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ספר דע את נשמתך - פרק יב - מחשבת החיה - שמתך 008 - מחשבת החיה

1. Wisdom - The Unification of the Universe

The *Chayah* level of the soul is, in essence, the power of wisdom (*chochmah*), as Shlomo HaMelech said, "Wisdom sustains its owner."^[1] [1]

There is a verse, "All of them, You made with wisdom."^[2] [2] It is clear and simple that this does not simply mean that each part of Creation was made with wisdom. Rather, the verse is coming to teach us that the common uniting factor between all of the creations is that they were all made with wisdom. Thus, it is teaching us that the root of the unification (*achdus*) of all of existence is *chochmah*, wisdom.

There is *achdus*\unification in the "negative" sense, and there is *achdus*\unification in the "positive" sense. *Chochmah*\wisdom is the "positive" use of *achdus*\unification, as in "All of them You made with wisdom", which refers to action, and hence a constructive use of the *chochmah*. The positive use of *chochmah*\wisdom is, essentially, the unifying power in Creation.

2. The Connection Between Chayah\Chochmah and Ohr (Spiritual Light)

Chochmah (wisdom) is a kind of *ohr* (spiritual light), as it is written, "The wisdom of man illuminates his face."^[3] [3] The *Mishnah* in *Avos* teaches that the world was created with ten expressions.^[4] [4] The *Gemara* asks that the Torah only writes "And Hashem said" nine times - where is the tenth place? The *Gemara* answers that the word "*Beraishis*" counts as one of the expressions, for it is written, "By the word of Hashem, the heavens were made."^[5] [5] Thus, the first expression of Hashem to create the world was "*Beraishis*" ("In the beginning"), and the second expression was "And Hashem said, Let there be light".

The first expression, *Beraishis*, corresponds to the *Yechidah* level of the soul, which is also known as the spiritual sphere of "*Keser*" (lit. "Crown" - the highest spiritual point). The second expression, *Yehi ohr* ("Let there be light"), corresponds to the *Chayah* level of the soul, which is also known as the spiritual sphere of *Chochmah*, wisdom.

From the above, it is clear and simple that the “*Chayah*” part of the soul corresponds to the power that is known as *ohr* – spiritual light – which is described in the words “*Yehi ohr*”, “Let there be light.”

3. *The All-Inclusive Light Which Sees From One End of the World To The Other*

Of this light, Chazal state that Adam was able to use it to see from one end of the world to the other. How was Adam able to see through this light from one end of the world to the other? The simple answer to this is because the light must have been very powerful, enabling him to see that far. From a materialistic perspective, this seems to be a powerful form of physical vision, and it meant that Adam could stand at the northern end of the world and see what was happening in the southern end of the world, or to see the west from the south. This is only a superficial understanding, and although it may be true, this is not the inner point of the light.

Clearly, when the Sages revealed that there was a light which Adam could see from one end of the world to other with, they were not speaking of a superior kind of binoculars that could see a distance of a thousand kilometers away. Rather, they were defining what the concept of this spiritual light. It was the light of *chochmah*\wisdom, which is the “*Chayah*” part of the soul. Since the concept of this light is defined as *chochmah* - which unifies Creation - that is why it was a view that could see everything, from one end of the world to the other.

4. *An Inner View From The Soul*

The “*Chayah*” part of the soul, which corresponds to *chochmah*\wisdom, is the root of the power of thought (*machshavah*).

When the Sages revealed to us that there was a light which could see from one end of the world to the other, this was teaching each of us a way in *avodas Hashem*, that there is a power to see from one end to the other – through an inner understanding of our soul, and a perspective which one must work to acquire.

5. *What Is The Thing That Unifies Everything Together?*

Let’s explain more.

From a superficial perspective, we can say that man sees many details in the world: many creations, many actions, many colors, etc. Here is a question: What is the thing that unifies it all together?

Our teacher, the **Ramchal** (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato)[6] [6] established that all of Creation serves to reveal the oneness (*yichud*) of Hashem, that there is nothing in Creation which rules besides for Him. This means that **every single action of every detail in Creation exists in order to reveal His oneness**. This is a brief description of the core of his Torah teachings.

This fundamental teaching of the *Ramchal* reveals to us an important understanding about all of Creation: that **the entire Creation is unified**. Without this rule, we would view the entire Creation as a bunch of disparate parts and details, with nothing unifying together.

[Examples of ‘Partial’ Unity]

[The Arizal’s Teachings About Soul Incarnations.] [The above understanding of the *Ramchal* does not appear in the writings of the *Arizal*, and therefore one will not gain the *Ramchal*’s perspective just by learning the *Arizal*’s words alone]. When one learns the writings of the *Arizal*, he sees that the *Arizal* discusses the concept of *gilgul* (soul reincarnation), and he would learn that a certain person was born with a defect in his heart because of a sin in a previous lifetime, and another person did certain deeds

in his previous lifetime and rectified them in the next lifetime. This kind of understanding is only a “partial” kind of unifying, because it would only be unifying together the different lifetimes of a person.

In another example, the *Arizal* (in *Shaar HaGilgulim*) explains how a certain person’s *Neshamah* can be a combination of other *neshamos* (and therefore he may feel more of a love for those who contain sparks from his *Neshamah*). This is also “partial” “unifying”, because it unifies together two parts of a *Neshamah*, a *Neshamah* of a lesser root with a *Neshamah* of a more inclusive root.

