*, will be forever. *Mashiach* will come from Yehuda and Dan. If *Mashiach* were to come from Dan alone, he would be on the level of the ‘lower’ lion, and then he could be attacked by the other ‘lower’ lion that is on the side of evil. But *Mashiach*’s father is from Yehuda - the ‘higher’ lion - which is stronger than the ‘lower’ lion; thus it cannot be attacked.

Nevuchadnezzar can only attack the ‘lower’ lion in *Klal Yisrael*, but not the ‘higher’ lion in *Klal Yisrael*. Thus, the *Mashiach*, who will come from Yehuda, will be invincible, and his *Beis HaMikdash* cannot be destroyed.

The Sages say that had Moshe entered Eretz Yisrael and built the *Beis HaMikdash*, it could never have been destroyed. We also find that the *Mishkan*, which was built by Moshe, was not either

destroyed; it was merely hidden. The *Mishkan*, which is never destroyed, is the root of the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which is never destroyed.

By contrast, the first two *Batei Mikdash* were split between Yehuda and Binyamin, and thus they were susceptible to be destroyed, due to the disparity amongst the *malchus*. Yehuda and Binyamin really cannot be connected, because two kings cannot rule under the same roof. Thus the two *Batei Mikdash* which they jointly possessed could be attacked by Nevuchadnezzar.

### *The Third Beis HaMikdash: The Union of Yehudah and Dan*

It has been explained here that there is a ‘lion’ of Yehuda, and a ‘lion’ of Dan. These concepts need understanding, however. In addition, we also need to understand what exactly their union is.

Since Yehuda and Dan are both called “lion”, their union would mean that there are now two “lions”. If there are two lions, there is no chance against them. Thus, the third *Beis HaMikdash* will never be destroyed, for it is built by Mashiach, who comes from Yehuda and Dan, the two ‘lions’.

### *Gevurah (Strength) and Malchus (Royalty)*

Until now, we have outlined the concepts. Now let us try to relate to these matters on a more practical level in our life. What is the ‘lion’ of Yehuda, and what is the ‘lion’ of Dan, in terms of our own personal *avodah*?

We find that the Jewish people, in general, are compared to the lion. The beginning of *Shulchan Aruch* says that upon awakening in the morning, one must strengthen himself like a lion (“*yisgaber k’ari*”), to serve the Creator. The lion’s identifying trait is *gevurah*, strength.

*Gevurah*, symbolized by the lion’s strength, is referring to the ‘lion’ of Dan. The power of Dan is the power to be a ‘lion’ in terms of exercising *gevurah*; to illustrate, the tribe of Dan are called the protectors of the Jewish people. In this aspect, Dan is referred to as the ‘lion’: he shows strength, as he tries to fight the forces of evil.

When a person awakens from sleep, he must ‘strengthen himself like a lion’. We can view this with a deeper understanding: *Chazal* say that sleep is a sixtieth of death; thus, getting up from sleep is like rising from a degree of death. Death was caused by the Serpent. But Dan is called both the lion and the serpent. Dan is a ‘lion’ with regards to the fact that he can strengthen himself and come out of the serpent’s hold on him (the forces of evil), and pull himself out of the serpent’s grasp. Dan is called the serpent, but his gift is that he can also come out of the ‘serpent’ that he is compared to: because he is also called a ‘lion’. That is the ‘lion of Dan’: his aspect of *gevurah*, to strengthen himself and overcome evil.

Yehuda’s power to be a lion, though, serves a totally different (and higher) purpose than Dan’s ‘lion’ aspect. Yehuda’s role is not merely to overcome evil and to rise above it. One of the animals

pictured on the legs of the *Merkavah* (the “Holy Chariot” in Heaven), is the lion, and it is on the right side of the *Merkavah*, which shows that the lion symbolizes *malchus*. Yehuda’s purpose is to reveal *malchus*.

These are very different aspects of the concept of the ‘lion’. The ‘lion of Dan’ represents coming out of evil and lowliness; this is the ‘lower lion’, for it is not yet the ultimate power of the lion. The ‘lion of Yehuda’, which is the ‘higher lion’, is the lion that reveals *malchus*. The lion is king over all the animals, for it is the most exalted. This brings out the true concept of the lion: it is king. This is the higher lion (which is invincible): the lion of Yehuda.

### *The Depth of The Destruction*

Now we can have a deeper understanding of what the destruction was to the *Beis HaMikdash*, and what our *avodah* is, during these days.

The ‘destruction’ is essentially a situation where we remain at the level of Dan and we aren’t accessing the higher perspective, Yehuda. When we think that *gevurah* means to merely overcome evil, and we are unaware of the *malchus* which we must come to reveal, *this* is the depth of destruction! It is this perspective which could allow Nevuchadnezzar attack.

But remember, Nevuchadnezzar could only destroy our ‘lower’ lion, the lion of Dan, and not our ‘higher’ lion, Yehuda.

One has an *avodah* to fight evil, to strengthen himself and “be strong like a lion”, but ultimately, this aspect of *gevurah* is not using the essence of the lion’s power; it is only the serpent’s power. This is Dan’s power, not Yehuda’s power. Thus it is not enough to really stand a chance against evil. Only the “lion” within us can really overcome evil, and only the lion within us reveals our higher purpose.

The purpose of overcoming evil is not merely to overcome evil and rise above our earthiness where we can shake off the dust from ourselves. The purpose is to reveal our inherent *malchus*!

### *How To View Our Struggle With Evil*

Now we will speak about this in simpler language.

You can have a person who is always fighting his *yetzer hora*, and he is constantly involved with the struggle in overcoming evil. But he might always dealing with thoughts of *shiflus* (low self-worth) towards himself. He is always busy fighting his feelings of low self-worth that is created from having to deal with overcoming disgusting evil acts. This kind of person is always fighting the *yetzer hora*, and commendably so – but he is only fighting with the power of Dan, which is not powerful enough to withstand the forces of evil.

The higher way of being “as strong like a lion” when we try to overcome evil is to realize the very essence (*atzmiyus*) of our *neshamah*. Our *neshamah* is called “daughter of the King”: we must

remember our royal status and awaken it. Only then are we truly invincible to evil, and we can then fight evil using this higher perspective. But even more so, we access the *malchus* that is within us, which is the ultimate purpose.

In the month of Av, we mourn the destruction. Our eyes fill with tears, and we realize how low we have sunk, into the very ‘earth’ of This World. But we must realize that we can rise above all of this ‘earth’. We can shake off the dust that has gathered on us and be free of it. The Sages say that “Whoever mourns it, will merit to see it rebuilt”. We can rise above all that we have sunken into, but we must understand: how, exactly, do we rise? What is our perspective as we try to do so?

If one tries to fight the evil of this world because he is merely by trying to overcome, he still has a lowly perspective of himself. And in addition, he will not really succeed in fighting evil, when he has such a perspective. He still thinks he is part of the earth, and therefore, he is not immune to destruction.

But if one realizes that he can rise above his earthy aspect, when he has a yearning to come out of it because he realizes his inherent *malchus*, he reveals the true power of the Jewish people, who are called *bnei melachim* (sons of kings). It is from this deep place in our soul that we can view our struggles with, which we can use to ultimately persevere.

### *The Depth of ‘Getting Up After Chatzos’ on Tisha B’Av*

The *halacha* is that after *chatzos* (noon) on *Tisha B’Av*, we rise from the ground, because we are taught that after *chatzos*, the *Mashiach* is born; our consolation begins. But we must know how to ‘rise’. To what are we rising to?

On an inner level, we cannot rise from the earth if we remain on the level of Dan’s *gevurah*. But if we access the level of Yehuda, then we will be able to. Rising from the earth means that we can rise above evil and earthiness, by fighting it and not giving in (*gevurah*\Dan) and it also means that we can truly be ‘as strong as a lion’ and reveal the inner royalty of a Jew’s soul (*malchus*\Yehuda) - the deep and pure point in our soul which yearns for the revelation of the ultimate *malchus*.

### *In Conclusion*

May we merit, with the help of Hashem, to reach the level of “His father is from Yehuda, and his mother is from Dan<sup>182</sup>”: that when we fight evil, it should be with both of these aspects. Then we will merit, with *siyata d’shamaya*, the light of Mashiach, and the revelation of the complete redemption to all of the Jewish people. *Amen, V’Amen.*

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182 In quote of the words of Rashi concerning the Mashiach’s ancestry.



## 34 / Av – The Lion

### *The Destruction of Jerusalem: When The 'Lion' Attacked*

The *mazal* of the month of Av is “*aryeh*”, the lion.

In this month, the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, by the Babylonian king, Nevuchednezzar. Our Sages compared king Nevuchadnezzar to a lion, for only a ‘lion’ could have the power to attack the *Beis HaMikdash*, which is called *Ariel*, “lion of G-d.”

It is clear that the *mazal* of the month of Av is tied to the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Let us try to understand a little about what the ‘lion’ is in deeper terms, so that we can understand more about the month of Av, and the *avodah* we have during these days; may it be transformed from mourning to joy.

### *The Lion: The Symbol of Malchus \Royalty*

Our Sages state that each of the animal groups has their respective king. The king of the birds is the eagle, the king of domestic animals is the bull, and the king of the beasts is the lion. The lion represents *malchus* (royalty). Although it is king over the beasts alone, it is considered to be the representation of the concept of *malchus*.

The Jewish people are referred to by seven names, and one of them is “*aryeh*”, “lion”. But more specifically, it is the tribe of Yehuda, the king of all the tribes of Israel and ancestor of the Davidic dynasty, who is compared to the lion.

The *Beis HaMikdash* is partially built in Yehuda’s portion, and the rest of the *Beis HaMikdash* is in Binyamin’s portion. Binyamin attained part of the status of the *malchus* due to the first king appointed in *Klal Yisrael*, who was King Shaul, a descendant of Binyamin. However, Shaul’s status of *malchus* was eventually transferred to David, who descends from Yehuda. The *Beis HaMikdash*, which was called *ariel* (lion of G-d), was a manifestation of *malchus* - represented by the “lion”.

### *The Evil Lion, Nevuchadnezzar*

The Gemara<sup>183</sup> says that a lion does not attack two people; it will only attack one single person at a time. The Gemara asks: don’t we see that a lion does attack two people at once? The Gemara answers that it depends. If the lion thinks that there are two people in front of it, it will not attack

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them both. But if it thinks that the two people look like two animals, then it will attack them both, because then it doesn't think of them as people; it thinks of them as animals.

The deeper meaning of this is that when a person sinks to the level of an animal, he can be attacked by the 'lion' [on the side of evil]. "*They became comparable to animals*", the prophet says, concerning the sinful level that the Jewish people sank to, in the era preceding the destruction. When we weren't sinning, we are called "*adam*" (man); we resemble the perfected level of 'man' that we are created to be. But when we sank to the level of sins, we were on the level of animals – and then we were able to be attacked by the 'lion': Nevuchadnezzar.

If the *Beis HaMikdash* could be destroyed in the month of Av – the representation of the entire Jewish people together – then it must be because we sank to the level in which we were comparable to animals. Had we been on the level of "man", then the 'lion' that is Nevuchadnezzar could not attack us, for the lion doesn't start up with even more than one man. If Nevuchadnezzar was able to come and destroy the *Beis HaMikdash*, this could only have been possible because we became like 'animals' in his eyes, and when he viewed us as animals, he was thus able to attack us. We lost our original *tzuras adam* (ideal form of man).

### *The Two 'Lions': Yehuda and Dan*

In the blessing of Yaakov Avinu, Yehuda is compared to a lion. Yehuda is blessed with the *malchus* (the royal dynasty), the attribute of the lion. Generally speaking, the lion is represented by the tribe Yehuda. But we also find that the tribe Dan is compared to the lion. Yaakov Avinu compares Dan to a serpent, but Moshe Rabbeinu in his blessing compares Dan to a lion.

The Gemara says that the lion has six names<sup>184</sup>. However, there are essentially two roots of where it all stems from: there is a 'lion' aspect contained in Yehuda, and there is a 'lion' aspect contained in Dan.

The lion that is 'Yehuda' represents the concept of *malchus* (royalty), which is Yehuda's role. Yehuda is the symbol of royalty, for the Davidic dynasty stems from him. The lion that is 'Dan', though, refers to the fact that the tribe of Dan is the protectors of the Jewish people, who would guard the borders of Eretz Yisrael from enemy attack; as the tribe Dan is portrayed in the blessing of Yaakov Avinu (as explained according to *Rashi*). This is Dan's aspect of 'lion'. Thus, there is a 'lion' that refers to royalty (Yehuda) and there is a lion that refers to fighting evil (Dan).

The Sages state, "A king can break fences, and no one can protest him." This is referring to the power of *malchus* (royalty), which is Yehuda's aspect. A true king is all-powerful and he can do as he pleases. We also find this concept in the side of evil. The Sages state that the Serpent is one who

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184 aryeh, kfir, lehavi, layish, shachal, shachaf

“breaks the fences of the world.” The Serpent, who represents evil, has the audacity to break the proper rules of the world and trample upon all that is holy.

Dan is called the “serpent”, but he is also called the ‘serpent’ on the side of holiness, who can watch and protect the boundaries and fences of the Jewish people. Dan is the opposite of the concept of Yehuda, who is a king who can break all fences. Whereas Yehuda can break through all fences, because he is the king, Dan serves to protect the fences and boundaries within the Jewish people.

### *‘Higher’ Lion and ‘Lower’ Lion*

The *Beis HaMikdash* is called *ariel*, “lion of G-d”. It is clear that the ‘lion’ which the *Beis HaMikdash* is compared to is the lion of Yehuda, an invincible ‘lion’, for he represents the *malchus* of Hashem. The evil ‘lion’, Nevuchadnezzar, came and destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*. How are we to understand this? If the lion of Yehuda cannot be attacked, for he is the king, then how could Nevuchadnezzar attack the *Beis HaMikdash*?

The answer is because Nevuchadnezzar’s ‘lion’ aspect does not draw its power from Yehuda’s ‘lion’ aspect. Rather, Nevuchadnezzar gets his ‘lion’ aspect from Dan. And the ‘lion’ aspect of Dan can be overcome by evil forces.

Yehuda’s ‘lion’ aspect cannot be defeated by Nevuchadnezzar, because the *malchus* of Yehuda cannot be overcome by the *malchus* of Nevuchadnezzar. The ‘lion’ on the side of evil, Nevuchadnezzar, can only attack the ‘lower lion’, Dan. Nevuchadnezzar can’t touch the ‘higher lion’, Yehuda.

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You can have a person who is always fighting his *yetzer hora*, and he is constantly involved with the struggle in overcoming evil. But he might always dealing with thoughts of *shiflus* (low self-worth) towards himself. He is always busy fighting his feelings of low self-worth that is created from having to deal with overcoming disgusting evil acts. This kind of person is always fighting the *yetzer hora*, and commendably so – but he is only fighting with the power of Dan, which is not powerful enough to withstand the forces of evil.

The higher way of being “as strong like a lion” when we try to overcome evil is to realize the very essence (*atzmiyus*) of our *neshamah*. Our *neshamah* is called “daughter of the King”: we must remember our royal status and awaken it. Only then are we truly invincible to evil, and we can then fight evil using this higher perspective. But even more so, we access the *malchus* that is within us, which is the ultimate purpose.

In the month of Av, we mourn the destruction. Our eyes fill with tears, and we realize how low we have sunk, into the very ‘earth’ of This World. But we must realize that we can rise above all of this ‘earth’. We can shake off the dust that has gathered on us and be free of it. The Sages say that “Whoever mourns it, will merit to see it rebuilt”. We can rise above all that we have sunken into, but we must understand: how, exactly, do we rise? What is our perspective as we try to do so?

If one tries to fight the evil of this world because he is merely by trying to overcome, he still has a lowly perspective of himself. And in addition, he will not really succeed in fighting evil, when he has such a perspective. He still thinks he is part of the earth, and therefore, he is not immune to destruction.

But if one realizes that he can rise above his earthy aspect, when he has a yearning to come out of it because he realizes his inherent *malchus*, he reveals the true power of the Jewish people, who are called *bnei melachim* (sons of kings). It is from this deep place in our soul that we can view our struggles with, which we can use to ultimately persevere.

### *The Depth of ‘Getting Up After Chatzos’ on Tisha B’Av*

The *halacha* is that after *chatzos* (noon) on *Tisha B’Av*, we rise from the ground, because we are taught that after *chatzos*, the *Mashiach* is born; our consolation begins. But we must know how to ‘rise’. To what are we rising to?

On an inner level, we cannot rise from the earth if we remain on the level of Dan’s *gevurah*. But if we access the level of Yehuda, then we will be able to. Rising from the earth means that we can rise above evil and earthiness, by fighting it and not giving in (*gevurah*\Dan) and it also means that we can truly be ‘as strong as a lion’ and reveal the inner royalty of a Jew’s soul (*malchus*\Yehuda) - the deep and pure point in our soul which yearns for the revelation of the ultimate *malchus*.

### *In Conclusion*

May we merit, with the help of Hashem, to reach the level of “His father is from Yehuda, and his mother is from Dan<sup>185</sup>”: that when we fight evil, it should be with both of these aspects. Then we will merit, with *siyata d’shamaya*, the light of *Mashiach*, and the revelation of the complete redemption to all of the Jewish people. *Amen, V’Am*

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185 In quote of the words of Rashi concerning the *Mashiach*’s ancestry.



## 35 / Elul - Virgin

### *Elul – The Mazal of Besulah \ Virgin*

The month of Elul, as is well-known, contains the *mazal* of *besulah*, virgin.<sup>186</sup>

The verse “*Ani L’Dodi, V’Dodi Li*” (“I am to my Beloved, and my Beloved is to me”)<sup>187</sup> refers to the month of Elul. Thus [since the *mazal* of Elul is *besulah*\virgin], the term “*ani*” is referring to the aspect of *besulah*\virgin. The relationship between the Jewish people and Hashem are compared to a *chosson* and *kallah* (a groom and bride), with Hashem depicted as the *chosson* and the Jewish People as His *kallah*.

There are different relationships that a *kallah* (bride) may later have towards her husband. She may [*chas v’shalom*] become widowed or divorced from him. Or, she may retain her original status of being a “virgin” towards him.

Let us see what the concept of *besulah*\virgin is, which each Jew needs to have [in his relationship towards Hashem], in the month of Elul, the month where the concept of the *besulah*\virgin takes hold.

The virgin girl has a pure status, since she has not yet had relations with any man, but this also means that she has not yet become exclusively designated to the man who betroths her in marriage.

The first and only person whom the Torah calls a *besulah* is Rivkah Imeinu. The Torah says that she was a beautiful maiden, and a virgin, whom no man had relations with. From here we learn what the concept of a *besulah* is all about.

Of Rivkah, the Torah also says that she had a painful pregnancy, when her future sons, Yaakov and Esav, were clashing within her. She went to seek out the word of Hashem concerning this matter. She passed by the house of idols and she felt intense movement, and when she passed by the Beis Midrash she also felt intense movement. She didn’t know what kind of baby she was having, an idol worshipper or a Torah scholar, and she was confused.

The depth of this was that she was like a *beinoni*, a person who is “in between” different states, whose status is *teluyah*, pending – one who is not here neither there. That is the very concept of a *besulah*: she has not had relations with any man, but she is not yet designated to her husband, because her status is *teluyah*, pending, resembling the *beinoni*, whose fate lies in the balance.

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186 Sefer Yetzirah 5:4

187 Shir HaShirim 6:3

### *The Connection Between Mazal Besulah\Virgin and Seeking Hashem In Elul*

In Elul, our *avodah* is to seek out Hashem, as it is written, “*Seek Hashem, where He is found*”<sup>188</sup>, which refers to the month of Elul. But this “seeking out” of Hashem must come from the same purity of the *besulah*, just as the pure, holy *besulah* Rivkah Imeinu sought the word of Hashem, as the Torah says, “*And she went to seek Hashem.*”<sup>189</sup>

That is why the *mazal* of Elul is *besulah*, the virgin - it is because we must seek out Hashem like the original *besulah*\virgin, Rivkah, who sought Hashem. This is an additional insight into the verse “*Seek Hashem where He is found*” – it means that **we must “seek Hashem”, from our “besulah” aspect.**

In the 40 days which span Elul through the Ten Days of Repentance, the climax is the holy day of *Yom Kippur*, where there was an *avodah* of the *Kohen Gadol* in the *Kodesh Kodashim*. The *Kohen Gadol* is the only one of whom it is said (in the Torah) that he is required to marry a *besulah*\virgin. A regular *Kohen* can marry a divorcee, but the *Kohen Gadol* can only marry a *besulah*. Thus, at the end of this 40 day period, which is on *Yom Kippur*, is the *avodah* of the *Kohen Gadol* - who is the full revelation of the concept of *besulah*. In the general sense, all of the Jewish people have the *mazal* of *besulah* in Elul, but it is the *Kohen Gadol* specifically where the concept of *besulah* is manifest in the actual, *halachic* sense, for he is only permitted to marry a *besulah*.

### *The Concept of “Besulah” In Halachah, and In The Soul*

Returning to our original question: What exactly is our “*Ani L’Dodi*” (I am to my Beloved) aspect in Elul, and how does it relate specifically to the *mazal besulah* of Elul?

Moshe ascended the mountain of Sinai in Elul, and he remained there for 40 days, and it is our own *avodah* during these days to resemble this 40-day ascent of Moshe on the mountain. When Moshe ascended the mountain, he wasn’t here on this world, because he was in Heaven. This 40-day period is therefore not just a period of seeking forgiveness and atonement, in the simple sense; it is a period when Moshe wasn’t on this world. That represents the inner dimension of our *avodah* during these 40 days from Elul through *Yom Kippur*. To resemble Moshe’s ascent to Heaven, when he wasn’t on this world at all, one needs to become closed off from the rest of the world, to become separate and disconnected from This World, so that he can avoid any negative influences from anyone.

That is the implication of the *mazal* of *besulah*\virgin in Elul – one must be like a *besulah*, a “virgin”, in the sense that he\she is closed off from any strange, unwanted influences that come from the people of this world.

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188 Yeshayahu 55:6

189 Beraishis 25:25

How can one attain such a level of purity on this world, though, especially if we are influenced by the surroundings, (as the Rambam famously said, that a person is mainly influenced by the opinions of his surroundings<sup>190</sup>)? How can we remain like a *besulah*?

The *avodah* that we have during these days tells us the answer. Our *avodah* in Elul is to be like Moshe when he ascended the mountain for 40 days, when he wasn't on this world at all. That is how we can be like a *besulah* towards Hashem – by being disconnected from This World, during this time of the year. This is a very clear definition of the depth of our *avodah* during these days. It is to have 40 days when we are not in this world! In Heaven, Moshe didn't eat and didn't sleep - and that is the depth of the *avodah* we have during these days of Elul, through Yom Kippur.

This *avodah* ends with Yom Kippur, when we resemble angels. That is when we actually do not eat and we wear white to resemble a Heavenly state, like the *Kohen Gadol* in the *Kodesh Kodashim* on Yom Kippur, who must be married to a pure *besulah*. But this period of purity begins with Elul, with entering into the innermost chambers with Hashem, which we must be trying to reach for all these 40 days of Elul.

The full revelation of this is on Yom Kippur, but these 40 days of Moshe Rabbeinu ascending to the mountain represents the idea of disconnecting from the world, during this time. For this reason, some had the custom to fast for 40 days before Yom Kippur, to reflect how Moshe didn't eat in Heaven for 40 days, because he wasn't part of this world then.

The verse “*Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li*” (“I am to my Beloved, and my Beloved is to me”) depicts the month of Elul. **The implication of “*ani*” (I) is that one’s “I” should be like the *besulah*. To the degree that one makes himself like a *besulah* in Elul, there will be “*Ani L'Dodi*” (I am to my Beloved), and accordingly, that is how much of a revelation there will be of “*Dodi Li*” (My Beloved is to me).**<sup>191</sup> Then there will be a special love (*chibah yesairah*) that the “Groom” (Hashem) will show towards His *kallah besulah*, His virgin bride.

### *Disconnecting From The World – Through Bittul (Self-Nullification) To Hashem*

We need to understand the *pnimiyus*, the inner depth, of these days. Our *avodah* during these days is that we should not be found here on this world, just as Moshe wasn't on this world, when he ascended the mountain for 40 days.

In order for one to become separate from the world, he needs to have *bittul* (self-nullification). One needs to be *batel* (בטל>nullified), which has the letters ל, ט, כ, (beis, tes, and lamed), similar to the root letters of the word *besulah*, which contains the letter ל, ת, ב. The power of *besulah* in Elul is the

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190 Rambam Hilchos De'os 6:1

191 Sfas Emes: L'Chodesh Elul

power to bring a person from the level of *besulah* spelled with a letter ת\tav, to *bittul*, which is spelled with the letter ט\tes.

The *avodah* of being like a *besulah* [in Elul] reveals two aspects [disconnection from the outside, and self-nullification]. As explained, one aspect of *besulah* is to be safeguarded from the rest of the world, so that no one else can enter. On a practical level, this means that one needs to disconnect from the world, similar to how Moshe Rabbeinu ascended the mountain for 40 days, when he was not part of this world. This is what enables the *besulah* to become designated to Hashem – it is through *bittul*, self-nullification.

The verse of “*Ani L’Dodi V’Dodi Li*” implies that if I am designated to my Beloved alone, “*Ani L’Dodi*”, and to no one else - only then can there be “*Dodi Li*”, that “my Beloved is to me”. That is the implication of *besulah* – to be designated to Hashem alone. There is only *Ani L’Dodi* if I am *batel* (nullified) to Him, and only then there can be “*Dodi Li*”.

In clearer terms to help us understand the concept, the Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuvah* says that only when one regrets, confesses, and resolves not to sin again, can “The Knower of all hidden secrets can testify, that the person will not revert back to sin”.<sup>192</sup> The commentators wonder what the source for these words of the Rambam is. But along the lines of our discussion, the explanation of the Rambam’s words is because a *besulah* guards her opening, and if the Creator knows that the person is still apt to return to sinning, it is as if the opening isn’t closed anymore.

The month of Elul contains the *mazal* of *besulah*, but it seems that we are no longer a “*besulah*\virgin” towards Hashem. For if a *besulah* has relations, whether in the usual fashion or in the unusual fashion, she is no longer a *besulah*, and so have we “cohabited” with other “men”, by committing sins. So how we can still be like a *besulah* towards Hashem? Haven’t we lost our “*besulah*” status by now?

The answer to this is that we can only be a *besulah* if we are like the *ketanah*, a minor girl under the age of three, whose *besulim* return even after it has been broken. Without being like a *ketanah* under the age of three, we cannot be like a *besulah* in Elul, and even if we would do *teshuvah*, we would only be like a widow or divorcee towards Hashem. Only from resembling the *ketanah* under the age of three can our *teshuvah* be genuine, lasting, and complete.

### *Resembling The Purity of The Besulah Ketanah – Through Bittul*

This is the depth of the *mazal besulah* of Elul. There are two kinds of *besulos*\virgins. There is a kind of *besulah* who has never cohabited at all, and there is also a *besulah* who loses her *besulim* but later her *besulim* return (which is only possible with a *ketanah*, a minor girl under the age of three). The month on Elul is not like the first kind of *besulah*, who has never cohabited\sinned. That is an

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192 Rambam Hilchos Teshuvah 2:2

altogether different level of purity. The month of Elul is rather like the *besulah* whose *besulim* returns to her even after it has been broken, which is only possible by a *ketanah* under the age of three.

Therefore, in Elul, one needs to be like the *ketanah*, within his soul, by nullifying himself totally to the Authority, and in this way, then even if the *besulim* have been broken, the *besulim* return. On a similar note, the *Raavad*<sup>193</sup> writes that the *mazal* of *besulah* in Elul implies “a woman, who has light *daas*”<sup>194</sup> [one should be pure-minded and ready to nullifying himself to the Creator, just as a woman nullifies herself to her husband].

The more *bittul* (self-nullification) that a person feels towards the Creator, the more that the ‘*besulim*’ [purity] can return. A *besulah* implies that she is designated only to her husband. According to the level that one makes himself like a *besulah* towards Hashem, that is how much he becomes betrothed and designated to Hashem.

### *Practically Speaking: Practicing Times of Disconnection From The World In Elul*

Making this matter practical, each person must find during these days some time of the day where he is not of the people of the world. He needs time to silence his soul and be dedicated to Hashem, where there is only Hashem, where he transcends time and place. The *Beis Din* sanctifies the times, and this is because the Jewish people can be above time and be disconnected from the world. If a person acquires during these days a deep place in his soul where he is disconnected from everything, just for some time of the day, he acquires new “*besulim*” for himself.

If one only does *teshuvah* on an external level, he is only doing *teshuvah* from the outer, superficial layers of his existence, and he won’t succeed. He needs a new place in himself, “the place where *baalei teshuvah* stand”<sup>195</sup> - a place which is not a place. This means a disconnection from the world and a place where one is completely dedicated to Hashem. If one reaches this place in his soul, he is connected to period of the 40 days when Moshe ascended the mountain. This is also the point where the “*besulim* return”. If we want to define what our actual, practical *avodah* is during these days, that is the definition.

In order for one to reach the *avodah* of these days, he must reach a place in his soul where he feels disconnected from the world. Then his soul will hear Hashem saying **סְלַחְתִּי כַדְבַּרְיֶךָ**, “I have forgiven you, as you have spoken.”<sup>196</sup> These are days where any person can become disconnected from the world, similar to how Moshe ascended to Heaven, during this time.

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193 peirush HaRaavad: Sefer Yetzirah 5:4

194 Shabbos 33b

195 Berachos 34b

196 Shemos 14:20 (this verse is often recited in the Selichos prayers).

May the Creator merit us to serve Him as we should during these days, and to merit forgiveness from Him, and that all of Creation should merit the complete revelation of Him. *Amen V'Amen.*

## *36 / Tishrei – The Scale*

### *The Mazal of Tishrei: Moznayim (Scale)*

The *mazal* of the month of *Tishrei*, as is well-known from the words of *Chazal*, is “*moznayim*”, the [Heavenly] “scale”.<sup>197</sup>

The Ramban explains that the connection between the *moznayim* \scale and the month of *Tishrei* is because “It is a time of *din* (judgment), when Hashem weighs all the deeds of people on a scale (a *moznayim*).” Let us reflect more into this, to understand what the depth of this is - besides for the simple meaning of it, which is that Hashem weighs all of man’s deeds on a scale.

### *Moznayim \Oznayim \Ears – A Higher Mode of Conduct Than Af \Nose*

The word *moznayim* is from the word *oznayim*, “ears”. The ears are in a higher place of the body than the nose.

When one is a *tzaddik* and he does the will of Hashem, he gives a *nachas ruach*<sup>198</sup> to Hashem, which is like a pleasant “smell” to Hashem, whereas the *rasha*<sup>199</sup> gives off a “foul odor” to Hashem through his evil deeds. The nose is called *af*, and Hashem’s anger is also called *af*. One of Hashem’s traits of mercy is that He is “*maarich apo*”, He delays His anger, both towards the *tzaddikim* and towards the *reshaim*. How does Hashem delay His anger, His *af*? It is clear that He uses His trait of *erech apayim*, when He makes Himself slow to anger (as it were), towards *reshaim*. But how is Hashem *maarich apo* even towards *tzaddikim*? This matter is explained as “Hashem stretches out His *af* (His “nose”, so to speak), to His *oznayim* (His “ears”, figuratively speaking).

This means that Hashem uses a different mode of conduct, switching from the mode of *af* to the mode of *moznayim*. This is the *mazal* of *moznayim* of *Tishrei*. Hashem’s merciful trait of *erech apayim* is thus the revelation of His mode of conduct called *oznayim* (“ears”), from the word *moznayim*.

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197 Sefer Yetzirah 5:4

198 pleasantness

199 wicked person

### *Moznayim Is Kaf HaMedameh – The Imagination*

In order to understand this concept better, we will need to examine the words of the Gemara: “In the future, Hashem will slaughter the evil inclination. To the wicked, the evil inclination will appear like a hair, and to the righteous, the evil inclination will appear to be like a mountain.”<sup>200</sup> In either case, the Gemara says that the evil inclination “appears”, it is *nidmeh*, to both the righteous and the wicked. The word *nidmeh* is, related to the word *medameh*, imagination, implying that both the righteous and the wicked experience the evil inclination in terms of the imagination.

*Nidmeh* \fantasy is also called “*kaf hadimyon*”. The letter *kaf* in the *Aleph Beis* represents the concept of imagination, because imagination makes things appear to look “like” something else, and the letter *kaf* of the *Aleph Beis* implies the term “like”. Therefore, the letter *kaf* is referred to as *kaf hadimyon* – the letter that implies the concept of imagination.

In a scale, a *moznayim*, there are two sides – a *kaf yemin*, the right side of the scale, which symbolizes merits and righteousness, and the left side of the scale, the *kaf sm’oel* (also called *kaf chovah*) which symbolizes sin and wicked deeds. Any time where we find the term *kaf*, it implies *kaf hamedameh* – the use of the imagination. This implies that the *moznayim*, the scale, is an example of *kaf hamedameh*.

The *kaf hayemin*, the right side of the Heavenly scale, weighs the merits of *tzaddikim*, and the *kaf sm’oel*, the left side of the scale, weighs the acts of the wicked. On a simple level, it is the righteous acts of the *tzaddikim* weighed against all of the evil fantasies of the wicked which fuel their wicked deeds. The *kaf moznayim*, the Heavenly scale, is the point in the middle that weighs the two sides.

However, since the “*kaf*” *moznayim* (the scale) is an example of “*kaf*” *hamedameh* (the imagination) –for they are both in the category of “*kaf*” - this implies that even when the *kaf* (the middle part of the scale) is pointing towards the side of the *kaf yemin*, the side of the *tzaddikim*, it is not a true judgment - for it is ultimately a *kaf hamedameh*, a scale that weighs good imagination versus evil imagination. It is all within *medameh*, the imagination, and therefore it is not a true judgment.

### *Hishtavus \Equality – Through Nullifying The Will*

The *Gra* says an amazing insight, that those who are in the category of *beinonim* are the very “scale” that decides between the righteous and the wicked, and therefore, in this aspect, the *beinonim* are on a greater level than *tzaddikim*. Certainly, the *Gra* does not mean that *beinonim* are on a higher spiritual level than *tzaddikim*. But there is definitely an angle where the *beinonim* are at a higher level than *tzaddikim*. In what way are the *beinonim* at a greater level than *tzaddikim*?

The *Chovos HaLevovos* says that the greatest quality is *hishtavus*, to be equal, between two different sides. One's *avodah* is not merely to become more leaning towards good, but to be at an equal stance between the sides of good and evil. Why? The *Rambam* says that a person's main *avodah* is to stay in the middle between two extremes. In order to improve, one must go to the other extreme, but ultimately he must come back to the middle point. Becoming extreme in a good character trait is only a temporary stage, and it is not the purpose. The purpose is to become more balanced between the two extremes of good and evil – to stand in the middle point.

What is the understanding of this? It is because when one is extremely pointed towards good, this really comes from his own *ratzon*, his will, and even though it is a holy will, it is still within the category of his *medameh*, imagination. Therefore, there is a level greater than having a holy *ratzon*. This greater level is called *hishtavus*, equality, which is by returning to the middle point between two extremes. It is described by *Chazal* in the expression, “Nullify your will, for His will”,<sup>201</sup> meaning that one should have no will of his own, other than the will of Hashem.

### *Leaving Medameh \Imagination*

The concept of the *moznayim*, the scale, in terms of the soul, means that we go above the level of *kaf*, above *medameh* – above even the *kaf yemin* which leans towards good.

Ever since Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas* (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil), he entered in an existence of *medameh*\imagination<sup>202</sup>, into the *kaf moznayim*, and man's *avodah* ever since is to rise above the level of *kaf moznayim*, above *medameh* – which means that he must strive to transcend his own *ratzon* (will), so that he can reach the *moznayim*\scale itself. Clearly, we first have the *avodah* to leave the *kaf chovah* (or *kaf sm'ael*) the side of the scale that leans towards evil, and to cause the scale to be tipped towards the *kaf zechus* (or *kaf yemin*), but after that, the *avodah* is to rise to the *moznayim* itself, above either *kaf*.

This is the secret of the *avodah* we have during the 40 days from Elul to Yom Kippur. It is 40 days of leaving the *kaf hamedameh* – firstly, to leave the *kaf chovah*, and even more so, to leave the *kaf yemin*.

According to the above, we can understand the depth of Hashem's trait of *erech apayim*, where Hashem is *maarich apo* (He stretches his *af*) all the way until the *oznayim*, the “ears”. The “ears” symbolize balance, because *oznayim* is from the word *izun* (balance).

The 40 days of Elul to Yom Kippur begin with hearing the sound of *shofar*. The *shofar* is a higher form of prayer than verbal prayer. The sound of the *shofar* is a simple, undivided sound, with no verbalization, which is only heard. It comes from a higher place, which is not broken up into words.

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201 Avos 2:4

202 As explained by the Sforno and Gra

Through *shofar*, “Hashem removes Himself from His Throne of Judgment and moves to His Throne of Mercy.” The *shofar* elevates a person from the level of verbalized prayer to the “ears”, a higher point than the mouth. That is the depth behind the *mitzvah* of hearing the *shofar*. It reveals the mode of conduct of the “ears”, which is a higher mode than the mouth\verbalization.

That is the depth of how Hashem switches to His Throne of Mercy. The awakening of Hashem’s mercy on Rosh HaShanah, through hearing the *shofar*, is because there is *hishtavus*, an equality between two sides – and because of this, it follows that there is no punishment for sin. Hashem’s conduct of mercy on Rosh HaShanah, its inner root, comes from the mode of “ears”, above the mouth and above the nose.

We blow *shofar* to remember the *akeidah* of Yitzchok, to awaken the merit of Avraham’s deed of being willing to give up his only son for Hashem. What was the great test of the *akeidah*, and why was it the most difficult of all tests? Simply, it was because he had to overcome his great love for his child, by loving Hashem more than his child. But the deeper reason is that since his entire future and legacy would be through Yitzchok, by giving up Yitzchok he was prepared to give up all that he stood for. He had to uproot his holy *ratzon*\will, and become totally nullified to Hashem.

First one has the *avodah* to become like a *tzaddik* and develop a holy *ratzon*\will. After that, the *avodah* is to sacrifice even the holy *ratzon*\will for Hashem, so that one has no will of his own, totally nullified to Hashem.

To illustrate this idea, there was a story with the Brisker Rov that one year he couldn’t get an *esrog* for Succos. That year, when everyone came to *shul*, they thought that the Brisker Rav would be especially sad, because he was known for his love of *mitzvos*. But to everyone’s surprise, the Brisker Rov looked very happy, much happier than he ever was. When asked why he was so happy, he said that until now, he couldn’t be sure how well he was fulfilling Hashem’s will. Now that he didn’t have an *esrog*, he is certain that he was doing the will of Hashem, because this is what Hashem wanted from him, that he shouldn’t have an *esrog* this year.

The depth of this story is that while the *tzaddikim* have attained a holy will, they are prepared to forego even this, if Hashem wills it. They are ready to sacrifice their own will for Hashem’s. This is the depth of the matter that Hashem will slaughter the evil inclination even for the righteous – it means that He will slaughter even the holy will, which is ultimately a branch of the imagination, and in its place, they will have no will of their own, only Hashem’s.

The depth of these days, which are called *Y’mei Ratzon*, “days of will”, is to leave our own will – to leave the negative *retzonos* represented by the *kaf chovah*, but even more so, to leave even the *kaf zechus*, which represents the holy *retzonos*, and to instead become like the *beinonim*, who stand equally between the sides of good and evil, the state of *hishtavus*\equality. It is to enter a state where we have no will of our own, because there is only the will of Hashem. [We can now understand why the *Gra* says that the *avodah* of a person during the Ten Days of Repentance is to be like the *beinonim*, and how the *beinonim* are on a greater level than the *tzaddikim*, to a certain extent].

There is a dispute in the Gemara<sup>203</sup> how the *beinoni* merits to be written for a good judgment: Is it by doing one more *mitzvah*, which makes him more meritorious because he increases the *kaf zechus* in his favor, or is it by refraining from sin, which weakens the *kaf chovah*. The question in the Gemara is, how Hashem “leans” Himself more towards His trait of “*rav chessed*”, of showing great kindness: Either it is through increasing one more good deed, or it is by avoiding sin.