Why are the above two examples only a “partial” kind of unifying? The kind of unity which the *Arizal* is discussing is not a kind of unity which unifies together the entire Creation. If one soul loves another soul because the other is a spark of his own soul, this person’s soul has become more unified with another, but it does not unify the entire Creation together. Therefore, the *Arizal*’s teachings are describing a “partial” kind of unifying [as opposed to the more all-inclusive kind of unifying which the *Ramchal* described].

[2. The Unifying Power of In-Depth Torah Study.] When one studies Torah in-depth, he can see how the Torah is entirely a unifying power.

As the Sages state, from the time of Creation, Hashem has been arranging marriages. The depth behind this is that every day, Hashem is renewing the power to unify. When one has this perspective about the power of Torah learning, and that the Torah renews the world by unifying Creation, he reveals the *achdus* \unifying that is contained in the Torah.

When one exerts himself in the study of Torah, he learns how to take apart and combine, reminiscent of what happened with Adam and Chavah, who were at first separated from each other and later joined together.

This concept, to divide matters from each other and then unify them, is the inner perspective in Torah learning. Just as a person can have many destined spouses, so is a person learning the holy Torah able to reveal many different ‘spouses’ to each other [by combining together different pieces of knowledge in the Torah]. One can reveal a unifying power through learning Torah.

Yet, this is also a ‘partial’ level of unifying, for it does not reveal a oneness which unifies together the entire Creation. Even when unifies much pieces of information together when he is studying Torah, this still does not reveal that all of the knowledge is one single unit.

[3. Unity of Souls.]

The root of all of us began with the soul of Adam HaRishon. Every soul was contained in his soul. This seems to be the point where everything is unified. However, even this unity was partial. It was not the unified state of the entire Creation. The souls of all human beings were contained in Adam’s soul, but what about the rest of the Creation, such as the animals, plants and rocks? Adam’s soul contained every social being which came into existence, which includes only human beings, but not the other creations which aren’t capable of speech. While it was certainly a more unified state than our current one, it was not the complete unity of Creation.

And so, we remain with our question: Where do we find in the Creation a power that can unify together all kinds of creations – the non-living, the plants, the animals, and people?

6. The Power of the “Chayah” To Unify

Truthfully, there are many different means by which the entire Creation becomes unified. Before we

explain these ways of unifying, let us understand that the very understanding of unifying together all of Creation comes from the perspective that is in the “*Chayah*” level of the soul. And the “*Chayah*” can be revealed in several ways.

On the first day of Creation, when Hashem created the light that could be used to see from one end of the world to the other, the depth behind this matter is that it was a means by which the entire Creation could be unified together. Thus, the power to “see” from one of the world to the other is referring to the power that unifies together all of the Creation, which is really the power of the *Chayah*. The *Chayah* part of the soul takes on the form of various means, by which a unification of Creation can result from.

The following is an example where the *Chayah* is cloaked in. Hashem said, “*All is called in My Name, and for My honor I created it and fashioned it, and also made it.*” [7] [7] This verse teaches us that we can reveal the glory of Hashem in each thing. Thus, by revealing the honor of Hashem in each thing, the entire Creation is unified.

Compare it to the following parable. A person has several children in his house, and he asks from all of them that they help him set the table for dinner. The children are trained to be obedient and they all help him set the table. Each of the children is doing an action that reveals the honor of their father. They are all setting the table in order to honor their father’s request. In a sense, they are all unified together, in this act. However, it is only a partial level of unity. Why? While they are all doing an act that honors their father, the unity is only revealed on a level of actions. It doesn’t yet show that they are unified, in their very essence.

An additional example of a unifying power is *chochmah*, wisdom. Hashem created the entire world with *chochmah*, with His wisdom, and therefore His wisdom is contained in each thing. One can learn how to see the wisdom of Hashem in each thing, and thereby unify together all the parts of Creation, because he sees that they are all examples of Hashem’s wisdom.

The essential unifying power, however, is contained in the perspective viewed through the *Chayah* level of the soul. It is written “*And He blew into his nostrils a breath of life, and man became a living soul.*” [8] [8] The Sages state that “The One who blew, blew from His own.” We should reflect into this statement. What were the Sages telling us here? What does difference does it make from where Hashem blew from, from His own or from somewhere else?

There are many levels of understanding to this matter, but for our purposes, the meaning is that just as Hashem is One, Individual, and Unique, so is the breathe of life which he breathed into man, “from His own” – which means that Hashem ‘breathed’ into man, so to speak, a power to unify. If the breathe of life in man wouldn’t have been from “His own”, we would relate to the breath of life in man simply as another new power added to the list of man’s abilities. If it simply another power added onto man, then it is a human power, and this would mean that all of Creations are essentially separated from each other. But since Hashem breathed into man this power from “His own”, Hashem has breathed into man a power to unify.

Earlier, we explained that the *Chayah* perspective of our soul can unify together the entire Creation, through the various means which it is cloaked in. This is through uncovering the *chochmah*, the G-dly wisdom, which is in each thing. That is one way to reveal the unity of Creation: the *chochmah* in each thing is really a garment of the *Chayah*, and through it, there is a unity of Creation that can be revealed on many different levels. But there is also a more inner way of revealing unity: by revealing the very root of the *Chayah*’s power.

7. *Revealing The Chayah: The Ramchal’s Principle of “Revealing The Oneness of Hashem” and The*

Baal Shem Tov's Principle of The "G-dly Spark"

The concept of revealing the *Chayah* part of the soul is where we encounter the same core principle that runs throughout the teachings of the *Ramchal* as well as the *Baal Shem Tov*.

The *Ramchal* establishes a principle that everything in Creation is for the purpose of revealing the oneness (*yichud*) of Hashem. The *Baal Shem Tov*, however, has a different understanding of how the entire Creation is unified: each thing contains a "G-dly spark" which empowers it.

From a simple perspective, when a person doesn't that deeply into this, it seems that these two principles are completely different from each other. But if we look deeper, we can see that both the *Ramchal's* core principle and the *Baal Shem Tov's* core principle are essentially two approaches which reveal the *Chayah's* perspective.

We will explain this. Firstly, we should understand that the complete power to unity is not found in the *Chayah* level of the soul, but only in the *Yechidah* level, from the word *Yachid* (Individual). Of the *Chayah* level of the soul, which corresponds to *chochmah*\wisdom, it is said, "And wisdom, from where is it found?"^[9] [9] The verse is saying that the source of wisdom is rooted in "from where?" which in Hebrew is called *ayin*, nothingness. This means that all wisdom is nursed forth from *ayin*, and that is how the wisdom can unify.

So while the absolute level of unifying is only found in the *Yechidah*, it is *chochmah* (*Chayah*) which reveals that point of unity. How does the *Chayah* reveal the point of unity? It is either revealed in the sense of **po'el (active current use)** or through **nif'al** (eventual purpose of the use). [That is the outline, and now it will be explained.]

The *Baal Shem Tov*, who spoke about the "G-dly spark" in each thing, was relating more to the *po'el* aspect, whereas the *Ramchal*, who spoke about revealing the oneness of Hashem, was relating more to the *nif'al* aspect. In depth, these two viewpoints really complement and complete each other. Thus, the *Ramchal's* principle and the *Baal Shem Tov's* principle are not two completely unrelated teachings. It is the same principle, but the *Ramchal* is describing it in terms of *nif'al* (eventual purpose of the use), while the *Baal Shem Tov* is describing it in terms of *po'el* (active current use).

We will now explain these words.

Po'el \ Currently Active Sense - The *Baal Shem Tov's* definition is that there is a "G-dly spark" in each thing which keeps it sustained. Firstly, let us understand clearly that this "G-dly spark" has no divisions to it, for G-dliness cannot be divided. G-dliness is a total state of unification, which does not divide into any parts. Therefore, the concept that there is a G-dly spark in each thing cannot mean that there are millions of these sparks and that each creation has one of these sparks which sustains it. Rather, it is one spark, which illuminates each creation and which sustains each of them.

It can be compared to the following parable. The sun lights up the world. The sun is one unit, but its light spreads to the entire world. The sun itself is not being divided. The same sun which shines in Israel is the same sun which shines in the western parts of the world, as well as the distant eastern parts of the world. Thus, the G-dly spark which is in each person, also called "bone of the *Shechinah*", is all the same spark which is found in all people, as opposed to understanding it as being many different sparks, *chas v'shalom*.

Just as *Eliyahu HaNavi* can attend ten *bris* events at the same time, and we do not say that there are ten *Eliyahu HaNavis*, but we understand it as a spiritual power that can be revealed in many places at once, so can we understand that the G-dly spark in each person is all an expression of the same spark. Thus, the G-dly spark is a "unifying" power.

Let us now understand it in depth. On a simple level, this G-dly spark which sustains each of us, and all creations, is one power which is found in all of the creations, thus it is a power which unifies together all of Creation. However, what we need to understand is: Why does this vitality have to be revealed in the creations, when Hashem can keep all His creations sustained from a different source? To illustrate, it is known today that there are microscopic cells which are sustained from the energy of the sun.

It must be that the G-dly spark which sustains each creation is that there is a revealed oneness in all creations. From that perspective, all of the creations are unified. This means that from my private perspective, I am separated from all other creations. What unifies me with all other creations? It is the G-dly spark found in me. It is found in everything, and it is one single spark which sustains everything all at once – and which is the unifying point of everything.

In contrast to the above, the view of *Nif'al* (eventual purpose of the use) says that the “G-dly spark” which sustains each person is, unconsciously controlling him and leading him. The direct result of this principle is that all actions which I do are a revelation of how Hashem sustains me. This is the secret behind the teachings of the *Ramchal*, who explained that everything in Creation exists in order to reveal the oneness of Hashem. This is a view the perspective of *ni'fal*, of the eventual purpose of the use, for it is how the G-dly spark is activated within me and revealing His oneness.

Thus, the *Baal Shem Tov* is speaking from in the sense of *po'el* (active current sense), for the G-dly spark that sustains each thing is the unifying power which is found within me. The result of this is [the *Ramchal's* perspective] that since there is a G-dly spark that is actively working within me, all of the actions I do are serving to reveal the oneness of Hashem [this is the *nif'al*, eventual purpose of the role of the G-dly spark].