What is the difference? Simply speaking, it is because if a person does one more *mitzvah*, his merits outweigh his sins, and if he refrains from one more sin, his sins will not outweigh his merits. But the deeper understanding of “increasing the *kaf zechus*” is that a person increases the *kaf hamedameh* in the side of holiness, and refraining from one more sin means lessening the *kaf hamedameh* in the side of evil. If one increases the *kaf zechus*, he is increasing the *medameh* in the side of holiness, which is the will of the righteous, and if one lessens the *kaf chovah*, it means he is weakening *medameh* in the side of the evil, or the will of the wicked. These are two different ways of how Hashem leans Himself towards kindness.

But the trait of *erech apayim*, as explained, is deeper than Hashem’s trait of *rav chessed*. When Hashem leans towards *chessed*, there is no revelation of *hishtavus*\equality. Only through His trait of *erech apayim* does Hashem “stretch the *af* (nose) all the way until the ears”, meaning that He conducts Himself above the level of *af*\nose and instead He conducts Himself on a level of *oznayim*\ears. When Hashem uses His trait of *rav chessed*, a person remains in either side of the *kaf moznayim*, either side of the scale. He may be on the side of the *kaf chovah*, which represents the *yetzer hora* and the will\imagination of the wicked, or he may even be on the side of the *kaf zechus*, which is the will\imagination of *tzaddikim*, but either way, he is within the *kaf hamedameh*.

### *Yom Kippur – Rising Above Medameh\Imagination and Entering Havayah\Reality*

This is the depth of Yom Kippur as well. There is a teaching that Yom Kippur is *k’Purim*, it is “like Purim”.<sup>204</sup> Therefore, Yom Kippur atones for all *kaf hamedameh*, it is the atonement for all *medameh*\imagination. Yom Kippur is the atonement for the “*kaf*” itself which makes itself *medameh*\comparable to Purim. It is not simply an atonement for sins – rather, it atones for the very *kaf hamedameh* itself - the “*kaf*” that is *medameh*.

The depth of the atonement for the soul, and the way it is cleansed and purified, is when the soul is cleansed out from the *medameh*\imagination. That is the whole *avodah* of Yom Kippur, where one goat is sent for Hashem and the other is sent to *Azazel*. Through the *goral*, there was a sorting process, between two seemingly equal looking goats. The *goral* says: “No. that they are not equal. One is for Hashem, and the other goes to *Azazel*.”

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203 Rosh HaShanah 17a

204 Tikkunei HaZohar 57b (tikkun 21)

Man is called *adam*, from the word *medameh*\imagination. On Yom Kippur, man has the *avodah* to elevate himself to the level of an angel - meaning, one leaves behind *medameh*, on this day. That is the depth of the atonement on Yom Kippur.

***Leaving the Imagination Enables a Person to Sense Hashem's Presence***

The depths of the *avodah* during this month of Tishrei, and especially Yom Kippur, is to reach this inner place of “*moznayim*”, the scale.

Certainly, it entails leaving behind the *kaf chovah*, the side of the scale which houses all of the wicked deeds, but it even entails leaving behind the *kaf yemin*, the right side of the scale which contains all of the merits. This is because one needs leave behind all *medameh* in the soul – he must leave the imagination, the root of the will, so that he has no personal will of his own, in order that his own will has become nullified to the Creator's. And then, one will be able to sense *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

**As long as one's *medameh*\imagination is active, he cannot sense Hashem. When one leaves *medameh*, he goes above his initial level which is called “*adam*”, and then, he can feel the reality of Hashem.**

These are days of cleansing out the soul from the *medameh*\fantasies, and in its place, to instead reveal the true reality, *havayah*, which is only One. That is how we prepare for Yom Kippur, that the only true reality, the *havayah*, is G-d: “*Hashem, hu haElokim*”, “Hashem is G-d”.

May we merit together with all of the Jewish people to purify ourselves from *medameh*, to reveal the *elokus* (G-dliness) in our souls, and to be written and sealed for a good year, and to the complete Redemption. Amen.

## *37 / Cheshvan – The Scorpion*

### *Cheshvan \ Scorpion – The “Bitterness” of The Month of Cheshvan*

The *mazal* associated with the month of *Cheshvan* is “*akrav*”, the scorpion.

This bears a connection with the *mazal* of the previous month, *Tishrei*, which is *moznayim*, the scale. In the month of *Tishrei*, man is judged by the scale in Heaven, which weighs his deeds. If man is found to be guilty in judgment, he is subject to punishment in *Gehinnom*. The lowest place in *Gehinnom* is described by our Sages a place that is full of scorpions. If *chas v’shalom* the person was found guilty in the judgment of the month of *Tishrei*, he will be subject to the *Gehinnom* that is contained in the month of *Cheshvan* - the month of the “scorpion”.

*Cheshvan* is called *Mar Cheshvan*, “bitter *Cheshvan*”. One of the reasons why there is “bitterness” contained in *Cheshvan* is because it is a place full of scorpions that deliver the punishments of *Gehinnom* to those who were found guilty in the previous month.

What is the depth behind the concept of scorpion?

### *Serpent \ Evil Heat and Scorpion \ Evil Coldness*

In the Torah, there are three creatures associated with causing harm to man: The serpent (snake), the *seraf*, and the scorpion. These three harmful creatures are also representations of three distinct evil forces in Creation [here we will analyze the differences specifically between the serpent and the scorpion, and how these are forces in Creation which manifest in our own souls].

We find that the serpent is associated with heat, whereas the scorpion is associated with coldness. The serpent represents a kind of evil that is awakened through the force of “heat” in Creation, when it is used for evil passions, whereas the scorpion is of a different nature of evil: it represents a kind of evil that is associated with coldness. The Hebrew word for scorpion, *akrav*, is from the word “*av kar*”, “father of coldness” – it represents the root of a force of “coldness” in Creation.

Thus, the scorpion is associated with coldness, and if the *mazal* of *Cheshvan* is scorpion, it must be that *Cheshvan* is a month where “coldness” is manifest. We can find a correlation to this: In the month of *Cheshvan*, we begin to ask for rain, which is cold water.

Coldness is also the evil trait of Amalek. Of Amalek the Torah writes, “They met you”, and the Hebrew word for this is “*korcha*”, from the word *kerirus*, “coldness.” [Amalek is the evil force in Creation that is at war with G-d. It induces “coldness” into Creation, which manifests in people as a cold and apathetic attitude towards holiness]. The *gematria* (numerical value in Hebrew) of the word

“Amalek” is equal to the Hebrew word “mar”, which means “bitter”,<sup>205</sup> hinting to the Amalek\coldness that is in “*bitter Cheshvan*”.

This is why *Cheshvan* is called “*MarCheshvan*”, “*bitter Cheshvan*” – its bitterness is due to the “coldness” that is revealed in this month.

There is a *halachah* that if a snake is near one’s heel as he is *davening Shemoneh Esrei*, he should not interrupt his *Shemoneh Esrei* to move away from the snake, because the danger is not definite, for it does not always bite. But if there is a scorpion at his heel, he must interrupt his *Shemoneh Esrei* and move away from the scorpion, because the danger is definite. A scorpion will definitely sting, its sting is life-endangering, so one is allowed to interrupt his *davening* to move away from it.

A snake will only bite if it is angered or bothered in some way; it is dangerous only when it becomes reactive to something, so as long as one doesn’t bother the snake, there is no need to interrupt his *davening* and move away from it. But a scorpion will always sting, whether it is provoked or not.

This is really because the snake acts based upon the force of “heat” in Creation, which is the root of excitement; thus a snake will only be harmful and use its evil “heat” if it is provoked, where it will then react with excitement and it will then cause harm. But a scorpion is acting based upon the force of “coldness” in Creation. Coldness doesn’t need anything to activate it in order for it to be cold. The scorpion is the manifestation of “coldness” in Creation, so it will always be harmful, regardless if it became excited or not.

The scorpion attacks even when it is not provoked and nothing caused it to act. It begins to act from itself, and not from any other factor that caused it to act. This is its coldness. The snake, however, will only attack if it is angered, which is heat.

So the difference between the forces of heat and coldness is that heat is activated only when there is a point that preceded it, whereas coldness begins from itself even when nothing precedes it. Heat is a result of something else before it, whereas coldness does not come as a result of something; it is activated on its own. Of course, sometimes coldness can also be a result. But coldness is mainly activated on its own, and not as a result of something else that came before it.

### *Joy – The Balance Between Heat and Coldness In The Soul*

In regards to our own personal soul, the forces of heat and coldness need to be in balance with each other. In the ideal situation, heat and cold are harmonized, and then the soul can function properly.

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205 The word עמלק is equal to 240 (ע equals 70, מ equals 40, ל equals 30, and ק equals 100. So it is 70+40+30+100, which equals 240. The word מלך is also equal to 240 because מ equals 40 and ל is 200, and 40+200 equals 240.

In the month of *Tishrei*, we experienced *zman simchaseinu*, the time of our happiness. The truth is that in order for us to maintain *simcha* (joy), we need a balance between coldness and heat in the soul. The combined *gematria* (numerical value in Hebrew) of the words *kor* (cold) and *chom* (heat) is equal to the numerical value of the word *sam'each* (joy),<sup>206</sup> which hints to us that *simcha* results only when there is a balance between cold and heat in the soul.

But when a person is drawn towards either of the two extremes – either too much coldness in the soul or too much heat in the soul – there cannot be *simcha*. If a person is drawn too much after the force of “heat” of the soul, that means he needs a feeling of warmth in his *Yiddishkeit* in order for him to survive, and as soon as he loses that feeling warmth, he loses all of his joy with it.

To illustrate, in the month of *Tishrei*, we had the mitzvos of *sukkah*, and the four species, and the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*. All of these *mitzvos* provide us with *simcha*. But as soon as these *mitzvos* are gone, when *Tishrei* has ended, a person who depended on this warmth will be left with no *simcha*.

True *simcha* is maintained only when there is a proper balance between heat and coldness of the soul. If a person is too dependent on the “heat” (or a warm feeling of excitement), he is not able to carry on when that “heat” is gone. The same is true vice versa: if a person is too cold and he does not have enough heat in the soul, he will also not be happy, because his soul lacks a balance.

The ability of “coldness” in the soul is the ability in a person to remain unfazed and be unaffected by the surroundings.<sup>207</sup> [This is a power that can be used for either holiness or evil, depending on how balanced it is.] If a person is too isolated from the others to the point that he doesn't react at all to others and he is too detached from others, he is too “cold”, and he will not be happy. [But if he can separate himself from the influences of the surroundings yet he can also relate to others, he has the proper balance between his coldness and his heat, and then he can be happy.]

### *An In-Depth Understanding of The Serpent (Heat) and The Scorpion (Coldness)*

The serpent represents an extreme pull towards heat. In fact, the very pull towards heat [or excitement] is already an effect of the Serpent upon mankind. The scorpion, however, is an extreme pull towards coldness. Besides for the fact that the scorpion's coldness is the roots of Amalek, it is in essence an extreme pull towards coldness. So whenever there is an extreme pull towards heat, it is connected with the evil caused by the Serpent, and whenever there is an extreme pull towards cold, it is connected with the scorpion.

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<sup>206</sup> קר is equal to 300 (100=ק, 200=ר) and חם equals 48 (8=ח, 40=מ) which adds up to 348. The word שמחה is equal to 348 (300=ש, 40=מ, 8=ח).

<sup>207</sup> To learn more about the power of “coldness” in the soul, refer to Understanding Your Middos\_035\_Cold Water In The Soul. “Coldness” is also one of the 70 forces of the soul listed by the Vilna Gaon (Gra, Yeshayahu 11:1), and it is explained more in-depth by the Rav in the Hebrew audio files of דע את כוחותיך \_09, \_010, and \_011

These are two root evil forces in Creation: the serpent (too much ‘heat), and the scorpion (too much ‘cold’). There is also a third evil force of Creation, the *seraph* (שרף).

The Hebrew word for serpent is *nachash* (נחש) and the Hebrew word for scorpion is *akrav* (עקרב). The first letter of the words נחש, עקרב, and שרף are the letters נ, ע, and ש, which forms the acronym of the term נ"עש"ן. The letter ע stands for עולם (“*olam*” – “world”, or place), the letter ש standing for שנה (“*shanah*” – “year”, or time), and the word נ standing for נפש (“*nefesh*” – the soul). Our Sages teach that every concept in Creation exists on three planes: in place, in time, and in the soul.<sup>208</sup> The *akrav*\scorpion begins with the letter ע, so the scorpion is manifest particularly in “*olam*”, in place. The *nachash*\serpent begins with the letter נ, so it is mainly manifest in “*nefesh*”, in the soul. The *seraph* begins with the letter ש, so it is mainly manifest in “*shanah*”, in time.

The serpent represents extreme heat, and the serpent is mainly manifest in the dimension of “*nefesh*\soul”, so its extreme heat is mainly manifest in the dimension of “soul”. The scorpion represents extreme cold, and the scorpion is mainly manifest in the dimension of *olam*\world\place, so its extreme cold mainly manifests in the world.

There is a verse, “*A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth stands forever.*” The generations that come and go represent *nefesh* (the souls of people), whereas the earth that stands forever represents *olam* (place).

The coldness of the scorpion, which is manifest in “place”, lies in the dimension that came before the creation of the world, which began our souls. It represents the concept of the “nothingness that came before existence” (*heder kodem l’havayah*).<sup>209</sup> This is because as we explained earlier, coldness is not a continuation of something that precedes it; it begins from itself. Coldness therefore represents a beginning point. When one begins from a beginning point, he is using the concept of coldness. This is a power that can be used for good or evil, as we will soon explain.

If a person begins from a point that is not a beginning point, this is heat. When we begin something based upon emotional reaction, this is heat. The differences between heat and cold are also known as the concepts known as *kedem* (before\beginning) and *achor* (after). The term *kedem* means “beginning”, where a person begins from the beginning point of something. This is coldness. The term *achor* means “after”, meaning when a person begins from a point that is “after” the beginning point. This is heat.

These are two root powers in our soul: coldness and heat.

The Serpent placed a spirit of impurity upon Chavah. Ever since then, mankind is drawn after “heat” and less inclined after “cold”. It is usually heat which dominates man, and this is the effect of

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208 Sefer Yetzirah, III

<sup>209</sup> See *Getting To Know Your 70 Forces of the Soul\_01 and\_02*

the Serpent upon mankind. It induced an excessive pull towards “heat” upon Creation [which is why man is very pulled after acting upon on emotion].

When we stood at Sinai, the Sages state that this spirit of impurity was removed from us. How, then, were we able to commit the sin with Golden Calf, when the Snake’s “heat” was now removed from us? It was because there was still another force of evil that had been around even before the Serpent: the scorpion. The scorpion’s coldness enabled the possibility of excessive “coldness”, an indifference to spirituality, which made it still possible for us to sin.

Before the sin, the Serpent told Chavah that if she eats from the *Eitz HaDaas*, she will “become like Hashem”. [This power exists both in the sides and in the sides of holiness. In the Snake’s argument, it was clearly evil, in that it is a desire to feel as if one is G-d. But in holiness, it exists as the desire to “resemble” the perfection of G-d].<sup>210</sup> The idea of trying to become like Hashem stems from coldness, not from heat, because resembling Hashem means to resemble the very Beginning point of man, which is coldness, for coldness is a beginning point.

Thus, the coldness of the scorpion is the idea of a beginning point, whereas the serpent introduced heat. Ever since the sin, mankind can only pro-create if there is heat and passion in the desire to pro-create. This is all a result of the Serpent’s “heat”.

Coldness, though, is the key that reveals the beginning point that comes before any heat. It is the key that reveals Hashem Himself.

The Sages say that Amalek is a nation that “knows its Creator, yet rebels intentionally against Him”. Amalek is the evil manifestation of “coldness”, because it wants to be its own beginning point and replace Hashem. Amalek wants to begin from itself [as is well-known, Amalek is called *raishis goyim*, “the first of the nations”, because its essence is about being the “first” – and now we have a deeper understanding of this]. Amalek is at war with the very *havayah* (existence) of Hashem.

The depth behind *bris milah* (circumcision) is to remove the *orlah* (blockage) that is upon the skin. This *orlah* is essentially referring to the excessive heat in Creation which was introduced by the Serpent. When we remove that excessive “heat” by removing the *orlah*, we are resembling a return to the situation of before the sin, where there was nothing but holy “coldness” in Creation. Thus, the holiness that lies in the concept of the “scorpion” (coldness) is the fact that it has the power to remove *orlah* (spiritual blockages) – it can remove excessive heat from upon us, and return us to the situation of before the sin.

### *Rectifying The Effect of the Serpent Upon Procreation*

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<sup>210</sup> Refer to *Reaching Your Essence\_02\_Feeding The Jewish Soul*, and the series *Getting To Know Your Imagination*

The act of procreation (bearing children) can either come from passionate desire, which is heat, or it can come from a true desire to bring children into the world, which represents the desire to begin a new beginning, which is the truer desire to bear children. After the sin, woman was cursed with “*And to your husband, you shall desire*”, and this was the effect of the Snake, which induced desire\heat into the act of procreation. Thus, the very fact that procreation requires heat\passion is entirely an effect of the Serpent, and it is not the ideal state of mankind.

The way to rectify this effect of the Serpent is to utilize “coldness” – the power to begin from a new beginning. In other words, one should yearn for a very desire for what true life is. When one yearns for life in this way, his desire to bear children is stemming from this purer motive, and this rectifies the effect of the Serpent upon procreation.

### *The Current Era ('Serpent') Vs. The Future ('Scorpion')*

The serpent challenged man. Its effect on mankind after the sin was that it causes us to understand something only when we are challenged. For example, in our current state, we can only understand something if we know what its opposite is (*dovor v'hipucho*).

The current state is known as “*shis alfin*”, the “6,000 year era” which precedes the Next World. In the current state of affairs, we can only understand things based on the “six” sides or directions that we can view a matter, a reflection of the 6,000 year era we are in. This is all an effect of the Serpent upon mankind. Similarly, woman is called “*eizer k'negdo*” (a helpmate who is opposite) of man, who opposes and challenges the husband; this too is an effect of the Serpent upon mankind, which caused us to have opposition and challenges.

In the future, we will return to the holy kind of “scorpion”, where we begin from a new beginning, and we are not opposed.

In the current state of affairs, the month of *Cheshvan* is known to us as “*Mar Cheshvan*”, “bitter *Cheshvan*”. The coldness in Creation is not yet rectified, due to the presence of Amalek, who prevents the revelation of Hashem upon the world. The coldness in the month of *Cheshvan* is currently an evil coldness, the coldness of Amalek, thus it is a “bitter” month to us.

But the Sages revealed that in the future, the third *Beis HaMikdash* will be built in the month of *Cheshvan*. The Sages guarantee us that it will never be destroyed, and the depth of this is because it will not be built in a state of opposition and challenges as our current era is in, for it will be built from a new beginning point.

This is the depth that lies behind the month of *Cheshvan*.

### *Applying This Concept To The Soul*

In terms that apply to our own personal souls, the concept of the “scorpion” means that we have a power to use a holy kind of coldness: a deep, inner power to begin from an entirely new beginning point.

In the side of evil, this exists as a desire to commit idol worship, which declares a new beginning that is an act of heresy and a denial of Hashem. But in the side of holiness, the power of starting a new beginning is the root power of the soul that can reveal G-dliness.

### *In Conclusion*

In every soul, there is “coldness” and “heat”, and we need to balance out these two forces within us. We explained that when we attain a balance between coldness and heat in the soul, the result is *simcha*. We are then able to continue the *simcha* that was revealed to us in the month of *Tishrei*, into the rest of the year.

## 38 / Kislev – The Bow

### *The Mazal of Kislev – “Keshes” (The Bow)*

The *mazal* of the month of Kislev is called “*keshes*” (which can either mean “bow” as in bow-and-arrow; or it can mean the “rainbow”).<sup>211</sup>

Yitzchok Avinu blessed Esav with the gift of “*keshes*” – his descendants would become successful archers in battle. The Sages explain that the “*keshes*” of Esav refers to the Greek nation<sup>212</sup>. Thus, the *mazal* of the month of Kislev, which is *keshes*, is directly related as well to the events of Chanukah, where we had to deal with the Greek exile.

Where is the first time in the Torah that a *keshes* is mentioned? The first “*keshes*” mentioned in the Torah was the “rainbow”, which appeared in the sky after the *Mabul*.<sup>213</sup>

However, the rainbow existed already before the *Mabul*. The *Midrash* states that there were ten things created on Friday at twilight, and one of them was the “*keshes*”, the rainbow. The Ramban explains that the original rainbow of Creation, which was created on the sixth day, is a rainbow that is formed when the sun’s rays bounce upon the wind. But the rainbow that appeared after the *Mabul* was a sunlight amidst the “clouds”.

Only after the *Mabul* did there appear a rainbow that appeared in the clouds. Hashem said that the rainbow after the *Mabul* is a sign that He will remember the *bris* (the covenant) that He made with mankind not to destroy the world. Before the *Mabul* there was also a rainbow, but the *Mabul* gave new meaning to the rainbow: now the rainbow would be called “*kashti*” (“My sign”), which He places in the clouds, as a sign that He remembers the *bris* that was made.

What was the *keshes* of before the *Mabul*, which was created on Friday at twilight? And what was the rainbow that came after the *Mabul*, which is associated with the clouds? What is the difference between these two kinds of *keshes*?

### *“Keshes” in the Side of Holiness Vs. “Keshes” in the Side of Evil*

The concept of “*keshes*” is found both in the sides of good and evil, just as everything else in Creation, which exists in both the sides of good\holiness and evil\impurity.

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211 Sefer Yetzirah 5:4

212 Beraishis Rabbah 65:8

213 The Deluge (otherwise known as the Flood)

The Torah describes Yishmael as being a skilled archer, who was successful hunter with his *keshes*, his bow and arrow. This is describing the evil kind of *keshes*. [Later we will explain what this is]. In contrast, the holy kind of *keshes* is found with Yosef. One of the blessings given to Yosef is “*keshes*”. The *keshes* of Yosef has the power to fight Esav, and in the future, the *keshes* of Yosef will overcome the evil *keshes* of Esav.

What is the holy kind of *keshes*, and what is the evil kind of *keshes*? What is the *keshes* of the nation Yisrael, which is holy, and what is the *keshes* that the Greek nation possesses, which is evil?

### *Evil “Keshes” – A Sense of False Completion*

*Keshes* is from the word *koshi* (difficulty), and it is also from the word *kishut* (adornment, or beautification). [The implication of “*koshi*” (difficulty) is the evil use of *keshes*, whereas the use of *kishut* (adornment\beautification) is the holy use of *keshes*, as follows.]

A *keshes* is always a half-circle, as the Talmud explains.<sup>214</sup> In a *keshes* of bow and arrow, there is the arrow, and there is the half-circle of the bow, which the arrow is strung from. The *keshes* – it use as a bow that flings arrows - is a weapon of war. In this sense, *keshes* connotes *koshi*, “difficulty”, for it means war.

How is the *keshes* used in war? The very fact that it is a half-circle makes it possible for the arrow to be flung from it.

The *keshes*\rainbow is also a half-circle. A rainbow results from when the sun meets the wind, resulting in an arch-sharped bow - a rainbow – which has the shape of a half-circle. However, the two ends of the half-circle do not meet with each other. Each end stands on its own and the two ends do not unify; they remain as two separate ends which do not meet at some point. This symbolizes how the *keshes* connotes difficulty and war.

Applying this concept in terms of the soul, the evil use of *keshes* is when one is incomplete yet he thinks of himself as perfect and complete. This is also known as the trait of *kashyus oref* (to be stiff-necked; a kind of evil brazenness), which is also related to the word *keshes*. The arrow in a bow is only able to be strung because of the half-circle of the bow; so too must one understand that he is only a half, and he is incomplete. When a person perceives himself as whole and complete, he has the negative trait of *kashyus oref*, and this is the evil side to “*keshes*”.

### *“Keshes” In Holiness: Praying To Fill What We Lack*

The holy kind of *keshes* is when a person utilizes the power of *bakashah* (request; prayer) – also rooted in the word *keshes*. The Sages said, “*Tefillah* (prayer) does half.” When a person wants

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214 Eruvin 65a

something, he is like a half-circle, like a bow - he knows he is not complete, he feels lacking somewhat, and he seeks completion. Thus, when he prays for what he lacks, his prayers accomplish the other “half” that he is missing.

*Bakashah* is when I realize that I only have half, and I am trying to get the other half. This is what lays behind the concept of *tefillah*. It is when I have the perspective that I am not remaining in the half that I have; I am hoping to have my other half filled. This is the holy kind of *keshes*: the power of *bakashah*, or *tefillah*.

This is how “*keshes*” results in “*kishut*” (adornment, or beautification), which is the good and holy use of *keshes*. Hashem designed all of Creation in a way that we are all lacking and insufficient, and we need to be completed by other “half” - the Creator. All created beings are incomplete and need to be completed by their other half, which is the Creator. The beauty of Creation, its *kishut* (beauty), is precisely when the many “halves” of this creation are completed by their other “half”.

As an example, Hashem did not bring any rain until Adam prayed for it. This taught us that man is essentially lacking, for he is a created being and thus insufficient, and through prayer, he accomplishes the other “half” that is missing.

At the beginning of creation, Hashem created the *keshes* (the rainbow) on Friday, at twilight. But the Sages also said that at that very time, the *sheidim* (demons) and *mazikin* (harmful spirits) were also created. This alludes to the evil kind of *keshes*, which is *kashyus oref*.

But after the *Mabul* came a *keshes* (rainbow) which symbolizes holiness. The rainbow which Hashem put into the sky after the *Mabul* was a sign that He would forever remember the *bris* (covenant) He made with the word to never destroy it again.

This *keshes*\rainbow appeared in the clouds. Unlike the original *keshes*\rainbow of creation, which is a combination of sunlight and air, the rainbow that came after the *Mabul* was a combination of sunlight and cloud. The clouds enable the rain, which man had to pray for, in order for the rain to come. Thus, the *keshes* that appears in the clouds represents *bakashah*, prayer. This is a kind of “*keshes*” that requests its other half.

This is in line with the concept of *bris* that the *keshes*\rainbow represented. In a *bris*, there are two sides, and one of the sides is loyal to the other; the one who agrees to the *bris* is saying that he is incomplete by himself, and he needs the other to complete him.

But by the *keshes* of bow and arrow, the bow seems to be complete in and of itself, even though it is only a half. This is the evil kind of “*keshes*” – the “*keshes*” of Esav, of Yishmael, and of the Greek nation – a *keshes* that does not recognize its incompleteness, thinking that it is complete in and of itself, failing to realize how it really needs another half to complete it.

### *Keshes and The Concept of Bris*

Yosef HaTzaddik represents the concept of keeping the *bris* (the holy covenant between Hashem and the Jewish people, which we must guard in various ways), thus, Yosef contains the holy kind of *keshes* (for the holy kind of “*keshes*” is associated with the concept of *bris*), which can counter the evil *keshes* of Esav.

*Chazal* say that if one stares at the *bris* of himself<sup>215</sup> (and surely if he stares at the *bris* of another), his own “*keshes*” (his “bow”; the male organ) is withheld, and he will not be able to bear children. The *bris* implies that he is but a half, who is incomplete and needs to be completed by the one whom he made the *bris* with; meaning, he must guard the *bris* with the one whom he has made the *bris* with, which is his spouse [and on deeper level, the Creator].

This is the holy kind of “*keshes*”: when I realize that I am but a half, and I need another half to complete me. This perspective of “*keshes*” (in the side of holiness), is at the core of the concepts of *tefillah* and *bris*.

### *The Deeper Meaning of “Keshes”: Equalizing With Others (and Integrating With Hashem)*

There is also another meaning to *keshes* explained in *Chazal*: *keshes* is also from the word “*hekesheh*”, which means “comparable.” The *keshes* \rainbow after the *Mabul*, which symbolized the concept of *bris*, was about the *bris* between Yisrael and Hashem (even though it took place before there was a *Klal Yisrael* yet, it was an allusion to the future *bris* that Hashem would make with *Klal Yisrael*, through the Torah). The rainbow after the *Mabul* showed that all creation are “*mukashim*” (to be compared, so to speak) to Hashem.

The *halachah* is that it is forbidden to stare at the “*keshes*” of oneself or of others<sup>216</sup>, and the Sages say that this is like gazing at the *Shechinah*, which is forbidden. How is the *keshes* of the body compared to the *Shechinah*? It is because *keshes* alludes to how all created beings are “*mukash*” (compared) to Hashem. Thus, to stare at the *keshes* (whether it is the *Bris Kodesh* on the body, or whether it is the rainbow, which symbolizes the *bris*) is like staring at the *Shechinah*, which is forbidden.

### *“Heakesh” – What I Have Is Equal To What Others Have*

There are two abilities in man that contradict each other: *tefillah* (prayer, which means that I am insufficient and I need something to complete me), and *someiach b’chelko*, “being happy with one’s lot”. These two abilities contradict each other because if I pray, I am not happy and sufficient with what I have, and if I am happy with what I have, I see no reason to pray, because there is nothing that I lack that I am trying to fill.

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215 It is forbidden according to Halacha for one to gaze upon the male organ, either of himself or of another.

216 see *ibid*

Simply speaking, “one who has a hundred wants two hundred”, and a person cannot be *someich b’chelko* as long as he wants something that he doesn’t have right now. But if a person gains the ability to be “*makish*” himself to others – in the sense that he feels that what he has is equal to what others have, and that what others have is equal to what he has – then he sees no reason to want anything that others have, for he realizes that he really does have what he sees in others. This is the deep attitude that is behind the power to be *someiach b’chelko*.

When one is using the concept of *keshes* for evil, he will want something and will fight and engage in war with others, in order to get what he wants (this is the “*koshi*” aspect of *keshes*, and it is evil). When one is using the concept of *keshes* in the side of holiness, when he wants something, he will pray to Hashem to get it (this is the “*bakashah*” aspect in *keshes*, and it is good and holy). But there is also a higher way of using *keshes*: if I want something, I can realize that whatever I have is really *equal* to what another has - and then I will no longer want what others have. I can only pray for something I want when I am unaware that I really have what another has; once I realize that I have what others have, I see no need to pray for it.

The desire in a person to have anything else that he doesn’t yet have is a lack of *someiach b’chelko*. It is a lack of understanding that whatever I have is really *equal* to what another has.

When Hashem split the waters on the second day of Creation, the lower waters were jealous of the upper waters. The lower waters thought that the higher waters were more important, so the lower waters were jealous. They thought that the upper waters have something that they don’t have. A person always wants the other half of what he is missing, which seems to not be in his possession. Either he will fight to attain it (which is evil) or he will pray for it (which is holy). But there is a deeper perspective he can have: if one is “*makish*” himself to others – if one realizes that all that he has is equal to what others have, and that the same is true vice versa - he realizes that the half which others possess is also a part of him. He is not lacking anything. This is the depth of *someiach b’chelko*.

### *“Keshes” and the Greek Nation*

The Sages associate the concept of *keshes*, contained in the month of Kislev, with the Greek nation. What is this *keshes*? The ancestor of the Greek nation, Yefes, was given a blessing by Noach that he would “dwell in the tents of Shem”. In other words, Yefes was blessed with the *chochmah* (wisdom) that would come to the Greeks, which would eventually challenge the *chochmah* of the Torah, which was inherited by the descendants of Shem. What, essentially, is the difference between the Torah’s wisdom and the Greek wisdom?

The wisdom of the nation Yisrael, which is the wisdom contained in the Torah, is essentially the fact that Hashem learns with a person as he learns Torah; “One who sits and learns Torah, the *Shechinah* sits with him and learns with him.”<sup>217</sup> When one learns Torah, he is able to have the

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217 Berachos 5a

understanding that he is but a half, who is incomplete and who needs to be completed by another half, the Creator. By contrast, when one learns any wisdom other than the Torah (and any non-Torah wisdom is included in Greek wisdom), it is viewed as a wisdom that complete in and of itself, devoid of any other half; it is disconnected from Hashem. Only with learning Torah can a person realize that his wisdom is just a half, which needs Hashem in order for it to be completed.

Hashem is on one side, Yisrael is on the other side, and there is a *bris* (covenant) that connects us together. That *bris*, symbolized by the *keshes*, is the Torah. But what is this *bris* of the Torah? It is when one learns Torah with the understanding that his learning is just the “half” that he is accomplishing, and he still seeks the other half, Who is Hashem.

Before learning the Gemara, there is a *tefillah* to say, composed by the sage Rabbi Nechunia ben Hakanah. This is a *bakashah*, a request and a prayer from Hashem, that we should succeed in our learning. We need *bakashah* before we learn Torah so that we can understand that our Torah learning is our “half” that we can accomplish, and to understand that our other half that we need is Hashem.

This is the holy power of *keshes*, which Yosef personified. Yosef merited to be called one who is “tender in his years, yet a father of wisdom.” Yosef became great in *chochmah* (wisdom) because he merited to have Hashem learn with him, through learning with Yaakov Avinu. Yosef recognized that he is the other “half”, the lower half, whereas Yaakov is the upper half. Such Torah learning is the Torah of the nation of Yisrael. By contrast, the evil kind of “*keshes*” is the perspective of the Greek nation, which is when one perceives his wisdom as complete and independent of Hashem, when in reality, any of the wisdom that he learns is but a half a larger whole, which he fails to recognize.

## *In Summary & Conclusion*

Thus, altogether, there are three levels to the concept of *keshes*. The evil kind of *keshes* is when I think that I am complete. The good kind of *keshes* is when I realize that I am a half that needs to be completed by another half. A higher level of *keshes*, which was the level reached completely by Moshe Rabbeinu, is when one understands that he is “*mukash*” - when one is at a state of equilibrium with all others, because he recognizes the other half as equal with his own half. Moshe Rabbeinu realized this fully, and that is the depth of why the *Shechinah* spoke from his throat.

The *avodah* in the month of Kislev, which is about the concept of *keshes*, is thus to realize that I am but a half, and that I must seek to be completed by my other half.

“There is no generation which does not have in it a righteous person like Moshe”<sup>218</sup> – thus, every Jew can attain a spark of Moshe Rabbeinu’s level, to be “*mukash*”, to equalize ourselves and align

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218 Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim

ourselves with our other “half”, Hashem – and in this way, we can merit some degree of Moshe’s level: “the *Shechinah* speaks from his throat.”

## 39 / Teves – Goat

### *The Mazal of Teves – The G'di (Goat)*

The festival of Chanukah, in contrast to all other Biblical and Rabbinical festivals, is unique in that it overlaps two months – Kislev and Teves. The *mazal* of Kislev is *keshes* (the bow), and the *mazal* of Teves is *g'di* (goat)<sup>219</sup> - thus Chanukah, which connects together the months of Kislev and Teves, is a union of these two *mazalos* of *keshes*\bow and *g'di*\goat.

The simpler understanding [of the connection on Chanukah between *g'di*\goat and *keshes*\bow] is as follows. The Sages state that the Greeks sent a message to the Jews, “Write for your selves on the horns of a bull that you have no portion in the G-d of Israel.”<sup>220</sup> *Rashi* explains that the ‘bull’ was a hint to the sin with the Golden Calf; thus, in turn, Chanukah was a rectification of the sin with the Golden Calf. A hint to this is that the first letters of the words *g'di*\גדי and *keshes*\קשת, which are the letters *gimmel*\ג and *kuf*\ק are equal in numerical value to the word *eigel*\עגל\calf.<sup>221</sup> Thus, the concepts of *g'di*\goat and *keshes*\bow, are both associated with the rectification of the sin with the Golden Calf.

Here we will delve specifically into the role of the *g'di* (goat) in Chanukah of the spiritual power that it represents.

### *The Greek Nation Is Symbolized By The Leopard*

Concerning the future, it is written, “The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the goat with the leopard.”<sup>222</sup> In a vision to the prophet Daniel, the Greek nation appeared to him in the form of a leopard. He saw four beasts, parallel to each of the four exiles, and the third beast he saw was a leopard, parallel to the third of the exiles, which is the Greek exile.

A leopard is full of many different spots, which are unique from each other. These many spots that are part of its physical appearance are called *tzuros* (formation), a hint to the many *tzaros* (difficulties) which the Greek exile would cause the Jewish people.

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219 Sefer Yetzirah 5:14

220 Beraishis Rabbah 2:4, Vayikra Rabbah 13:5

221 עגל is equal to 103 (ע is equal to 70, ג is 3, and ל is 30; for a total of 103. The letters ג and ק are 3+100, which is 103.

222 Yeshayahu 11:6

The redemption, where “the leopard will dwell the goat”, symbolizes a point in time where the “leopard” (the Greek nation) will be connected with the “goat” (the *mazal* of the month of *Teves*) – in other words, where the leopard will be ‘lowered’ [humbled] to the goat. Chanukah, which connects together the ‘leopard’ with the ‘goat’, is thus a revelation of a concept of a ‘leopard’ in the side of holiness (and the leopard is part of the lion family, so it is really a reference to the lion).

Hence, the *mazal* of *g’di*\goat is really a spark of the light of the future, in which the leopard will dwell with the goat, and the wolf will dwell with the lamb. The evil “leopard” - the Greek nation - was defeated, and thereby lowered to the level of the goat, revealing instead a holy and rectified kind of “leopard”, which can dwell with the goat (the leopard’s root in holiness is the lion).

The Sages say that in the future, all the festivals will disappear except for Purim<sup>223</sup>, and there are those who include Chanukah as well.<sup>224</sup> The understanding of this opinion, that Chanukah will not cease in the future, is linked with the fact that the *mazal* of the month of *Teves* is *g’di*\goat, which on an inner level is referring to the complete level of *g’di* in the future, where there will be a union of leopard with goat. (The future will also be a revelation of the full level of the “light of Torah” - which is also what Chanukah revealed.)

Let us try to understand more about this *mazal* of *g’di*\goat.

### *G’di and the Tribe of Gad*

The word *g’di* (goat) is rooted in the word “Gad”, who was one of the twelve sons of Yaakov Avinu. Gad was named by Leah from the words, “*Ba gad*”, lit. “Gad has come”.

*Rashi*<sup>225</sup> cites three different meanings of Gad’s name. One of the meanings of it is “*Ba gad, ba mazal*” (lit. “Gad has come, good *mazal* has come”). The word “*gad*” is thus synonymous with the very concept of *mazal*. Another reason for Gad’s name is because his birth was like a “*begidah*”, a “betrayal” – in the sense that he was born from a maidservant, and not directly from her. A third reason for his name is because he was born circumcised, and the word *gad* means to “cut”, hinting to the cut of the *bris milah* that he already was born with.

The word “*mazal*” is from the word “*noizel*”, to “flow”; the concept of *mazal* is about the continuous flow of all *shefa* (Heavenly sustenance) to the Jewish people. Throughout the 12 months of the year, there are 12 *mazalos*, and the *mazal* of *Teves* which is *g’di*\goat corresponds to the tribe Gad - who is the root of *mazal*, for Leah said upon the birth of Gad, “*Ba gad, ba mazal*”. Thus, the *mazal* of *Teves*, which is *g’di*\goat, is the root viewpoint of all the other *mazalos* throughout the other

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223 Midrash Shochar Tov: Mishlei: 9:1

224 Ateres Zekainim Orach Chaim 676, Sefer HaChaim 3:7, Magid Maisharim parshas Vayakhel, Manos HaLevi: hakdamah

225 Beraishis 30:11, and Rashi ibid

months of the year. The *shefa* of all the *mazalos* of the year flows from the *mazal* of Teves, which is *g'di*\goat.

Since the term “Gad” implies different meanings - as explained above – the concept of Gad and the *mazal g'di*\goat therefore contains opposite concepts. This will either mean that the *shefa* of all the *mazalos* stem from Gad’s aspect of “discontinuation” (*gid*\cut), or, from Gad’s aspect of *begidah*\betrayal – also a form of discontinuation (either of these implies a bad *mazal*), or, the opposite – the *mazalos* may all stem from Gad’s aspect of “*ba gad ba mazal*”, the fact that Gad implies good *mazal*, a continuation of uninterrupted *shefa*. So Gad, or the *mazal g'di*, can either imply continuation of *shefa*, or it may imply the discontinuation of *shefa*.