Therefore, from a deeper understanding, the teachings of the *Ramchal* and the teachings of the *Baal Shem Tov* are really one and the same. The *Ramchal* was speaking of the external dimension to the unity, from the *po'el* (the current active use) of the G-dly spark, which is about how the unity is actively revealed, through the actions of each creation. The *Baal Shem Tov* was speaking about the more inner dimension of the unity, its very perspective, which is that there is a unifying power [called the “G-dly spark”] found within us.

8. The Root of The Unity Is In G-dliness

Thus, the *Chayah* part of the soul is the revelation of the unified state of Creation, revealed in each of the creations. As explained, the *Chayah's* perspective is not the complete level of unity that can be found in the soul.

We defined this unity through the understanding that each of us contains a G-dly spark that sustains all creations. There are two layers to this unity: an external layer, which is found in the person, and an inner layer, which is the G-dly spark that sustains us.

This unity does not come from the view of our self. From the view of our private self, there is no unity with the rest of the creations. Only from the view of the G-dly spark that sustains me, is there a perspective of a unified Creation.

We will explain. A person is comprised of a soul and a body. The *Baal Shem Tov* defined three levels of existence – the first which is called *Olamos* (lit. “Worlds), which corresponds to the physical body, and an intermediate level which is called *Neshamos* (lit. Souls), corresponding to the soul [the true self, which is beyond the physical layer of our existence], and the highest level being *Elokus*, “G-

dliness”.

From the perspective of our physical body, there is no unified state with Creation, and even more so, it is a state of separation from all other creations.

From the perspective of the soul, there is a partial level of unity with us and with all other Creations, but it is not the absolute level of unity. This is because although all souls in the Jewish people are one unit, there are 70 nations of the world which are not unified with the Jewish people, so the unity is not complete. Even if we were to unify all the nations together, it would still not unify the rest of the creations, which include animals, plants, and the non-living.

The absolute level of unity with Creation is only from the perspective of the point of “G-dliness” that is found in all creations. That is essentially the *Chayah* which is within us. With the help of Hashem, when we learn about the *Yechidah* level of the soul, we will learn about an even deeper level of unity. That is why we said that from the *Chayah*'s perspective, the unity of Creation is revealed through the “G-dly spark” that resides within all of the creations.

9. Revealing The “Chayah” In The Mind and Heart - By Knowing and Feeling Your Source of Vitality

Until now, we explained the role of the *Chayah*. Now we shall try to explain how to reveal this within us, meaning, how we can reach a revelation of the *Chayah* that is in each of us.

As with anything else, there are always two levels to reach: an intellectual connection to the matter, and a heart connection to the matter. This is based on the verse, “*And you shall know today, and you shall settle it upon your heart.*” We first need to bring a matter into our intellect, and then bring it into our heart. The intellectual level of revealing the *Chayah* is when achieved when we learn all that there is about this topic, and the heart level is when we have sharpened our understanding of this matter to the point that we clearly feel it in the heart.

Let us explain each of these stages in more detail: how we can reveal the *Chayah* through recognition of the intellect, as well as through the recognition of the heart.

Intellect: The “intellect” level of revealing the *Chayah* is when **one knows what his source of vitality is**. This is not referring to a mere intellectual level of knowledge, but through a “*daas*” of this matter, as the *Tanya* explains *daas*, that it is when one connects his mind to the matter. In our own terms, we refer to this as “awareness” (in Hebrew, *mu-da-ut*).

In the morning prayers, we say that Hashem “renews, in His goodness, every day constantly, the act of Creation.” Why? The depth of it is because the world gets its vitality each moment from the total unification of Creation. We need to identify this concept first on an intellectual level, and it will not suffice just by reciting the above morning prayer. Rather, we need to recognize it well through thinking about it. One should arrive at a clear intellectual recognition that “What is it that sustains my life every moment? It is the G-dly unity which is found within me.”

Heart: The *avodah* on the “heart” level is to try to sense the inner source of our energy (which is the Creator).

Every person can feel that he is alive, but when he never pauses to think about he is pursuing various worldly interests, he doesn't feel his existence. If he pauses a bit from what he is doing, he can feel that he is alive. Yet, even when a person reminds himself that he is alive, he may not consider the source of his life and how he is being kept alive. He is only in touch with the result of his being alive – and not with the root of his being alive.

Compare this to a person who turns on the sink and he has running water. He doesn't stop to consider where the water is coming from, if it's coming from the Kineret, or from a spring in the Golan, or from Ein Gedi. At best, when he drinks the water, he can tell if it came from a clean source or from a dirty source. But as the water's flowing out of the sink, he is not thinking about where the water is actually coming from. He is only examining the quality of the water – its results – but not the actual source of the water.

When we are speaking here of the need to connect to the *Chayah* in the soul, it is not enough just to feel the results of our *Chayah*, which is the mere sense of being alive. Rather, we need to connect to the inner source of our *Chayah* – to feel where the Source of our energy is coming from.

10. Feeling The Source of Our Breathing – By First Finding Our Personal Source of Vitality

Today, there are many practices which really stem from our early *sefarim* which involve focused breathing, and on how to inhale and exhale properly, etc. These matters are explained in the writings of Rav Abulefia and by others. Without getting into the details, let us first understand what the source of this *avodah* is.