Gad’s aspect of *gid*\cutting\discontinuation implies limitations, as in the phrase, “Words as tough as ‘*gidin*’ - spears”.<sup>226</sup> There are 248 limbs and 365 *gidin* (sinews) in the body; the 248 limbs are parallel to the 248 sins which the Torah enumerates, and the 365 sinews are parallel to the 365 *mitzvos* of the Torah. The Ramban says that the 248 sins of the Torah represent *yirah*\fear of Hashem, which is the idea of staying contracted to boundaries, whereas the 365 *mitzvos* represent *ahavah*\love, which is expansion.

Let us now delve into the roots of these matters.

### *The Power of Goat skins the Jewish People from Western Society*

When Yaakov had to take the blessings from Esav, he disguised himself with goatskins. Yitzchok felt the skin on his neck and hands, which was covered in goatskins, and therefore thought he was Esav, and that is what ultimately secured Yaakov with the blessings (and which also aided him in the spiritual war against his brother Esav). Thus, it was goatskins which saved Yaakov.

The war of Esav against Yaakov was first centered on who would get the blessings. He fought Yaakov to leave the womb first, so that he could become the firstborn and have blessings, and later, he tried getting the blessings for himself, and was subsequently at war with Yaakov for taking the blessings from him. Yaakov was able to defeat Esav and take the blessings, through wearing the goatskins.

But the battle with Esav wasn’t yet over. Later, the angel of Esav fought Yaakov when Yaakov went back to retrieve the *pachim ketanim*, the small pots which he had left behind (and the Sages said that these *pachim ketanim* were actually the small jug of oil which would eventually become the same small jug of oil with the signature of a *Kohen Gadol* used in the miracle of the Chanukah story<sup>227</sup>). After Yaakov overcame Esav’s angel, he received the commandment not to eat the sinew of *gid hanasheh* - also from the word *g'di*. The implication of this is that Esav’s angel was trying to

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226 Rashi to Shemos 19:3

227 Megaleh Amukos parshas Vayishlach (Beraishis 32:24)

attack Yaakov Avinu's power of "g'di", by hitting him in the thigh, where the area of *gid hanasheh* is. Essentially, it was trying to turn Yaakov's power of *g'di* into its opposite implication, "*gid*" – which means "cut", or discontinuation.

The prophet says that in the future, Esav will be like straw, and Yosef will be like a fire, which will burn and destroy the 'straw' that is represented by Esav. Esav is also compared to a fire. Esav is the evil kind of fire, whereas Yosef is holy fire, and the holy fire of Yosef will destroy the evil fire of Esav in the future. There is a hint to this from a certain *halachah* pertaining to the laws of Shabbos. The Gemara says that if a fire starts on Shabbos, one should first surround the fire with goatskins, which can cause the fire to die down.<sup>228</sup> Thus, the power of the "goat" can overcome fire. This is a hint to the power of the "goat" which Yaakov Avinu was protected with, which has the power to overcome Esav.

This concept is also at the root of the miracle of Chanukah. The Sages compare the Greek exile to "darkness", and the exile of Edom (Esav) to the lowest abysses of the earth (the *tehom*), and that the exile of Edom gets its strength from its predecessor, Yavan (the Greek nation). Thus, the Greek exile continues with the exile of Edom\Esav. We find that in the episode of Yehuda and Tamar, which formed the roots of the Messianic dynasty through their children Peretz and Zerach, that Yehudah gave goatskins to Tamar. Thus, the roots of the Mashiach involved goatskins.

The roots of the Messianic dynasty are these two sons of Yehuda and Tamar: Peretz and Zerach. The word "Peretz" is from the term *poiretz geder*, "to break through fences," the quality associated with royalty, for "a king can break through fences, and no one may protest." It is the power to break through limitations, corresponding to the "*gid*" aspect of Gad (cut\discontinuation\limitation) and, in its place, to reveal the *g'di* aspect of Gad, which is *mazal* - continuation.

Thus, there is an ongoing spiritual "war" between these forces of *g'di* (*mazal*, continuation) and *gid* (cut\discontinuation).

### *The G'di\Goat – The Connecting Point Between Yehudah and Yosef*

*Chazal* state that after the sale of Yosef, when Yehudah "descended" to Goshen, it was as a punishment for causing Yosef's descent to Egypt. Furthermore, in the episode of Yehudah and Tamar, Yehudah was proven wrong when she showed him the goatskins, which proved that he had been with her. This was in full measure for having caused pain to Yaakov Avinu when he made him think that Yosef was dead, by showing him goatskins dipped in blood. On a deeper level, the goatskins symbolize all of the wars between Yaakov and Esav, with all the spiritual failures involved, which the Jewish people will go through in the ongoing war with Esav.

In the side of holiness\rectification, the “*gid*” (discontinuation) aspect becomes *g’di*\goat\continuation, the *mazal* of Gad, which is completely good *mazal*, in which the *shefa* is continuous – through the power of *g’di* and all that it represents. The power of *g’di* first came to the aid of the Jewish people in the life of Yaakov Avinu, when he was saved by goatskins; and it was continued through Yehudah, who fathered the Messianic dynasty which involved the use of goatskin.

In both of the blessings of Yaakov and Moshe which were given to Gad, the tribe Gad is compared to a young lion. This corresponds to the “leopard” in the side of holiness which Gad corresponds to [which has the power to defeat the Greek exile, the evil leopard].

### *Gad\G’di – The Power of Bris Milah Where All Mazal and Shefa Comes From*

Thus, we find a connecting point between Yosef and Yehudah. At first, Yosef descended to Egypt through the means of Yehudah (who was mainly responsible for selling him), and afterwards, Yehudah descended to Goshen by means of Yosef (for the brothers shunned him after the sale of Yosef, causing him to descend from his previous royal status).

The inner task of Gad (*g’di*) is to connect together Yosef and Yehudah and to continue this connection [as will be explained].

In the beginning of *Parashas Vayigash*, when Yehudah approaches Yosef, this is symbolic of the future, when Yehudah will become connected to Yosef [via the two Messiahs, Moshiach ben Yosef and Moshiach ben Yehudah]. From the connection between Yosef and Yehudah, comes all *mazal* and *shefa* to the Jewish nation.

From where does all the *shefa* and *mazal* come from? It is all rooted in Gad, the power of the *g’di*, which symbolizes good *mazal* and continuous *shefa* (as explained above at length). We mentioned earlier that the opposite of the “*mazal*” aspect in Gad is his aspect of *gid*\cutting, which symbolizes ‘disconnection’. On a simple level, this appears to mean that there is an aspect in Gad which contains bad *mazal*. However, we can now view this with a deeper meaning: through the cutting of the *gid* (circumcising the foreskin), a Jew gains the holiness of the sign of the *Bris Kodesh* (Holy Covenant) – of which all *shefa* comes from.

Thus, it is precisely the “*gid*” aspect which can bring all *mazal* and *shefa* – this is referring specifically to the “*gid*” aspect in the side of holiness, which is the concept of *Bris Milah*, circumcision of the foreskin. This is also the implication of Gad’s power of being born circumcised. He was born already with the foreskin cut, and this is really a sign of his good *mazal*, for all good *mazal* comes to a Jew from the sign of the *Bris Kodesh*, which is symbolized by the cutting and removal of the foreskin; from *Bris Kodesh*, one receives good *mazal* for his children and for all his continued offspring who descend from him.

Thus, the depth behind Gad is that he causes connection through the act of cutting and separation, which appears to be nothing but separation, but which is in actuality a connecting force. The “cut” foreskin which Gad was born with is the source of his good *mazal*. This is the depth behind Gad’s power of having been born circumcised. In this way, Gad’s aspect of *gid* is not a negative *mazal* for him, but to the contrary, it is synonymous with his aspect of *ba gad, ba mazal* – his good *mazal* – which corresponds to the spiritual power of the “*g’di*”. Through the “cutting” of the *Bris Milah*, which is the *gid*, there is a connecting point between Yosef and Yehudah, and from there, all *shefa* comes.

### *The Month of Teves – A Difficult Month, Which Contains The Light of Chanukah*

The month of Teves, on one hand, is a troublesome month for the Jewish people. It contains “words as tough as *gidin* (spears)” – it contains *Asarah B’Teves*, the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Teves, where all of the events leading up the destruction of the Holy Temples began.

But there is also a higher, deeper aspect to the month of Teves. Its *mazal* is *g’di* goat, from the word Gad, which symbolizes the very concept of *mazal*. We have explained here that the depth of this power of “*g’di*” is due to the power in the Jewish people of *Bris Milah*, circumcision, an act of cutting and separating which leads to connection and a combination of mighty spiritual power, which has the strength to defeat the evil forces of Esav. This is the root of how the month of Teves can contain Chanukah, which is the light of the future.

### *The Power of Gad’s Success At War: When The “Hands” Are Connected To The “Head”*

Part of Gad’s blessing is that he is successful when his tribe goes to war with his enemies. In the blessing of Moshe, Gad is compared to a young lion which can tear apart its victims, removing the skull together with the arm in one blow.<sup>229</sup> The depth behind this is because Gad can ‘connect’ together the arm with the head [and all that these two parts of the body symbolize].

In the Chanukah miracle, the “majority fell to the hands of the few”. Simply speaking, this meant that although the *Chashmonaim* were outnumbered by the Greek army, the *Chashmonaim* were still able to defeat them. But the depth of this is that the *Chashmonaim* became the majority, through their own spiritual power, making the Greeks into “few”, and this was how the Greeks fell into their hands.

The Greeks were only more powerful than them in their numbers, size and physical strength - in their “hands”. But the *Chashmonaim* were more powerful than the Greeks because they were represented by the “head”, which is above the hands.

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229 Devarim 33:20

Thus, the secret of winning against all negative forces is when the Jewish people connect their “hands” with their “head”.

### *“Peretz”: The Holy Power of “Peritzas Geder” (Breaking All Limitations) Which Can Defeat The Greeks*

On a deeper level, Gad’s success is not because of *mazal* or either because of his power of “cutting”, but because he has the power to go to war against his enemies in order to reveal the continuation of all holiness.

The Greek nation fought the Jewish people by forbidding them from *Bris Milah*; the depth of this is that they were fighting the continuation of the Jewish people, for all good *mazal* for the Jewish people stems from *Bris Milah*. This was their intention as well in contaminating all the oils in the *Beis HaMikdash* and in breaking down all of its walls. They were using the power to “cut”, *gid*, an evil power of *peritzas geder*, “breaking fences”, which aims to break down the holiness of the Jewish people.

But the Jewish people contain a holy ability of *peritzas geder*, symbolized by Peretz, ancestor of the Messianic dynasty and all royalty, which uses this power for holiness. When the Greeks tried breaking through all of the ‘fences’ of the Jewish people, this was essentially the Greek “darkness” which the Sages attribute them to, but when the *Chashmonaim* prevailed, it was the power of *peritzas geder* which does not bring darkness, but light and illumination.

This is Gad’s holy power of “*gid*”, which is his ability of *peritzas geder* when used for holiness, where *mazal* is continuous. The Greek nation wanted to weaken this power of the Jewish people and to darken all of their *mazal*. But through the power of *peritzas geder* (breaking fences) in the side of holiness, symbolized by Peretz, Zerach, and Gad, there was spiritual light and illumination which dispelled all of the “darkness” of the Greeks.

Chanukah contains this spiritual power of Peretz, of holy *peritzas geder* (breaking fences). It also contains another spiritual illumination: it must be lit at the entranceway, with the menorah on the right and the *mezuzah* on the left, and this implies that we use the spiritual power of the *mezuzah* to guard our entranceways, fences, and *gedarim* (boundaries). With these two spiritual powers combined – holy *peritzas geder*, and *shemirah* (protecting) our own *gedarim* which guard our holiness - the complete level of *mazal* is revealed, and then we enable the power of the “king can break fences”, the root of redemption.

### *Chanukah – The Mitzvah That Is The Light of the Torah*

The light revealed on Chanukah is the power of Gad, who tears apart his enemies like a lion, removing their ‘skull’ and ‘arm’ at once. We have Torah and *mitzvos*, and the Torah symbolizes the head, for it is the wisdom (which is contained in the cerebral faculties), whereas the *mitzvos*

symbolize the hands, for they are physical actions. Throughout the rest of the year, there is this difference between Torah learning and *mitzvos*. But on Chanukah, we have a *mitzvah* of lighting the menorah, which is a *mitzvah* that contains “Torah” in it, for it is a *mitzvah* which shines the light of the Torah. On Chanukah, we have an act of a *mitzvah* which is entirely the light of Torah! Thus, Chanukah is the connection between the “hands” (*mitzvos*) with the “head” (Torah).

This is precisely the power of Yosef, which can defeat the power of Esav. Yosef’s holy “fire”, which can burn through Esav, is the concept of combining the “hands” with the “head” – a level where our acts of *mitzvos* contain the light of Torah.

Esav’s power is fueled by *asiyah* action, as alluded to from his name “Esav” which is from the word *maaseh* action, and symbolized by his power of the “hands” which personifies him. What is the way to defeat Esav’s power of action, his “hands”? Through *mitzvos* alone, we cannot defeat Esav, for it will only be action against action. But if our actions of *mitzvos* are fueled by the holy power of thought that is the Torah, our actions combined with the “Torah” in them can then overcome Esav’s power.

The *mitzvah* of lighting the Chanukah *menorah* is a unique *mitzvah* act which reveals the spiritual illumination of Torah outward to the rest of the world, from the entranceway of the house where it is lit. It is this power which can overcome Esav. In order to overcome “action” – the power of Esav – we need to combine our own actions (*mitzvos*) with the mind, with the power of holy thought, the Torah. In this way, our “hands” (actions) become empowered with the “head” (mind/Torah).

Thus, the power of Gad is essentially the power to infuse our actions of *mitzvos* with inner, holy thought. This is the depth behind “*Mitzvos* require *kavanah* (concentration)”<sup>230</sup> – on an inner level, it means to combine “Torah” within our actions, to combine the arm/hands/*mitzvos* with our head/skull/Torah. Then, our Torah and *mitzvos* become unified as one.

All of the festivals will cease in the future, except for Purim and Chanukah. Similarly, the *mitzvos* will cease in the future.<sup>231</sup> These two statements are interconnected. It is because all of the festivals (besides for Chanukah and Purim), and all of the *mitzvos*, represent the “hands” without the head, thus they will cease; whereas Chanukah is the light of the future, in which our hands/actions/*mitzvos* will become connected with our head/thought/Torah.

This is the light of the future....

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230 Pesachim 114b

231 Niddah 61b

## 40 / Shevat – Pail

### *The Mazal of Shevat – D'li\ Pail*

The *mazal* of the month of *Shevat* is called “*dli*”, “*pail*” [i.e. as in a *pail* or bucket of water].<sup>232</sup>

The word *dli* דלי has the same root letters as the word “*yeled*” (ילד), “child”, which is also from the word דל, “*dal*”, “destitute.” A child is needy and therefore he is in a situation of *dalus* (poverty), for he is dependent on others. It means to be lessened, demoted, to be made small. But we also find that the word *dal* can mean “exalted”, as in the verse, ארוממך ה' כי דיליתני, “*I will exalt You, Hashem, for You have drawn me up.*”<sup>233</sup>

Thus, the term “*dal*” can either imply “lessening”, or it can mean the opposite of this – it can mean ascent, raising, exaltedness, uplifting. The term “*dal*” therefore contains two opposite meanings.

The purpose of a “*dli*”, a *pail*, is to draw water from one place and bring it to another place. A *dli\pail* is lowered into a pit of water and then it is lifted back up, so that it can provide water. Therefore, a *dli\pail* is lowered for the purpose of ascending.

The Sages compare the Jewish people to a *dli* (*pail*) which is sometimes empty and sometimes full; so are the Jewish people sometimes ‘empty’ and sometimes ‘full’.<sup>234</sup> When a *pail* is lowered into a pit of water, it is usually empty, and when it is lifted up from the pit, it is full. So too, the Jewish people are ‘empty’ when they are in a situation of *dal*∧destitute, and they are ‘full’ when they become exalted by Hashem afterwards.

Thus, the word דיליתני (“for You have drawn me up”), which is rooted in the word *dli\pail*, is an expression of thanking Hashem for making one exalted and uplifted, after one has been previously lacking and destitute.

### *Yosef and Moshe Are Both Compared To The Pail*

[There are different instances in the words of our Sages in which certain *tzaddikim* are compared to the *dli\pail*.] In *Pesikasa Zutrusi*, the Sages compare Yosef to a *pail*, for, just like a *pail*, he was

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232 Sefer Yetzirah 5:14

233 Tehillim 30:2

234 sefer Agadas Olam Katan; sefer Chochmas HaNefesh (Rokeiach)

lowered into a pit and later raised from the pit. Elsewhere, the Sages also compare Moshe Rabbeinu to a *dli\pail*.

As we will explain, these are two different connotations of the concept of the *dli\pail*.

The Sages state that “A *dli* (*pail*) is sometimes empty and sometimes full”. When Yosef was lowered into the pit, this was because of Reuven’s plan to save him, and later he descended to Egypt, sold to the house of slavery, which was entirely a ‘pit’ for him (in the spiritual sense, for it was a place of impurity and depravity), and finally, he was imprisoned, where he descended once again into a ‘pit’. In the end, he was raised from the ‘pit’ and made viceroy, but he went through much descent in order to get there.

Thus, Yosef is compared to the *dli*, a *pail*, which is sometimes empty and sometimes full, for he went through descent and ascent. He first descended into the pit and later into slavery. When he was sold to slavery, his entire sense of self was nullified, for a slave does not own anything of his own; everything he acquires goes to his master. The slave is an example of complete bittul (self-nullification), where a person has nothing for himself. He was made truly empty from his own self, and this was his ‘descent’, and this is how Yosef is compared to the *dli*.

Moshe Rabbeinu is also compared to a *dli*, and this is in a different sense than Yosef. Moshe did not have to descend into a pit or into slavery. Although he was placed in a basket to float in the Nile, he did not actually descend into any pits. Moshe was a shepherd, who draws forth water to feed the sheep, but this did not involve any descent. Thus, the *dli* that Moshe is compared to is the kind of *dli* that is full, as opposed to the *dli* which Yosef is compared to, who had to go through descent – like the *pail* when it is empty.

### *Ascending Through The ‘Pail’ – By Means of A ‘Rope’*

Even more so, though, there is a deeper aspect of the *dli\pail*.

Although the *dli\pail* is simply an object that descends, we also find that the *dli\pail* can cause ascent. How can the *pail* cause ascent? Through attaching a rope to the *pail*, one can pull the *pail* immediately after lowering it into the pit. In this instance, the *pail* is never considered to have descended into the pit, for it can be easily pulled out. Since it is connected to above the pit, it is never really fully in the pit, for it can easily be pulled out of the pit and go back to above the point.

Thus, the kind of pit which is “sometimes empty and sometimes full” is only when there is no rope in the pit which attaches to above the mouth of the pit. But if at the bottom of the pit has a rope attached to above the pit, that means that the bottom of the pit is always connected to above the pit. In that sense, the pit will be considered to always be ‘full’ - for whatever is in the pit is considered to be above the pit even as it within the pit.

The Nile River would irrigate the land of Egypt through its *deliyas mayim*, through the drawing of its water. A slave could not leave Egypt. In and of itself, Egypt was a place of total spiritual

descent. But there was also ascent there, for Yosef is compared to a *dli*\pail, and Yosef was in Egypt, which enables one to remain connected to his source even as he is lowered into Egypt.

### *Yosef Was In The 'Pit' Without A 'Rope'*

When Yosef was lowered into the pit through Reuven's advice, he was not considered to be totally in the pit, for Reuven was above the pit and was able to save him, so he was connected to above the pit. Reuven was the like the 'rope' that attaches whatever is in the pit to above the pit. But when Reuven came back and Yosef had been sold to Egypt, there was no one waiting above the 'pit' to rescue him - and now he was truly in the 'pit'.

This was the depth of Yosef being compared to a "*dli*"\pail: when the *pail* is empty and it is in the pit, with nothing to remove it from there. Through being sold to Egypt, he was totally in the 'pit' (in a place of spiritual depravity), and with nothing to take him out of there.

Yosef asked the butler to save him and remove him from this 'pit' – and the butler did not remember him. The depth of this was that in order to be raised from the 'pit', one has to connect to above the point. In asking the butler to save him, he could not be rescued, for the butler was currently in prison, in the pit, and one cannot save someone while he is in prison or when in a pit. And the butler didn't remember him, because he wasn't waiting for Yosef from above his 'pit' like Reuven was.

### *The 'Rope' That Lifted Yosef Out of His "Pit": Yosef's Torah Learning In Egypt*

How indeed did Yosef come out of his 'pit' he had descended to? When Yaakov came to visit Yosef in Egypt and he wanted to know if it was really Yosef, Yosef proved it to him by learning with him the laws of *eglah arufah*, which they had been learning on the day he was sold. The depth of this is that Yosef remained connected to above, even as he was in the pit that was Egypt - like a *pail* attached to a rope above the pit. The words of Torah which he had been learning before he went to Egypt were essentially that 'rope' above his 'pit', which helped him stay connected him to above the pit. Thus, his descent was not total, for even amidst his descent, he remained connected to above.

When water is drawn from a pit, the water has previously been below, inside the pit, and now it is above. The real place of the water is in the pit, but we can draw the water out of its source in the pit and now it is above the pit. In contrast to this, if we are drawing a person out of a pit, in order to rescue him, the person had previously been above the pit - so when we draw him out, we are really returning him to his real place, which was always above the pit.

The lesson we are pointing out from this is that it is easier for a person to be saved, in the spiritual sense, if he remains connected to his upper source, for if he identifies his real place as above the pit, it is easier to return him to his source above.

### *Connecting Oneself To The “Pail” of “Yosef” and The “Pail” of “Moshe”*

Let us now ‘draw’ these matters closer to our souls.

There is much spiritual descent that the Creation has gone through until now. There are levels and levels in *Gehinnom*, in order of descent. One of these levels is called “*Bor*” – “the Pit”. Through sin and other spiritual failings, a person descends into the “Pit” that is *Gehinnom*.

Whenever a person goes through a spiritual fall, if he can be like a *pail* attached to a ‘rope’ that is above the pit, he can then easily rise out of the ‘pit’, so his descent into the pit will never be total. [This is the ‘*pail*’ symbolized by Yosef HaTzaddik, who, even when descended into the ‘pit’ of slavery and Egypt, he remained above all of it, for he remained connected to his source, through the words of Torah that he remembered learning with his father Yaakov].

After that, one can then rise out of the pit by using the power of Moshe Rabbeinu, who always remained above the pit, and was never lowered into the pit in first place – he is compared to the ‘*pail*’ which never descends into the pit, who always remains above.

[Thus, first one needs to be like the ‘*pail*’ which Yosef is compared to – when one can easily pull himself out of his ‘pit’, by making sure to be connected to his pure source, even as he is amidst the lowest levels. After one does that, he can then rise to the level of ‘*pail*’ which Moshe is compared to – to be on a level where you never descend into any spiritual failures to begin with].

### *Practically: Acquiring Your “Rope” – Guarding Your Innermost Point*

When a person is in the pit, where there is no water and only snakes and scorpions, he needs a ‘rope’ that will attach him to above the ‘pit’.

To apply this point to ourselves practically, a person needs to make sure that he has at least one point in his soul which can be above all failure, which can always remain in its exalted state, a part of himself which never descends into the ‘pit’. If one makes sure to protect this point of the soul well and to never let it descend with him in all his failures, he remains connected through this ‘rope’ to above the pit.

The *Sefer HaYashar* says that even as one is in a time of *katnus* (immaturity) and *yeridah* (spiritual descent and failures), he should protect at least one point in himself which can stay above all the failures, keeping it active, in spite of all the other failures he is going through.<sup>235</sup> All of one’s inner *avodah*, which includes spiritual failings – as it is written, “A *tzaddik* falls seven times and rises” - requires one to have a “rope” that can attach him to above his “pit”, above all of his spiritual failings and falls.

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235 Sefer HaYashar: 6

The Sages said that the *mazal* of the month of *Shevat* is “*dli*”, a *pail*, which is also explained to mean as a ‘*pail*’ of spiritual ‘water’ which Hashem pours upon the nation Yisrael, to purify them.<sup>236</sup> These “pure waters” can be poured on one who makes sure to have a ‘rope’ that connects him to above.

The Sages also state that “Just as Moshe drew water as a shepherd, so will he draw water on all those in the future.” This is the future redemption, where all those who fell into the pit will be drawn out. But each person, even when he falls, needs to have a point where he remains connected to Above, even if he is going through the worst kind of fall possible. He needs to hold onto it before he falls, as well as after he falls. It is the unchanging aspect of the soul, which must remain as it is in its purity. Therefore, one must make sure to guard it, no matter how low he falls.

From this power, one can strongly connect himself, from within himself, to the power of the *dli* \ *pail* which can raise him from any descent, and to merit the “pure waters” sprinkled upon him. This goes beyond the concept of “descending for the purpose of ascending” (*yeridah l’tzorech aliyah*), for even if the person is going through a kind of spiritual fall which is not for the purpose of later ascending, he can still be saved, as long as he has the ‘rope’ that connects him to above. In that way, even when he does fall, he will not fall completely, for he is always connected to his ‘source’ above the ‘pit’.

When does a person truly fall? Only when his connection to Above is severed. But if he can remain connected to a point above all of his failures, he can then easily rise from the pit of descent after he falls. Then he will know the meaning of כי דיליתני ה' ארוממך – “*I will exalt You, Hashem, for You have drawn me up*” – which is closeness to Hashem.

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236 Yalkut Reuveni: Beraishis: 1

## 41 / Mazal Adar – Fish

### *Why Haman Rejoiced*

The *mazal*<sup>237</sup> of the month of Adar, as is well-known, is *dagim* – fish.

There is a well-known Gemara: When Haman cast lots (*purim*) in order to decide which month to destroy the Jewish people, it landed on the month of Adar, the month where Moshe Rabbeinu left the world, and therefore he grew very happy, taking this is a sign that it will be a month of bad *mazal* for the Jewish people.<sup>238</sup>

Elsewhere, *Chazal* state a different reason of why Haman rejoiced. In the words of the *Midrash* in *Esther Rabbah*, Haman was happy that the lot fell on Adar because the *mazal* of Adar is fish, and fish can be swallowed.<sup>239</sup>

The Gemara elsewhere says that “Just as big fish swallow the smaller fish, so would people swallow each other, if not for fear of the government”. Amalek did not fear Hashem when they attacked the Jewish people in the desert. They were missing fear of a higher authority, so they did not care to swallow others. Haman, who descended from Amalek - the nation that does not fear Hashem – was ready to ‘swallow’ the Jewish people, for his lot landed on the month of Adar, the *mazal* of fish, which can get swallowed alive. Thus, we can now better understand why Haman rejoiced when the lot that he cast fell on the month Adar.

What was Haman’s downfall? *Chazal* say that Haman overlooked the fact that “Just as fish can swallow, so can they be swallowed.”<sup>240</sup> Let us reflect a little into the depth of Haman’s downfall, and on the deeper meaning of how fish can both swallow and be swallowed. What is the depth of this matter that fish can swallow and also be swallowed?

### *Haman Thought That The Light of Moshe Rabbeinu Cannot Protect Us In Adar*

Haman was happy because he thought that in the month of Adar, he will be able to ‘swallow’ the Jewish people. Let’s analyze this further.

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237 astrological sign

238 Megillah 13a-13b

239 Esther Rabbah 7:11

240 Esther Rabbah ibid

The Gemara says that “the fish do not meet the sunlight, because they are always covered by the water. There is also a Gemara that says that “The face of Moshe is like the face of the sun.”<sup>241</sup> In other words, the spiritual light of Moshe Rabbeinu, which is compared to the sunlight, cannot reach where the fish are.

Thus, the depth of why Haman rejoiced was not simply because it was the month where Moshe expired (as is well-known, Moshe expired on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Adar, and the number 7 in Hebrew is  $\tau$ , which is equal in *gematria* to the word  $\text{אִשׁ}$  fish). Rather, it is because the spiritual power of Moshe is compared to the sun’s light, which does not reach the fish.

That is the depth of why Haman rejoiced: since the mazal of Adar is fish, he thought that Moshe Rabbeinu’s merits would not be able to protect the Jews in the month of Adar, because the light of the “sun” cannot reach the “fish”. So it wasn’t simply because Adar was the month where Moshe left the world; it was because even if Moshe were to have remained alive in the month of Adar, his light cannot reach the “fish”. This insight made Haman confident that in the month of Adar, he will be able to destroy all the Jews.

### *Haman Thought He Is The ‘Big Fish’ Who Will Swallow All of the ‘Little Fish’*

There is yet a deeper understanding of why Haman rejoiced because he thought he could swallow the Jewish people in Adar.

The Gemara says that “by way of the world, the big fish can swallow little fish”. When the lot that he cast landed on the month of Adar, which has the *mazal* of fish, Haman understood this to mean that he will be like a “big fish” who can swallow all the of little fish, which he thought was represented by the Jewish people. After all, the law of nature is that the big fish swallow the little fish, and not the other way around. Haman didn’t dream of a possibility that perhaps all of the ‘small fish’ will swallow the ‘big fish’, because that goes against the laws of nature. The *mazal* of fish is that they can get swallowed by bigger fish; so Haman thought that he is for sure the “big fish” that can come and ‘swallow’ all of the “little fish”.

### *What Haman Didn’t Realize*

Based upon the above understanding, we can now proceed to understand the following. What is the root of the disadvantage contained in the concept of fish?

The Gemara<sup>242</sup> says, “Where do we find a hint to Haman in the Torah?” and the Gemara answers from the verse, "הַמִּן הָעֵץ הַזֶּה", "*HaMin HaEitz HaZeh*”, (“From this type of tree”), which is said regarding the *Eitz HaDaas* (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil). Regarding the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas*, one of the opinions in the Gemara is that it was *dagan*, a kind of grain. The word

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241 Bava Basra 87b

242 Chullin 139a

“*dagan*” (דגן) is a combination of the word *dag* (דג) and the letter *nun* (נ) which is equal to “50”. In Aramaic, the word *dag*\fish is called “*nunei*”, similar to the letter *nun*, which further hints to the connection between fish and the number 50.

The Gemara<sup>243</sup> asks, “Where is a hint to Moshe from the Torah?” The Gemara answers that it is contained in the verse, “בשׂאגם הוא בשר”, when Hashem wanted to destroy of all mankind, by the decree of the *Mabul*<sup>244</sup>; the Gemara says that the fish survived the *Mabul*. Herein contains the root of how the Jewish people could be saved. Haman thought that he could swallow all of the ‘fish’, the Jewish people, because the mazal of Adar is fish. But he didn’t realize that the fish were saved from the *Mabul*, when the rest of the world had been destroyed. Herein lays the downfall of Haman.

### *The Depth Behind The Fish That Swallowed Yonah*

We can also understand it further. Where do we find the concept that the fish swallow others? There was a big fish that swallowed the prophet Yonah, who refused to listen to Hashem’s command to admonish the people of Ninveh. Hashem sent a big fish to swallow Yonah – here we see a concept in which a big fish can come and swallow a person.

The Sages explain that at first, when Yonah was swallowed by the big fish, he was enjoying it there, so Hashem made the big fish spit him out and then he was swallowed by a small fish.<sup>245</sup> From this we can see that not only can a big fish swallow a person, but even a small fish can swallow that which is bigger than it. Now we can better understand that the Jewish people were truly in danger. If even a small fish can swallow a person, surely the Jewish people were in danger of being swallowed by a ‘fish’ – whether the ‘fish’ is big or small.

There is a verse, “*From the stomach, the grave, I was rescued.*” As long as Yonah was in the big fish, *Chazal* say that it was like Gan Eden to him, and he had it all good there. When he was swallowed by a small fish, which Rashi identifies as a female fish – this represents the place that is “*from the stomach, the grave, I was saved.*” Normally it is a big fish which swallows a small fish, but with Yonah, a small fish swallowed something that was bigger than it. The fact that Yonah could be swallowed by a small fish is the root of the downfall of Haman, who wanted to swallow us.

### *The Tzaddikim Will Eat The Leviathan In The Future: The Root of Haman’s Downfall*

Let us explain this more.

It is brought in *Pirkei D’Rebbi Eliezer*, and in other places in *Chazal*, that when the fish swallowed Yonah, after some time the fish said to Yonah, “My time has come to be swallowed by the

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243 *ibid*

244 The Deluge

245 *Pirkei D’Rebbi Eliezer* 10, *Midrash Tanchuma: Vayikra*: 8

*leviathan*.”<sup>246</sup> Later when Yonah met the *leviathan*, he said to it, “Know that in the future, Hashem will make a festive meal for the *tzaddikim*, and what will be served in that meal? You!” Immediately the *leviathan* fled. What is the depth of this?

Normally, it is the bigger fish which swallow the smaller fish. Who is the biggest fish that swallows the smaller fish? The ultimate “big fish” that exists is the *leviathan*, which is called the ‘king of all fish’. It is the ultimate swallower. At the meal for the *tzaddikim* in the future, the “*seudah* of the *leviathan*”, it will be revealed that the one that swallows (the *leviathan*) is the one that will be swallowed.

This concept took place in the side of evil with Yonah, where it was not only a big fish which swallowed him, but even a small fish was able to swallow him. Afterwards when Yonah was saved, whereupon he said “*From the stomach, from the grave, I was rescued*”, and it came time for the fish to be eaten by the *leviathan*, what did Yonah say to the *leviathan*? He said to it, “We, the *tzaddikim*, will be the ones to eat you in the future.” From here we see the concept that the biggest fish of all, the *leviathan*, will be swallowed by the *tzaddikim*.

### *The Depth of The Danger: Man Can Be ‘Swallowed’ By ‘Fish’*

There are two extremes to how this concept manifests in the side of evil.

At first we explained the simpler manifestation of this concept, in the side of evil: the fact that a big fish can swallow the smaller fish [which hints to how the Jewish people were in danger from Haman].

But this was not that much of a worry for the Jewish people, because we see that Yonah was enjoying it inside the belly of the big fish. The fact that a ‘big fish’ was threatening to swallow the Jewish people was therefore not such a threat to them, because it is still possible to survive after being swallowed by the ‘big fish’ – and be in a Gan-Eden like state, as Yonah was.

What, then, was the great danger to the Jewish people? It is from the fact that Yonah could be swallowed by a small fish, which he wanted to be saved from – of which he said, “*From the stomach, from the grave, I was rescued*.” So the Jewish people were truly in danger from the fact that Haman wanted to swallow them.

Haman is called “this oppressive man, this enemy”, to the Jews. He was the “big fish” that wanted to destroy all of the “small fish”, the Jewish people - just as Yonah was suffering when he was swallowed by the small fish. But it was not simply because the “big fish” can swallow the “small fish”. It was because even the small fish can swallow that which is bigger than it.

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246 The “leviathan” (in Hebrew, *livyasan*) is often translated as the “whale”. The Sages state that Hashem created two of these giant whales, one of them a male and a female. The female whale was so strong that it could have destroyed the world. Therefore, Hashem killed it and salted its meat for the future, when the *tzaddikim* will enjoy the “*seudas halivyasan*”, the “festive meal of the leviathan”. Understandably, this is not referring to a physical pleasure, but to a spiritual bliss that goes beyond our comprehension.

[Thus there was a very great danger to the Jewish people, because if there is a concept that even a small fish can swallow a person (like what happened with Yonah) – which is even worse than being swallowed being a big fish (and that is what happened with Yonah) – then the Jewish people were in very great danger from the ‘fish’, Haman, who is trying to ‘swallow’ them.]

What happened in the end? Everything was turned around for the better of the Jewish people. It reflected the state of the future, where the *tzaddikim* will eat the biggest fish of all, the *leviathan* – and so they were able to ‘swallow’ Haman, the ‘big fish’.

This is the depth of the words of the *Midrash* in *Esther Rabbah* that we mentioned in the beginning, that Haman rejoiced when the last that he cast fell on Adar, which has the *mazal* of Adar, for fish can be swallowed. He knew that not only can a big fish swallow the small fish, but that even the small fish can swallow that which is bigger than it; thus he was truly an enemy who was endangering the survival of the Jewish people.

What he failed to realize was that just as there is a possibility that they can be ‘swallowed’ by him, so can there be a possibility that they can ‘swallow’ him. And how indeed did the Jewish people have the power to ‘swallow’ him? It is not in the same way that a big fish can swallow a small fish. Rather, it is in the same way that the *tzaddikim* in the future will swallow the *leviathan*, the biggest fish of all.

### *The Torah Of The Future: A Level Beyond The Five Parts of The Torah*

Haman built a gallows for Mordechai that was 50 *amos* high. The letter *nun* (נ) is equal to 50, which is similar to the Aramaic word “*nunei*”, which we mentioned earlier, in connection with the Hebrew word *dag* (fish). In the end, it was Haman who was hung on it, and this reflects the future, when the “big fish”, the *leviathan*, will be eaten by the *tzaddikim*.

The Gemara<sup>247</sup> says that eating fish [on too much of a regular basis] is detrimental for the eyes. This can be connected with a statement of the Sages that “the eyes see, and the heart desires”,<sup>248</sup> which connotes that the eyes see forbidden sights and they become damaged spiritually; the root of this began ever since Chavah laid her eyes upon the *Eitz HaDaas*. Elsewhere, the Gemara says that “*nunei samei eina*”, “fish are a remedy to the eyes.”<sup>249</sup> How do we reconcile these contradicting statements?

The word *nunei* contains three letters (נני), and elsewhere the Gemara explains that the three consecutive letters of נ, ט, נ are a hint that *nunei*\fish are a *sam*\remedy to the eyes. Let us understand this deeply. In the side of evil, the letters ט and נ (the word *sam*\טמ) is placed in between the letters of ט and נ, which is the word טומא, blindness, of the eyes; this refers to the concept of how fish are

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247 Talmud Bavli: Berachos: Chapter Nine

248 Bamidbar Rabbah 10:2

249 Nedarim 54a

bad for the eyes. But in the side of holiness, “fish” are good for the eyes; we see this from fish of Yonah. The Gemara says that its eyes became windows, and Yonah was able to see the entire ocean through it. This is how “fish” are good for the eyes, *nunei sama eina* – “fish are remedy (סמא) for the eyes.”

The letters נ ט ן form the word נטע, which we find in the verse of the Torah of הארון, when “the *Aron* (Ark) journeyed forth in desert”.<sup>250</sup> The Gemara says “the *Aron* is [contains] a *sefer* in and of itself”, apart from the five parts of the Torah that are the *Chumash*. This is related to the concept of how *nunei* (fish) is the *sama* (remedy) of the *eina* (eyes), because it contains the letters נטע, which stands for “*nunei sama eina*”. Let us explain.

The *mazal* of Adar is fish, so Haman rejoiced when the lot that he cast fell on Adar; the word for “rejoiced” here is שמח which has the letters חמשי alluding to the *Chumash* (the five parts of the Torah). In other words, Haman can only have power of us if our Torah is on the level of *Chumash*, which is represented by the number 5.

But the *mazal* of fish represents a level that is above the number 5, for “fish are remedy the eyes”, (“*nunei sama eina*”), and the “*nunei sama eina*” (which is represented by the word נטע) by the *Aron* represents “a *sefer* in and of itself”, which means that there is another *sefer* besides for the 5 parts of the *Chumash*. In addition to this, the Gemara also says that besides for how the *sefer* contained in the *Aron* was a unique *sefer* in and of itself, there is also another *sefer* of the Torah – the *sefer* that is formed by those who learn the Torah. So altogether there are 7 parts to the Torah – the 5 parts of the *Chumash*, the *sefer* that was in the *Aron*, and the *sefer* that is formed by those who learn it. Thus, through the concept of “*nunei sama eina*” (represented by the word נטע) which we find by the *Aron*, a new *sefer* is revealed. This shows us that power of *nunei*, fish, represents a whole new level of Torah – a level in which there are 7 parts to the Torah, and not 5 - which is what protected us from Haman.

In the time of Purim, the nation accepted the Torah willingly again, “out of love from the miracles”, as *Rashi* says. Haman wanted to swallow the Jewish people, but in the end it was they swallowed him. Herein lays the root of the light of the Torah that will be revealed in the future, which will go from 5 parts of Torah to 7; this was revealed on Purim. It revealed a new acceptance of Torah, a new *sefer* that was separate from the five parts of the *Chumash* – which is contained in the concept of “*nunei sama eina*”, represented by the word נטע, in the verse of הארון.

Moshe told Yehoshua to write in a *sefer* of the events of the war with Amalek, as a remembrance. What is this *sefer*? It is the “new *sefer*” of the Torah which is apart from the *Chumash*, which will be revealed in the future - when the Torah will go from the 5 parts to 7 parts.

### *The Depth of the Purim Seudah: A Resemblance of the Seudah of the Leviathan*

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250 Bamidbar 10:35

The *seudah* that we eat on Purim is called “*mishteh v’simcha*”, of celebration and joy. The Gemara says that we have *oneg Shabbos* (pleasure on Shabbos) by eating big fish. But the *seudah* of the *leviathan* in the future will not just be a meal of eating big fish like we have today, because the *leviathan* is the biggest fish ever. Shabbos is called “a resemblance of the World To Come”, where we rejoice by eating big fish. The meal of the future, however, will be the “World To Come” itself, and it will not be with just big fish, but with the biggest fish ever - the *leviathan*.

On Purim, when we have a *seudah* of *mishteh v’simchah*, where we “celebrate the downfall of that wicked one”, it is really a resemblance of the *seudah* of the *leviathan*.

The Gemara says that Hashem created two *leviathans* – a male and a female. Hashem castrated the male *leviathan* and killed the female; there would be no marital connection between the male and female *leviathan*. Marital connection is called *da’as*, as the possuk says by Adam and Chavah, “*And Adam knew (va’yeda) his wife*”, which refers to conjugal relations. There will be no *daas* between the male and female *leviathan*, because there will only be one of them. This is the depth of the *seudah* we eat on Purim, in which there is an obligation upon a person to become inebriated to the point of *ad d’lo yoda*, of having no more *daas*. It reflects the *seudah* of the future where the *tzaddikim* will eat of the *leviathan* - where there will be no *daas*.

As is well-known, Purim is a light of the future. Purim will never cease, unlike the other festivals. The depth of this is because the *seudah* of Purim is a revelation of the *seudah* of the *leviathan* that will be in the future; Purim is a resemblance of it. The *seudah* of the *leviathan*, which we resemble in the *seudah* we have on Purim. Haman wanted to ‘swallow’ us, and in the end, it was us who ‘swallowed’ him. We ‘swallowed’ Haman – and that is the root of the future *seudah* of the *leviathan*, where the *tzaddikim* will all swallow the ‘big fish’.

### *The Secret of Haman’s Downfall – The “New Sefer” of Torah That Was Contained In The Aron*

In the *parsha* in the Torah of *וידי בנסוע הארון*, there are two places where the letter נ appears. There is a regular נ at the beginning of the *parsha*, and there is an upside-down נ at the end of the *parsha*. At first Haman built a gallows of 50 *amos* to hang Mordechai on, and in the end Haman, it was hung on it; this is the hint contained in the upside-down נ – it hints to us that Haman’s plans involving the number “50” (the gallows which he prepared for Mordechai which was 50 *amos* high) were turned upside-down on him, so his own plans were turned on him. Thus, it is the *parsha* of *וידי בנסוע הארון* which contains the secret to Haman’s downfall. From the power of the special *sefer* of Torah that was inside the *Aron*, came Haman’s downfall – it is the “new Torah” of the future, whose light was revealed on Purim, which saved the Jewish people from Haman and which destroyed him, using Haman’s own “50” that he had planned.

Thus, the light revealed on Purim is represented by the fish, particularly in the concept of *nunei sama eina*, “the fish are remedy to the eyes”. The “*nunei*”, the fish, brought about our reason to eat the *seudah* of the Purim (as explained until now) - where we celebrate the downfall of Haman, in which the power of “fish” was turned against him. It is all a resemblance of the *seudah* of the *leviathan* in the future.

This is the great spiritual “light” of Purim that came to the Jewish people, which the Megillah describes as *orah*, the “light”, that came to the Jewish people then. This was really the light of the new revelation of Torah of the future, which was contained in the *sefer* that was inside the *Aron*.

### *The ‘Fish’ and ‘Wine’ Of Purim*

This is also the root of why there is an obligation to drink wine on Purim. Wine in Hebrew is יין, which is equal in *gematria* to the number 70, which parallels the number 7; as mentioned earlier, the number 7 is the level of the future Torah, in which the Torah will go from 5 parts to 7 parts.

On Purim, there is both eating and drinking. We eat fish and we drink wine at the Purim *seudah*. Eating the fish at the Purim *seudah* is a reflection of how the *tzaddikim* will eat the *leviathan* in the future. We also have wine on Purim, which also reflects the “wine” that will be served in the *seudah* of the future. These two aspects resemble the *seudah* of the *leviathan* in the future, where there will be “fish” [the new revelation of Torah, which is the secret of “fish is remedy to the eyes”] and “wine” [the future Torah, which will have 7 parts, parallel to the “70” of יין\wine].<sup>251</sup>

At the *seudah* of the *leviathan* in the future, there will only be one fish in the world, and there will be no connection of *daas* between the male and female *leviathan*, because there will only be one *leviathan*; [for there will be no more *daas* – it will go beyond our *daas*].

This is the depth of “One is obligated on Purim to become inebriated to the point of *ad d’lo yoda*, (until he does not ‘know’)” .....

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251 A similar insight to this is brought in *sefer Nezer Yisrael* vol. II: Moadim, of Rav Avraham Tzvi Kluger shlit”a.

## *Q&A About Rosh Chodesh & Mazal*

### *Q&A – Purpose of the Rosh Chodesh Series*

**QUESTION:** I have listened to all of the Rav’s *shiurim* on the topic of “Rosh Chodesh”, including the series on *Avodah* of Rosh Chodesh, *Mazal* of Rosh Chodesh, and *Mabus* (Essence) of Rosh Chodesh, and most of the *shiurim* on “*Shevet*” (Tribe) of Rosh Chodesh. I want to know what the Rav’s purpose was in giving these *shiurim*. I also want to know if these *shiurim* are offering an alternative ladder of growth (which seems to begin from the month of Nissan, the beginning of the months).

Also, if someone was born in a certain month, does that mean this personal *avodah* is closer to the *avodah* described in the *shiurim* about the essence, *mazal*, and tribe of that month? For example, if someone was born in the month of Sivan, does that mean his *avodah* is more connected with the *mazal* of “twins” in the month of Sivan, and with all that this implies? And is such a person’s *avodah* more relevant to the personal correction which that “tribe” of that month (such as the tribe of “Reuven” in the month of Sivan)? Also, are these *shiurim* a step-by-step program of growth, or is there no particular order to go in, when trying to practically implement these *shiurim*? Meaning to say, for example, that the *avodah* of the month of Sivan doesn’t necessarily need to be done before the *avodah* of the month of Tamuz?

**ANSWER:** There is a *mazal* for each day as well as a *mazal* for each hour of the day, and a *mazal* for the month. Each *mazal* is a “garment” of one’s soul. There is a way to serve Hashem based upon one’s very soul, and this is the primary service of the Jewish people, who are above *mazal*. There is also a way to serve Hashem through the “garments” of the soul, such as through the *mazalos*.

The “Rosh Chodesh” series (Essence, Mazal, Tribe, and Avodah) were given according to the order of the months, but this is not a specific order. Rather, it is a possible order to go in for one who wants to serve Hashem based on the order of the months, which correspond to the order of the *mazalos*. This is because there are many different orderly systems within Creation, and that means that there are many different corresponding orderly systems of *avodah*. The orderly system described in the classes of the *Rosh Chodesh* series is one of those orderly systems.<sup>252</sup>

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252 Q&A 4587 – Purpose of the Rosh Chodesh Series

*Q&A – Mazal Vs. 4 Elements*

**QUESTION:** It's known that a person is comprised of the 4 elements, and each person has a dominant element in his personal soul. I have a few questions about this.

1) Is a person's dominant trait/element dependent on the mazal (zodiac) in which he was born in? (The month I was born in, Sivan, which has the mazal of "twins", corresponds to the element of wind. And indeed, I feel that this is my dominant element).

2) If a person, let's say, was born in the month of Adar, which has the mazal of "fish", and which corresponds to the element of water, is it still possible for him to have a different dominating element, which doesn't correspond to that month's mazal? Does a person born in the month of Adar (the mazal of "fish") automatically have a dominant element of water?

In other words, does a person need to identify what his strongest element is, or can a person just assume that his dominant element corresponds to the mazal of the month that he was born in?

**ANSWER:** A person's soul is comprised of its actual essence (*atzmus*) as well its outer garments (*levush*). The *atzmus*/essence of one's soul is always rooted in one particular element which is its primary element (fire, wind, water or earth). In addition to this factor, a person also has a *levush*/garment for his soul, which is called the *mazal* (zodiac sign). The word *mazal* is from the words "*Yizlu mayim*", "The water shall flow." With the Jewish people, the primary factor of the soul is the very essence of a Jew's soul, for the Sages state, "There is no *mazal* [dictating] over the Jewish people". Therefore, our main relationship with our soul is to relate to the very essence (*atzmus*) of our soul, and to relate only a little to our *mazal*. Therefore, a person needs to clarify his primary element, which is part of his soul's essence, and this is his primary inner work and unique role on this world.<sup>253</sup>





*Part Four:  
Tribe  
of the  
Month*

## 42 / Nissan - Yehudah

### *Nissan – The Tribe of Yehudah*

The Vilna Gaon writes that the twelve months of the year are parallel to the twelve *shevatim* (tribes). There are many different opinions in the writings of our Rabbis concerning which months are parallel to which of the 12 tribes. According to some opinions, the month of Nissan represents the tribe of Yehudah.

### *Yehudah: The Expression of Hodaah (Giving Thanks)*

When Yehudah was born, his mother Leah expressed thanks for him, saying, “*This time, I thank Hashem.*” The name Yehudah is rooted in the word *hodaah*, thanks, because Leah felt thankful to Hashem over his birth.

As our Sages say, being that Yaakov Avinu had four wives<sup>254</sup>, and since our matriarchs knew through prophecy that 12 sons would come from Yaakov Avinu, the natural order of events would have been that 3 children would come from each mother [4x3=12]. Therefore, Leah thought she would not beget more than the 3 children to Yaakov. When she saw that she was given a fourth child, she realized that Hashem was giving her even more than her allotted portion of children. Thus, she had special reason to thank Hashem.

The Gemara<sup>255</sup> says that Leah was the first person in history to give *hodaah* (thanks) to Hashem, when she gave *hodaah* to Hashem over the birth of Yehudah. However, there is also a deeper understanding to this, as we will see.

### *‘Hodaah’: Through Denying Idol Worship*

The *possuk* in the *Megillah* says that Mordechai was called “*ish yehudi*” [which simply means that he descended from Yehudah]. The Gemara expounds upon this that “Whoever denies idol worship, is called a ‘*Yehudi*’ (a Jew).” Mordechai fought the trend of idol worship in his times, thus he earned the title of ‘*ish Yehudi*’. Thus, a denial of heresy, along with acknowledging the existence of Hashem, is what constitutes being called a ‘*yehudi*’. If so, *hodaah* is not just about admitting to something. It is about denying the other alternative.

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254 The two Imahos, Rachel and Leah; and the two maidservants, Bilhah and Zilpah.

255 Talmud Bavli: Tractate Berachos: Chapter Nine

The Torah records that Esav married a woman whose name was “Yehudis”. *Chazal* explain that her name was called Yehudis because she denied idol worship, and anyone who denies idol worship ‘*yehudi*’. Esav married her with the agenda of impressing his father Yitzchok, marrying a righteous woman who didn’t serve idols, which would get his father to think that he had given up his ways of idol worship. [In reality, this was all a deception, and later we will explain more about this].

So the root of the term *yehudi\hodaah* is not just about acknowledging Hashem. It involves a denial of idol worship, and from that, faith and acknowledgment in Hashem can then become revealed.

### *‘Hodaah’: ‘Bittul’\Nullification*

There is another aspect to Yehudah’s name. In the episode of Yehudah and Tamar, Yehudah admitted to Tamar that she was correct; “*She is more righteous than me.*” *Chazal* praise Yehudah in this act for the fact that he “admitted, and he was not ashamed”, and because of this meritorious act, Yehudah merited that the kingdom of David descended from him. This paved the roots of Mashiach and the future redemption.

The Gemara says that our matriarch Rachel is praised for grabbing onto the art of silence, whereas Leah is praised for the grabbing onto the art of gratitude. We see that the *hodaah* which Leah revealed is expressed as well in the life of her son Yehudah who is associated with that very *hodaah*, as follows.

The Gemara states that Yosef sanctified the name of Hashem in private<sup>256</sup>, thus he merited that a letter of Hashem be added to his name; there is *possuk* in the Torah which names Yosef as “*Yehoisaf*”, so we see that a letter ך was added onto his name; whereas Yehudah sanctified Hashem’s name in public<sup>257</sup>, thus he merits the full name of Hashem in his name<sup>258</sup>.

Thus, there is a deeper aspect to the *hodaah* in Yehudah’s name. It wasn’t just because Leah felt gratitude to Hashem that she had been given more than her allotted portion of children. It was because *hodaah* implies admitting to something, which is the trait of nullifying oneself. This is called *bittul* (nullification).

Even more so, *hodaah* implies a denial of something else. In order for a person to give *hodaah* to Hashem, he has to first deny idol worship. After denying heresy, a person can then have faith in Hashem and be thankful to Him. So in order for a person to be “*modeh al ha’emes*” – to admit to the truth – he has to first deny the opposite of truth.

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256 By the confrontation with the wife of Potiphar, when he refrained from sinning with her

257 When he admitted publicly that he was wrong and that Tamar was correct

258 The name “Yehudahh” contains the four letter name of Havayah

The deepest implication of *hodaah* is when Hashem's Name is sanctified in public. The Gemara says that because Yehudah sanctified Hashem's Name in public [through being 'modeh' to Tamar], he merited to have Hashem's Name of *havayah* revealed in his own name.

### *Denying Idol Worship: The Incomplete Level of 'Hodaah'*

Let us reflect more about Yehudah and the root concept behind his name, *hodaah*. As explained above, *hodaah* implies a denial of the alternative option. In order to 'admit' that Hashem exists, one has to deny the existence of other gods, or else his *hodaah* is not a true *hodaah*. If I believe in Hashem, that means I must deny that there are other gods.

Thus, all *hodaah* implies a denial of something else. As the Gemara says, a Jew is only called 'Yehudi' if he denies idol worship. If this is the definition, though, such *hodaah* is not the complete level of *hodaah*, for it involves an element of denial. Although the denial here is a denial of idol worship, which [denial of idol worship] strengthens the admittance to one's belief in Hashem, the entire such *hodaah* is based on the fact that idols are denied, which makes the *hodaah* incomplete. It is *hodaah* only in the sense of the denial of idol worship [and it is not *hodaah* for the sake of *hodaah*].

It is reminiscent of the case in the Gemara of 'modeh b'miktzas'<sup>259</sup>, one who admits partially to a claim. In the case of *modeh b'miktzas*, he admits partially to the claim, but he denies the other half that he isn't admitting to. The entire *hodaah* is based on a *kefirah* (denial) of something else. It is thus called *modeh b'miktzas*.

Thus, the *hodaah* of Leah over the birth of Yehudah wasn't the complete level of *hodaah*. Her *hodaah* to Hashem was based on the fact that she received more than her allotted portion of children; this came at the expense of the other wives of Yaakov Avinu, who would now bear less children, now that more children were being given to Leah. Since her *hodaah* came at the expense of others, we can view it as an incomplete kind of *hodaah*, because her *hodaah* implied that she is getting her part, while the others are being denied their part.

Thus, any *hodaah* which results in a deficiency to another, cannot be called complete *hodaah*. Whenever it comes to interpersonal relationships with others, any *hodaah* that one expresses will imply that he has received what others didn't receive, so the *hodaah* is incomplete. By contrast, the complete level of *hodaah* is only when my *hodaah* isn't causing any deficiency to another; when it isn't coming at the expense of another.

### *Incomplete "Hodaah"*

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<sup>259</sup> Bava Metzia 3b

Thus, when *hodaah* is a denial of something else, or when it comes at the expense of another, it is the incomplete level of *hodaah*. Such *hodaah* is only considered *hodaah* from the perspective of this “world of falsity” that we live in. [In contrast, true *hodaah* comes from a higher dimension than this world of falsity].

The *Sforno* says that Yehudah was not the first person to be named Yehudahh. The wife of Esav, Yehudis, preceded him. Yehudis denied idol worship, thus she is called Yehudis, for anyone who denies idol worship is called “*Yehudi*”. Why indeed did Esav marry a righteous woman who denies idol worship? He wanted to trick Yitzchok Avinu by making him think that he married a righteous woman. If so, the entire *hodaah* of his wife Yehudis is a *hodaah* that was false! It represents a kind of *hodaah* which isn’t about admitting for the sake of the truth. The true and complete kind of *hodaah* it is being done for the sake of the truth, and not for any other personal reason.

Thus, *hodaah* is incomplete when it is based on a denial of the alternative option. Such *hodaah* involves an element of falsity, and it is represented by the false *hodaah* of Esav, in his marriage to Yehudis.

The *hodaah* found on This World includes both admitting and denial; the “denial” aspect in it makes it incomplete, for true *hodaah* does not come from a denial of something else.

### *Complete ‘Hodaah’*

Where do we find a revelation of complete *hodaah*? It is hinted to in the words of the Gemara we brought earlier: Yehudah sanctified the name of Hashem in public, and because of this, he merited that the four-letter Name of Hashem (*havayah*) be part of his name. This is a kind of *hodaah* (admittance) which does not come due to any denial of something else.

It was revealed in this world by the giving of the Torah, when Hashem said, “*I am Hashem, your G-d.*” This was a revelation of the ultimate *hodaah*, the belief in Hashem’s existence, before there was any mention or possibility of other gods. It was a kind of *hodaah* that is above this world entirely. Such *hodaah* is not coming for the purpose of denying other gods; it is coming to state the existence of Hashem. It is not about a denial of falsity. It is a revelation that there is only one option in reality, as opposed to “two” options (belief in Hashem vs. belief in idols and falsity).

The higher revelation of *emunah* is when it is revealed there is only “one” option – faith in Hashem - as opposed to ‘choosing’ between the ‘two’ options (faith vs. heresy). When one’s *emunah* is crystal clear, there is no possibility of another option. When one’s *emunah* is not that clear, though, although he can still have *emunah*, his *emunah* is being questioned, because he sees ‘another’ option.

This can be compared to *Chazal*’s critique of Noach for being one who ‘believes, yet doesn’t believe.’ With such *emunah*, a person believes in Hashem and admits to His existence, denying any other possibility, but he is still retaining the ‘option’ that there is another ‘possibility’. He still has

doubts, and he wonders about other possibilities. As is well-known, doubts are induced by the force of Amalek in the world. When a person has any doubts in his *emunah*, Amalek has some hold on him.

When *emunah* is clear, there are no doubts, no trace of Amalek. With such *emunah*, there is no need in the first place to deny the notion of false gods.

Thus, the *hodaah* represented by Yehudah is not complete *hodaah*, for it involved a denial of something else (it came at the expense of the other wives of Yaakov Avinu, who would now have less children, now that Leah is being given more children). Therefore, all *hodaah* which we recognize in This World is incomplete, for it is within the perspective of the current 6000 year era we are in.

### *Nissan, Yehudah, and Redemption*

In the month of Nissan, we were redeemed, and *Chazal* state that in the future, we will be redeemed as well, in the month of Nissan. This has its roots in Yehudah, whom the month of Nissan represents. Yosef was the first to go down to Egypt. He represents the exile. Yehudah represents the power to leave the exile. How do we see this? *Chazal* state that Yehudah established a yeshiva in Goshen, in Egypt, for the duration of the exile. This laid the hidden roots for the redemption from Egypt.

In Nissan, we will be redeemed, and [throuredemption comes] through the power of Yehudah. However, it will not be through the ‘*hodaah*’ aspect of Yehudah, which is incomplete. The future redemption will not be about denying other gods so that Hashem can be revealed. Rather, the future redemption will be like Yehudah’s act of sanctifying Hashem’s Name of public – a complete *hodaah*, a *hodaah* for the sake of revealing His name of ‘*havayah*.’ When the name of *havayah* is revealed in the future, it will be revealed then that Hashem “was, is, and will be”, the only ‘one’ option that exists.

The Sages state that nowadays, the Throne of Hashem is incomplete, due to the presence of Amalek, who does not allow for the complete revelation of Hashem’s Name. In the future, when Amalek will be erased, there will be no more possibility of doubts, and the *emunah* in Hashem will be absolute and definite.

This is the depth of “In Nissan, in the future, they [the Jewish nation] will be redeemed.” It will be revealed then the complete level of ‘*hodaah*’ that is present in Yehudah’s name, the revelation of a reality in which there are no other possibilities, other than the full acknowledgement of Hashem’s existence.

### *Nissan: The Time To Reach The Complete Level of Emunah*

During this time of the year, Nissan, we can reveal the more complete level of *emunah*, in which there are no ‘two’ possibilities, and that there is only ‘one’ possibility: our complete *emunah* in Hashem.

When we see *hester* (concealment) in creation, our simple way to deal with this is to choose to have *emunah*, rather than focus on the *hester*. But the deeper method, which reflects the *avodah* here we have been describing – the power of Yehudah, which is more revealed in the month of Nissan - is to view the *hester* as being part of our *emunah* itself. All *hester* that we see is somehow a part of our *emunah*, and is not in contraction with it.

This is the concept of complete *hodaah*, of *emunah shelaimah* (complete faith), of Yehudah sanctifying the ‘Name of Hashem’ in public...

## 43 / Iyar – Yissocher

### *The Month of Iyar Corresponds to the Tribe of Yissocher & the Power of Thought*

The month of Iyar corresponds to the tribe of Yissocher. There are differing views regarding which tribe the month of Iyar corresponds to, but the main view is that the month of Iyar corresponds to the tribe of Yissocher.<sup>260</sup>

By the blessing given by Yaakov to his son Yissocher, the Torah says, “*Yissocher is a strong-boned donkey; he rests between the boundaries. He saw that serenity was good...yet he bent his shoulder to bear.*”<sup>261</sup> The month of Iyar also corresponds to the soul’s ability of *hirhur*, thinking. What is the connection between Yissocher, and the ability of thinking?

The Gemara says that just as a donkey stays awake both at night and at day, so does a Torah scholar think of Torah at day and at night.<sup>262</sup> The Vilna Gaon says that a Torah scholar thinks of Torah even as he sleeps. Thus, the “donkey”, which Yissocher is compared to, is the metaphor for a Torah scholar, who is constantly thinking about Torah.

### *Yissocher Can Enjoy Reward For Efforts In Torah Learning Even In This World*

The blessing of being “a strong-boned donkey” is a general blessing that Yaakov gave to the Jewish people on a general level, and it was given to the tribe of Yissocher on a more specific level. In the blessings that Moshe gave to the Jewish people, Moshe said, “*Rejoice, Zevulun, in your departure; and Yissocher, in your tents.*”<sup>263</sup> As is well-known, Chazal teach that there is a special relationship between Yissocher and Zevulun. Zevulun pursues commerce, and provides Yissocher with food and other forms of support, so that Yissocher can learn Torah.<sup>264</sup>

The work which Zevulun pursues is not like the work which Adam was cursed with, which has become the curse of mankind ever since. Adam was cursed with having to exert himself with work. Man’s sustenance can only come to him when he puts exertion into making a living, as the Torah

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260 Peirush haGra to Sefer Yetzirah 5:1

261 Beraishis 49:14

262 see Rashi ibid

263 Beraishis 49:13

264 Rashi ibid

ays by the curse given to Adam: “*By the sweat of your brow.*”<sup>265</sup> But Zevulun working to support Yissocher isn’t like that. Yissocher and Zevulun aren’t just in a partnership together, with Zevulun working to support Yissocher. Rather, the blessing of Yissocher is that although he benefits from the efforts of Zevulun, yet he still maintains his reward for Torah learning.

Yissocher is compared to a donkey, and the Gemara explains that it is the ‘donkey’ of Zevulun, which refers to the commerce of Zevulun, which enables Yissocher to learn Torah. Of the partnership between Yissocher and Zevulun, Chazal state, “Today is for action, and tomorrow is for receiving reward.”<sup>266</sup>

[But on a deeper level], the word “Yissocher” contains the word *s’char*, reward, which is a hint that Yissocher enjoys reward even on This World. The root of the word “Yissocher”, which is the word *s’char*/reward, is similar to the word that Leah used when she said to Rachel, “*Your wages have been earned, with the dudaim of my son,*”<sup>267</sup> when Leah allowed Rachel to have the *dudaim* which Reuven would bring to her, in exchange for moving into Yaakov’s tent in Rachel’s place. The Torah uses the term *s’char* in this verse. This is a hint that “Yissocher” reveals how the reward in the future for today’s efforts is not only in the future, but that it can also be enjoyed today.

There are two kinds of effort that one needs to go through on this world: Effort in our Torah learning (represented by Yissocher), and the effort that one needs to put in to making a living (represented by Zevulun).

Working hard to make a living is a kind of work that is represented by the element of “earth”, the “earth” that man has been plunged into ever since the first sin, when Adam was cursed with having to work hard by plowing the fields (making a living) and with returning to the earth (death). The concept of “Today is for action, tomorrow is for reward” implies that one will enjoy his reward for today’s work (all of the hard work that he endured on This World) only in the future. This is all the kind of work that is associated with the element of earth, and it is the work of Zevulun. This is also the implication of the verse, “*Plant with tears, and reap with joy,*”<sup>268</sup> where one enjoys the reward for his efforts only in the future.

But Yissocher reveals that even in This World, there can be reward, for Yissocher’s name is from the words *yeish s’char*, “There is reward”<sup>269</sup>, implying that there is reward that can be enjoyed even now as we are on This World. Even in This World, there can be a point where we are unaffected by the curse placed on Adam and the rest of mankind. Chazal teach based upon the verse “*Rejoice,*

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265 Beraishis 3:19

266 Talmud Bavli Eruvin 22a

267 Beraishis 30:16

268 Tehillim 126:5

269 Zohar I 158a

*righteous ones, in Hashem*”, that this rejoicing is referring to Yissocher, because Yissocher enjoys the *rinah shel Torah*, he “sings” over the Torah, through his exertion in Torah learning, thus Yissocher has the blessing of enjoying the reward for Torah study even on this world.

So not only does Yissocher enjoy from Zevulun’s commerce, but he enjoys his reward even on this world. Zevulun only enjoys reward in the future, and this is in line with the rule that “Tomorrow is for reward.” Normally, reward is only in the future. But for Yissocher, there is reward even now, in this world.

### *Leah’s Reward: Yissocher Enjoys The Results of Zevulun’s Work*

As mentioned, Yissocher is from the words *yeish sochor* (there is reward). Chazal teach that Yissocher was the *s’char*, the reward (given to Leah) for the *dudaim* (which Leah gave to Rachel). Chazal expound that the Hebrew letter *shin* (ש) appears twice in Yissocher’s name, with the second letter *shin* being silent and unpronounced. This was a hint that Yissocher was rewarded to Leah for two different reasons, with the first reason being the primary reason, hence the first *shin* is pronounced, and the second reason being the secondary reason, hence the second *shin* in Yissocher’s name is silent.

The first reason that Leah was rewarded with Yissocher was because, as Chazal teach, that when Leah saw how Rachel wanted to bear tribes through her maidservant Bilhah and introduced Bilhah as a wife to Yaakov, in order to beget tribes her name, Leah followed suit and brought in her maidservant, Zilpah, into marriage with Yaakov Avinu, in order to beget more tribes in her name. Thus, Yissocher was the *s’char* (the reward) that Leah received through bringing in Zilpah. Another reason why Leah was rewarded with the birth of Yissocher, Chazal teach, is because Leah gave away *dudaim* to Rachel.

What is the meaning of this? Chazal are teaching that the primary reason for Yissocher’s birth was a reward to Leah for bringing in her maidservant Zilpah into marriage with Yaakov Avinu to beget more tribes. A maidservant is enslaved to do work for her owner, while the owner enjoys the results of the work of the slave or maidservant. When Leah brought her maidservant Zilpah into marriage with Yaakov Avinu, she would enjoy the results of Zilpah’s work. In reward for bringing in Zilpah, Leah would enjoy the results of her maidservant’s work by bearing Yissocher and also Zevulun, and Zevulun’s work would support Yissocher, so that Yissocher can enjoy the results of Zevulun’s work.

There are two kinds of work on this world. There is the kind of work which was given as a curse to man, to work and plow the fields of the earth, in order to earn a livelihood. This was the kind of work that was given to Zevulun, and the results of his work are enjoyed by Yissocher, whom Zevulun supports. But another kind of work is when a person can find serenity after his work, as the Torah says about Yissocher, that his blessing is to find *menuchah* (serenity) after all of his hard work, after bearing the yoke of Torah on his shoulders. Yissocher’s exertion in Torah, in bearing the yoke of Torah, is the source of why the tribe of Yissocher is called *yodei binah l’itim*, “men who

understand the times”, and as the Gemara says, since the tribe of Yissocher were experts in the knowledge of astronomy and the constellations, they became the heads of the Sanhedrin to calculate and modify the months of the Jewish calendar.

When Yissocher was born, the Torah says that he was the fifth child born to Yaakov (and that Zevulun was the sixth child born to Yaakov). In actuality, Yissocher was really the ninth child born to Yaakov (because the births of Dan, Naftali, Gad and Asher preceded his birth), but he was the fifth child of Leah. Chazal ask: Why is it that only by Yissocher and Zevulun that the Torah specified what number child they were, which the Torah did not do when it came to the other children of Yaakov? Chazal learn from this that the Torah called Yissocher the fifth child because unlike the other tribes, who would later fight the nations of the world with their armies (to conquer Eretz Yisrael), Yissocher had *chamushim*, “armies”, of men who fought the “war of Torah”. The word *chamushim* is from the word *chamesh*, which means the number 5. Work on this world is primarily Zevulun’s role, but the effort in Torah learning is primarily the role of Yissocher, who fights the “war of Torah”.

### *The Depth of Why Yissocher Is Compared To The “Donkey”*

As mentioned, Yissocher’s name is from the words *yeish sochor*, “there is reward”, and this is also connected with the fact that Yissocher is compared to the *chamor*, the donkey. The word *chamor* is from the word *mochor*, “tomorrow”, implying that Yissocher’s reward in the “tomorrow”, the future, is because he bears the yoke of Torah, through exertion in Torah learning. Yissocher’s reward in the future will be due to all of his Torah learning.

But there is also more to this matter. The Gemara<sup>270</sup> says that those who rule the *halachah* for the Jewish people either descent from the tribe of Levi or from the tribe of Yissocher. Of Levi the Torah says “They shall rule Your laws to Yaakov”, and of Yissocher the Torah says that they are *yodei binah l’itim*, “men who understand the times.” The Gemara explains that Yissocher knows the knowledge of astronomy and the constellations, which primarily is based on the knowledge about the sun and moon. From this Gemara, we can see that the inner root of Yissocher’s power of Torah learning and his expertise in ruling the *halachah* is because Yissocher possesses knowledge about the sun and moon, which represent time.

Our world will last for a total of 6,000 years<sup>271</sup>, which is the dimension of time. The world in the future will be a “day that is entirely Shabbos”, it will be above time. In our world, there is a dimension of time, and time is governed by the *mazalos* (the constellations), which is primarily centered around the sun and moon. Yissocher is *yodei binah l’itim*, he understands the knowledge of time, the knowledge about the sun and moon, and this is also connected with the fact that Yissocher

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270 Talmud Bavli Yoma 26a

271 Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 97a

is called *chamor*, “donkey”. On a deeper level, *chamor* refers to the 248 limbs of the body, because the word *chamor* can be rearranged to form the word *ramach*, the number 248.

The Gemara says that at first, Avraham ruled over 243 limbs of the body, and later he was rewarded by Hashem to rule over the remaining 5 limbs of the body which are ordinarily not in a person’s control, so that he was ultimately able to rule over all 248 limbs of the body.<sup>272</sup> So too, the “reward” for Yissocher is, on a deeper level, the fact he can rise from the “*chamor*”, which refer to the materialism of the body, to the level of *ramach*, to be in control over all 248 limbs of the body. The “reward” given to Yissocher is that he can resemble the reward given to Avraham, who was able to rule over all 248 parts of the body.

That is the depth behind why Yissocher is compared to the *chamor*/donkey, and this is his “reward”. The exertion of Yissocher in Torah study enables him to learn Torah, through bearing the yoke of Torah like a donkey carrying a load, and Yissocher’s reward is that he is compared to the *chamor*, the “donkey”, which is equal to the number 248, a hint to the power to rule over all 248 limbs parts of the body, which includes the 5 limbs of the body which are normally not under a person’s control.

Thus, the *chamor* aspect of Yissocher is the fact that he can rise from the level of *chamor* (*chomer*/materialism) to ruling over all 248 limbs of the body, even the 5 limbs that are not in a person’s control. These 5 limbs of the body are not within one’s power of *bechirah* (free will), and only through a special reward did Avraham merit from Hashem to have control over them. The ability to rule over all 248 limbs, given to Yissocher, is the ability to access the time period when there will be no more *bechirah*. This will be in the future, of which it is said, “*Days in which I have no desire.*”<sup>273</sup>

That is the depth of Yissocher’s name which implies *yeish sochor*, that “there is reward”, referring to the future reward for Yissocher, the power to go above *bechirah*. The power of *bechirah* given to man is that he can utilize his free will to rule over 243 of his 248 limbs, and in the future, man will be able to rule all over 248 limbs. Yissocher’s reward is that he is given the power to rule all over 248 limbs, even in our current times.

### *Analyzing The Difference Between The Powers of Yehudah*

Chazal state that Yissocher was the second tribe to bring the *korbonos* when the *Mishkan* (the Tabernacle) was being inaugurated, in the merit of giving advice on how to donate to the *Mishkan*. What was the “advice” that the tribe of Yissocher gave? Yissocher’s advice was that everyone should

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272 Talmud Bavli Nedarim 32b

273 see Talmud Bavli Shabbos 151b

donate wagons to the *Mishkan*.<sup>274</sup> This advice, Yissocher's wisdom, did not come from ordinary wisdom. It came from the level of the wisdom of the future.

Since Yissocher is *yodei binah l'itim*, Yissocher's tribe can "understand the times", drawing wisdom from the future, from the future "day that is entirely Shabbos", which is also known as the wisdom of Mashiach, and it is the "*new Torah shall come forth from Me*."<sup>275</sup> This is the wisdom of the future, but it is able to become revealed onto our current dimension, through Yissocher.

There is a verse about Mashiach's arrival by the Redemption, that Mashiach will come like a "*pauper riding on a donkey*."<sup>276</sup> Mashiach descends from Yehudah, and Mashiach ben Yehudah is being compared to a donkey. Yissocher is also compared to the donkey. What is the difference between Mashiach ben Yehudah with Yissocher, who are both compared to a donkey?

As it is being explained here, the reward of the future, which can be revealed even in today's time - the power of a person go above his *bechirah* – is a power which comes from the spiritual illumination of the Torah of the future, which penetrates into our own dimension. That is essentially the "*yeish s'char*", the reward, which Yissocher can access even now. This is also the meaning of the "In the future, Hashem will give 310 worlds to each *tzaddik*"<sup>277</sup>, the reward which Yissocher can merit even within this current world.

From a subtler perspective, there are two kinds of reward in the future. There will be reward for all of today's efforts, as Chazal state, "Today is for doing, tomorrow is for reward", and "Whoever toils on Erev Shabbos, will eat on Shabbos."<sup>278</sup> But there will also be another kind of reward, of receiving Hashem's endless mercy even when we are undeserving, which comes from the *otzar shel matnas chinam*, Hashem's "treasury of free gifts", which is essentially the power of *menuchah* (serenity) that will be in the future, the "day that is entirely Shabbos". This power is more elevated than Yissocher's, and it was given to Yehudah, and it will be revealed through Mashiach ben Yehudah. This will be Yehudah's gain over Yissocher. Yissocher's reward comes from effort and toil, whereas Yehudah's reward comes from Hashem's compassion even when we are undeserving.

Yissocher and Yehudah are both compared to a donkey, but what is the difference between them? There is the level of the future, and there is the level where the future can become illuminated into our own dimension. The level of the future is the power of Yehudah, whereas the future being shined within our own dimension is the power of Yissocher.

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274 Bamidbar Rabbah 12:16

275 Yeshayah 51:4

276 Zechariah 9:9

277 Mishnayos Tractate Uktzin 3:12

278 Talmud Bavli Avodah Zarah 3a

Yissocher's advice was to donate wagons to the *Mishkan* (the Tabernacle in the desert). Of the *Mishkan* it was said, "By the word of Hashem, they journeyed."<sup>279</sup> The *Mishkan* had an outer and an inner aspect to it. The inner aspect of the *Mishkan* was that it was a resting place, a point of non-movement. The outer aspect of the *Mishkan* was that it had to keep being moved from place to place every so often. The 6,000 year era we are currently in is a dimension of movement. In it, we had 42 encampments in the desert. This required wagons, to transport all of the material for the *Mishkan*. But in the future, which will be the day that is entirely Shabbos, there will be an eternal resting place, the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which will not have to be moved anywhere, and there will be need for wagons. It will be the absolute level of *menuchah* (serenity).

The depth behind Yissocher's advice to make wagons for the *Mishkan* was because in our current dimension, there is a need for movement, and therefore the *Mishkan* had to get moved from place to place. But the *Beis HaMikdash* was placed in Yehudah's portion (for the most part) and there was no need for wagons, because the *Beis HaMikdash* was not moved anywhere. This is really because the *Beis HaMikdash* is meant to become a place for eternal rest, with no need for movement, and hence there is no need there for wagons to transport any material. That is the power of Yehudah, which will become revealed in the future.

### *The Dudaim Revealed Yissocher's Connection to Yehudah*

The lower aspect of Yissocher is that he enjoys the results of Zevulun's work, and the higher aspect of Yissocher is his exertion in Torah, which brings serenity to him even now, so that he can enjoy the future reward even now. But there is yet a deeper aspect of "reward" given to Yissocher.

The Gemara says that because Leah gave away the *dudaim* [the special plants with mystical properties] to Rachel, she was rewarded with the birth of Yissocher. The commentary of the *Gilyon HaShas* (authored by Reb Akiva Eiger) and the commentary of *Daas Zekainim al haTorah* both explain, based upon the Gemara<sup>280</sup>, that when Yaakov was coming home to the field, a donkey roared and died, and Leah heard the sound and went outside to see what happened, and then she saw Yaakov and greeted him. Later that night, Leah conceived Yissocher. Hence, it was a donkey that caused Yissocher to be born, because it was a donkey caused Leah to leave her house and meet with Yaakov, which led to her conception of Yissocher. (A different view in Chazal is that the *dudaim* in the fields made a noise which caused the donkey to die, and there are many other views in Chazal regarding this matter.) In any event, Chazal explain that it was a donkey that was the catalyst for Yissocher's birth.

The meaning behind this matter is that since Yissocher's birth came about through a donkey, Yissocher is not able to enjoy the complete revelation of "the pauper riding on the donkey" that will

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279 Bamidbar 9:18

280 Talmud Bavli Niddah 31

be in the future, which refers to the coming of Mashiach. The Gemara says that “If the Jewish people are meritorious, they will merit the Redemption through clouds of Heaven, and if they are not meritorious, it will be through a pauper riding on a donkey.”<sup>281</sup> Yissocher’s advice by the *Mishkan* was to make wagons to transport all of the material for the *Mishkan*. The wagons are a hint to the donkey, which transports material. This is Yissocher’s higher aspect, the “pauper riding on a donkey”, and it is the lower level of Redemption, and the lower aspect to Yehudah’s power of redemption.

From the perspective of Yehudah, either we merit redemption through clouds of Heaven (the higher mode of Redemption, which is more dazzling) or through a pauper riding on the donkey (the lower mode of Redemption, which is less dazzling). But for Yissocher, the highest level is “the pauper riding on a donkey”. Yissocher’s higher aspect, the donkey, a hint to “the pauper riding on the donkey”, is only the lower aspect for Yehudah. The *dudaim* gave off a scent which brought about the birth of Yissocher. The *dudaim* gave off a scent that came from the future Redemption, where there will be the scent of Mashiach. Yissocher’s birth, which came about through the scent of the *dudaim* [which Leah gave away to Rachel] was therefore a ‘spark’ of the scent of Mashiach (who comes from Yehudah). Hence, there is a connecting point between Yissocher and Yehudah, though the *dudaim*.