It is written, “*The breath of our nostrils, Hashem’s anointed.... under whose protection, we had said, we would live among the nations.*”^[10] ^[10] The verse attributes *ruach*, the air, to the nose. The main source of our life-giving vitality comes from the air that we mainly breathe through our nose. While we are also able to breathe from our mouth, but our main energy comes from breathing through our nose. This is true both on a physical level as well as on an inner level. Thus, the main vitality which comes to us through our breathing, is coming to us by way of the nose.

The idea of learning how to breathe properly, on the inhale and exhale, is, on an inner level, a way to become connected to the source of our energy.

We need to understand that when people work on their inhale and exhale, this is not simply a superficial act which we are familiar with from the various breathing exercises that exist today, in which a person discerns how rapid his breathing is, from which place in the body it is coming from, etc. That perspective is just a language of the body, which originated from the gentiles, and it is not the language that speaks to a Jew.

A Jew has to feel that the source of the vitality in the breathing comes from his *Neshamah*, from his soul. When inhaling, a Jew must return the source of the vitality to his inner root, which is the *Chayah* part of the soul that is within him. And on the exhale, he should feel that he has released this source of his vitality. When one works with his breath, this is really an *avodah* for one to reach one's inner source of vitality. When inhaling, one needs to feel that he is taking in the source of his vitality from outside, and when exhaling, one needs to be aware that his releasing this source of vitality outward. But in order to reach this understanding, one first needs to feel that the source of his vitality that is within him.

If the breathing exercises are done without feeling the inner source of one's vitality, they are simply external physical breathing exercises which calm the body, and perhaps it can calm the heartbeat as well and moderate it better, as well as calm the thoughts. But this alone will not lead a person inward to the source of the vitality coming in, because the person is missing the root of connecting to his inner energy source.

Therefore, in order for one to turn breathing into an inner *avodah*, one needs to reveal the *Chayah* point in the soul. How can one do this? Every person has a certain **path** that can connect him to the source of his vitality – meaning, every person has a path from which he can use to nurse forth his

inner source of vitality.

11. Discovering The Main Source of Chiyus (Vitality) In Our Actions, Emotions, and Thoughts

The *Chayah* point in the soul is also known as *ohr makif*, “enveloping light”, for the *Chayah* surrounds and envelopes the *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah*. In clearer terms, the *Chayah* is the source of *chiyus* (vitality or energy) found in our “*Nefesh*” level, which is our area of action; it is also the source of energy found in our “*Ruach*”, which corresponds to the character traits and emotions; and it is also the source of energy found in our “*Neshamah*” level of the soul, which corresponds to thought.

Action (*Nefesh*): Let us first identify the source of *chiyus* when it comes to our area of “action” [which corresponds to the *Nefesh* level of the soul]. If a person works as a farmer, he is involved with planting, digging, reaping, etc. Another kind of person may be a blacksmith, and another person is involved with construction. People who do physical work are deriving some level of *chiyus* from their actions. Each person derives a life-giving vitality from various forms of physical work, and one should identify it.

Just as there is a kind of physical activity which we each derive vitality from – all of us on some level, more or less – so is there a primary emotion (corresponding to the *Ruach* level of the soul) which we derive vitality from, meaning that our main source of emotional vitality comes from a certain emotion, which we should identify. Going deeper, there is also a primary kind of thinking (corresponding to the *Neshamah* level of the soul) which we gain vitality from.

If a person wishes to reveal the *Chayah* level of the soul needs, he must reveal what the source of his *chiyus* (vitality) is. In order to do this, one needs to deeply examine his activities, emotions, and thoughts, and to see in each of these areas where he is deriving life-giving energy from.

This inner work, of clarifying where you get *chiyus* from, is a very personal kind of *avodah*, which each person needs to do with his own soul. Understandably, most people in the world have not even touched upon knowing where they get their *chiyus* from. They never think about what mainly energizes them; they never clarify to themselves what makes them feel more alive.

If we take a person and we ask him at the end of the day, “From where do you get vitality from?”, we will get all kinds of answers that are superficial, such as a kind of physical pleasure which the person enjoys the most and which he lives from. We will not even speak about this here. Let us instead speak about the more inner aspects of where people get *chiyus* from.

If we ask a blacksmith, “Where do you get *chiyus* from?”, he may answer, “Today I built an *Aron*. After I was finished, I looked at it for 10 minutes and I felt a certain feeling of vitality from what I did.” People also like to take pictures of their work after they are finished, so that they can remember it. Their work makes them feel more alive. There are people who have constructed buildings, and if they are passing by, they will want to stop in and see their building. They live from the satisfaction that comes from their finished product.

Clearly, we are not discussing anything here a spiritual source of *chiyus*, which is a deeper kind of *chiyus*. This is rather a first, basic step of knowing where one gets *chiyus* from: by seeing which kind of physical work he does which he finds a sense of vitality in.

Emotion (*Ruach*): After considering which kind of physical activity you get vitality from, the next step is to identify the primary emotion which you receive vitality from.

There are those whose souls are more rooted in “*kav yemin*”, the “right line” [which represents *chessed* (kindness)]. These kinds of people mainly derive their emotional energy from *ahavah*, love. Others are

more rooted in *kav smo'el*, "left line" [which represents *gevurah*\strength], and they mainly derive their emotional energy from *yirah*, from seriousness.

These two main roots of the emotions, *ahavah* and *yirah*, are very general terms. *Ahavah*\love divides into many different kinds and levels of love, and the same goes for *yirah*. There are many emotions, but *ahavah* and *yirah* are the roots. One needs to figure out which of the emotions he mainly receives vitality from.

For example, some people need to feel loved by others, and this is their basis of vitality. Others do not care if people love them or not. Another kind of person does not need to feel loved by others, but if he does get love from others, he receives vitality from it. Yet it isn't his main source of vitality, because he doesn't need it that much. He receives vitality from a different emotion, perhaps from acts of giving or the like.

Each person has a certain emotion which he derives vitality from, and one must identify it. It may be a positive emotion, or a negative emotion.

Thought (*Neshamah*): Next, a person rises to the level of thought. One needs to identify which kinds of thoughts give him vitality.

We can have a person who goes to seven *shiurim* during the week from seven different people, and you ask him, "From which *shiur* did you get *chiyus* from?", and he answers, "From all of them!" But this just shows that he is confused. Of course, it is possible that all of the seven *shiurim* which he heard are all "*The words of the living G-d*" and therefore they are all true. But each person has an individual soul, which has its particular source of vitality. Does a person have the soul of *Mashiach*, which is an all-inclusive soul that can receive vitality from everything equally? No! Each person has a kind of thought where he derives his main vitality from.

To give examples, some people mainly derive vitality (in the thoughts) from an interesting insight of the Torah, practical *halachah*, while others mainly enjoy in-depth learning of Gemara. In-depth learning itself divides into several different styles of learning. Others mainly enjoy the depth of *pnimiyus haTorah*, the inner dimension of Torah.

Often, when a person is starting off his path of spiritual growth, he learns a *sefer* and feels enjoyment from it, so he immediately decides that it is his source of vitality. However, we already explained earlier (in the chapter of "*Thoughts of Ruach - Emotional Intelligence*") that a person is not able to have clarity right away. It is a drawn-out process. It takes time for one to recognize himself, throughout different periods of life. It also takes time for one to amass the necessary information of the words of our Sages, in all their many different 'colors'. Only after this learning process can a person identify where his source of his vitality [in his area of thought] is.

12. Knowing Your Personal Source of Vitality - In Action, Emotion, and Thought

The *Chayah* part of the soul is essentially the point where we are getting *chiyus*\vitality from. If a person wishes to reach its innermost point, which is the root of life, the point where there is G-dliness - as the *Baal Shem Tov* said, that each person has a point of G-dliness within that sustains him - one cannot jump straight to this inner point. Rather, a person must first identify his more external sources of *chiyus* - the vitality he gets from certain actions, from certain emotions, and from certain thoughts.

When one traverses this path, firstly, he receives a "clear world" within him. As explained earlier, a person can never have 100% clarity, but one can certainly receive a clearer understanding, to the extent that he has become clear about what he wants.

When a person feels a sense of dissatisfaction from life, and he doesn't know how to identify what gives him vitality, he won't know how to fill the void. In contrast to this, when a person knows what gives him vitality, he at least has an 'address' of where to go. Compare this to a person who runs out of milk in the house, but he knows of a store nearby where he can get milk from. When a person feels a void in himself, as long as he knows where he can go to get *chiyus* from, he will be able to help himself, because he is clear about where the source of his *chiyus* is.

We can possibly say that almost all people are not clear about where they feel vitality from. Instead, they are just taking life as it comes. But one needs inner clarity about which actions give me vitality, which emotions or *middos* give me vitality, and what kinds of thoughts give me vitality.

When one becomes clear about himself like this, he gains immensely. Firstly, he will be able to get back to a source of vitality when he is going through a stressful period or dissatisfaction in his life. Even more so, when he is involved with the activity\emotion\thought that gives him vitality, he will receive even more vitality from it than before, now that he has become clearer that it gives him vitality.

Why is it that way? Until he becomes clear about where he gets vitality from, we can compare his life to the sun on a cloudy day, which isn't able to shine. When he clarifies what his source of vitality is, it's as if he is removing the 'clouds' of confusion that are covering his soul, where the 'sun' in his soul can now shine strongly. In the words of the Gemara, there is a terminology found "If the matter is clear to you as the sun."^[11] ^[11] How does a person reach a level of clarity that is as clear as the sun? By removing the obstacles and placing them to the side, we have created an opening and now the matter can shine clearly in the soul.

When a person clarifies where he gets vitality from in the areas of action, emotion, and thought, this clarity gives him an additional burst of vitality to those areas where he was already getting vitality from, because he has now become clearer about his vitality from these areas.

Although we are discussing this matter in relation to revealing the *Chayah* part of the soul, we can all understand that this is the implication of the words of one of the Sages, "You see a clear world."^[12] ^[12] From where do you get vitality from? What energizes you? When you live with clarity! A person must recognize where he gets vitality from. The inward result from this will be that a person will reveal an inner flow of vitality within him. In contrast, when a person does not identify what gives him vitality, he cannot identify any inner source of vitality in him.