Yissocher’s highest point is only at the ‘heel’, at the lowest point, of Yehudah. Yissocher’s comparison to the donkey, which symbolizes his exertion to bear the yoke of Torah, is the highest spiritual point that Yissocher can reach. But for Yehudah, this is his lower point. The “donkey” that Yissocher is compared to is really like death for Yehudah, because it represents only the lower level of Redemption [in which there is only exertion in Torah, without serenity], the level that is “the pauper riding on a donkey”.

Yissocher enjoys the results of the work of Zevulun. Just as Zevulun has to go from place to place as he earns livelihood, never finding true rest in his efforts to earn livelihood, so does Yissocher never find true rest, since Yissocher is being supported by Zevulun’s work. Yissocher is compared to a donkey, who has no *menuchah* (serenity), because just like the donkey moves from place to place and it has no place of rest, so does Yissocher wander from place to place [through his exertion in Torah learning] without any absolute *menuchah*. Yissocher does not possess the absolute level of *menuchah*, which is Yehudah’s power, the spiritual light of the future.

### *Healing In The Month of Iyar*

The month of Iyar is an acronym for “*Ani Hashem Rofecha*”, “I am Hashem, your Healer.”<sup>282</sup> It is a month that contains the power of healing. The power of healing comes from Yissocher, because

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281 Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 98a

282 Chasam Sofer Shabbos 147b

through exertion in Torah and bearing the yoke of Torah, a person merits healing. When there is a wound or a malady, there is a need for healing, but if there is no wound or malady present, there is no need to be healed. And similarly, when there is sin, there is a need to repair the sin, but if there is no sin present, there is no need for repair. The entire need for exertion came about through sin. Through bearing the yoke of Torah, which is the power of Yissocher, one can receive healing to any of his maladies.

But there is also a deeper understanding. Through the *dudaim*, there was a pleasant scent, a scent that came from the spiritual level of the future, the scent of Mashiach. The *dudaim* symbolized the connecting point of Yissocher to Yehudah, the ability of Yissocher to rise above our current dimension of time, and to go to the level of Yehudah – to be above our world of time, and to shine the light of the future within our current dimension of time. That is the complete *tikkun*.

### *Pesach Sheini – The Power to Rise Above Time*

The month of Iyar has *Pesach Sheini* in it, and *Pesach Sheini* represents the spiritual light that is above time. The holy *Zohar* explains that “*Pesach Sheini* is above the level of *Pesach Rishon*”. This is because the spiritual light of *Pesach Sheini* (the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Iyar) is above time.

During our current dimension, where we are bound to time, a person is able to reach the high spiritual levels of Pesach only during the actual time when it is Pesach, which is the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan. But when a person accesses the dimension that is above time, he is able to reach those high spiritual levels on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, which is *Pesach Sheini*.

Where does *Pesach Sheini*, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, get its spiritual illumination from? *Pesach Sheini* contains spiritual power only because of the festival of Pesach itself, which is on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan. The spiritual illuminations of Yehudah and Yissocher [during the months of Nissan and Iyar] provide the power to go above time.

The concept of *Pesach Sheini* [in the times of the *Beis HaMikdash*] was that a person who couldn't bring the *korbon pesach* on Pesach, because he was far away from Jerusalem or because he was impure and couldn't come, he was able to bring the *korbon pesach* on *Pesach Sheini*. Yissocher represents the light of the future touching upon our current dimension of time. But because Yissocher also connects with Yehudah, who has the power of meriting Redemption through clouds of Heaven, through the power of Yissocher (in the month of Iyar) we are able to “skip” over our current dimension, and rise to the dimension that is above time, to have a kind of “*kefitzas haderech*” (shortcut).

This is not only a way to merit healing in the month of Iyar, it is a way to merit the complete spiritual recovery. The *Megaleh Amukos* says that the word “Iyar” is an acronym for Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov, and Rachel. These four *tzaddikim* are also the “four feet that uphold the Heavenly

Chariot”, which represents the complete spiritual circuit.<sup>283</sup> The month of Iyar therefore represents the concept of transcending our dimension of time and accessing the level of complete spiritual repair.

### *Practically Accessing The Power of Yissocher*

In terms of the soul, one can use this power of Yissocher by separating himself from the world and exerting himself in Torah, which leads to enjoyment in Torah study. This is the deeper implication of the “*yeish sochor*”, the reward, which Yissocher has.

Another way to use this power is by becoming connected with Hashem, where a person can receive wisdom because he has gained greater *d'veykus* with Hashem, as in the verse, “*And wisdom, from where is it found*”<sup>284</sup>(meaning that *chochmah*/wisdom is found in *ayin*/the spiritual, which is connection to G-d). This is essentially the spiritual light that comes from the future, and this is the *menuchah* (serenity) of which “*Yissocher saw that it was good.*”<sup>285</sup> It is a level where Torah learning does not require exertion, where one knows Torah becomes he becomes a *maayan hamisgaber*, a “mighty wellspring”.<sup>286</sup> It is when one is above the level of regarding Torah learning as a “burden” that one must bear upon himself. This level of Torah learning is accessed when one can tap into the light that comes from the future, which is the concept of *menuchah* (serenity), the “day that will be entirely Shabbos”.

The fact that the months of Nissan and Iyar are adjacent to each other shows that a person needs to synthesize the powers of these two months together. When one only tries to ascend higher to G-d through the path of Yehudah (Nissan/time/exertion in Torah), without using the path of Yissocher, he cannot succeed. First, a person needs to separate from the world, to stop being interested in what the rest of the world is pursuing. Then, one will merit that his livelihood will come on its own to him, just as Zevulun supports Yissocher, without Yissocher having to worry where his livelihood will come from.

But this alone is not enough, because a person will still be within the realm of time and he will thereby be limited to the bounds of time. He would only be activating the lower use of Yissocher’s spiritual power. He would still be found within the level of This World, for he is still within the “burden” of living on this world (and there, and he will not be able to go beyond the level of the “donkey” who must bear the yoke of Torah upon his shoulders (which is his greatest burden in life).

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<sup>283</sup> cited also by *Beis Shmuel to Shulchan Aruch Even HaEzer 126:6* and in *sefer Bnei Yissocher: Maamarei Chodesh Iyar 1:1*

<sup>284</sup> *Iyov 28:12*

<sup>285</sup> *Beraishis 49:15*

<sup>286</sup> *Avos 6:1*

One needs to also make use of the higher power of Yissocher, the power to become connected with Hashem to the point that he is “one” (*chad*) with Hashem.

Then the Torah can become truly revealed to him, now that he is found with Hashem. This is the meaning of the verse, “*Be wholesome with Hashem your G-d*”,<sup>287</sup> to merit a kind of Torah learning that comes from being attached with Hashem.

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287 Devarim 18:13

## 44 / Sivan – Reuven

### *The Month of Sivan Corresponds To The Tribe of Reuven*

We are now entering, with *siyata d'shmaya*, the month of Sivan (may it come upon us for a blessing).

When the Jewish people left Egypt, Hashem gave them the *mitzvah* of Rosh Chodesh. We have 12 months in the year. The Sages teach that everything which exists in time also exists in the soul.<sup>288</sup> If there are 12 times of the year known as Rosh Chodesh, where do we find 12 souls who correspond to these 12 months? Those were the 12 sons of Yaakov Avinu (the 12 tribes). Each month corresponds to a different tribe. The month of Sivan, according to our teacher the Gra, corresponds to tribe of Reuven.<sup>289</sup>

What is the connection between the tribe of Reuven and the month of Sivan?

### *Kayin, Reuven, and Yisro*

Leah named her firstborn son “Reuven” because when he was born, she said, “*Reu, bni*”, “See that I have a son”, which affirmed that she deserved to be the wife of Yaakov Avinu, for now she had borne the first of the 12 tribes. Another reason, Rashi says, is because she said, “*Reu bein bni, l'bein chami*,” “See the difference between my firstborn son and the firstborn son of my father-in-law (Yitzchok), who is Esav.”<sup>290</sup> Leah knew that her firstborn son Reuven would be righteous, in contrast with the wicked firstborn Esav.

The Zohar<sup>291</sup> says a different reason for Reuven’s name: The word “Reuven” is from the words *ohr ben*, a “spiritual light that is a son”. This meant that Reuven’s role was to bring spiritual light to the world and thereby fix the “darkness” that came to the world through the first child of the world, Kayin. When Kayin sinned, he brought darkness upon the world. In contrast, Reuven was charged with the task of fixing the damage of Kayin, which would bring “light” to the world and thereby dispel the darkness brought by Kayin.

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288 Sefer Yetzirah 3:1

289 Peirush haGra on Sefer Yetzirah 5:1

290 Rashi on Beraishis 29:32

291 Zohar II (parshas Mishpatim) 104a

Elsewhere, Chazal revealed that Reuven was a soul reincarnation of Kayin. Yaakov Avinu said about Reuven (in the blessings) that Reuven bears the trait of *yesser se'ais*, “foremost in rank”,<sup>292</sup> and this is a hint that Reuven’s deeper soul mission was to attain the trait of *se'ais* (forgiveness) which Kayin did not attain, for Hashem had told Kayin, “*If you improve yourself, you will be forgiven*”.<sup>293</sup> Unfortunately, when Kayin’s soul was reincarnated in Reuven, Kayin’s damage continued and Reuven failed in his mission to fix the damage caused by Kayin.

Later in history, Kayin was reincarnated as Yisro, who was called *keini*, which hints to the word “Kayin”.<sup>294</sup>

### *Reuven’s Spiritual Light – The Power To “See” The Sounds At Har Sinai*

From the words of the Zohar, we can see that Reuven’s name is rooted in the word *ohr* (light). The *Gra* says that the term *ohr* is connected with the month of Sivan, because in the month of Sivan the entire Jewish nation at the mountain “saw” all of the thunderous sounds and they were also able to “hear” the visions at Har Sinai.

The Sages take note of the fact that this was miraculous, because sounds are normally heard, not seen, and visions are normally seen, not heard. But at Har Sinai, the miracle was that the people could “see” the sounds and “hear” the visions. What gave them the power to “see” the sounds at Har Sinai? It came from the spiritual power of Reuven, which offered them the spiritual vision to “see” the sounds.

### *The Original Level of Light Was The Light Mixed Together With Darkness*

The Sages also draw a parallel between the Ten Expressions which Hashem created the world, with the Ten Commandments of the Torah that were said at Har Sinai. The first expression that Hashem used to create the world was, “*Yehi Ohr*”, “Let there be light”, and this corresponds to the first of the Ten Commandments, which was “*Anochi Hashem*”, “I am Hashem”. Thus, the Torah’s first commandment, “I am Hashem”, is rooted in the first of Hashem’s expressions to create the world, which was “Let there be light.”

What is the connection? The words “*Let there be light*” was really the very root of the Torah, because the Torah is the “light” of Creation, for Torah is called *Torah ohr*, “Torah of light”, and furthermore, Hashem used the Torah to create the world with it.<sup>295</sup> After Hashem created the “light”

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292 Beraishis 49:3

293 Beraishis 4:7

294 Arizal in Sefer HaKavanos (47a), and sefer Likutei Torah (parshas Vayechi)

295 Editor’s Note: As stated in Zohar 161a, “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world.”

of Creation (which is really the Torah), Hashem testified about it that *“It was good”*. And we also find that the Torah is called “good”, as it says in the verse, *“For I have given you a good purchase, my Torah, do not abandon it.”*<sup>296</sup> Hence, the Torah is the “good light” that Hashem created the world with.

On the first day, light and darkness were originally mixed together, and then Hashem separated them, assigning the light to the daytime and the dark to the nighttime [and at that point there was no sun and moon yet, because the luminaries were only created on the fourth day. On the first day, day/light and night/dark existed without the sun and moon]. When Hashem gave the Torah, the first commandment of *“I am Hashem”* originated in the first expression that Hashem used to create the world, which was, *“Let there be light.”*

Which light was the source of the first commandment of the Torah? Was it from the light that Hashem created on the first day, which Hashem separated from the darkness, or was it from the original state of light when it was originally mixed with darkness? It came from the light of *ohr haganuz*, the “hidden light”, the light that is hidden away for the *tzaddikim*. This light came from the original mixture of light and darkness, of which Hashem said it was “good”. That is also why it is called the “hidden” light, because it existed as part of darkness, so it was a more hidden level of light. [And when Hashem separated the light from the darkness, He hid away the original light that was part of the darkness, and He stored it away for *tzaddikim*, and this light became the *ohr haganuz*, the hidden light].

Hence, the depth of the spiritual light revealed at the giving of the Torah – the first commandment of *“I am Hashem, your G-d”*, which was an outcome of *“Let there be light”* - was that this was really the original level of light, when light was mixed together with darkness at the beginning of Creation.

### *The Original Mixture of Light and Darkness Returned At The Giving of the Torah*

How can we see this that there was light and darkness together at the giving of the Torah? On one hand, there was fire on the mountain, which gave off light, and at the same time, there were also thick clouds of darkness covering the sky. So there was light and darkness at once, at the time when the Torah was being given.

Bringing out this concept even stronger, the giving of the Torah was during the day (light). There is also an aspect of “darkness” at the giving of the Torah, because the Jewish people were forced to accept the Torah, when Hashem suspended the mountain over them and said, “If you accept the Torah, good, and if not, you will be buried under this mountain.” Later, they said *Naaseh V’Nishmah*, “We will do and we will hear.”<sup>297</sup> When they were forced to receive the Torah, it was

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<sup>296</sup> Mishlei 4:2

<sup>297</sup> see Tosafos to Shabbos 88a

like “darkness” to them, in contrast to when they received it willingly, where they accepted it with clarity, which was “light” to them.

### *The Connection Between The Months of Nissan, Iyar and Sivan*

There are 50 days between the festivals of Pesach and Shavuos, which concludes in the month of Sivan. This 50-day period combines together the months of Nissan, Iyar, and Sivan and unifies them. The 50 days of *Sefiras HaOmer*, from Pesach until Shavuos, is not simply a count that happens to overlap the months of Nissan, Iyar, and Sivan. Rather, all of these months are connected together through the circuit that begins with Pesach, leading into the days of the Omer, and ending with Shavuos.

Usually a festival will take up only one month. Pesach is in Nissan, Shavuos is in Sivan, Rosh HaShanah is in Tishrei, and Purim is in Adar. Chanukah is the only festival which overlaps two months, Kislev and Teves. The Ramban says that just like Succos has seven days followed by an eighth day, Shemini Atzeres, when we celebrate Simchas Torah, so does the seven-day festival of Pesach have an “eighth day” that completes it, which is Shavuos. The festival of the Shavuos is the “Shemini Atzeres” of Pesach, because Shavuos is a celebration of Simchas Torah. Thus, Pesach begins in Nissan and ends in Sivan.

The first letters of the words “Nissan”, “Iyar” and “Sivan” spell the word “*anas*”, which means to be “forced”, a hint to when the people were forced to accept the Torah at Sinai. Through the counting of the Omer, the months of Nissan, Iyar, and Sivan become connected under one unit.

The people were forced to accept the Torah. Was this a form of “darkness”, or was it “light”? *Naaseh V’Nishma* was said with clarity, and clarity symbolizes light (just as the light makes things clear). But when the people were forced to accept the Torah, it was not done out of clarity, so this was the concept of “darkness”.

At first there was a mixture of light and dark in Creation, before Hashem separated them. Before the separation, however, when Hashem made the light and the dark, He declared that it was “good.” The original darkness was called “good”, it was a perfect creation. Only on the fourth day of Creation did Hashem declare darkness as not being good, when He made the moon smaller than the sun, because the moon complained that “Two kings cannot share one crown.”<sup>298</sup> Ever since the moon became minimized, the nighttime and the dark fell into a state of ruination.

### *Reuven’s Light*

As mentioned, Reuven’s name is from the words “*ohr ben*”, a son who brought spiritual light to the world. What was the nature of this light? [We will know after the following introduction.]

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298 Talmud Bavli Chullin 60a

The original light at the beginning of Creation was called “good”. On the fourth day of Creation, though, there was another kind of light that was created, which came from the two luminaries that were placed in the sky above the earth: the sun and moon. The light that came from these luminaries was meant to become perfected, but it became ruined, due to the moon’s request to be made bigger than the sun. [Soon we shall more explain more about this].

Yaakov Avinu was tricked into marrying Leah instead of Rachel. Reuven was conceived from Yaakov and Leah on the night of their wedding, and when Yaakov awoke in the morning, he discovered that he had not married Rachel, but Leah. It follows, then, that Reuven’s entire birth came about through a situation where Yaakov had been “forced” into marrying Leah instead. Although Yaakov was not completely forced, for he had willingly married Leah, it was not his plan to marry Leah first, and therefore on some level it was considered as if he was forced into marrying her. Thus, Reuven comes from being forced.

(Leah named her first son Reuven because she said *Reu bni*, “See that I have a son”. Why was he called Reuven, then, and not *Reubni*, as his mother Leah expressed at his birth? It was because Reuven should have really come from Rachel, because Yaakov had intended that Rachel become his first wife. His firstborn son, Reuven, should have come from Rachel. Instead, he married Leah first, and therefore Leah could not name him *Reubni*, which would mean “My son”, for in a sense, he was really supposed to be Rachel’s son. So instead, she named him Reuven.)

How did Reuven fail in fixing the sin of Kayin? Had Reuven accessed the original light of Creation which was good, Reuven would not have sinned. Instead [by being impulsive and too quick to act], Reuven only accessed the “lower” level of light, the light that was created on the fourth day of Creation, which had become ruined, ever since the moon complained on that day when it said that “Two kings cannot share one crown.”

The Gemara says that when the people said *Naaseh V’Nishma* at Har Sinai, they each received two crowns.<sup>299</sup> Because the moon said it cannot share the crown with the sun, the people should have only received one crown. With the sin of the golden calf, the two crowns were taken away. Had they only received one crown, it would not have been taken away from them, because someone has to bear the crown. But because they received two crowns, both ended up being taken away from them after the sin with the calf. When they were forced to accept the Torah at Har Sinai, this was darkness. This was a hint that they would later fall from that level of standing at Sinai and they would lose their crowns. Had they been at the complete level when they stood at Sinai, they couldn’t have sinned with the calf.

### *Moshe’s Role Was To Reveal The “Light” of Torah Upon The World*

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299 Talmud Bavli Shabbos 88a

The Sages said that when Moshe was born, the whole house was filled with light.<sup>300</sup> He was the only one who could give the Torah to the Jewish people, because his role was to fix the darkness that entered Creation [ever since the first sin] and to reveal the “light” of the world, the Torah. If the Torah could not be given through Moshe, no one would be able to give it, because only the one who filled the house with light could be the one to give the Torah to the world - and fill the world with light.

### *The Danger In The Month of Sivan*

In these days of the month of Sivan, we will soon be in the three days of preparing for the Torah. The word “Torah” is from the word “*ohr*”, spiritual light, and the Torah itself is called *ohr*, as in the verse, “*Ner mitzvah v’Torah ohr*”, “The flame of a commandment, and the Torah is light.”<sup>301</sup> There is also a verse, “*The wisdom of man illuminates his face*”<sup>302</sup>. Every year at this time [in the days preceding the festival of Shavuos, when the nation was preparing to receive the Torah], a great spiritual light comes down to the world. But how many people make use of it?

The month of Sivan corresponds to Reuven, whose spiritual light became tarnished [due to his impulsiveness in the act of moving his father Yaakov’s bed from Bilhah’s tent into his mother Leah’s tent, an act which was criticized by Yaakov Avinu and which caused Reuven to lose his blessing]. If we use the light of Reuven in the month of Sivan which became tarnished, then we will fall again into the state of the sin with the calf, which took place in the month of Tamuz, the month that follows Sivan.

Reuven acted too quickly and impulsively, and in doing so he resembled the impulsiveness of Kayin, thus he failed in fixing the damage that Kayin brought. Since Reuven failed in using his light correctly, we cannot take his path if we are to succeed. It would only lead us into sin, which led to the tragedies and destruction that took place in the months of Tamuz and Av, which came as a result of the sin with the golden calf.

### *“Reuven, My Firstborn” – Utilizing The Light of Reuven In The Month of Sivan*

What is the possibility for us to make use of Reuven’s light, so that we will not be wearing “two crowns” (which leads to ruination), but “one crown”?

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300 Talmud Bavli Sotah 12a

301 Mishlei 6:23

302 Koheles 8:1

At the giving of the Torah, the entire people were “like one man, with one heart.”<sup>303</sup> This was how they prepared for the Torah. What did this mean? It means that the way to prepare for the Torah is when two people can share one crown!

Chazal teach that the word *Anochi* is an acronym for *aryeh* (lion), *nesher* (eagle), *kaf* (which stands for *keruv*/cherub), and the letter *yud* stands for Yaakov. The prophet Yechezkel saw in his vision of the *Merkavah* (the Heavenly chariot) that the Heavenly chariot consists of an eagle in the middle, a lion to the right, the face of a man in the back, and an ox in the left. Where was the *keruv* (the cherub) in his vision? Chazal explain that at the giving of the Torah there was the commandments of “*I am Hashem your G-d*” and “*You shall not have any other gods*”, and after the sin with the golden calf, the image of the *keruv*/cherub on the *Merkavah* changed to the image of an ox, because the people had now sinned with an ox (a calf). Thus, with the sin of serving the golden calf, they damaged the level of “*keruv*” that was in the Heavenly *Merkavah*.

In the *Aron Kodesh* (the Holy Ark), the *keruvim* (cherubim) faced each other, and this resembled the state of the Jewish people when they all had one heart at the giving of the Torah. But this was not the case anymore after the sin with the calf. The first two commandments (“*I am Hashem*”, and “*You shall not have any other gods before Me*”) were two commandments that were essentially one commandment (the concept of belief in G-d), and it corresponded to the concept of two people sharing one crown. After the sin with the calf, the Jewish people fell from their exalted level, of two being one, down to the level where they are all “two”, where each person is separated from the other, where they do not all have one united heart, where they are each wearing two crowns and they are not all sharing one crown.

Had the people not sinned, the image of the *keruv* in the *Maaseh Merkavah* would have remained. What was the significance of the image of the *keruv* in the *Maaseh Merkavah*? The word *keruv* contains the same letters as the word *bechor* (firstborn), hinting to the primary *bechor*, Reuven. This was the original spiritual power contained in the month of Sivan, which is the month of Reuven – the power that was represented by the *keruv*, the ability to be united.

Because of Reuven’s sin, the status of the *bechirah* (firstborn) was lost from Reuven and transferred to Yosef. Yet, even after Reuven lost his blessing, Yaakov still called him “*Reuven, bechori*”, “*Reuven, my firstborn.*”<sup>304</sup> This means that on some level, Reuven’s power to the *bechor* remains intact.

After the sin with the golden calf, the people fell from the exalted level of *keruv*, and now the image of the *keruv* on the *Merkavah* changed to the image of an ox. The hint of this was that they had fallen from their level of oneness, represented by the *keruvim* who were like one, and now they had fallen to the level of oxen, which gore and attack one another.

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303 Rashi Shemos 19:2

304 Beraishis 49:1

(Although the “ox” represents a fallen state, as implied by the sin with the golden calf which corresponds to the ox (the calf was a baby cow, and a cow is an ox), even the level of the “ox” can be repaired. This was the role of Yosef, who received the firstborn status from Reuven. Yosef’s role was to repair the level of the “ox”. Yosef is referred to as an “ox” in the blessing of Yaakov. This was a hint that Yosef was the “ox” on the side of holiness, and his role was to fix the “ox” on the side of evil, which is called the *shor muad*, a “wild ox”, which an owner pays full damage. Yaakov was called *ish tam*, a wholesome man, and Yosef continued Yaakov’s role of *ish tam*, by remaining pure in Egypt. He became like *shor tam*, the “tame ox”, and in doing so he repaired the “ox” on the side of evil.)

### *Sivan Is The Month of “Twins” – The Level of Brotherhood*

The inner level of the month of Sivan is also represented by its *mazal*, which is called *te’umim*, “twins”, similar to the twin pair of *keruvim*. At Har Sinai, the entire people had one heart. They resembled the faces of the *keruvim* when they were facing each other, two that are one. The Sages state that the *keruvim* were either like two children facing each other, or like a *chosson* and *kallah* greeting each other. This was the level of standing at Sinai: resembling the unity of twins, which were like the *keruvim* facing each other.

The true spiritual light of Reuven which must be revealed in the month of Sivan is the concept that Reuven is the *bechor* who represented the level of the *keruvim* when they face each other.

At the sin with the golden calf, the Jewish people fell from their unified state and now they were like an ox which gores. Instead of being one man with one heart, each of them were now commanded to kill their own brothers (those who sinned with serving the golden calf).

When two people cannot become disconnected from each other, they are called *achim*, brothers, from the word *achvah*, unity. Shimon and Levi were called *achim*, because Yaakov saw that they cannot become separated from each other. However, Shimon and Levi used their brotherhood to sin by banding together to wage war on Shechem, and Yaakov cursed their actions, because it was not the true use of *achvah*, since it was done through weapons and violence. Only the *bechor*, who was Reuven, who came before his brothers Shimon and Levi, could reveal the true level of brotherhood.

### *The Two Spiritual Lights Available In Sivan*

The month of Sivan therefore contains two different levels of spiritual light that can be revealed: a lower level of light, and a higher level of light. The lower level of spiritual light in Sivan is the power to become forced to accept the Torah, and this corresponds to the level of the two crowns that everyone received, which were eventually taken away from us. The higher level of spiritual light in Sivan is the very light of the Torah itself.

There is an amazing introduction of the Ramban in his commentary on the Torah. The Ramban said that the Torah preceded the world by 2,000 years, and this was a kind of Torah which was not divided into any letters yet. This original, undivided level Torah was contained in the first two commandments which were said together at Har Sinai: *“I am Hashem, and You shall not have any other gods.”* This level of Torah, which preceded the world, is the hidden level of Torah which does not become divided into any letters.

At the first two commandments, when we heard such a level of Torah, we did not hear two different things. Rather, we heard two commandments that were one, and we heard it as one. When we merit accessing the light of the original level of Torah which does not divide into any letters, that is how we access the inner spiritual light.

The 600,000 souls of the Jewish people, who all stood at Sinai “with one heart” were only able to united together only through the level of Torah that preceded the world, which was not divided into any letters. Only the undivided level of Torah could unify everyone together. The 600,000 souls of the Jewish people, who correspond to the 600,000 letters of the Torah, cannot be connected together through the level of Torah that we have now, which divides into many different letters. They could only be connected together through the original, undivided level of the Torah which preceded our world.

### *“Had We Just Been Drawn Close To Har Sinai...It Would Have Been Enough”*

This is the depth of what we say in the *Hagaddah* by *Dayeinu*, “Had we just been drawn close to Har Sinai and we would not have received the Torah, it would have been enough.” How could just standing at Sinai have been enough, without receiving the Torah?! The secret of this is because all 600,000 souls of the Jewish people were only able to stand together Har Sinai due to the light of the Torah which preceded the world, the level of Torah which did not divided into any letters, which was the level of Torah that unites the entire Jewish people together.

It would have been enough for us to stand at Sinai without receiving the Torah we have now, which divides into 600,000 letters, because the hidden, original level of the Torah was what enabled us to get there in the first place. This hidden level of Torah, which does not divide into the 600,000 letters of the Torah that we have now, would have been enough for us [because it was all-inclusive of the entire Torah, since it consisted entirely of the first two commandments, “I am Hashem” and “You shall not have any other gods”, which form the basis of the entire Torah].

### *In Conclusion*

It is our blessing now that every one of the Jewish people with the help of Hashem should merit to return to this inner light and to connect to all 600,000 souls of the Jewish people and to all 600,000 letters of the Torah, as well as to the Creator of the world, in the level of complete unity. Amen, and Amen.



## 45 / Tamuz – Naftali

### *Naftali's Name Is Rooted In Connection and Prayer*

The month of Tamuz, according to the *Gra*, corresponds to the tribe of Naftali.

When Naftali was born, Rachel proclaimed, “*Naftulei Elokim niftali*”, “G-d has answered my persistent prayers.”<sup>305</sup> Rashi explains three reasons for Naftali’s name. The word “Naftali” connotes either: (1) connection, (2) persistence, and (3) prayer.

[In this *derasha*, it will be explained how Naftali’s primary blessing is that he enables “connection”, facilitated through “prayer”].

### *Naftali's Blessing – The Fruits of Ginosar*

In the blessing of Yaakov to the tribes, Naftali’s blessing is that he is “*swift as a gazelle, who bears good tidings.*”<sup>306</sup> In the blessing of Moshe, Naftali’s blessing is “*Naftali is satisfied, and he is full of blessings of Hashem.*”<sup>307</sup> Rashi explains that Naftali’s blessing is that his portion of land is where the “fruits of Ginosar” grow. These fruits are the most blessed fruits in Eretz Yisrael, they are very sweet-tasting, and they grow very swiftly.

### *Naftali – The Illumination of Gan Eden On This World*

Why are Naftali’s fruits blessed? The Gemara says that Bais Sha’an, which is in Naftali’s portion of land in Eretz Yisrael, is where the entrance to Gan Eden is.<sup>308</sup> Thus, not only did the fruits in his portion grow quickly, but his portion of land contains an entrance to Gan Eden.

The Torah says that Hashem placed a churning sword of fire at the entrance to Gan Eden, to guard the path that leads to the *Eitz HaChaim* (the Tree of Life). That entrance to Gan Eden is in Bais Sha’an. So on one hand, Bais Sha’an is the area where there is a churning sword (*cherev*) of fire, which symbolizes destruction (*churban*). That is one side of the coin to Bais Sha’an: It connotes destruction.

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<sup>305</sup> Beraishis 30:8

<sup>306</sup> *ibid* 49:21

<sup>307</sup> Devarim 33:23

<sup>308</sup> Talmud Bavli Eruvin 19a

On the other hand, the Sages teach that when the tribes were about to bury Yaakov in the Cave of Machpela, Esav tried to prevent them, and Naftali ran swiftly to retrieve the documents showing that Yaakov had the rights to be buried in the final spot in the cave.<sup>309</sup>

Thus, it was Naftali who enabled Yaakov to be buried in the Cave of Machpela, which was in “Chevron”. Naftali enabled “Chevron”, the antithesis of *cherev* (sword/destruction), the antithesis of Esav who acted like a “churning sword of fire”, when he tried to prevent Yaakov from burial by standing in front of the cave of Machpela.

A *cherev*, a sword of fire, was placed at the entrance to Gan Eden, separating Gan Eden from the outside world. But Naftali’s portion contains the entrance to Gan Eden, where the churning sword was in place, and Naftali implies connection [as cited earlier from Rashi]. The depth of this is that Naftali’s power of “connection” would enable Yaakov to become connected with the Cave of Machpela.

When Adam and Chavah were sent out of Gan Eden, they lost the special fruit which grew swiftly in Gan Eden. Hence, Naftali’s blessing of swiftly growing fruit, which was connected with Gan Eden, was really an illumination of Gan Eden onto this world. The fruits of Naftali, the “fruits of Ginosar” which are in Beis Shaan, are blessed by the opening of Gan Eden there, which shines an illumination of Gan Eden into world outside, enabling a connecting point to Gan Eden.

### *The Fruits of Ginosar (of Naftali’s Portion) Are More Prominent Than Bread*

The “fruits of Ginosar”, the crops which grow in Naftali’s portion, have special laws when it comes to the laws of blessings over food. *Tosafos* in Tractate *Berachos* explains that while there is normally a rule in the laws of blessings on food that bread is the most important food, and a blessing on bread exempts all other foods on the table, there is one exception: the fruits of Ginosar. If there are fruits of Ginosar in one’s meal, even bread becomes secondary to these fruits, and a blessing on bread will not exempt these fruits of Ginosar from a blessing. Bread becomes secondary to these fruits of Ginosar.<sup>310</sup>

The depth of this is because after Adam sinned, he was cursed with “*By the sweat of your brow you will eat bread*”, and all bread would now have to be earned from hard work as a result of the sin. Bread became spiritually tainted from the effects of the sin. But the fruits of Ginosar, which grew in Naftali’s portion, symbolize Gan Eden, for they grew in a place where there was an opening to Gan

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<sup>309</sup> *Talmud Bavli Sotah 13a* (Editor’s Note: Later in the *derasha*, the Rav noted that Naftali’s actions were not needed in the end, because Chushim the son of Dan killed Esav in the interim. Still, Chazal praised the swiftness of Naftali when he ran back to retrieve the documents, which showed that Naftali had the potential to allow Yaakov to be buried in the Cave of Machpela.)

<sup>310</sup> See *Talmud Bavli Berachos 44a* and *Tosafos ibid*

Eden. Hence, the fruits of Ginosar symbolize Gan Eden, the level of before the sin of Adam. Hence, bread is secondary in importance to the fruits of Ginosar. The bread, which is part of the curse given to Adam, is not as important as the fruits of Ginosar, the fruits of Naftali's portion, which are from the illumination of Gan Eden.

### *Naftali's Power of the Mouth and the Feet*

The Sages speak of three different abilities of Naftali: (1) His ability of swiftness [which was explained above]. (2) The “speech” of Torah which was in Naftali's portion, for the *Beis Din* would convene in his portion of the land). (3) The ability of “satisfaction” of Naftali, for Moshe said “*Naftali, seva ratzon*”, “Naftali's will is satisfied”.

Naftali's ability of “satisfaction”, *seva ratzon*, is also identified as *sechok* (laughter). This is because there are 12 senses in the soul, corresponding to the 12 months of the year. Speech corresponds to Nissan, and satisfaction (laughter) corresponds to Adar. The month of Adar, the month of “laughter”, corresponds to the tribe of Naftali.

This laughter is really the laughter of the future. Currently this laughter cannot be complete, due to the existence of sinners, who go against Hashem's will, which prevents the world from being filled with true laughter. But in the future, when there will be no possibility of going against Hashem's will, there will be complete laughter. Adar, which contains the power of laughter, is the laughter of Naftali. The month of Adar connects the beginning of the year (Nissan) with the end of the year, revealing laughter throughout the year.

The mouth contains the power of laughter. Naftali's blessing of *seva ratzon*, which is the ability of laughter, is therefore an implication that Naftali's power lies in the mouth. Naftali's blessing is also that he can run swiftly, which uses the feet. Thus, Naftali's power lies both in the mouth (laughter) and in the feet (running).

There are different sections of the body. According to one system, the body contains three sections (the head, the torso, and from the stomach and below). According to another system, the body generally consists of two main sections: The head and the rest of the body. The head begins with the skull and ends with the mouth. The end of the body is the feet. Hence, Naftali's abilities lie in the mouth and in the feet, connecting together the two ends of the body - the end of the head (the mouth), and the end of the rest of the body (the feet).

### *Naftali's Power of Prayer*

Furthermore, Naftali is compared to the gazelle. There is a verse, “*Like a gazelle thirsting on the banks of the water*”<sup>311</sup>, which refers to a person's ability of thirsting for connection to G-d through

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<sup>311</sup> Tehillim 42:2

the power of prayer. So the swiftness of the gazelle is also connected with the power of “prayer” that is symbolized by the gazelle, Naftali.

What is the connection? A person cannot be swift when he is too connected with his element of earth, which weighs him down. The “feet” are connected to the element of earth, to the ground, and with the feet alone, a person cannot overcome the heaviness of the element of earth which slows him down from pursuing the spiritual. Only through the mouth – specifically the tongue, which the *Chovos HaLevovos* calls “the lightest part of the body” - is a person able to be swift. Naftali’s ability is that he connects the “feet” with the “mouth”, and with the swiftness of the mouth (speech and prayer) the feet are able to run swiftly.

In Gan Eden, Adam was originally on the level of the “mouth”, where he enjoyed tasting the secrets of the Torah. After the sin, when he sent away from Gan Eden, he fell from being on the level of the “mouth” to the level of the “feet, because Adam was cursed with death, “*To earth you shall return*”, and death connects man to the earth, which the feet stands on and touches.

Yaakov’s burial was in Chevron. The Gemara says that the worst place for growing crops is Chevron, while the best place for crops is Teverya (which was in Naftali’s portion). Thus, when Naftali ran swiftly to retrieve the documents so that Yaakov could be buried in Chevron, the depth behind this was that Naftali’s swiftness enabled Chevron to be connected with “Teverya”. By connecting “Teverya” with Chevron, Naftali’s ability countered Esav’s attempt to prevent Yaakov from Chevron (though ultimately it was not Naftali who prevented Esav, but Chushim the son of Dan).

How did Naftali contribute to stopping Esav’s attempt of preventing Yaakov’s burial in Chevron? It was because Naftali enables a connection of the mouth and feet together. Through Naftali, the “mouth” of Yaakov overcomes the “hands” of Esav. The power of the mouth is essentially the power of prayer - and prayer can overcome Esav. And that is the depth behind Naftali’s blessing: his power of prayer, which can overcome Esav.

### *Naftali – The Revelation of The True Sense of Taste*

When the Sages describe the senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste), some of the Sages list the power of speech instead of the power of taste. Before the sin of Adam, the mouth was only used for speech, and taste was a higher sense that was used for intellectual and spiritual comprehension (the secrets of Torah), so the sense of taste was not originally associated with the mouth. After the sin, when taste fell from being on an intellectual and spiritual level down to a sensual level, the mouth would now become a container that holds the abilities of speech and taste.

Naftali’s blessed fruits represent a repaired form of connection between the sense of taste with the sense of speech. In Gan Eden, the sense of taste was only used [by Adam] to “taste” the *taamei Torah*, the secret explanations and reasons of the Torah. After the sin, when Adam tasted the forbidden fruit, Adam was no longer able to enjoy the *taamei Torah*.

The Raavad writes that the sense of taste is in the tongue, the *cheich*, which is from the word *chochmah* (wisdom), a hint to the true sense of taste, which is used to perceive higher understanding and wisdom of Torah. This will be the reward given out in the future - the understanding of the *taamei Torah*. Hence, the true use of taste is to taste the *chochmah* (wisdom) of the *taamei Torah*. After the sin, Adam lost this sense of esoteric taste and now the sense of taste is in the mouth. Speech was always an ability of the mouth, but before the sin the mouth only housed the ability of speech, because taste was an intellectual and spiritual sense and it was not associated with the mouth. After the sin, when taste was used for evil (by eating from the forbidden fruit), the sense of taste fell from its higher level and now it would be used sensually, and now the mouth would become a container for both speech and taste.

Through the blessed fruit of Naftali, though, there is a return to the level of taste in Gan Eden, when taste was repaired. This is a not a sense of taste is coming from the mouth alone, but a taste that is connected with the speech of the mouth. The ability of speech is connected with the mind, the ability to perceive *chochmah* (wisdom of the Torah), which is in the head. After the sin, the sense of taste fell from the level of the mind (intellectual and spiritual taste) to the level of the mouth (sensual taste). But through Naftali's blessing, through the fruits of Ginosar and the waters of Teveria (the Kineret), the speech of the mouth connects the sense of taste to the *chochmah* (wisdom of Torah), elevating the sense of taste from the mouth to the head.

The Sages teach that there is also *horaah*, halachic rulings of Torah, which came from Naftali (the Beis Din would convene in Naftali's portion). Although *horaah* (rulings of Torah) mainly came from the tribes of Levi and Yissocher, there was only an aspect of *horaah* that came from the tribe of Naftali, and this was because the members of the tribe of Naftali were blessed in their "mouth": They were connected to the *chochmah* of the Torah, by way of the mouth. This was the unique revelation of Torah in the tribe of Naftali.

The sweet fruits of Ginosar in Naftali's portion, on a deeper level, represented the sweetness of the words of Torah which were enjoyed by the tribe of Naftali. The unique share in Torah which the tribe of Naftali had was mainly about connecting together the *chochmah* (wisdom) of the *taamei haTorah* with the speech of the mouth. This produced sweet words of Torah, because it was a connection of the *chochmah* in the head with the speech in the mouth. It repaired the taste of Adam which had been ruined from eating of the *Eitz HaDaas*. It is the repaired level of the sense of taste, which reveals an ability to "taste" the *chochmah* of the Torah – the ability of the *Eitz HaChaim* (the Tree of Life).

Thus, the fruits of Naftali, which are really rooted in Gan Eden, specifically in the *Eitz HaChaim*, is the ability to taste the *chochmah* of the Torah, of which it is said "And wisdom sustains her owner"<sup>312</sup>, the higher sense of taste which is connected with the *chochmah* (wisdom) in the head.

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<sup>312</sup> Koheles 7:12

Hence, the blessing on Naftali's fruit wasn't just that it tasted sweet. The blessing given to Naftali was that he received a revelation of a sense of taste that was connected with *chochmah*, the wisdom of the Torah. That was the power of Naftali: To connect the sense of taste with the head.

Thus, we have seen so far that Naftali has the power of connecting different levels together (Gan Eden with the world, Teverya with Chevron, the mouth with the feet, the sense of taste with the head). Now we can understand with greater depth the implication behind the word "Naftali", which Rashi explains as "connection".

### *Naftali – The Root of Why Esav's Head Merited Burial*

Based on the above, we can now proceed to understand the following.

The *Leshem* explains that Leah and Rachel were supposed to be born as one woman, but as a result of the sin of Adam HaRishon, their soul became divided into two parts, Leah and Rachel. The war between Yaakov and Esav, the war of the younger versus the older, was also embodied in the "war" (so to speak) between Leah and Rachel – the competition between these younger and older siblings. But from a deeper perspective, Leah and Rachel are really one soul. Only as a result of the first sin were they split into two different souls, but at their root, they are really one soul.

The Sages teach that the head of Esav (after it was severed by Chushim son of Dan) rolled into the Cave of Machpela and was buried there.<sup>313</sup> On a deeper level, this was because Naftali connected Rachel and Leah together, because Naftali connects the mouth [Leah/prayer] with the head [Rachel/wisdom], and therefore Esav, who was originally destined to marry Leah, had a part of him which was buried in the Cave of Machpela. But it is only his head which was buried there, because it is only the head of Esav which was connected with the *taamei HaTorah*. The rest of Esav's body was not connected with his head, therefore the rest of his body did not merit burial in the cave of Machpela.

Esav was called *ish seir*, a hairy man, and he was called *asuy v'gamur*, he was born made and complete, because he was full of hair. The Sages teach describe the hair as "surplus of the head".<sup>314</sup> On a deeper level, the hair, the surplus of the head, refers to the *taamei haTorah* which we currently have no comprehension of. Currently, these *taamei haTorah*, represented by the concept of hair, which is above the head, cannot be comprehended, because it has fallen into the side of Esav. But at the repaired level, the hairs represent the *taamei haTorah* which will be revealed in the future.

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<sup>313</sup> Talmud Bavli Sotah 13a

<sup>314</sup> Pri Eitz Chaim (Rabbi Chaim Vital) shaar haTzitzis 3

This was the deeper reason why the head of Esav was buried in the cave of Machpela. Through Naftali, Leah and Rachel were connected, and this repaired the mouth of Esav, because Naftali represents the elevated level of the mouth, thus Esav's head merited burial.<sup>315</sup>

### *In Conclusion*

Esav was called “Seir”, which also means “hair”, alluding to the future judgment on Mount Seir over the nations of the world. The depth of this will be that the spiritual level of comprehension represented by the “hair” – the *taamei haTorah* - will be taken back from Esav, and it will be given to the Jewish people.

Rachel and Leah became connected together through Naftali, and this connection is the epitome of the complete unification of the future, when the mouth will become connected with the head, when the *taamei Torah* (secret explanations of the Torah), which are currently concealed, will become revealed again. May that happen very soon, speedily in our days, with the building of the *Beis HaMikdash, Amen V'Amen.*

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<sup>315</sup> Editor's Note: The Ramchal in *sefer Daas Tevunos* explains that the 10<sup>th</sup> century (the “Elef haAsiri”) corresponds to the hair.

## *46 / Av – Shimon*

### *Av, The Month of Shemiyah/Listening, Corresponds To The Tribe of Shimon*

We are in the month of Av, which means that the month of Elul will be here soon.

The months of Av and Elul bear a connection. They are both months in which we are meant to use our power of *shemiyah* (hearing). The month of Av corresponds to the power of *shemiyah*, “hearing”, and in the month of Elul, we begin to hear the *shofar* blast.

The Sages teach that the month of Av, specifically, contains the power of *shemiyah*/hearing.<sup>316</sup> The twelve months of the year also correspond to each of the twelve tribes, and the month of Av corresponds to the tribe of Shimon.<sup>317</sup> The word “Shimon” is from the word *shemiyah*, to hear.

Following the month of Av is the month of Elul, which is all about the power of *maaseh*, “taking action”. There are two views in our Sages about which tribe the month of Elul corresponds to. One view is that Elul corresponds to the tribe of Gad<sup>318</sup>, and the other view is that Elul corresponds to the tribe of Yehudah<sup>319</sup>.

In either case, though, the month of Av is about the concept of *shemiyah* (hearing), while the following month, Elul, is about *maaseh* (action).

### *The Ideal State Is When Maaseh (Action) Precedes Shemiyah (Listening)*

At Har Sinai, the people said *Naaseh*, “We will do”, before they said *Nishma*, “We will listen.”<sup>320</sup> Here, when it came to receive the Torah, we find that *maaseh* (action) preceded *shemiyah* (listening), because we were first willing to keep the Torah, before we even heard what the Torah entails of us. The Sages teach that when the people uttered “*Naaseh*” before saying “*Nishma*”, the angels remarked, “Who revealed this secret to them?”<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Sefer Yetzirah 5:4

<sup>317</sup> Ibid 5:5

<sup>318</sup> The view of the Gra

<sup>319</sup> The view of the Arizal

<sup>320</sup> Shemos 24:7

<sup>321</sup> Talmud Bavli Shabbos 88a

Thus, at the giving of the Torah, there was a secret revealed, that the power of *maaseh* (action) is able to precede *shemiyah* (listening).

How do we reconcile this with the order of the months, where Av, corresponding to *shemiyah*/listening, precedes Elul, which corresponds to *maaseh*/action? The answer to this is because after the sin with the Golden Calf, we fell from the exalted level we were at when we stood at Har Sinai, and that is why currently, it is *shemiyah* (listening) which precedes *maaseh* (action).

Thus, in the ideal state, *maaseh* (action) precedes *shemiyah* (listening). Why is it that way? And how did we fall from that level?

There is really a deeper root to this matter. When Hashem created the world, He first said “*Naaseh*”, that the world should be made. Thus, the original plan is that “*Naaseh*”, action, comes first. Before man was created, *maaseh* precedes *shemiyah*. Only after man was created did the order get changed, and now *shemiyah* precedes *maaseh*. Man first has to “hear” what to do, in order to know how to act. That is why the angels were perplexed at how *Klal Yisrael* knew the secret of saying *Naaseh V’Nishmah*.

When *maaseh* (action) precedes *shemiyah* (listening), a person naturally does the will of Hashem. But when *shemiyah*/listening precedes *maaseh*/action, man has to first “hear” what is being asked of him before he does it, and this will mean that man doesn’t always do the will of Hashem - because he doesn’t always listen. When doing depends on listening, man doesn’t always do what he is supposed to do, because he first has to listen, and he doesn’t always listen.

### *Two Different Kinds of Crying: Av and Elul*

During the month of Av, our voices are heard, as we weep in mourning over the destruction. This kind of crying is called *bechi*, a mournful kind of crying. When we weep in Elul, though, it is a different kind of crying, which is called *yelalah*. What is the difference? Crying in the month of Av is to weep over the past, but crying in Elul is to regret the past and also make resolutions for the future. Our crying in Av focuses on the past, while our crying in Elul focuses on our future.

When we come into the month of Elul, we connect ourselves to the power of *maaseh*, to the *maaseh* (handiwork) of the *dvar Hashem*, the word of Hashem. The Sages teach that Hashem created the word in the month of Elul (on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of Elul). We are connecting ourselves in Elul to the *maaseh* of Hashem, to the original handiwork of Hashem, and this was the *maaseh* which preceded all *shemiyah*.

The concept of *maaseh* in Elul is two-faceted. We cry in Elul because we just passed the month of Av, where we didn’t hear the word of Hashem because of our sins, and thus we had to endure the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, and we cried over the past. But in Elul, not only do we cry for our sins of the past, but we also reveal the *maaseh* of the creation of the world. In that sense, we

access the original level in which *maaseh* precedes *shemiyah*. In Elul, our crying comes as a result of the *maaseh* that is in Elul.

### *The Connection Between Shimon and Shemiyah/Listening*

Let us try to understand this better.

Chazal teach that when Leah gave birth to her second son, she named him “*Shimon*”, from the word *shemiyah* (listening), because Hashem “listened” to her prayers when she felt “hated” by Yaakov Avinu.<sup>322</sup> Leah was aware that she was not the main wife of Yaakov Avinu, and that her sister Rachel was the main wife. This made her feel hated [on some level]. Thus, Shimon’s name came from the fact that Leah felt hated.

The Gemara says that the people in those times were saying that the Lavan’s older daughter, Leah, would marry Yitzchok’s older son, Esav, and that Lavan’s younger daughter, Rachel, would marry the younger son, Yaakov. When Leah heard the rumors, she was so pained at the fact that she might marry Esav, that her eyebrows fell out as she wept bitterly over her fate and prayed incessantly that she should not marry Esav.<sup>323</sup>

This was the actually the deeper root of how Leah would come to feel hated. It began with the fact that Leah was originally destined to marry the wicked Esav. There is a verse, “*Yaakov I loved... and Esav I hated.*”<sup>324</sup> Esav is “hated” by Hashem. Thus, even when Leah married Yaakov, she still felt that she bore a connection to Esav, who is hated by Hashem. That is why she still felt hated, even as she was still married to Yaakov! She knew that she was not the main wife of Yaakov, and that meant that she was still connected with Esav [by default, since she was not considered by Yaakov to be the main wife]. When Shimon was born, Leah knew that Hashem “heard” how she had felt hated, and that is why Leah named him “*Shimon*”, from the word *shemiyah*, to hear.

Shimon and Levi banded together to destroy the city of Shechem, and Yaakov Avinu cursed their anger. The Sages explain that Yaakov Avinu was chastising them for using Esav’s methods of violence and war.<sup>325</sup> Shimon (and Levi) used the method of Esav, of using violence to succeed, and on a deeper level, this is because Shimon bears a connection to Esav. Why? It was because, according to the above explanation, because Shimon’s name was given in connection with Leah’s feeling of being “hated”, for being the destined mate of Esav.

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322 Beraishis 29:31

323 Talmud Bavli Bava Basra 123a

324 Malachi 1:2

325 Rashi on Beraishis 49:5

### *Shimon's Punishment Was Because Of His Connection To Esav's Actions*

Shimon was punished for instigating the violence on the city of Shechem and for arranging the sale of Yosef. Yaakov said of Shimon, “*I will spread him amongst Yisrael*”. Shimon’s tribe did not receive a concentrated portion of land in Eretz Yisrael. Instead, members of the tribe of Shimon were spread out over the entire landscape of Eretz Yisrael. The Sages state that Yehudah’s portion of land overlaps with Shimon’s portion of land. Shimon didn’t receive an equal portion in Eretz Yisrael as the other tribes received. This was a direct punishment for acting like Esav, when he waged war against the city of Shechem. Shimon also bore a connection with Esav’s actions, because just as Esav sold his rights to the firstborn, so did Shimon also lose his rights to a portion in *Eretz Yisrael*.

Taking this further, the destruction to the *Beis HaMikdash*, which took place in the month of Av - the month that corresponds to Shimon - is essentially rooted in the Shimon’s error of acting like Esav. When waging war on Shechem, Shimon engaged with the sword in order to kill. The Hebrew word for “sword” is “*cherev*”, which is the root of the word “*churban*”, destruction. When Shimon used the *cherev*/sword to wage war against the city of Shechem, he was acting like Esav, and this led the roots to the *churban*, to the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*.

The Gemara says that the second *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed due to *sinas chinam* (baseless hatred).<sup>326</sup> This, too, is connected with Shimon. Shimon’s name was given in connection with Leah’s feeling of being “hated”. Since Leah felt hated, and Shimon’s name was a reminder of how she had felt hated, Shimon’s month, Av, would eventually become tainted with the baseless “hatred” that led to the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*.

### *Shimon's Rectification Is To Join With Yehudah*

[Thus, Shimon received an awful punishment, by acting like Esav. He lost a true portion in *Eretz Yisrael*, and his actions paved the way for the eventual destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Yet, Shimon is one of the holy tribes in the Jewish people, and he can certainly receive a *tikkun*, a spiritual repair.]

How can Shimon be repaired? The answer lies in his name, “Shimon”, which is from the words *shom meon*, “There, is the dwelling place [for G-d].” Shimon can be repaired when he becomes connected with the “dwelling place for G-d.”

Shimon’s error in destroying Shechem, where he acted like Esav, made him fall to the level of *shom avon*, “There, is sin”.<sup>327</sup> Shimon’s repair is to rise from his fallen state, *shom avon*, “There, is sin”, to his ideal level, which is called *shom meon*, “There, is the dwelling place for G-d.” How can the tribe of Shimon achieve this repair?

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326 Talmud Bavli Yoma 9b

327 Zohar II parshas Mishpatim 104a

In order for Shimon to be repaired, his tribe needs the rectified power of *shemiyah*, of listening. The fact that Yehudah's portion overlaps Shimon's portion in Eretz Yisrael is what contains the key to Shimon's repair. It shows that the tribe of Shimon becomes repaired when they are joined and connected with the tribe of Yehudah. That is the deeper reason of why Hashem placed Shimon's portion together with Yehudah's: So that Shimon will learn from Yehudah and become repaired.

### *Shimon's Repair Lays In Yehudah's Power of "Naaseh V'Nishmah"*

How does Shimon become repaired through Yehudah? It is because Yehudah has the power of *maaseh*, the power to take action, which precedes the power of *shemiyah*/listening (which is the power of Shimon). Yehudah represents the ideal state, in which *Naaseh* (We will do) precedes *Nishma* (We will hear), when *maaseh*/action precedes *shemiyah*/listening.

The ultimate effect of the ruination to Shimon's power of *shemiyah*/listening, which took effect in the month that corresponds to Shimon/*shemiyah* – the month of Av - was the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* that happened in Shimon's month, Av.

But when Shimon becomes joined with Yehudah, the ruined month of Av can become repaired. The month of Av can become repaired through its following months, Elul and Tishrei, which have great spiritual power. Elul contains the power of *maaseh* (action), which corresponds to the ideal state, in which *Naaseh* precedes *Nishma*. The month of Tishrei was when the second pair of *Luchos* were given, and this returned the people (on some level) to the state in which *Naaseh* precedes *Nishma*. This is the key to repairing Shimon's ruined power of *shemiyah*.

### *Heeding Hashem's Voice – Hearing The Endless Sound of Hashem*

Shimon's name is rooted in the word *shemiyah*, "hearing", and this is a hint to the time when Hashem will "hear" to the cries of the Jewish people in exile.

How does one connect to the power of *shemiyah*, the holy power of "hearing", which is Shimon's power and which is the concept of the month of Av?

When one makes sure to "hear" the word of Hashem, one is "hearing" a spiritual sound that is endless. It is essentially to hear the "sound of *shofar*", a cry of the *shofar* which is joyous, because it heralds the Redemption, as opposed to a sad, mournful cry that signifies destruction. To "hear" the sound of the *shofar*, the endless sound, is to connect to the level of future, to "hear" the sound of the future even in the present.

In the months of Elul and Tishrei, the level of the future is more apparently revealed. The *shofar* blast which we hear in the month of Elul is so that we can become inspired to accept resolutions upon ourselves and engage in *teshuvah*. Rav Saadya Gaon says that the *shofar* we hear in the month of Tishrei, the *shofar* on Rosh HaShanah, alludes to the *shofar* of the future. Thus, on a deeper level, "hearing" the *shofar* during Elul and Tishrei is about becoming connected with the future.

This is in contrast with the month of Av, in which we cry over the past and we grieve over our sins and mistakes. The month of Av focuses on our errors of the past. By contrast, hearing the *shofar* sound [in the months of Elul and Tishrei] is a catalyst that awakens us to accept upon ourselves that we will do *teshuvah*, by making resolutions to improve, for the future. The months of Elul and Tishei are about looking towards the future.

***In Conclusion***

When Hashem is speaking to us, and we are not “hearing” Him, this resembles how Hashem spoke to Adam in Gan Eden, and Adam didn’t want to “hear” Hashem’s voice...

But when we make sure to accept resolutions for the future, to improve, to do *teshuvah*, we hear the endless sound, the voice of Hashem, which we will hear in the future, with the coming of the Redemption, in which we will hear the great *shofar* sound of the arrival of *Mashiach*!

May we all merit together to make resolutions for the future, and merit to hear the *shofar* of *Mashiach*, the complete redemption, may it come speedily in our days, Amen.

## 47 | Elul – Gad

### *Elul – The Tribe of Gad*

We are in the month of Elul. Each of the 12 months corresponds to one of the 12 tribes. The Gra and others wrote that the tribe of Gad corresponds to the month of Elul.<sup>328</sup> What is the connection between Gad and Elul?

### *Gad: Concealment*

When Gad was born, Leah said, “*Ba Gad*”, “Gad has come”, and Rashi explains that this means [according to one interpretation]: “*Ba Gad, ba mazal*” – “When Gad comes, mazal comes”.<sup>329</sup> Our Sages explain that the word “*Gad*” is equal in *gematria* (numerical value) to the number 7, and the word “*ba*” is equal to 9, and since a normal pregnancy can take either 7 or 9 months, Gad represents the fetal state (*ibbur*) of man, which normally lasts for 7 or 9 months.

In Moshe’s blessing to Gad, Gad is given a portion that is by “*Eiver haYarden*”, the crossing of the Jordan, which is not part of Eretz Yisrael proper. The *Eiver haYarden* is also the area where Moshe is buried, though his exact burial place is not known. This can be understood on a deeper level as follows. In the 40 days when Moshe ascended the mountain of Sinai, which began in Elul [and ended on Yom Kippur, when he brought down the second set of *Luchos*], no one knew where Moshe was. This is in connection with the fact that Gad’s portion is not in Eretz Yisrael proper, but in *Eiver HaYarden*, Moshe’s burial place, which no one can see or know of. A fetus in its mother cannot either be seen [by the human eye]. The fetal state [which corresponds to Gad, as explained above] is the beginning state of a person. It is the beginning state of one’s formation, where he cannot be seen, because he is hidden, covered over, and concealed. Thus, Gad represents the idea of concealment.

Anything that exists first begins in a fetal state, a state of pregnancy, which eventually leads to its “birth”, when it emerges into the outside. The “pregnancy” of each thing can also be prolonged, where it undergoes a process of *ibbur* pregnancy and it takes a certain amount of time the “fetus” to develop and emerge.

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328 peirush haGra: Sefer Yetzirah 5:3

329 Rashi to Beraishis 30:11

We find this concept in all three dimensions – *Olam* (World\place), *Shanah* (year\time), and *Nefesh* (soul).<sup>330</sup> The year goes through a process of “pregnancy”, taking a full 12 months until it is complete, and this “pregnancy” can be prolonged whenever there is a leap year, such as when there are two months of Adar that year. The soul also has *ibbur*\pregnancy, and this we find in the idea of pregnancy itself. The place in the world where there is *ibbur* is in Eretz Yisrael. The Sages called it “*iburah shel ir*”, the place “where the city extends”, and this is by the *Eiver haYarden*, the crossing point at the Jordan - which is Gad’s portion.

Note that the *Eiver HaYarden* is not part of Eretz Yisrael proper, but in the section of land in Eretz Yisrael that is called *iburah shel ir*, an extension of Eretz Yisrael – but it is not the actual land of Eretz Yisrael itself.

### *Gad – The Hidden Beginning*

The *Zohar* says that had Gad been born from one of the main mothers (either Rachel or Leah), he would have been the greatest of the tribes. Let us try to understand the depth behind this.

The Sages state that first of tribes to go out to war against our enemies, is Gad. The depth of this is that Gad represents the idea of *raishis*, the first. This is connected with the *Zohar*’s statement that had Gad come from one of the mothers, he would have been the greatest of the tribes. Gad is really the *raishis*, the first, except that he is the “hidden” first, the hidden beginning. This is also why Gad represents the fetal state [as explained earlier], because the fetal state is hidden, concealed beginning of a person. And that is also why Moshe’s burial place is in Gad’s portion, a place of concealment.

### *Gad – The Power To Rectify The Root of Sin*

The month of Elul corresponds to the tribe of Gad. The month of Elul is the time of doing *teshuvah*. Every sin creates “concealment” [of G-d’s light] to come to the world. Gad, who represents the idea of concealment, is the power to do *teshuvah* [to repent and return to G-d] over the concealment [of G-d’s light] that is created from sin.

Through Gad, we have the power to do *teshuvah*. How? The power of Gad reveals that the beginning of each thing is always a state of concealment. When one does *teshuvah*, on a simple level, this means that repents over the acts of sin he committed. However, there is a more inner aspect to *teshuvah*, which is more important: one must repent over the concealment that was created from his sin. After the sin, Adam needed clothing, *begadim*, which covers the skin, and this is another hint that sin creates concealment and covering; and in addition, the word *begadim* is from the words “*ba Gad*”, which implies that sin is rectified through Gad.

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330 Sefer Yetzirah 3:1

When the time for *teshuvah*, Elul, arrives, on a deeper level, our *avodah* during these days is to fix the original betrayal\*begeid* of Adam, which caused the need for clothing\*begadim*.

### *Eliyahu HaNavi and Redemption & the Connection to Elul\Gad*

The Sages state that Eliyahu HaNavi comes from Gad, from his mother's side. The Sages also said that Eliyahu's name hints to *ba l'hagid*, "he comes to inform" the good tidings of the Redemption. [Thus, the month of Elul, which corresponds to Gad, is also connected with Eliyahu HaNavi. Soon the connection will be explained further].

In Elul, Moshe ascended the mountain of Sinai, but his ascent was not complete, because after 40 days, he descended from the mountain. In contrast to this, Eliyahu ascended the mountain and never descended from it. These are two different levels of ascension. Moshe's ascension was incomplete, whereas Eliyahu's ascension was complete. Eliyahu's burial place is unknown, and in this aspect, Moshe bears a similarity to Eliyahu, because his burial is also not known.

In Elul, Moshe ascended the mountain, and then descended, when he came to give the second set of Tablets. Eliyahu also ascended the mountain, but he did not descend. Eliyahu comes from Gad, who corresponds to the month of Elul. The implication of this is that the month of Elul contains two deep aspects: Moshe's ascension, and Eliyahu's ascension.

In Elul, there is the power of Gad, which is described as "*ba Gad*". Eliyahu comes from Gad, and Eliyahu represents the good tidings of the Redemption, for he is the one chosen to inform the Jewish people of the Redemption.

On a deeper level, Eliyahu will reveal the level of the first set of *Luchos*. On Yom Kippur, we received the second set of *Luchos* from Moshe, and this was the apex of the 40 days of Moshe's ascension on the mountain which began in Elul. But this was only the external revelation of Elul, for was a revelation that came after sin [the sin with the Golden Calf]. The inner revelation in the month Elul is the first set of *Luchos*, which Eliyahu will reveal when he informs the Jewish people of the Redemption, when the world will be returned to the state of before the sin of Adam.

This is the depth of why Gad is the most prominent of the tribes [according to the Zohar]. It is because he is the tribe who represents the informing of the Redemption, which will signify the revelation of the first set of *Luchos*. Gad is the hidden "first" of the tribes, the hidden beginning, from whom the Redemption is revealed.

Before the arrival of the Mashiach, the Sages that the Jewish people will endure *chevlei Mashiach*, the birth pangs of Mashiach. The onset of labor is usually painful, throughout the pains of pregnancy, labor, and birth. So too, the Redemption will be preceded with pain. However, when Eliyahu will come to inform the Jewish people about the Redemption, at that point, there will no longer be *chevlei Mashiach*, and instead, the Mashiach will be in the category of "painless birth", reminiscent of the level before the sin, where childbirth would have been painless.

*Power of Gad In Elul: A Painless Fetal State – Returning to the State B/4 the Sin*

This is from the power of Gad, as implied in the term “*ba Gad, ba mazal*”, which means that Gad has the power of good *mazal*.

In Elul, we prepare for the new year, for Rosh HaShanah, which is the birth of the world, as we say on Rosh HaShanah, “*HaYom Haras Olam*”, “Today is the birth of the world.” Rosh HaShanah is a time when the world undergoes a new birth. This comes from the power of Gad, who represents the fetal state - one which is holy, undamaged from the sin of Adam, and painless. It is the level of before the sin of Adam, where no rectification is required and where is no need for pain.

Of Eliyahu it says, “*And he will return the hearts of the fathers to the hearts of the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.*”<sup>331</sup> That is how Eliyahu will reveal the redemption – it will be a joyous return, not like a birth which is painful, but a birth that is painless and full of joy [the level of the future, when there will be no more pain].

Anything that we traverse throughout the month of Elul is like the fetal state, for Elul corresponds to Gad, who represents the fetal state [as explained earlier]. But this “fetal state”, this process of pregnancy and birth, does not have to be like the painful kind of pregnancy and birth which we are familiar with. Instead, it is a “pregnancy” and “birth” which can be pleasant and joyous to us.

The Sages state that “In Elul, the King comes to the field.” The depth of this is because Elul is like the fetal state, where something is emerging into the outside. Instead of pain and ruination, which is a result of sin, we can have Gad’s power during this time of the year, a level where there is no pain.

In Yaakov’s blessing, Gad is compared to the heel, because the heel is the end of the body, and so is Gad at the end of the year, for Elul\Gad is the last month of the year. Gad, Elul, is the heel of the year, the endpoint of the year, which shows that the year can end with the power of Gad, a good end to the year, a pleasant end.

*Increasing Good Actions in Elul – Connecting To the Power of Gad*

The month of Elul, which corresponds to Gad, contains the power of holy action<sup>332</sup>, for Gad is the first of the tribes to go out to war against the enemies of the Jewish people. But Gad’s power of action\war is unlike like the war of Yaakov against Esav, which is a painful war filled with strife. Rather, Gad reveals a rectified state of war, one that begins with rectification, not with ruination.

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331 Malachi 3:24

332 Editor’s Note: The Sages describe Elul as the month of maaseh\action. Refer to Essence.of.Rosh.Chodesh\_07\_Elul - Action

Yaakov and Esav began to quarrel with each other in the womb, when they were yet in their fetal state, and Rivkah complained of the pain of this pregnancy as Yaakov and Esav clashed inside her. But Gad reveals a kind of fetal state which is painless. Thus, through Gad, the painful war fought between Yaakov and Esav becomes rectified.

This is also the depth of why we “increase good deeds” in the month of Elul. [Besides for the simple meaning, that we increase good deeds as part of doing *teshuvah*, it is also because] it is a way for us to connect to the power of Gad, a fetal state which is painless, which rectifies the impaired fetal state of Yaakov and Esav where there was clashing and war.

Thus, Elul is the power of holy “action”, for Gad rectifies the strife in the fetal state between Yaakov and Esav, so that there is no more war between Yaakov and Esav. From Gad’s power – the revelation of a “painless pregnancy” - the war between Yaakov and Esav will cease, and through that, we will merit the full meaning of “*ba Gad, bad mazal*” (the “good *mazal*” of Gad).

### *In Conclusion*

May we merit from *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* that we should have “*ba Gad ba mazal*”, the level of before the sin, where there is no pain in pregnancy and birth, and instead, may we have only *simchah* [joy] and *nachas* [pride from our children] in the home.<sup>333</sup>

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333 Editor’s Note: For more on the power of Gad, refer to *Mazal.of.Rosh.Chodesh\_013\_Teves* - Goat

## 48 | Tishrei – Yosef

### *The Connection Between Yosef and the Month of Tishrei*

The month of *Tishrei* is called *Yerach HaAisanim*, “month of the giants”.<sup>334</sup> The Gemara gives two reasons for this. One reason for this, the Gemara says, is because it corresponds to the three “giants”, our forefathers Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. Another reason, the Gemara says, is because it is a “giant” in terms of *mitzvos*, and *Rashi* explains that this is because it contains the many *mitzvos* of the festivals Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, and Succos.

We find that the Torah says the word “*Aisan*” (giant) regarding Yosef HaTzaddik, in the verse, *וְתִשָּׁב בְּאִתּוֹ קֶשֶׁתוֹ* (“*But his bow was firmly emplaced*”)<sup>335</sup> The Sages state that Yosef was great enough to be one of the *Avos* (forefathers), and he would have had 12 tribes, but he lost this merit due to the ten droplets of seed that escaped him when he was running away from the wife of Potiphar.

The *Gra* says that the month of *Tishrei* corresponds to Yosef.<sup>336</sup> Therefore, if *Tishrei* is called *Yerach HaAisanim*, “month of the giants”, and Yosef is called *Aisan*, and he could have been one of the *Avos*, who were called “*Aisanim*” – we can now understand another reason why the month of *Tishrei* is called *Yerach HaAisanim*. It is because the month of *Tishrei* corresponds to Yosef, who was great enough to be called *Aisan*, and who could have been one of the *aisanim* (giants), one of the *Avos*.

Yosef was eligible for the title of *Aisan*, but in the end, he is not actually called *Aisan*, because he lost this merit when he was escaping from Potiphar’s wife and ten droplets of seed escaped him.

### *Yosef Represents The Transformation of Din \Judgment to Rachamim \Mercy*

The Gemara says that on Rosh HaShanah, Hashem “remembered” Sarah, Rivkah, Rochel, and Channah by making them conceive on this day. From Hashem’s “remembering” of Rachel, she bore Yosef.<sup>337</sup>

Elsewhere, the Sages state that when Leah bore Dinah, immediately Rachel gave birth to Yosef, and that Hashem remembered Rachel on this day because it was Rosh HaShanah, the day that

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334 Rosh HaShanah 11a

335 Beraishis 49:24

336 peirush haGra: Sefer Yetzirah 5:3

337 Rosh HaShanah 10b

Hashem was judging the world.<sup>338</sup> The name “Dinah” is from the word *din* (judgment). Hashem remembered Rachel on that day and opened her *rechem* (womb), from which Yosef was born. The depth of this is that Yosef was borne from the *Yom HaDin*, the day of judgment, where Leah bore Dinah, who represents *din*\judgment.

Dinah’s name, which is rooted in the term *din*\judgment, represents the *middas hadin*, the attribute of judgment, whereas Yosef represents the *middas harachamim*, the attribute of mercy, for he was born from the miraculous opening of the *rechem* of his mother Rachel (hence the connection between *rechem* and *rachamim*). On a deeper level, this means that since Yosef was born due to the birth of Dinah, the *middas hadin* became transformed into *middas harachamim*. From the birth of Dinah, the birth of Yosef was enabled, therefore Yosef represents the concept where the *middas hadin* is transformed into *middas harachamim*.

Elsewhere, the Sages state that when Dinah bore a child to *Shechem*, she named her Osnas, and the angel Gavriel came down and arranged for Osnas to be sent down to Egypt, and later, Osnas the daughter of Dinah became the wife of Yosef. The depth behind this is that Osnas was born from Dinah\*din*\judgment, so was Yosef borne because of Dinah\*din*\judgment. Therefore, they were destined to be married, for they were came from the same source – both of their births were because of Dinah, and on a deeper level, they were both borne from *din*\judgment. Dinah represents *din*\judgment, and both Yosef and Osnas represent the concept of the transformation of *din* to *rachamim*, for Yosef was born due to Dinah’s birth whereupon Hashem immediately remembered his mother Rachel [and Osnas was rescued after being born from Dinah, which was also *rachamim*].

### *Yosef’s Lost Status*

Going deeper with this concept, the *Mishnah*<sup>339</sup> states that the gentile kings begin counting the new year from the month of Nissan, whereas the kings of the Jewish people begin to count the new year from the month of Tishrei. As mentioned above, the month of Tishrei corresponds to Yosef. *Chazal* also list ten kings who ruled the entire world.<sup>340</sup> The first four were Hashem Himself, Nimrod, Yosef, Shlomo. Who did Yosef rule over? He only ruled over Egypt. Unlike Shlomo, whose rule spread from Jerusalem to the rest of the world, Yosef’s rule began in Egypt, a gentile nation of the world.

*Chazal* state that Yosef escaped prison on Rosh HaShanah, which is in the month of *Tishrei*, as opposed to the month of Nissan. If Yosef’s rule would have begun from the Jewish people, then his

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338 Berachos 60a

339 Rosh HaShanah 2a

340 Megillah 11a

rule would have had to begin in the month of Nissan, but since his rule began from the gentile nations, from Egypt, therefore it had to be that he would leave prison in the month of Tishrei.

Hashem arranged that Yosef become ruler over Egypt, over the nations of the world, and in Egypt, he lost his title of “*Aisan*” as well, by the episode of the wife of Potiphar, when he was escaping her and ten droplets of seed escaped from him. Thus, even when he became king in Egypt, his rule was destined not to last, for his royal status had already been damaged when the ten droplets left him.

Had Yosef retained his title of “*Aisan*” [by totally avoiding the wife of Potiphar and not letting himself become ensnared by her at all], the *middas hadin* would have become completely rectified and the transformation to *middas harachamim* would have been completed, and then there would be no more need for *middas hadin*. Instead, Yosef lost his title of *Aisan* because ten droplets of seed escaped him when he was running away from the wife of Potiphar, and because of this, he would only have 10 children come from him, instead of 12 tribes which would have come from him.

### *Tishrei – A Time of Din \ Judgment*

Therefore, these days of Tishrei contain a strengthened *middas hadin*, because the *middas hadin* did not become rectified by Yosef, it was not turned into the *middas harachamim* as it should have. Although though Yosef was borne due to the birth of Dinah, which was a transformation of *din* to *rachamim*, this was not yet a complete rectification for the *middas hadin*. Yosef had the task to complete this transformation of *din* to *rachamim*, and because he lost the title of *Aisan*, the transformation of *din* to *rachamim* was never completed and therefore the *middas hadin* of *Tishrei*, which corresponds to Yosef, remains as *middas hadin*.

In the month of *Tishrei*, there is Rosh HaShanah, the head of the entire year, and therefore, *Tishrei* is the root of all of the months of the year. Since *Tishrei* corresponds to Yosef, and Yosef’s great status became damaged, this means that the month of *Tishrei*, as well as Rosh HaShanah, became damaged as well. *Tishrei* is the root of the year that became spiritually damaged, due to the ten droplets that accidentally escaped Yosef.

This is a deeper reason why there are ten days of *din* (judgment) between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, and why the judgment is first signed on Rosh HaShanah and only later sealed on Yom Kippur, with ten days of judgment in between. It is because Yosef did not complete the transformation of *din* to *rachamim*, which he could have accomplished, had he not lost the title of *Aisan*. The ten days of judgment in between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur correspond to the ten droplets that escaped Yosef. The *middas hadin*, represented by Dinah, returns during this time of the year - instead of the *middas rachamim* represented by Yosef.

### *Rectification of Yosef’s Damaged Status – Through Shofar*

Of Yosef it is said, “*Ben poras Yosef, alei ayin*”, “A charming son is Yosef, he is above the eye.”<sup>341</sup> *Chazal* give different meanings of the word “*poras*”: It is from the word *pharaoh*, and the verse is saying that Yosef became like a *pharaoh* of Egypt; another meaning is that it is from the word *poter*, “interpreter of dreams”, the talent of Yosef which ultimately enabled him to ascend to power; and another meaning is from the word *hefarah*, to annul.

Rosh HaShanah is called *Yom HaZikaron*, the “day of remembrance”, when Hashem remembers the merits of the Jewish people. The Gemara says: “And how is there a remembrance? Through *shofar*.”<sup>342</sup> The depth behind this is that Yosef’s great status became damaged, which made him lose the title of *Aisan* and he was no longer able to be included as one of the *Avos*. The *shofar* comes to rectify the damaged greatness of Yosef, which is described as “*poras Yosef*” (the charm of Yosef), and a hint to this is that the word *shofar* is from the word *meshaper*, to beautify – it comes to beautify the damaged “*poras Yosef*”.

This also another insight into the teaching of the Sages state that when Hashem hears the *shofar* on Rosh HaShanah, “He passes from His Throne of Judgment and transfers to His Throne of Mercy.”<sup>343</sup> On Rosh HaShanah, Hashem remembered Rachel and made her conceive, by opening her *rechem* \womb, from which Yosef could be born. In doing so, He changed the *middas hadin* to the *middas harachamim*. Rosh HaShanah is the time when Hashem remembers Rachel and that He made her conceive – but what exactly is it that awakens this remembrance? It is precisely through *shofar*. This is because the *shofar* comes to rectify the damaged status of Yosef, and this is somewhat of a rectification to the damaged title of “*Aisan*” that was given to Yosef.

### *In Conclusion*

May we merit with *siyata d’shmaya* the return to the title of “*Aisan*” to Yosef, when *Tishrei* will be the completed *Yerach HaAisanim*, the month of the giants which corresponds to our three “giants”, our forefathers Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov – joined with Yosef. Then we will have the complete level when we will merit that the *middas hadin* should become completely transformed to the *middas harachamim*.

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<sup>341</sup> Beraishis 49:22

<sup>342</sup> Rosh HaShanah 16a

<sup>343</sup> Tikkunei HaZohar tikkun 18, Vayikra Rabbah 29:10

## 49 / Cheshvan – Levi

### *The Month of Cheshvan Corresponds To The Tribe of Levi*

The month of Cheshvan, according to *Gra*<sup>344</sup>, and according to one of the opinions of the Rabbi Avraham ben David, corresponds to the tribe of Levi.

### *Levi: The Power To Remain Loyal To Hashem*

When Levi was born, Leah said *“This time my husband will rejoice with me, for I have born him a third son.”*<sup>345</sup> By the blessings of Yaakov, Levi did not receive a blessing. Yaakov cursed the anger of both Shimon and Levi, and he said *“I will divide them amongst Yaakov and spread them out amongst Yisrael.”*<sup>346</sup> Levi did not receive a portion in Eretz Yisrael. But later, when Moshe blessed the twelve tribes, he included Levi in the blessings: *“Your Tumim and Your Urim befit your devout one...the one who said of his father and mother, I have not favored him”*.<sup>347</sup>

Rashi<sup>348</sup> cites our Sages, that Moshe was praising the tribe of Levi when they refused to participate in the sin with the golden calf, for they remained loyal to Moshe, and when Moshe commanded everyone to kill all of those who had deliberately sinned, the tribe of Levi *“did not recognize their brother, child, father, or mother”* and listened to Moshe’s call. For this, Moshe blessed them.

### *Levi’s Power To Resemble Adam HaRishon Before The Sin*

The tribe of Levi’s power to withstand the sin of the golden came from the power to be on the level of Adam HaRishon before the sin. Before the sin, the first man (Adam) had no father, mother, siblings, or children. Adam [and Chavah] had no one else in the world [with them], and there was only Hashem. The power of Levi to refrain from serving the golden calf was really a power to withstand all outside influences: that even when everyone else around them was falling into sin, one can be completely loyal to Hashem, for they recognized that there is no one in the world other than Hashem.

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344 Peirush haGra Sefer Yetzirah 5:1

345 Beraishis Rabbah 29:34

346 Beraishis 49:7

347 Devarim 33:8

348 ibid

When the tribe of Levi refused to join the people in serving the golden calf, it was like a replay of the original state of Adam HaRishon. In doing so, the tribe of Levi personified the implication of their name “*Levi*”, which is from term “*nilveh*” – “joined” – they were completely “joined” with Hashem, by remaining on the level of before the sin of Adam. Thus it was the tribe of Levi who were able to heed Moshe’s call of “*Whoever is for Hashem, come towards me*”.

Not only did they awaken this state of before the sin, but they awakened the very creation of Adam HaRishon, who was Hashem’s own handiwork, for Adam was the first man, where there were no parents and no children. Thus, the power of the Levites, who are called “Hashem’s servants”, represents the original handiwork of Hashem, Adam HaRishon before the sin, where man is completely joined with Hashem.

### *Levi – The Third Son Who Enables Connection*

The Sages said that after the sin, Adam separated from Chavah for 130 years.<sup>349</sup> Later Adam returned to Chavah and bore Shes, who became his third son. Similarly, Levi was the third son of Yaakov and Leah, resembling how Shes was the third son of Adam. Through Shes, Adam and Chavah were reconnected. This is the depth of Levi being the third son of Yaakov: it was because just as the third son, Shes, enabled Adam and Chavah to reconnect, so did Levi’s birth imply a truer level of connection between Yaakov and Leah.