Every person goes through many different things which he receives vitality from, but he doesn't always identify it. If he doesn't identify it, he doesn't connect to it, because he is not aware that it can provide him with vitality. Compare this to a person who comes across water and he drinks from it, and he is unaware that the water is really coming from an underground spring. His experience of this water is not nearly what it could have been, because he thinks he is drinking from some gathered rainwater, rather than from a spring.

It is the same with a person. As long as a person has not yet done any inner clarification with himself, even if he does touch upon an inner source of energy for himself, he will not sense it, so he will not derive any revitalizing energy from it. In contrast, when a person becomes clear about where he gets vitality from, he will sense that he is touching upon a personal source of energy for himself when he encounters it, and then he will become revitalized from it.

13. Feeling Alive

Each of us has a certain path, which can be used as a means to connect to the root of our personal

energy source. When a person connects to the source of vitality in his areas of action, emotion, and thought, he will suddenly feel that he has become **alive**. He is clearer about where he draws his vitality from, and therefore he can focus on this source of vitality and feel that this is where his vitality from. It is not simply that it results in feeling more alive – it is rather a feeling of an inner revelation, which is called *mekor haneviah* (inner source of energy).

It is difficult to express this any further in words. We should understand that the meaning of an “alive person” is a rare phenomenon in the world today. Many people do receive vitality, but they are not receiving it from the *mekor haneviah*, from an inner source of vitality. If we take a look at where most people are receiving vitality from, it is either from various desires of this world, such as food, etc. or from receiving a little honor. But these forms of pleasure are not an inner source of vitality.

A person might be involved with Torah study for his whole life, yet he hasn't even touched upon an inner source of *chiyus* in himself! Why? He learns Torah either because he knows that there is a *mitzvah* to learn Torah, or because out of an obligation to know *Shas*, or because he needs to know *halachos*. Although that is all true, where he is “he” found amidst all of this? We ask, “*And give us a portion in Your Torah*” – where is this person's personal portion in the Torah? One's personal portion in Torah serves as his vitality in learning Torah.

The Sages state that there are 600,000 letters in the Torah, parallel to the 600,000 souls of the Jewish people. Thus, each person has a personal source of vitality in the Torah, and he must reveal it. If one never reveals his personal source of vitality in the Torah, he will never study his personal portion in the Torah. It is not only people in the street who are lacking real vitality in their lives. Even a person who is sitting in the tents of Torah and immersed in deep study of Torah, will be lacking true vitality in his life if he has never done any inward clarification with himself.

Although the Torah is called “Torah of life”, and we say of the Torah “For they (the words of Torah) are our life”, this does not necessarily mean that a person's Torah learning is emanating from his inner source of vitality. When a person is not getting vitality from the inner source, he is missing the root of his *chiyus*, because he is not touching upon the inner root of his *chiyus*, and as a result, the *chiyus* that he does receive from his Torah learning will only be minimal.

14. In Summary of Revealing the Chayah By Way of the Soul's Garments

Studying the *Chayah* level of the soul begins with getting in touch with the “garments” of the *Chayah*, which are action, emotion, thought. After that, a person can then reach the understanding of the *Chayah*, which is his inner source of vitality. From there onward, one can go on to reveal the very Source of life that sustains him from within.

If a person skips over the stage of revealing his own inner vitality source, he will not be able to reveal the very Source within him that sustains his energy. First one needs to reach the root of his energy, and after touching upon it, one needs to go after the Root of his vitality source, the light of the Infinite, which sustains the very source of his energy. The light of the Infinite is cloaked in each person, in the “unifying point of Creation” which is present in each person, as explained in the beginning of this chapter.

We should understand that it is impossible for one to skip over this step. Only after a person reveals the source of his own personal energy, can he reveal the very root of his energy source, the Infinite, the “G-dly spark” that sustains one's *Neshamah*.

Earlier, we discussed focused breathing. We should understand that if a person has not identified where he gets vitality from in his actions, emotions, and thoughts, his breathing exercises will be

acting from a very superficial place. When he inhales and exhales, he won't touch upon his the source of his breathing, because he does not recognize the source where he draws his vitality from.

Only after a person recognizes his source of *chiyus*\vitality\energy, can his acts of inhaling and exhaling bring him to the source, for he can feel within him what his source of vitality is, thus he will be inhaling and exhaling from an inner place.

15. An Alternative Way To Reveal The Chayah - By Removing The Soul's Garments

Until now we learned about the inner way [of revealing the *Chayah* part of the soul] in which a person reveals his inner source of energy\vitality, and we learned of one way how a person can reveal it. There is also an alternative way to reveal the inner source of energy\vitality within us, which is a totally opposite approach than the one we explained until now.

We have so far explained how the *Nefesh*, *Ruach* and *Neshamah* levels of the soul are below the *Chayah* level of the soul and serve as "garments" for the *Chayah*. Until now we have taken the approach that we can reach the *Chayah* by way of the "garments", meaning, through identifying where we draw vitality from in the areas of action, emotion, and thought, we can reach the very source of the vitality. This approach reveals the source of one's vitality through the three garments which it is cloaked in. However, there is also an opposite *avodah* than this: to divest these garments, whereby one learns how to separate from his actions, emotions, and thereby reveal the "*Chayah*".