### *The Higher and Lower Aspects of Levi*

Therefore, Levi contains two aspects. Levi’s higher aspect is that he can access a spiritual illumination that comes from the state of Adam HaRishon before the sin. Levi’s lower aspect is that he is the “third son”, resembling the birth of Shes, the third son of Adam and Chavah, who was born after sin existed. When Levi ignored the people by the sin with the Golden Calf, this was a use of his higher aspect, the power of Adam HaRishon before the sin, when there were no other people in the world to influence him. That is the meaning of why Moshe blessed Levi with the quality of the *Urim V’Tumim* – it is because Levi can access the light of Adam HaRishon before the sin.

### *Levi’s Power To Remove All Chala\Void*

*Chazal* give several explanations for Levi’s name. The simple meaning is as the Torah says, because Leah said upon his birth “*This time my husband will join with me*”. But the Sages revealed several other reasons behind Levi’s name. One reason is because Hashem was “*livahu b’matanos*”, “He escorted him with gifts”, for Hashem had already named him before he was born, giving him

the 24 *matnos kehunah*, the gifts of the priesthood. Another reason given for Levi's name is because Levi bears the "*shem lavayah*" of Hashem, the name that "escorts" Hashem's name.

Shimon and Levi's anger was cursed by their father Yaakov [and as a result, Levi lost his portion in Eretz Yisrael. It seems that Levi is greatly lacking, for he does not have a portion in Eretz Yisrael. But on a deeper level, this is a reflection of his great spiritual power. Later this will be explained]. Levi sinned in the area of anger.

There are two roots to all sin in Creation. There are two main names of Hashem: the name of *havayah*, and the name of *Elokim*. [Thus the two roots of sin are: either when there is a void of *Elokim*, or when there is a void of *havayah*]. There is only one *havayah* - one existing Reality - but there can be many other possible *Elokims*, as we find in the term *elokim acheirim*, "other gods". Hashem commanded, "*You shall not have any other gods before me*", which implies that there is a possibility of serving other 'gods' [albeit forbidden]. There can be a plural use of the word *Elokim*, because it is possible for one to serve other gods, but there can never be a plural use of the word *havayah*, for there is only one Reality.

By the sin with the golden calf, Levi was careful not to serve "other gods". The rest of the nation fell to the sin of serving other gods, when Levi did not. The word "*Elokim*" is equal in value to the word *miluy*, to "fill". The concept of *miluy* is when a Hebrew letter is spelled out fully. For example, the *miluy* of the letter *aleph* is spelled out fully as the letters *aleph*, *lamed* and *pei*, and the *miluy* of the letter *beis* is spelled as *beis* and *tav*. The opposite of the term *miluy* full is *chalal*, void. The Torah says that Hashem blesses even Levi's *cheilo*, his soldiers, and *Chazal* expound this verse to mean that even a *cholol*, one whose status is profaned from birth (due to forbidden relations) from the tribe of Levi, is permitted to do his *avodah* with the rest of the *Leviim*. On a deeper level, this means that even the *chalal*, the "void", of Levi, is blessed.

The *miluy* of the word *Levi* is *lamed*, *vov*, *yud*. The "*miluy*" of Levi implies that his *chalal* is never a *chalal*, and instead, Levi is always filled. The lower aspect of Levi, the fact that he is the third son and that he rectifies the sin of Adam, implies *chalal*, a spiritual void. But the higher aspect of Levi is that his *chalal* is blessed – that he has no *chalal*!

The root of sin is always whenever there is a *chalal*, a spiritual void. The Gemara says that the most severe sin is *chilul Hashem*, to profane the name of Hashem. The word *chilul* is from the word *chalal*. The word *Elokim* is like a *chalal*, a void, when compared to the name of *havayah* – so the level of *Elokim* is a degree of *chilul Hashem*, when compared to the name of *havayah*. When Levi didn't fall to the sin, it was because they didn't want *elokim acheirim*, meaning that they were connected to *havayah*, the very essence of Hashem's Name, and that was how they were able to avoid the *chilul Hashem* of sinning with the golden calf. Hence, the deeper implication of Levi being the third son is because he removes the entire concept of *chalal*.

When woman was created, she was taken from Adam's rib, which was a *chalal*, a void, in the man's body. The very creation of woman created the possibility of *chalal*, of sin, for man. Levi's

power is that the *chalal* can be filled: that even when something is taken from place, there is no remaining *chalal* there, and instead it remains fully intact. Levi's blessing is that he has the *Urim V'Tumim*, and the depth of this is because the tribe of Levi maintains his *ohr* (spiritual light) and his power to be *tamim* (pure). Through the creation of woman, there should be *chalal*, since woman enabled the possibility of sin, but through Levi, the third son, who joined together his father and mother, there is instead *miluy*, a filling in place of the void.

Therefore, Levi reveals the point where there is no possibility of sin. There can only be a spiritual void, a *chalal*, if there is *chilul Hashem* involved. But if there is *miluy* filling even in the place of *chala* void, that means that there is never really a *chalal*, because the space can remain full even after something is taken from it. Levi's power is that he always keeps the *chalal* filled, and therefore, Levi reveals that the *chalal* is really not a *chalal*. It can be compared to drawing water from a spring, where the spring does not dry out, even though water has been removed from it.

### *Levi – The Removal of All Void, and the Revelation of Constant Connection To The Creator*

Moshe's blessing to Levi is that he has the *Urim V'Tumim*. What is the meaning of this, if the *Urim V'Tumim* was worn by the *Kohanim*, and not by the *Leviim*? There are many explanations of this verse, but the deep explanation is because he is always has *ohr* (light), and just as a fire's light does not decrease even when you borrow light from it (such as touching a candle to another candle, in order to light the candle), so does Levi always remain complete. Hence, Levi has the blessing of the *Urim*, the light. Levi also has the blessing of *Tumim*, from the word *temimus*, completion, because he always full and complete. Levi never lacks anything, he is never void, and he is always filled.

The Gemara says that from the tribe of Levi comes forth those who render Torah decisions.<sup>350</sup> Levi did not join with the sin of the golden calf, and this is connected with the fact that Torah comes from the tribe of Levi. The tribe of Levi is the continuation of the giving of the Torah at Har Sinai, which took place before the sin with the golden calf. The tribe of Levi did not sin with the golden calf, so they continue the original pure level of Torah that was given at Har Sinai. That is why they merit to have Torah rulings come forth from them. It is because their Torah never became tainted with sin. Such Torah becomes a Torah of truth.

Levi's quality is that he never becomes void or missing of anything. This resembles the attribute of Hashem, for Hashem never becomes lacking no matter how much He gives to others.

Why doesn't Levi have a portion in Eretz Yisrael? On a deeper level, this is because he does not need any portion, because he lacks for nothing, just as Hashem lacks nothing.

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<sup>350</sup> Yoma 26a

This is depth of what Leah said upon the birth of Levi, “*This time my husband will join with me.*” The creation of woman caused a void in man, for she was taken from man’s rib. When woman was created from man’s rib, this created a deficiency in man [and hence the possibility for sin]. But through Levi, there can be a kind of giving to another which does not result in any loss to the giver. This is because Levi reveals the concept of absolute connection to the Source, which is never severed. Thus, Torah comes forth from Levi, because he is always connected to his Source. All that comes forth from Levi is always connected to its Source, as it was from the beginning.

Levi was also blessed by Moshe to have success at war, that all of his soldiers return from war. When members of the tribe of Levi fight a war, they are always connected with their Source. They are not merely trying to eliminate the other side – they want to return the other side to their Source.

The revelation of Torah in Levi is that he has *miluy*: nothing is missing from him. The lower aspect of Levi is that he doesn’t have a portion in Eretz Yisrael, but in his higher aspect, “*Hashem is His inheritance*” as the Torah says - and this is because Levi really lacks nothing.

Levi is the third child of Yaakov, and Moshe was also a third child. The Sages state that the lower half of Moshe was like a man, while the upper half of Moshe was G-dly.<sup>351</sup> This means that Moshe was so connected with Hashem that he lacked nothing. This is the power of Levi, who always remains connected with his Source, and therefore he does not lack anything.

### *Cheshvan – A Month That Is Entirely Malei\Full*

The month of *Mar-Cheshvan* has no festival in it. It is called *Mar-Cheshvan*, “bitter Cheshvan”, because it does not contain any *yomim tovim* (festivals). The depth of this is that it seems to be a *chalal*, a spiritual void. Therefore, it is a month that contains bitterness.

However, that is only the “lower perspective” towards Cheshvan. The “higher perspective” towards Cheshvan is that it is entirely malei\full, and therefore it is a month which does not need any special day in it to be a festival. [As it has been explained here, the month of Cheshvan corresponds to the tribe of Levi, and Levi’s power is that he can always remain joined and connected with his Source. Levi reveals how everything, even the biggest *chala*\void, is always filled with the presence of Hashem.] Whenever there is a festival, there is a part of the month which has the festival, and a part of the month where there is no festival. But the month of Cheshvan is entirely *malei*\full, and therefore, for it is a month that is entirely ‘filled’ [with Hashem’s presence], hence it does not need any festivals in it.

As a hint to this, our Sages taught that the word “*Cheshvan*” has the same letters as the word “*Nachash*”, which is equal in value to the word “*Mashiach*”. It is a time when the light of *Mashiach* is

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<sup>351</sup> Yalkut Shimeoni Tehillim 841

extended onto the world, which reveals in the heavens and in the earth, a world that is entirely “filled” [with the presence of Hashem].

## *50 / Kislev – Binyamin*

### *The Month of Kislev Corresponds to the Tribe of Binyamin*

The month of Kislev, according to the *Raavad* and the *Gra*, corresponds to the tribe of Binyamin, the youngest of the twelve brothers, who completed the twelve tribes.

### *The Unique Aspects of Binyamin*

When Binyamin was born, his mother Rachel named him “*Ben Oni*”, “son of my suffering”, for Binyamin was born amidst the fatal childbirth that took his mother’s life. Later, his father Yaakov gave him the name Binyamin, from the words “*ben yamin*”, “son of my right”.

Binyamin was different from the rest of the tribes in many different ways:

1. Binyamin caused all of the brothers to reunite with each other, when they all had to save him from imprisonment.
2. He was the only brother who did not take part in the sale of Yosef.
3. He was the only brother who did not bow to the wicked Esav [for he wasn’t born yet], and in this merit, the Gemara says that Mordechai, who descended from Binyamin, also did not bow to Haman.<sup>352</sup>
4. Binyamin was the only of the brothers who was born with two twin sisters.
5. He was one of the four people who died completely free from sin, and who died solely because of the “effect of the Serpent” on mankind.<sup>353</sup>

### *Rachel Imeinu’s Soul In Binyamin*

Every man is connected with two women who are in his life: his mother, and his wife. The Torah says, “*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*”).<sup>354</sup> At first one is connected to his mother, and then he must reserve his primary connection for his wife. Every person starts out as a fetus in his mother, where he is only connected

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352 Yalkut Shimeoni 1054

353 Shabbos 55b (The four who never sinned were: Binyamin, Amram (father of Moshe), Yishai (father of Dovid HaMelech), and Kilav (a son of Dovid HaMelech)).

354 Beraishis 2:24

with his mother and to one else. He must listen to his mother's Torah when he is a child, as it is written, "*And the Torah of your mother, do not abandon.*"<sup>355</sup> But eventually, he must marry and leave his mother, and cleave to his wife, and to become "one" with her, as the Torah says: "*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*" When a person is still connected with his mother, he is not yet connected to a wife. Once he leaves his mother and he becomes connected with his wife, he is no longer connected with his mother, for now he has a wife.

With Binyamin, though, this was not the case. *Chazal* state that as Binyamin was being born, his mother Rachel gave her soul to him.<sup>356</sup> Binyamin's mother Rachel remained hidden in his soul, escorting him throughout his life. *Chazal* also state that Binyamin married the twin sisters he was born with.<sup>357</sup> The depth of the fact that Binyamin was born with two twin sisters was because he was able to be connected to two women at once. Since Rachel's soul lived on in Binyamin, it is as if he was connected with two women at once – his mother, and his wife.

*Chazal* state that when a person sins, "it is upon his mother to clean up his mess". A person sins only because he has a physical body that was taken from the earth. After Adam sinned, he separated afterwards from Chavah for 130 years. During that time, there was no woman in his life. He was no longer connected with his wife for this time, and he returned to his "mother", the earth he came from. Since Binyamin represents the concept of being 'connected' to two women at once, Binyamin was a rectification of Adam's sin, for Adam could not be connected with two women at once, whereas Binyamin could.

Normally, a man is either connected to his mother or to his wife, but he cannot be connected with both at once. But Binyamin was connected with his mother and his wife at the same time. Binyamin was also not connected with any sin, because he was one of the four people who never sinned, and he only died because of the Serpent's effect on mankind.

Rachel's soul in Binyamin enabled him to be connected with two women at once: to his mother (Rachel) and to his wife (the twin sisters he married). Therefore, on a deep level, it was not a coincidence that Rachel was buried in Bethlehem and she could not be buried with Yaakov. It was really because Rachel lived on in Binyamin, because she gave her soul to him, and that is why she could not be 'buried' with Yaakov – it was because she continued to remain alive, in her son Binyamin! That is also why she was buried in Bethlehem, the place where Binyamin was born – it was a hint that she continued to live on through Binyamin's birth, in Binyamin's soul.

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355 Mishlei 6:20

356 brought in the name of the Arizal

357 Rashi Beraishis 35:17 (see also Gur Aryeh ibid)

Thus, the depth of why Binyamin never sinned was because he was a rectification of the sin of Adam. After the sin, Adam could not be married to two women at once – he was separated from his wife Chavah and he returned to his “mother”, the earth, where his body came from. Binyamin rectified this, by being “married to two women” at once.

### *Binyamin: The Point of No Sin Which Rectifies The Sin of Adam*

*Chazal* also state in the *Sifrei* that Binyamin is different than the other brothers because he was born in Eretz Yisrael – specifically, in Bethlehem - whereas the other brothers were born outside of Eretz Yisrael. The depth of this is that the other brothers were not connected to the holy of ‘ground’ (symbolized by the holy land of Eretz Yisrael), and that is why there were not born in Eretz Yisrael, whereas Binyamin is connected to a holy kind of ‘ground’, the point where there is no possibility of sin. That is the depth of why Binyamin was born in Eretz Yisrael.

Binyamin had no sins, and he did not deserve to die due to any sins, and he only died because of the Serpent’s effect on mankind. Therefore, Binyamin represents the point where there is no sin. The Sages state that “The air of Eretz Yisrael makes one wise”,<sup>358</sup> which means that the land of Eretz Yisrael represents a total removal from sin. Adam’s body was taken from Bavel and his head from Eretz Yisrael<sup>359</sup>, so he still had some connection to “death”, to unholy ground, to the possibility of sin. But Binyamin was born in Eretz Yisrael, so he was entirely from Eretz Yisrael - and therefore, Binyamin was connected to holy kind of “ground”: the point where there is no possibility of sin, where there is no curse of death upon man that results from sin.

Binyamin’s blessing from Moshe is that he is the “*yedid Hashem*”, the “friend of Hashem”<sup>360</sup>, and that he has a portion in the land of the *Beis HaMikdash*. How did he merit this? The Gemara says that a *retzuah*, a strip of land, crosses between Yehudah and Binyamin’s portion of land<sup>361</sup>, and the tribe of Binyamin was pained at the fact that he doesn’t have this portion of land, which contains the section of the *Beis HaMikdash* that housed the *Mizbeiach*. Due to this pain, Binyamin will merit that the third *Beis HaMikdash* in the future will be built in his portion of the land.

Elsewhere, we find a dispute in the Sages about who was the first to jump into the sea. According to one opinion in the Gemara<sup>362</sup>, it was not Nachshon ben Aminadav who first jumped into the sea, but the tribe of Binyamin, and therefore he merited a part of the *Beis HaMikdash* in his portion of land. The depth of this as follows. At first, the world was filled entirely with water, and then

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358 Bava Basra 158b

359 Sanhedrin 38a

360 Devarim 33:12

361 Zevachim 118a

362 Sotah 17a

Hashem split the waters, forming the dry land. This original dry land became ruined from Adam's sin, when the earth became contaminated from the sin. Thus, Binyamin fixed the ruined state of the earth – he rectified the sin of Adam - by jumping into the sea. The sea split into 12 paths, the root of the 12 tribes, which became 12 *kesarim* (crowns). Thus, the dry land by the splitting of the sea was, on a deeper level, a rectification of the sin of Adam which had ruined the earth.

This was similar to when the waters of the world were gathered together on the third day of Creation to form the dry land. The first to jump into the sea (Binyamin) revealed a new, rectified kind of dry land. Thus Binyamin merited the *Beis HaMikdash* in his portion, for Binyamin represents the rectified kind of “ground” that is free from sin, which is fitting to house the holy *Beis HaMikdash*.

### *Binyamin and The Power of “Sleep” In Kislev*

The tribe of Binyamin corresponds to the month of Kislev, which contains the spiritual power called “sleep”.<sup>363</sup> What is the connection? We find that the *Beis HaMikdash* is called the *cheder hamittos*, the “bedroom”, a place of sleep.<sup>364</sup> A hint to this is that the *tzaddik* Yaakov Avinu slept on the future site of the *Beis HaMikdash*. The depth behind this is as follows.

Adam was put to sleep so that Chavah could be created from him. The first woman was formed from a state of sleep. In this state, Adam and Chavah were two beings in one unit. After the sin, when death came to the world, the state of sleep became a “sixtieth of death”. Now there would not only be sleep, but death - the result of sin - which causes a separation between man and woman. Through sleep, which is like death, the soul returns to its original source. Death returns the body to the earth and the soul to Heaven, and sleep is similar to this. Through sleep, a person is somewhat dead, because his body becomes still and silent, and his soul returns to Heaven. But in the original level of sleep, which is when Adam was put to sleep in order for Chavah to be created, Adam and Chavah were meant to remain connected as one unit. The sleep which came upon Adam was in order to enable Chavah and allow them to remain connected to each other, to be two beings that were one.

The *Beis HaMikdash* was a place that symbolizes the holy level of sleep. It was called the “gate of Heaven”,<sup>365</sup> a place where prayers would ascend and be heard, the place where the angels descended and ascended on Yaakov's ladder that reached Heaven. It was where Yaakov's head was placed on the ground: on a deeper level, this means that it was the connecting point between the physical and the spiritual, the point where Heaven touched earth. Since it was in Binyamin's portion, Binyamin

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363 Sefer Yetzirah 5:4

364 Rashi Shir HaShirim 1:16

365 Beraishis 28:17

represents the point where there is a connection between the body and the soul, between earth and Heaven.

### *How Binyamin's Power Counters the Greek Evil*

Greek wisdom, which is the opposite of the Torah's wisdom, is like the impaired level of "sleep", where the brain isn't functioning properly and the intellect is dulled. Greek wisdom is called the "fallen intellect" (*chochmah nefulah*). The Gemara says that the Greek ruler Hordos renovated the second *Beis HaMikdash* and made it look very beautiful, because he wanted it to be the most beautiful building in the world.<sup>366</sup> This is because the Greeks were solely interested in physical beauty. Binyamin was born on the road, and the depth of this is because Binyamin connects the land of Eretz Yisrael with outside of Eretz Yisrael. In other words, through Binyamin, Heaven touches earth, just as the place where Heaven touches earth, the *Beis HaMikdash*, was contained in Binyamin's portion of the land.

In the blessings of Yaakov, Binyamin is compared to the wolf.<sup>367</sup> The wolf kills its prey in the morning and divides it at night. The deeper meaning of this is that Binyamin connects the day and night together, which hints to how Binyamin is the connecting point between of all the dimensions of time, space, and soul. This is also the depth of why Binyamin is called the *yedid Hashem*, "friend of Hashem", because his title of "*yedid*" connotes this connection.

Binyamin corresponds to the power of "sleep" in the month of Kislev, because sleep is a point where death and life are connected together, for sleep is a "sixtieth of death", yet a person still remains alive when he sleeps. The body is somewhat dead when a person sleeps, because it becomes still, but the soul is kept alive. Binyamin corresponds to "sleep" because he represents the point where life and death are connected together. The *Beis HaMikdash* turned sins into merits, thus it turned death into life. This all took place in Binyamin's portion, hence, Binyamin has the power of forming the complete "connection" (*yedid*): to connect life and death together. This is why Binyamin corresponds to sleep – a state where life and death are connected together.

The month of Kislev, which corresponds to Binyamin, is the time where there is a spiritual war between the Jewish people and the Greek empire. It was the war of Greek wisdom, the "beauty of Yefes", against the wisdom of the Torah. But the most beautiful place in Eretz Yisrael, the portion of the *Beis HaMikdash* which was in Binyamin's part of the land of Eretz Yisrael, is what counters the superficial beauty of the Yefes\the Greek nation. Furthermore, the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (the Jerusalem Talmud) was composed in Yerushalayim, and it is the wisdom which comes from true and holy beauty, which counters the unholy beauty and wisdom of the Greeks.

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366 Bava Basra 14a

367 Beraishis 49:27

Hence, Binyamin's portion in Eretz Yisrael, which contained the first two *Batei Mikdash*, and which will contain the third *Beis HaMikdash* in the time of Mashiach, is the holy state of "sleep" that connects life and death together, which will be the state of the complete Redemption, may it come speedily in our days.

## *51 / Teves – Don*

### *Teves Corresponds To The Tribe of Don*

The month of *Teves*, according to the Gra<sup>368</sup> and others, corresponds to the tribe of Don.

The *sefarim hakedoshim*<sup>369</sup> explain that *Teves* is the most difficult month of the year, because it contains the power of *rogez* (fury).<sup>370</sup> This corresponds to Don, whose name comes from the word “*din*”, “judgment”, as Rachel [the mistress of his mother Bilhah] named him upon birth: “*For G-d has judged me*” [to be deserving of a child].<sup>371</sup>

### *Don Corresponds To Din \ Judgment*

Don was born from Rachel Imeinu’s maidservant, Bilhah. When Rachel wasn’t having children, she complained to Yaakov about her plight, and she said, “*If I will have none* [no children], *I am dead.*”<sup>372</sup> Yaakov then got angry at Rachel, and said to her: “*Am I in place of Hashem?*” Soon after, Rachel gave her maidservant Bilhah as a wife to Yaakov, to bear children in her place. Bilhah then gave birth to Don. Thus, Don was born as a result of the anger (*rogez*) of Yaakov Avinu, which was the *middas hadin*, the attribute of judgment. Hence, the name “Don” is connected to the concept of *din*/judgment.

When Rachel said, “If I will have none”, she used the word “*ayin*”, which means “nothing.” She used a similar expression of “*ayin*” that she said upon the birth of her own son, Binyamin. Rachel named him “*Ben Oni*”, “son of my suffering”, because she was dying amidst her childbirth.<sup>373</sup> The term “*oni*” has the same letters as the word “*ayin*”. Therefore, the term *ayin* connotes death and judgment.

Since Don’s name comes from the term *din*\judgment and his birth came about through Rachel’s expression of the term *ayin*, Don’s connection to “judgment” refers to the *middas hadin*, the trait of judgment, which brings about death.

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368 peirush haGra al Sefer Yetzirah 5:1

369 refer to Sfas Emes on Chanukah

370 Sefer Yetzirah 5:4

371 Beraishis 30:6

372 Beraishis 30:1

373 Beraishis 35:18

*Don and Shimshon*

When Yaakov blessed Don, he said about Don that judges will come forth from him<sup>374</sup>, and that Don can “hope for salvation in G-d.”<sup>375</sup> *Chazal* explain this verse to mean as a prophecy that a great judge of the Jewish people, Shimshon *HaGibbor* (the Mighty) will descend from Don.<sup>376</sup>

In the blessing of Moshe, the tribe Don is compared to the lion. In the blessing of Yaakov, however, Don is compared to a serpent. *Chazal* state that this is also referring to the judge Shimshon, who attacked the Pelishtim (Palestinians) like a serpent.<sup>377</sup> *Chazal* explain several ways how Shimshon is compared to a serpent: “Just as the Serpent took revenge against Adam and Chavah, so did Shimshon take revenge against the Pelishtim<sup>378</sup>. Just as the Serpent coaxed a woman to sin, so did Shimshon sin with women [Timnasah, Azah and Delilah].”

*Don and Shimshon Were Both “Alone”*

However, *Chazal* also teach that “Just as the Serpent went alone, so did Shimshon go alone.”<sup>379</sup> What is the root of this matter?

From all of the 12 brothers, Don was the only brother who had only one child [Chushim], whereas the other brothers had more than one child. Don’s son Chushim was deaf, and *Chazal* state that a deaf person is one of the four kinds of people who are regarded as dead<sup>380</sup>, so even his only son was not considered present. Therefore, in this sense, Don can be considered as being truly “alone”.

Thus, there is a power of “alone” rooted in Dan. This was later revealed in his descendant, Shimshon. How do we see that Shimshon received this power to be “alone”? In order to see how, we need the following introduction.

*Shimshon’s Misuse of the Middas HaDin (The Attribute of Judgment)*

There are two dimensions to the aspect of *din*\judgment in Don: a higher, repaired, aspect, and a lower, impaired aspect.

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374 Beraishis 49:16

375 ibid 49:17

376 Rashi Beraishis 49:16

377 Rashi Beraishis 49:17

378 Beraishis Rabbah 99:12

379 Beraishis Rabbah 99:11

380 Nedarim 64b

[The impaired aspect of the *middas hadin* is as follows.] Don’s illustrious descendant, Shimshon, was a judge of the Jewish people, as prophesied in the blessing of Yaakov Avinu. However, *Chazal* also teach that when Shimshon went to war against the Pelishtim, this was a violation of the oath that Yitzchok Avinu made with Avimelech, the king of the Pelishtim, when they had made a treaty that they and their descendants would never attack each other. In the language of the Gemara, Shimshon made a *chilul* (profanity) of the oath and regarded it as *chullin*, non-sacred.

What is the deeper understanding behind this matter? Yitzchok Avinu represents the *middas hadin*, the attribute of judgment. Rashi says that when Yitzchok was born, the “scoffers of the generation” accused Yitzchok’s lineage, saying that his birth came about from Avimelech and Sarah [for Sarah had recently been abducted by Avimelech, a year before]. In reality, this accusation was false, for Yitzchok was not borne from Avimelech, but from the holy union of Avraham and Sarah. However, since the rule is that “every falsity contains a spark of truth to it”, the accusation of the scoffers actually contained some truth to it, because Yitzchok represents the *middas hadin*, and so did the Pelishtim represent the *middas hadin*. The “truth” contained in the accusation was that Yitzchok was borne from “Avimelech”, meaning that he was born from the *middas hadin*.

However, the Pelishtim represent the evil side to the trait of *din*, whereas Yitzchok is the holy side to the trait of *din*. The term *din*/judgment is also known as *gevurah*, strength. Shimshon was called Shimshon “*haGibbor*”, a mighty warrior (from the word *gevurah*\strength) and this was related to the fact that the Pelishtim had accused his ancestor Yitzchok of being born from Avimelech, who represents the trait of *din*/*gevurah*.

Both Shimshon and the Pelishtim had *gevurah*, and when Shimshon waged war against them, his *gevurah* countered the *gevurah* of the Pelishtim. Therefore, when Shimshon fought the Pelishtim, it was essentially a war of *gevurah* against *gevurah* – the holy *gevurah* of Shimshon on one side, and the evil *gevurah* of the Pelishtim on the other side. Through the oath that was made between Yitzchok and Avimelech, there was supposed to not be any war of *gevurah*/*din* of Yitzchok [and his descendants, the Jewish people] against the *gevurah*/*din* of the Pelishtim [but Shimshon defied the treaty].

*Chazal* state that because Shimshon strayed after his eyes, his eyes were punished [when the Pelishtim bore out his eyes, before he was martyred].<sup>381</sup> Shimshon’s strength came from the fact that his hair was uncut from birth, for he was a *nazir* from birth<sup>382</sup>.

What is the understanding of this? *Chazal* state that Hashem originally wanted to create the world with the *middas hadin* alone, but He saw that the world wouldn’t survive, so He included the *middas harachamim* (the attribute of mercy) into the plan.<sup>383</sup> Thus, Hashem’s “first thought”, so to

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381 Sotah 9a

382 see Shoftim 13:5

383 Beraishis Rabbah 12:15, cited in Rashi to Beraishis 1:1

speak, was to create the world with the *middas hadin* alone. In a person, the power of thought is located in the brain, which is housed by the head. The head also houses the hair. Thus, there is a connection between thoughts and the hair - through the head. The hair is called the “extra parts of the brain”<sup>384</sup>, hence the hair is connected with the thoughts. On a deeper level, when Hashem saw that the world would not last through the *middas hadin*, this was a hint to Shimshon, who strayed after his eyes and was then judged with the *middas hadin*. Shimshon’s eyes were bored out by the Pelishtim shortly before he was killed, when he saw that the Pelishtim were about to cut his hair. This was a reflection of how the world cannot survive on the *middas hadin* alone. Shimshon’s strength came from the *middas hadin* which Hashem originally wanted to create the world with, the “first thought” of Hashem, so to speak.

Thus, Shimshon could not survive when he saw that his hair was about to be cut, reminiscent of how the world cannot survive with *middas hadin* alone.

However, the *middas hadin* of Shimshon wasn’t yet perfected, and this was because the *middas hadin* of his ancestor Yitzchok was rooted in the *middas hadin* of Avimelech, the king of the Pelishtim, as explained earlier. That was the depth behind the accusation of the scoffers of the generation, who were claiming that Yitzchok’s birth came about through Sarah and Avimelech. Sarah’s abduction by Avimelech was reminiscent of the Serpent’s impure effect on Chavah. The Sages teach that the Serpent placed a spirit of defilement on Chavah.<sup>385</sup> The Sages also said that as a result of the sin, woman undergoes the menstrual period each month, which is called *dam niddah* (menstrual blood), which is also an acronym for the word “Dan”.

Dan’s name, which is rooted in the concept of *din*, was essentially rooted in the original thoughts of Hashem to create the world with *din*. This concept manifested on the side of evil, when the Serpent placed a spirit of defilement on Chavah, thereby causing her to undergo *dam niddah*. Ever since then, the *middas hadin*, represented by “Don”, became damaged, and this is why the *middas hadin* inherited by Shimshon was still in need of repair.

When Hashem included the *middas harachamim* (attribute of compassion) into the design of Creation, when previously there was only the *middas hadin* alone, there were now two modes operating at once in Creation: the *middas hadin*, and the *middas harachamim*. In other words, there were now two modes of conduct, when there had been previously been one mode of conduct.

Thus, the depth behind how Shimshon was “alone” was because the *middas hadin* (represented by the *middas hadin* of Shimshon, the primary descendant of Dan) had originally been “alone” in Hashem’s original design of Creation, for the *middas hadin* had originally been alone and by itself, before the inclusion of the *middas harachamim*.

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384 Malbim on Shir HaShirim 5:2

385 Shabbos 146a

On a deeper level, this idea of “alone” (in Hebrew, “*yechidus*”) also represents the power of *echad*, “oneness”. This was the depth behind why Dan had “one” son. Don’s only son, Chushim, was also the one who killed Esav [when Esav tried to stop Yaakov Avinu’s burial at the Cave of Machpeilah]. The deeper way to understand this is that Chushim, the “one” and only son of Don, represents the power of *echad* oneness. This represents the holy, repaired use of the power to be “one”, the holy power to be “alone” (*levad*).

### *Repairing The Power of “Alone”*

What is the way to repair the power of *yechidus*/alone? We find that there are two ways.

There are two sides to the power of *yechidus*, being alone: an impaired use, as well as a holy, repaired use. The aloneness of the Serpent was the evil use of being “alone”, whereas Don’s power to be “alone” represents the holy use of this concept of “alone”.

### *The First Repair of Evil Oneness: When “One” Becomes Two*

The first way of how being “alone” is repaired is: When “one” becomes “two”.

We see this from the fact that Rachel could not have children by herself, and when she introduced her maidservant Bilhah into the picture, there were now “two” instead of “one” [Rachel and Bilhah together, instead of Rachel alone], and now there could be children through Rachel. Through Rachel and Bilhah together, there were now a partnership between Rachel and Bilhah, where “one” became “two”. The result from this was the birth of Don.

Thus, the repaired use of “alone” – represented by Don - was through the combined partnership of Rachel and Bilhah. This implies that the way to rectify the impaired “alone” is, by turning “one” into “two”.

Also, the birth of Dan came about through the jealousy of Rachel towards Leah. Thus, Don’s birth came about through a combination of Rachel and Leah. This was another way of how “one” became “two”.

### *Don’s Rectification Is To Join With Yehudah*

In the blessing of Moshe, Don is compared to the lion, but in the blessing of Yaakov, it is Yehudah who is compared to the lion. *Chazal* learn from this that Shimshon, who came from Don and who is compared to a serpent, descended from both Yehudah and Don. Shimshon’s father [Manoach] descended from Dan, and Shimshon’s mother<sup>386</sup> descended from Yehudah.

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386 Tzalponis

The Sages explain several different connections between the tribes of Yehudah and Don. The making of the Mishkan was through Betzalel, who came from the tribe of Yehudah, and also through Ohaliav, who came from the tribe of Don. In the dividing of portions of land of Eretz Yisrael, the tribes of Yehudah and Don had neighboring portions. Don and Yehudah are both compared to the lion.

Don's only son Chushim bore many sons, who in turn borne multitudes of descendants. This is another example of how the concept of "one" represented by Don eventually spawned into "two". This implies that the impaired "alone" of Shimshon - which reflected the impaired oneness of the Serpent - is repaired through "one" becoming "two", the power of Don.

*Chazal* explain that when Yaakov saw into the future that Shimshon would descend from Don, he thought that Shimshon would become the Mashiach. In truth, Shimshon came from both Yehudah and Don (His mother descended from Don, and his father descended from Yehudah). In reality, Yaakov was seeing the *pesoles*, the "impure side", of the Mashiach, in Shimshon. This is because the "Mashiach" in the side of evil is the Serpent [for Mashiach reveals the holy oneness of Hashem, whereas the Serpent is the evil oneness, which seeks independence from G-d].

One of the three women Shimson sinned with was Timnasa. *Chazal* state that both Yehudah and Don were involved with Timnasa. This was all because of the same root. Yehudah took Timnasa for a wife to bear Mashiach, whereas Shimshon sinned with her, but it was the same root, Timnasa, who was the root of Mashiach's progeny. Shimshon went to Timnasa as a result of not guarding his eyes. Yehudah elevated his spiritual level through guarding his eyes, whereas Shimson's spiritual level descended because he failed to guard his eyes.

The words *Don v'Nachash* ("Don and the Serpent") can be interchanged with the words "*nun shochad*" (which means "the number 50 and the term "bribery"). The Gemara<sup>387</sup> says that Shimshon judged for 20 years, and was careful not to take *shochad* (bribery). However, when Shimshon strayed after his eyes, this was like *shochad*. This was the impaired use of "*chad*", "one". His punishment was that his two eyes were bored out, implying that his "two eyes" fell to the level of "one" eye, which is impaired vision [because a person cannot see properly with only one eye].

Shimshon's two eyes were bored out, meaning that his two eyes became demoted to the level of one eye. In the blessing of Yaakov to Don, Don's descendant Shimshon is called the *shetifon*, a "serpent", a hint that Shimshon is the "serpent" on the side of holiness. One of the curses given to the serpent was that its two feet were removed, so that it only has "one" foot (so to speak). Shimshon is the holy kind of "serpent" because his ancestor Don is repaired by joining with Yehudah, where the concept of "one" becomes turned into "two". Through Mashiach (who comes from both Yehudah and Don), "one" becomes "two" (Don is joined with Yehudah), and this repairs the evil oneness of the serpent.

Whereas the oneness of the Serpent is the evil oneness [a oneness that seeks independence from G-d] the oneness represented by Don/Shimshon is the holy oneness, which is when “two” [implying separation, division, independence] becomes turned into one [oneness].

This is also the depth behind the blessing of Moshe to Don. The Sages teach in the *Sifrei* that Don was given two portions in Eretz Yisrael. Don was given two portions, including a portion that was near Yehudah, because Don is meant to join with Yehudah and become one, not to remain as two.

Thus, one of the ways in which Don/Shimshon is rectified is where the concept of “two” becomes turned into “one”. This also repairs the evil of the “Serpent”, the evil being who sought its own oneness [by seeking independence from G-d]. The “oneness” represented by Don/Shimshon is when “two” becomes “one”, which essentially returns the evil oneness of the Serpent to the holy source of oneness: the oneness of Hashem.

### *Repairing Evil Oneness Through Holy Oneness*

A second rectification for Don/Shimshon is through the “oneness” of Don/Shimshon, which is essentially the holy power of being “alone”. Yaakov’s blessing to Shimshon is that he will be “like one single judge for the entire world”. On a deeper level, this means that Don’s blessing is that he has the spiritual mission to return everything in Creation to the “single Judge”, the Individual One of the world. Rashi explains that “Just as Hashem judges without witnesses, so will Shimshon judge without witnesses.” [When Shimshon judged the Pelishtim, he did so without witnesses. This reflects the judgment of Hashem, Who judges without the need for witnesses.]

The infamous idol of Michah came from a member of the tribe of Don. This was the root of idol worship in the Jewish people. Later in history there was the idol worship of Yeravam ben Nevat. The idol of Michah, which came from the tribe of Don, did not allow for a complete redemption from Egypt, even when the Jewish people were redeemed. Since the redemption from Egypt was an incomplete redemption, due to the presence of the idol of Michah which came from Don’s tribe, the idol of Michah laid the root for all future exiles of the Jewish people.

When Avraham Avinu was first told that his descendants would endure exile, Hashem said to Avraham the words, “*Don Anochi*”, “I will judge”, which is a hint to Don’s role in the exile that prevented the complete redemption from Egypt (through the idol of Michah that came from Don’s tribe). Shimshon, who came from Don, was the rectification for Don. Thus, in the blessing to Don, Yaakov said, “*To your salvation I await*”<sup>388</sup>, when he foresaw that Shimshon would come from Don, for Shimshon would be the rectification for the idol worship of Don’s tribe. This was because Shimshon revealed the oneness of Hashem [by sanctifying his life to fight the idol worship of the

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<sup>388</sup> *Beraishis 49:18*

Pelishtim], the antithesis to the very idea of idol worship which implies that there is any other power besides for Hashem.

### *“To Your Salvation I Await”: The Hope That Bypasses Harsh Judgments*

The depth of Don’s blessing, the words “*To your salvation I await*”, is essentially the *middas harachamim*, Hashem’s attribute of compassion, which overcomes *din*/judgment. This is alluded to in the words “*I await*”, which in Hebrew is the word “*kivisi*”, from the word “*kav*”, the “line” of Hashem’s mercy that bypasses all judgment, from which all compassion comes, and which is also from the word “*tikva*”, hope. The entire concept of *din*/judgment is bypassed through the concept of *tikva*, hope, which is essentially the revelation of the *middas harachamim* (Hashem’s endless compassion) which overcomes the *middas hadin*.

The Sages state that before Hashem created the world, He foresaw that the world will not last through *middas hadin*, so He included the *middas harachamim* into the design of Creation, so that *rachamim* can overcome *din*. This was because the *middas hadin* at the beginning of Creation was not complete and perfected yet, and therefore it needed to be balanced by the *middas harachamim*. At that incomplete level of *middas hadin*, the world could not last with it, without the inclusion of the *middas harachamim*. But in the future, at “the great, awesome and mighty day of judgment”, the *middas hadin* will be fully complete, and the world will be able to last forever even with *middas hadin*.

### *The Month of Teves – The Month That Reveals Hashem’s Kindnesses*

This is the depth behind the concept of *din*/judgment in the month of Teves (represented by the tribe of Don, which implies *din*), which is called “the most difficult month” of the year<sup>389</sup>, for Teves is the month of *rogez* (fury)<sup>390</sup>, when the “fury of Hashem” is more exercised, where *middas hadin* is more dominant.

However, on the positive side, the word “*Teves*” is also from the word “*hatavah*”, which means “bestowal of goodness”, implying that Teves is also a month where we can access Hashem’s bestowal of goodness upon us [His *middas harachamim*, His endless compassion]. This is because the harshness of the *din*/judgment in the month of Teves will ultimately become complete and fully repaired in the great day of mighty and awesome judgment in the future, where Don will be fully rectified, which will reveal the individual One of the world.

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<sup>389</sup> *Sfas Emes Chanukah*

<sup>390</sup> *Refer to Sefer Yetzirah 5:4 and sefer Bnei Yissocher: Maamarei Chodesh Teves*

This is the implication of the blessing given to Don, “*Don shall judge his people, as one of the judges of Yisrael*”, which refers to the complete and perfected level of *middas hadin*, Hashem’s mode of judgment in the future, when He will be the only One.

## 52 / Shevat – Asher

### *The Month of Shevat Corresponds to the Tribe of Asher*

Each of the 12 months of the Jewish calendar corresponds to one of the 12 tribes. The month of *Shevat* corresponds to the tribe of Asher.

### *The Qualities of Asher*

Yaakov Avinu's blessing to Asher was, "From Asher, his bread will have richness, and he will provide kingly delicacies."<sup>391</sup> In Moshe's blessing to Asher, Moshe said, "The most blessed of children is Asher, he shall be pleasing to his brothers and dip his feet in oil."<sup>392</sup>

Let us try to understand, with the help of Hashem, about the spiritual power of Asher.

*Chazal* state that at first, no one was aware of how Asher was the most blessed from all of the tribes, but after Moshe revealed in his blessing to Asher that Asher will "dip his feet in oil", it was now made known that Asher possessed certain spiritual qualities that the other tribes did not have. What exactly was this unique quality of Asher, that he will "dip his feet in oil"?

### *Asher/Eitz HaChaim vs. Asheirah/Eitz HaDaas*

In the side of impurity, Asher is countered by the force known as "*asheirah*", a form of idol worship. The Gemara says that *asheirah* was a tree which used for idol worship.<sup>393</sup> It follows, then, that "Asher" is the force of holiness which counters the impurity of the "*asheirah*" idol worship. Thus, the "*asheirah*" on the side of evil is a "tree" of ruination, whereas "Asher" represents the opposite of the evil "tree" of *asheirah*. Hence, Asher is like a "tree" on the side of holiness, a "tree" that brings rectification. Clearly, these two "trees" on the sides of holiness and impurity are rooted in the two root trees in Creation, the *Eitz HaChaim* (the Tree of Life) and the *Eitz HaDaas Tov V'Ra* (the Tree of Knowledge).

The Gemara says that when Adam HaRishon sinned by eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*, he is either regarded as an apostate (*min*) or as a heretic (*kofer*)<sup>394</sup>. When Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*, it was

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391 Beraishis 49:20

392 Devarim 33:24

393 Avodah Zarah 48a

394 Sanhedrin 38a

like eating from an *asheirah* tree, a tree of idol worship and heresy. Had Adam eaten from the *Eitz HaChaim*, it would have been an act of holy eating, like the blessing given to Asher: “His bread will have richness, and he will provide kingly delicacies.”

The “kingly delicacies” of Asher represent the holy act of eating, eating from the *Eitz HaChaim*. The word that the Torah uses for “delicacies” here is “*maadanei*”, which is from the word “*Eden*”, a hint to the state of Gan Eden. Had Adam eaten from the *Eitz HaChaim*, he would have remained in Gan Eden. When Adam sinned and was subsequently sent out of Gan Eden, he essentially lost the *maadanim*, the kingly delicacies of Gan Eden – he essentially lost the *Eitz HaChaim*. When Adam was removed from Gan Eden, he was essentially removed from the very perspective that he had in Gan Eden.

*Chazal* state that Asher’s portion in Eretz Yisrael was greater than Yehudah’s, even though Yehudah had the status of king. This is really because Asher’s blessing is that he is able to “eat” from the *Eitz HaChaim*, and therefore Asher’s portion in Eretz Yisrael resembles living in Gan Eden. In a sense, it is considered as if Asher was never sent out of Gan Eden, since Asher retains the level of eating from the *Eitz HaChaim* that was in Gan Eden. Thus, Asher represents the state of before the sin of Adam.

### *How The “Fatty Bread” of Asher Repairs The Sin of Adam*

Going deeper into this discussion, part of Asher’s blessing is “fatty bread”, which the Torah calls *shemainah lachmo*, “fatty is his bread”. The word *shemainah* is from the word *shemoneh*, which means the number 8. The Sages explain that this is a hint to the eight special garments worn by the *Kohen Gadol*. Let us now see the depth of this.

After Adam sinned by eating from the forbidden tree, the Torah says that Adam made clothing to cover himself. The word for “clothing” in Hebrew is “*begadim*”, from the word *begidah*, “betrayal”, for clothing implies the man’s betrayal to G-d that came about through the first sin. The clothing which Adam made was a result of sin, and therefore all clothing (*begadim*) is impaired. In contrast to this, the eight special garments of the *bigdei kehunah* repairs the *begidah*/betrayal that came about through Adam’s sin.

Thus, the blessing of *shemainah lachmo* given to Asher which alludes to the eight special garments of the *Kohen Gadol* is, that Asher contains the spiritual power to return to the level of before the sin.

### *The Fatty Bread of Asher – A Hint To The Shtei Halechem*

Going deeper with this, Asher’s blessing of *shemainah lachmo* (his “fatty bread”) refers to the offering of the Omer, which was brought on the festival of Shavuot along with the offering of the *shtei halechem*, and the grains used for this offering came from Asher’s portion of the land.

The *shtei halachem* is remembered today through the *lechem mishneh* [by taking two *challah*-loaves of bread at the Shabbos meal]. The *lechem mishnah* is also in commemoration of the double portion of manna which would come in the desert every Friday, which came in preparation for Shabbos. The *lechem mishnah* are two loaves of bread which are lifted together, thereby becoming connected together, as if they are one piece.

The *Omer* offering was brought from animal food (barley) which became elevated to human food (for it was eaten afterwards by the *Kohanim*), and this was made possible through the two loaves of the *Shtei HaLechem*.

### *“Blessed From All The Children Is Asher”*

Moshe’s blessing to Asher was, “*Blessed from all the children is Asher.*” Rashi cites the words of the *Sifri* that from all of the 12 sons of Yaakov, it was Asher who had the most children. [We shall now explain that there is more depth to this matter].

The *Baal HaTurim* says that when the brothers came back from Egypt after they had met with Yosef, they didn’t want to tell Yaakov yet that Yosef was still alive, because they didn’t know how to break the news to him properly without shocking him. Asher told his daughter Serach that Yosef was alive, before the brothers told Yaakov about the news, and Serach devised a way to inform Yaakov of the news about Yosef being alive, without shocking him. But the brothers became angry at Asher for telling Serach of the news before Yaakov was told, so they placed a *cherem* (excommunication) on Asher, forbidding him from marital relations so that he shouldn’t beget any more children.<sup>395</sup>

Thus, the depth of the blessing of Moshe to Asher, “*Blessed from all children is Asher*”, is that Asher’s children are blessed - meaning that the *cherem* which the brothers placed on Asher was now removed.

The depth behind this matter is as follows. Yaakov had thought Yosef was dead, and therefore he thought that he wouldn’t go to the Next World [because he knew that his life’s mission was to bring the 12 tribes into the world, and since he thought that Yosef was dead, he only has 11 tribes and he can’t fulfill his life’s mission]. However, by way of Serach bas Asher – the daughter of Asher - Yaakov was able to know that Yosef wasn’t dead. Therefore, it is through “Asher” that Yaakov is informed that Yosef is alive and that he can go to the Next World.

Asher’s blessing of *shemainah lachmo* also refers to the word *Mishnah*, “double”, which alludes to the *shtei halechem*, which comes from the *Omer* offering that comes from Asher’s portion of land. The word *mishnah* is also found in term *mishnah l’melech*, when Yosef was “second in command” to Pharaoh. Asher’s blessing of *shemainah lachmo* is thus a revelation of how Yosef is really *mishnah*

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<sup>395</sup> Refer to Talmud Bavli Tractate Succah 56b, Daas Zekainim (Tosafos) to Beraishis 45:26, and Sifrei and Chizkuni to Devarim 33:24.

*l'melech*, meaning that Yosef is still alive. Thus, Asher's blessing (and Asher's daughter Serach) represents the revelation to Yaakov Avinu that Yosef wasn't dead, that Yosef still lives. Hence, due to the revelation of Asher (through his daughter Serach), "Yosef" is not dead.

Understanding this deeper, this means that Asher reveals how the *sof*, the "end", isn't really the end – instead of there being a *sof* end, there is a *tosefes*, an "addition" of life, to Yosef. That was the depth revealed through "Asher", whose name contains the word *she'air*, "remainder", implying that Yosef still remains alive.

The word "Asher" also contains the word *rosh*, head, because Asher reveals how Yosef is still the "head". Asher represents the idea that Yosef isn't dead, and that instead, Yosef is still alive, he remains at the head, and instead of being dead, he is the *mishnah l'melech* in Egypt.

The root of the matter is as follows. Asher, whose name contains the word *rosh*, has the same root letters as the word *Yisrael*, which is from the word "*li rosh*", "A head unto Me." The revelation of Asher's revelation is contained in the word "*Yisrael*", in the words *li rosh*, which can also read "*li asher*". When Yaakov overcame the angel of Esav, his name was now called *Yisrael*. Yaakov couldn't completely overcome the angel of Esav, and the angel of Esav attacked Yaakov's thigh. It was Serach the daughter of Asher who revealed to Yaakov that Yosef was alive, and therefore Asher is called "blessed from all children", because through Asher, it was revealed that Yosef (the primary child of Yaakov) was not dead.

### *Asher - Bringing The Highest Point Into The Lowest Point*

Asher's portion of land is blessed with oil. When the *Kohen Gadol* is anointed with oil, the oil is placed on the head. But Asher's blessing is that "his feet is dipped in oil", and the feet are at the lowest point of the body, which implies that Asher's blessing is that he can extend the highest point (the head) all the way down until the lowest point. Asher can reveal the "head" even in the "feet", he can reveal the highest point within the lowest point. Through Asher, it was revealed how Yosef (the "head" of all the brothers) was really in Egypt, the most depraved place on earth, the lowest point.

As mentioned before, the impure force which counters the holiness of "Asher" is the *asheirah*, a form of idol worship. The word *asheirah* is also from the word Ashur (Assyria), a depraved country which built several cities that were deserving of annihilation, including the city of Ninveh. Ashur came from the Generation of the Dispersal, the generation which sought to rebel against Hashem, when they tried to build a tower to the heavens. In other words, Ashur was the impure force of trying to get to the highest point, to the "head" - the evil use of the power of Asher.

### *Asher Symbolizes The Power of Complete Shirah/Song*

The word "Asher" is from the word *shirah*, song. Therefore, Asher represents the concept of *shirah*/song.

The root of *shirah* is in the name “Sarah”. What is the connection between *shirah* and Sarah? Before Sarah’s name was changed, when she was called Sarai, she had given Hagar to Avraham so that she could enable children to come from Avraham. Hagar was the daughter of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. On a deeper level, when Sarai had given Hagar to Avraham, this was the roots of the Egyptian exile taking hold upon the Jewish people. Later, when Sarai gave birth to Yitzchok, and her name was changed to Sarah, the roots of the redemption for the Jewish people began. Therefore, when Sarai’s name was changed to Sarah, this was a cause for *shirah*/song, because it symbolized the redemption.

Furthermore, Sarah was a cause for *shirah* because it is well-known in the *sefarim hakedoshim* that Avraham and Sarah’s deeper spiritual task was to repair the sin of Adam and Chavah. Since Avraham and Sarah achieved a repair of the first sin [Adam and Chavah ruined the world, whereas Avraham and Sarah fixed the ruination of the world, to a large extent, by teaching the world about G-d].

There are different levels of *shirah*/song, but the complete level of *shirah*/song was symbolized by the change of name from Sarai to Sarah. Once her name was changed from Sarai to Sarah, due to the birth of Yitzchok, there could now be a true and complete cause for *shirah*/song.

After the exodus from Egypt, there was the song of “*Az Yashir*” which was sung by the sea. These words contain the same letters as the word “*Asher*”, for it is Asher who reveals the true, complete level of *shirah*. The song of *Az Yashir*, the song at the sea, was rooted in the *shirah* of Serach the daughter of Asher, when she sang a song to Yaakov that his son Yosef is still alive. The song of Serach, the daughter of Asher, represented the root of the redemption from Egypt. The bones of Yosef were with the people at the splitting of the sea, and this was because Yosef’s presence symbolizes redemption. Since it was Asher’s daughter Serach who revealed to Yaakov that Yosef was still alive, it is through Serach the daughter of Asher that the true and complete level of *shirah* was revealed. Hence, the concept of *shirah* is symbolized by Asher.

At the song at the sea, there were two songs – one song was sung by Moshe, and the other song was sung by Miriam. These were two songs at once, but it wasn’t on the level of the song represented by Asher. The word “*Asher*” contains the words “*shar aleph*”, “one song”, a more perfect level of song that implies oneness. Therefore, the song at the sea, sung by both Moshe and Miriam, wasn’t yet the complete level of song.

The complete level of *shirah*/song revealed through Asher, which is one complete song, will once again return when we will sing by the future and complete Redemption for the Jewish people, and it will be the most complete level of song, when “Hashem will be One, and His Name will be one”.

## *53 / Adar - Zevulun*

### *Adar Corresponds To The Tribe of Zevulun*

The month of Adar is a time of joy (*simchah*) and laughter. Each of the months in the Jewish calendar corresponds to one of the 12 tribes. The month of Adar, according to the *Gra*, corresponds to the tribe of Zevulun.

### *“Rejoice, Zevulun, When You Go Out”*

Of Zevulun, the Torah says, “Rejoice, Zevulun, when you go out, and Yissocher in your tents”.<sup>396</sup> Thus, Zevulun is associated with *simchah*, with rejoicing. Let us try here to understand what the concept of *simchah* is, to arrive at a deeper and true understanding of it.

The month of Adar, which is the month of *simchah*, corresponds to Zevulun. What is the *simchah* that we find in connection with Zevulun? The Sages explain that Zevulun goes out in commerce in order to support his brother Yissocher, who bears the yoke of Torah<sup>397</sup>. Simply speaking, the joy of the tribe of Zevulun is because his tribe supports the Torah learning of Yissocher. However, who is happier, Yissocher or Zevulun? It would seem that Yissocher is happier, because he is the one who learns Torah. Yet the Torah says that it is Zevulun who rejoices! What is the *simchah* of Zevulun? And how does it apply to the *simchah* we have in the month of Adar?

Making the question stronger, the curse given to Adam after he sinned, was “By the sweat of your brow, you shall eat bread.”<sup>398</sup> Working for a livelihood is a curse, and it is part of the great sadness that came upon man as a result of the sin. Yet, the Torah associates the term *simchah* with Zevulun, even though Zevulun goes to work in order to support Yissocher. If anything, Zevulun should be sad that he has to engage in commerce and work, which is the curse that came as a result of the sin. How, then, is the business efforts of Zevulun specifically the cause of his *simchah*, when it is the curse of work which brought sadness to mankind?

### *The Techeiles In Zevulun’s Portion: A Reminder of Man’s Tachlis/Purpose*

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396 Devarim 33:18

397 Midrash Tanchuma, cited by Rashi in Beraishis 49:13

398 Beraishis 3:19

The Gemara says that Zevulun complained that his share in Eretz Yisrael does not include any cities or fields. Instead, he was given the seas, where there is no civilization. Hashem responded to Zevulun by saying, “There is something I have given in your portion which none of the other tribes have: the *chilazon* fish, from which *techeiles* comes from.”<sup>399</sup> The *chilazon* fish is found in the sea, which is only in Zevulun’s portion. Hence, the special portion given to Zevulun includes the *chilazon*, from which the turquoise wool of the *techeiles* is made from.

The Gemara says that when a person looks at *tzitzis* [when they are together with *techeiles*], the blue color of the *techeiles* reminds him of the sea, the sea reminds him of the sky, and the sky reminds him of the Throne of Glory.<sup>400</sup> The word *techeiles* is from the word *tachlis*. The depth of this is because looking at *techeiles* reminds a person of his “*tachlis*” – his ultimate purpose. The “*tachlis*”, the purpose and endpoint of the year, is the month of Adar. Thus, the deeper implication of Zevulun’s possession of the *techeiles* is that his tribe is more connected with the spiritual *tachlis*, the purpose, of man. That is the “*tachlis*” revealed in the month of Adar, which corresponds to Zevulun – and that is the *simchah* of Zevulun’s portion.

Hence, the month of Adar corresponds to *simchah* of Zevulun, the *simchah* of looking at *techeiles*, which reminds a person of his *tachlis*.

### *Haman’s Decree: The “End” Which Awakened The Jewish People To Their Tachlis/Purpose*

When Haman decreed destruction on all of the Jewish people, this was a decree that could have caused them either to totally despair, or to become awakened to their higher purpose. By realizing that their end was imminent, instead of sinking into lowly despair, they could now reflect about their end and reveal their *tachlis*, their true end, their true purpose.

The decree of death upon them, which was a threat of total annihilation of man – for the Jewish people represent all of Creation – was essentially a part of the process of rectifying the sin of Adam which had brought death upon the world. The entire Jewish people were now in a situation of total annihilation hovering above them, yet it was this very situation which spurred them on to repent and ultimately realize their higher purpose (*tachlis*). Through this situation where they faced annihilation and absolute destruction, they revealed their ultimate *tachlis*, their purpose.

### *Converts Come To Eretz Yisrael By Way of Zevulun*

Moshe’s blessing to Zevulun is that merchants would do business with Zevulun because he owned all of the ports at sea, which the merchants would first encounter when coming to do business in Israel. The businessmen of the tribe of Zevulun were all sailors, who did business at sea,

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399 Talmud Bavli: Megillah 6a

400 Talmud Bavli: Menachos 43a

and the Gemara says that all sailors are called *tzaddikim*, for they are always praying to Hashem to be saved from danger at sea.<sup>401</sup>

The gentiles who threw Yonah into the sea when the ship was in danger from the storm were sailors, and it was these sailors who ultimately caused him to do *teshuvah*. A gentile is able to donate *korbonos* to the *Beis HaMikdash*, and the Gemara says that in the future, gentiles will come to donate *korbonos* to the *Beis HaMikdash* and then they will be inspired to convert to the Jewish people. The gentiles will travel to Eretz Yisrael by sea, so they will first need to pass through Zevulun's portion, the sea, in order to get to Eretz Yisrael. Thus, the gentiles who convert to Judaism are only able to do so by way of Zevulun.

As explained before, Zevulun's portion, the sea, contains the *techeiles*, which reminds man of his *tachlis* (purpose). Thus, Zevulun's role is to rectify the sin of Adam (for the sin caused man to veer from his ultimate purpose). However, besides for this, Zevulun also accomplishes another role. By way of the sea, gentiles are able to come to Eretz Yisrael and donate *korbonos*, and are thereby inspired to convert to the Jewish people. Since Zevulun enables converts – which is the “purpose” of our exile, for the Gemara says that the Jewish people were exiled so that we can gain converts - Zevulun therefore represents the concept that it is precisely the end which reveals the root of all rectification.

### *Zevulun Represents The Concept of “Zevul” – Dung/Lowliness/Sin Can Ultimately Be Used For Fertilizer/Growth/Rectification*

The word “Zevulun” is from the word *zevel*, animal dung that is used to fertilize fields. Fertilizer comes from the lowliest possible element on this world - the dung of animals. Yet, it is precisely this lowly material which fosters growth, for the animal dung is used to fertilize the fields, producing all of the crops. Hence, Zevulun represents the idea that even the lowest element in the world can ultimately bring about growth.

Adam's sin brought about the curse of work upon mankind, and the sin also made it possible for unworthy seed<sup>402</sup> to come from him. Had Adam eaten only from the *Eitz HaChaim* and not from the *Eitz HaDaas*, there would be no concept of any unworthy seed coming from him. Through the sin of eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*, there was now a “*zevel*”, a lowly element of “animal dung” which came to the world, as a result of the defilement caused by sin. But through “Zevulun”, the impaired “*zevel*” which was brought to the world through sin can be elevated and thereby bring about rectification to the world. Zevulun represents the concept of revealing growth and elevation in the very place of *zevel*/dung/lowliness.

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401 Talmud Bavli: Kiddushin 81a

402 (i.e. Kayin, as well as the wasted sperm which came from Adam's body as a result of the 130 years in which he separated from Chavah. See Talmud Bavli: Eruvin 18b)

*The Simchah of the Month of Adar/Zevulun: Transforming An “End” Into Joy*

The great *simchah* (joy) that the Jewish people had in the month of Adar was that we were all facing annihilation at the hands of Haman, we were sad and we were mourning, we truly felt that our “end” was near, and ultimately this terrible situation became transformed into joy, when we were saved from the decree<sup>403</sup>. We turned our “end” and transformed it from sadness and despair into great cause for celebration and joy. This very concept, of using the idea of an “end” to reveal joy, is represented by Zevulun.

*Zevulun’s Joy – The Heavenly Beis HaMikdash*

The Gemara<sup>404</sup> says that one of the seven heavens is called “*Zevul*”, and that in this part of Heaven, the Heavenly *Beis HaMikdash* resides, with a Heavenly *Mizbeiach*, and the angel Michael offers up the souls of the Jewish people on this *Mizbeiach*.

This word “*zevul*” can also mean “*mador*”, which means a “special chamber”, alluding to the special chamber in Heaven. This is a hint that the part of Heaven which is called “*zevul*”, which corresponds to Zevulun, is the “special chamber” in Heaven which houses the *Beis HaMikdash* of Heaven.

Hence, the *Beis HaMikdash* of Heaven belongs to Zevulun. There is a “lower” *Beis HaMikdash* and a “higher” *Beis HaMikdash*. On This World, which is the lower world, the *Beis HaMikdash* is shared by the portions of Yehudah and Binyamin. But in the higher world, in Heaven, the *Beis HaMikdash* is in Zevulun’s portion.<sup>405</sup> That is a deeper understanding of *simchah* that Zevulun is blessed with.

*Zevulun’s Commerce At Sea Rectifies The Curse of Work Given To Man*

Earlier it was explained that Zevulun’s engagement in commerce rectifies the curse of work that has been placed on mankind ever since the sin of Adam. How does Zevulun’s commerce rectify the curse of work?

One reason is because Zevulun engages in commerce at sea, and by working in “water”, man is raised above the level of working with the “earth”. The element of “earth” became cursed with sadness ever since the sin of Adam, but through Zevulun’s commerce at sea, man is able to work joyously, on a level of “water”, which is more spiritual than the element of earth.

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403 through fasting, prayer, and repentance

404 Talmud Bavli Tractate Chagigah 13b

405 See sefer Kometz Minchah (of Reb Tzadok HaKohen) II:76

### *Zevulun: Turning End/Ruination Into Joy*

Let us reflect on another way of understanding, however, which will also have practical ramifications in our own lives.

There is a beginning and end of the year. [The beginning of the year is the month of Nissan, thus the end of the year is the month which precedes it, Adar]. Ever since Adam sinned, the concept of “end” always implies destruction. As an example, the Torah says that Amalek’s end will be destruction. The end usually implies the ruination of something. That is the result of the sin. Through the concept of Zevulun, the concept of “end” is repaired, for Zevulun shows us the idea that any end or situation of ruination is actually a cause for joy. [This will be soon be explained].

Let us think about the times we live in. We do not know when the Redemption will come. But anyone can see that we are very close to the end. The world today is not as it should be. The spiritual level today has deteriorated to an abysmally low level. We don’t have the *Beis HaMikdash*, the *avodah*, the *korbonos*, and because the ideal state is absent from our midst, we are missing so much. The Jewish people today are at the lowest level they have ever been in. What do we need to think, now that we are approaching the “end”?

The Gemara says that the final redemption will take place in stages. First the Redemption will come to the Mediterranean Sea, and then it will come to the sea of Teveria<sup>406</sup>. From there, the Redemption will continue in stages. Thus, Teveria is the beginning point of the Redemption, but first the Redemption will come to the sea, which is Zevulun’s portion. From here we can learn a deep insight, that before the Redemption can arrive, we first need to pass through “Zevulun” – in other words, we first need to access the “joy” of Zevulun. This is the depth of the verse, “*For with joy they go out.*”<sup>407</sup> It is because we will “go out” from exile into the redemption amidst joy, which represents Zevulun. Thus, the final step before the Redemption will be that we will need to first go through the perspective of “Zevulun”, which is *simchah*/joy.

After the month of Adar is the month of Nissan, which is the month of the Redemption. The month of Adar corresponds to Zevulun. Hence, in order to arrive at the Redemption, we must first go through the “end” - the month of Adar - which is “Zevulun”. Practically speaking, we need to first reach joy, represented by Adar/Zevulun, in order to arrive at the “Redemption”, which is represented by the month of Nissan.

### *The Joy of Clarifying Our Tachlis/Purpose*

But the question is: How will we traverse the month of Adar? Will we go through the month of Adar with sadness, or will we go through it with joy? How can we truly traverse the month of Adar

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406 Tosefta Succah 3:9

407 Yeshayahu 55:12

in the sense of the verse, “*For with joy they go out*”? What is the depth of our *avodah* in the month of Adar to have true *simchah*?

The *simchah*/joy of Zevulun applies on a general level to mankind, as well as on a more individual level, with each person. On a general level, it is the joy of turning end/ruination into growth and rectification [as explained earlier]. But it also manifests on a more specific level. In anything a person does, one must clarify what the *tachlis* (purpose) of it is.

Our general *tachlis* is that we are all here to bask in the pleasure of becoming attached with Hashem, as explained in the beginning of *Mesillas Yescharim*. But besides for this general *tachlis* we all have, we each encounter a specific purpose to each thing. One needs to clarify what the *tachlis* is, of each thing that he encounters.

Zevulun’s portion is the sea. The purpose of the sea is to act as a border for the land. The sea is the end of the land. But the concept of Zevulun is that the “end” is the very cause for joy.

### *Death – The “End” That Can Be Turned Into Joy*

Of the month of Adar, and of the day of Purim especially, the Sages said that “Wine enters, the secret comes out.”<sup>408</sup> The *gematria* (numerical value) of the Hebrew word for “wine”, *yayin*, is equal to the number 70. The Sages said that once every 70 years, the *chilazon* appears in the sea.<sup>409</sup> On a deeper level, this corresponds to the “70” of the wine of Purim, which reveals secrets.

Had Adam never sinned, he would have lived forever. After the sin, he could only live for 1,000 years, and he gave up 70 years of his life [for Dovid HaMelech]. Thus, ever since the sin, the number 70 corresponds to the average lifespan of man, and as implied by the verse, “*The years of a man are seventy*”<sup>410</sup>.

When one thinks that he will live for 70 years, does this cause him to feel sad or joyous? Naturally, a person will be sad when he contemplates the fact that man is destined to live for an average of 70 years. When a person considers that he will eventually give an accounting before Hashem after he dies (as the Sages state, “Know that in the future, you will have to give an accounting”), the natural reaction is sadness. People are naturally sad when they contemplate the end of their life on this world. But when a person gains the perspective of “Wine enters and the secret comes out”, the “wine”, corresponding to the “70” years of a person’s life, reveals *simchah*. It is like the *chilazon* which comes out once every 70 years – the “secret” that comes out which reveals joy.

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408 Talmud Bavli: Sanhedrin 70a

409 Talmud Bavli: Menachos 43a

410 Tehillim 90:10

The *chilazon* appears in the sea, in Zevulun’s portion, corresponding to the heaven that is called *zevul*, where the souls of the Jewish people are offered on the Heavenly Altar. “*Zevul*” is a place of great joy on High, for it corresponds to Zevulun, who is blessed with *simchah*. What is the *simchah* that takes place in the heaven of *Zevul*? As the Sages explained, it is the happiness of the souls who willingly offer their souls to Hashem.

When one contemplates his time of death, and certainly when he is actually facing it, one will usually become saddened and mournful. A person naturally does not want to die. But a person is also able to die amidst a joyous state. One can choose to happily give away his soul to Hashem, when the time of his death comes. He can “offer his soul on the Altar” to Hashem, amidst joy.

Who merits a joyous kind of death, and who doesn’t? The *halachah* is that when one brings a *korbon*, he can only offer it of his own will. One cannot be forced to bring a *korbon* – he must have the will to give it. So too, when one is giving away his soul to Hashem as a “*korbon*”, when the time of his death arrives, if he does so willingly and out of joy, his soul is offered by the angel Michael on the Heavenly Altar, to Hashem. But if the time of one’s death comes and he feels forced to give his soul back to Hashem, he is not going to Hashem willingly. His death will be truly sad, for he has not been willing to give his soul to Hashem, and he is not offered on the Heavenly Altar to Hashem.

The month of Adar shows us that an “end” can be joyous, and it doesn’t have to be sad! This will only be true, however, when one is always searching to reveal his *tachlis* (purpose). One who always lives with a sense of the ultimate *tachlis*/purpose – which is that we are here to become closer to Hashem – will live a vastly different life, and he will die an entirely different kind of death, in contrast to one who is sad on his day of death, who is sad to die because he did not spend his life trying to become closer to Hashem.

How can the day of one’s death be a happy day for a person? It should be viewed as the great *simchah* of leaving the physical existence of the body, and becoming entirely a *neshamah* (Divine soul), which can be offered on the Heavenly Altar to Hashem. If one is prepared for this and he wants it, not only will he die amidst a state of joy, but his life will also be spent in a state of joy. If one doesn’t want to give away his soul to Hashem, though, and he would rather stay in his body on This World, then not only will death be the saddest thing for him, but he will feel somewhat “dead” even while he is living.

### *Clarifying Our Joy In The Month of Adar*

When the month of Adar arrives, the month of *simchah*/joy, we need to know what *simchah* is, and we need to ask ourselves if we have really have true, pure *simchah* in our life. If not, than any joy that we have is superficial, it is not inner and genuine. When our joy is only superficial, if this it can be said, “*And of what purpose is this rejoicing?*”<sup>411</sup>

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411 Koheles 2:2

One first needs to know what the root of *simchah* is: what true joy is. Then, on a personal level, one needs to clarify: “Am I personally connected to true *simchah*?”

The first part is to clarify what real *simchah* is. It has been explained here that the concept of *simchah* is whenever we reach the end of something. The end either brings sadness and mourning, or, it can offer us joy, a new beginning, an elevation to a new state. After the month of Adar comes the “head” of all the months of the year, which is Nissan, so Adar is the end of the year. The joy that we can attain in the month of Adar is when we complete the year and rise to a year of more elevated growth than the previous year. In that way, we take the “end” and reveal joy in it – we are using the “end” as a way to reveal a new, elevated beginning. That is the depth of the joy is in this month.

Now we can better understand what the joy of Zevulun is. What comes from all of Zevulun’s business efforts? What does he have from all of his hard work? Since Zevulun’s joy is because he is earning livelihood in order to support Yissocher’s Torah learning, whenever he engages in commerce, he is aware of the *tachlis*/purpose of it all. He is only interested in what *results* from his work, not in the actual work itself: his work will enable Yissocher’s Torah learning.

True joy is when one reaches the “end”, the goal, the purpose/*tachlis*, of what he has done. When one does not clarify the purpose of what he is doing, he is living without a purpose and his life will be a sad one. But when one is aware of the purpose of all that he is doing, there is joy throughout all that he does.

### *The Depth of The Sadness In Our World*

Let us reflect. Why is the world full of so much sadness? Simply speaking, it is because ever since Adam sinned, there has been a curse of sadness placed on mankind. Man was cursed with “*By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread*”, the curse of working hard in order earn livelihood and to support himself and his family, and woman was cursed with the pains of pregnancy, childbirth, and childbearing. But there is also a deeper reason why there is so much sadness that fills the world. It is because people do not clarify the *tachlis*/purpose of what they are doing whether it is before they start or whether they are already at the end of what they do.

### *Accessing Joy On Shabbos – Only When We Are Living With Spiritual Goals*

[The following insight can give us a clearer understanding of the idea.] Zevulun was the sixth child of Leah. The number 6 corresponds to the 6 days of the week (also called the “6 days of action”) which is for work [action], as the Torah says “*For six days you shall labor*”<sup>412</sup>. The purpose, the *tachlis*, of the 6 days of the week is the seventh day, Shabbos. The connection between Zevulun

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412 Beraishis 20:9

and the number 6 is that they lead to a greater purpose, a goal, which enables one to start a new beginning.

Shabbos is the purpose, the goal, the *tachlis*, of the 6 days of the week. It has been explained here that *simchah*/joy comes when one reaches the *tachlis* of something. Since Shabbos is the *tachlis* of the week, what is the *simchah* on Shabbos? Is it a joyous day because that a person rests from the work that he has during the six days of the week...? On Shabbos, there is a concept of *oneg*, pleasure. Besides for *oneg Shabbos*, however, there is also *simchah* on Shabbos. What is the *simchah* on Shabbos?

The *simchah* of Shabbos is, that now that the six days of the week have ended, one has completed his work, as the Sages say of Shabbos, that it is “As if all your work is done”<sup>413</sup>, and now one can be raised to a higher spiritual level than the previous week. That is the *simchah* of Shabbos! It is so that we can become raised to a higher spiritual level than the previous week!

The *simchah* of Shabbos can only be experienced by one who realizes that Shabbos is the purpose, the goal, the *tachlis*, of the six days of the week. That is the depth of why Shabbos is a day of *menuchah* (serenity), epitomized by the fact that one should view Shabbos as if “all your work is done.”

If Shabbos comes and a person is simply thinking about what he did this past week and what he will do next week, he doesn't utilize the day of Shabbos properly, because he is not connecting to the *menuchah* of Shabbos. He doesn't view Shabbos “as if all your work is done”, because he doesn't have spiritual goals, and he doesn't see Shabbos as the goal of the week, and he certainly isn't trying to get to a higher spiritual goal for the following week. So he cannot experience the *simchah* on Shabbos, and he goes into the following week with a sense of sadness.

Why is it that people don't connect to Shabbos when it is here? It is really because they are not connected to a *tachlis* (goal/purpose) in all that they do, during the rest of the week. When people aren't trying to aim for any spiritual goals, they cannot live a life of joy, and they are left with sadness. It is the same sadness felt by a person when he realizes is soon going to die, when he realizes how much he has wasted his life, for he spent his entire life without trying to get to any spiritual *tachlis*/purpose.

Hashem said about Shabbos, “I have a good present in My hidden treasury, and Shabbos is its name.”<sup>414</sup> It is called a “good present” due to the joy that is available on Shabbos. The joy on Shabbos is the same “joy” that is described by the verse, “*For with joy they go out*” - it is the joy of “going out” of the previous spiritual goals of the past week, for the goals have been completed, and

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413 Mechilta (ibid)

414 Talmud Bavli: Shabbos 10a

he is now onto another spiritual goal for the coming week. For joy/*simchah* is accessed when we reach an end, a purpose, a goal – a *tachlis*.

When Shabbos arrives, certainly one's work is still incomplete in the physical world, but in the depths of the soul, one can feel on Shabbos that he has reached the spiritual purpose of all of his work of the past week. Then, one is empowered to enter into the new week with joy.

### *The Depth of Zevulun's Joy: Living With a Sense of Spiritual Purpose*

Zevulun's joy when he goes out to engage in commerce is because he is constantly bringing himself closer to his *tachlis* (spiritual purpose), throughout all of his business efforts. He is engaging in the pursuit of livelihood with a goal in mind: because he is concerned for the Torah study of Yissocher, who represents the Torah scholars.

A "Torah scholar is called Shabbos"<sup>415</sup>, so when Zevulun engages in commerce in order to support the Torah learning of Yissocher, on a deeper level, he is thinking about "Shabbos", for the ultimate spiritual goal of all six days of the week.

The Sages said that "*Today is for doing, and tomorrow is for reward*"<sup>416</sup> – and the "reward" for a person's work is when one reaches the *tachlis* of all of his work. Zevulun sees the *tachlis* of all his work, and with that perspective, he sets out to engage in his business efforts.

### *Beginning and Ending The Year With Joy*

*Simchah* comes when one reaches the goal, the end, of what he does. What about when a person begins what he does? Can a person have *simchah* when he begins any undertaking? A person can certainly begin with an attitude of joy, but he will only be able to remain with the joy if he is consistently aiming for a goal. When one is always aiming to begin another goal after he completes the previous, he will have a constant joy throughout all that he does, and not only when he arrives at his goal.

When the month of Adar ends, one needs to ask himself: "Do I feel a *simchah* in my soul? Do I feel that I have completed my "work" of this past year, and that I am now moving on to another spiritual goal for the coming year?" If one can answer "Yes" to this question, then he will be able to access true joy in the month of Adar and he will also be able to take the joy with him into the next year.

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415 Zohar III 29a

416 Talmud Bavli: Eruvin 22a

By contrast, if one does not feel that he has completed any goals this year – since he wasn't aiming for it - he will be sad in the month of Adar! And he will also enter into the coming month of Nissan with sadness...

### *Illuminating The Entire World With The Light of Joy: When A Jew Lives With A Sense of Spiritual Purpose*

In the future, the gentiles will convert and come to the *Beis HaMikdash* to bring *korbonos*, and this will be due to the true *simchah* of Zevulun, which will be revealed fully in the Jewish people and which will subsequently spread to rest of the world.

Shabbos is only for the Jewish people, for the *halachah* is that a gentile is not allowed to keep Shabbos.<sup>417</sup> But in the future times, when the Jewish people will keep a genuine and inner kind of Shabbos - meaning, when they access the spiritual light of *tachlis*, of revealing the purpose that they were created for – this spiritual light will illuminate the entire world, where it will influence even the gentiles, to convert to the Jewish people. If a Jew isn't living for any spiritual goals - if we do not clarify our own *tachlis*, then we don't reveal the true *simchah* in the world, and then the spiritual light of the *tachlis* cannot illuminate the world.

On Purim, there was a great revelation of spiritual light. Many gentiles converted to Judaism at that time, because they became afraid of the Jewish people. On a deeper level, these gentiles converted due to the spiritual light of the “joy” of “Zevulun”, which the month of Adar corresponds to [and the events of Purim took place in the month of Adar]. Since it wasn't yet the time for the future Redemption, this joy was still incomplete, and that is why the gentiles only converted out of fear, and not out of true joy. But in the future, there will be a great joy which will illuminate the entire world, which will cause the gentiles to convert to the Jewish people out of joy [as opposed to fear], because by that time, we will have all reached our *tachlis*.

### *Practically Speaking: Living A Life of Tachlis*

Making this concept practical, the more we set spiritual goals in what we do, and we keep making new goals for ourselves after we reach our previous goals, the more we will live a life of genuine, inner *simchah*/joy, creating a spiritual light of *simchah* that will also influence the entire world for the better.

By contrast, if we are not trying to reach any spiritual goals in what we do and we do not try to formulate any new spiritual goals for ourselves, then we will not be reaching our *tachlis*. We will not be able to start new spiritual beginnings either, if we aren't trying to complete any previous spiritual

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417 Talmud Bavli: Sanhedrin 58b

goals. Whenever we begin something new, it may either be due to a previous failure - or because we have completed a previous worthy goal, and now we are onto another worthy goal.

So, if each person on his/her own level, at whatever spiritual level he/she is at currently, is willing to accept upon oneself to aim for some spiritual goal and then aim for another, higher spiritual goal, of this it can be said, “*They advance from strength to strength*”.<sup>418</sup> But, if we are not aiming for any spiritual goals, then we will not reach them, and then we cannot reach the true *simchah* that is available in the month of Adar.

When the Sages said that “Wine enters and the secret comes out”, this is only true for one who lives all the time with a sense of *tachlis*/purpose in all that he does, which brings one to true *simchah*/joy. It is reminiscent of what the Torah says about Avraham Avinu in his old age, that “*he was old and becoming of his years*”<sup>419</sup>, meaning that he constantly lived with a sense of *tachlis*/purpose to his life, who truly utilized the very opportunity of living.

### *In Conclusion*

May we all merit, with *siyata d'shmaya*, together, that each Jew should reach his own goals, and that we should all reach our ultimate *tachlis*, and through this we will merit “*A new light on Zion will shine*”<sup>420</sup>, which will renew all of the Creation. May it come speedily in our days. Amen.

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418 Tehillim 84:8

419 Beraishis 24:1

420 as recited in the morning blessings before the Shema