In order to identify something, there are two ways. Either we can identify it by way of the garments which it is cloaked in, or by directly revealing it. To illustrate, let's say we meet a person in the street whom we only met once before, and we no longer remember what he looks like. How can we recognize him? We may ask him what he was wearing the last time we met him, such as what color his jacket was, etc. A more inner recognition of him would be if we can remember his facial features.

So we can recognize the person based on external features such as his build, voice, way of walking or style of dress, or we may recognize him through the face. Recognizing him through the face is the more inner way of identifying him, because the wisdom of a person is on his face: "*The wisdom of man illuminates his face.*" Wisdom (*chochmah*) corresponds to the *Chayah* level of the soul.

The point we want to take out of this is that when we want to reveal the *Chayah*, we can reveal it in either one of two ways. **(1)** We may reveal it **by way of its garments**, which are the actions, emotions, and thoughts, as we explained; through [uncovering our vitality] in those areas, we can thereby reach the very source of the vitality of the actions, emotions and thoughts, which resides above them. **(2)** Taking an opposite approach, we can alternatively reveal the *Chayah* by **divesting the actions, emotions, and thoughts**, which in turn reveals their source - the *Chayah*.

16. "Ohr Makif" - The View From Outside of The Self

In essence, the *Chayah* part of the soul is in the category of "enveloping force" (*makif*). The *Nefesh* resides in the liver, the *Ruach* is found in the heart, and the *Neshamah* dwells in the brain. The *Chayah* envelopes the person from the outside, and does not have a space within the body. In order for a person to reveal the *Chayah*, either he may reach it by way of the garments of the *Chayah*, or he may reach it by revealing the *Chayah* directly.

As we explained, the *Chayah* corresponds to "*makif*", a view from around the person which can see a broader, more inclusive perspective. It is a way to view a matter from the outside of the matter. **One can learn how to see himself from "outside" of himself.** In this way, he learns how to identify with his *Chayah's* view.

If one wishes to get used to the view from his *Chayah* and to receive a broader, “outsider” perspective on things, he can get an idea of this by taking a picture of himself and looking at it. (Without getting into the issue here of taking pictures, which many *halachic* authorities did not approve of, we are speaking here in a case where the person already has a picture of himself.) Usually when a person looks at himself, he is looking at himself from “inside” himself, but by looking at a picture of himself, it is like seeing himself from “outside” of himself. He can suddenly see himself in a new way.

This is especially the case in today’s times, where a person can view a video of himself, watching not only how he looks, but how he moves, how he acts, and how he talks. Through this means, a person can essentially learn how to view himself from an outsider’s point of view. If a person takes five minutes to watch a video of himself, he will realize that there are two different ways to view oneself – from the inside, and from the outside – and he will learn how to view himself from a completely different point.

There is a perspective that comes from within, and a perspective that comes from one’s outside. One may view a matter from inside of himself, or he may view a matter by stepping outside of himself. The Ramban advises that when a person is in doubt about anything and it is hard for him to decide what to do, because he feels drawn towards both options, he should get involved with Torah study, until the light of the Torah influences him to feel that he can now think of the options more objectively. Then he can decide properly between the options, carefully weighing out his choices, without feeling particularly drawn towards any one of them. This was also said by the Baal Shem Tov.

The depth behind this advice is that when a person is viewing a matter from his inside, he may be stuck inside his own view, so he cannot always see things clearly and objectively. If he steps outside of his view and instead he views the matter as if he is an outsider, he can see the matter more clearly, as if he is viewing it from above.

It can be compared to a person standing in middle of a city, who cannot see all the city’s streets at once. But if he stands on top of the tallest building in the city, he can see the entire city laid out in front of him, and then he can see everything clearly.

To illustrate, there is a story told that one of the *chassidim* came to the Kotzker Rebbe and asked, “How is it that people come to discuss with the Rebbe about financial matters, when the Rebbe has never dealt with money before?” The Kotzker Rebbe was very secluded for many years from the rest of the world which makes the question even stronger. How did he understand about money, if it wasn’t his field? The Kotzker answered, “That is precisely why. You are found within the business world, so you cannot see those matters clearly. I am outside of it, so I can see it more clearly.”

Viewing a matter from the “outside” enables a person to see it more clearly. Our problem is that we usually view a matter from inside of ourselves, and then when we are in doubts about how to decide something, we are particularly drawn towards choosing a certain option, which clouds our mind from seeing the situation more objectively. This happens because we are stuck inside our own view, so we don’t see the matter with clarity. That is why the Ramban advised that that becoming involved in Torah study, after doubts enter us, can remove whatever personal motivations we may have, which enables us to step outside of our own view, seeing the matter from an outsider’s point of view. When you view the matter as if you are an outsider, you can see it more clearly and then you can decide properly between different options.

In our circles, the custom is that whenever a person wants to resolve a doubt that he has, he goes to a Rav for his questions and to seek advice. This is precisely the idea of seeing the matter from the outside. A person may also be able to arrive at answer to his doubts just by sitting alone with himself

and then trying to see the matter from outside of himself, by stepping outside of his own view. This is also considered like asking another person. Why? He has left the matter from his own viewpoint, and as soon as he leaves his view of the matter, he is viewing it from a different place in the soul – he is no longer found in his own perspective, and instead he is viewing the matter from being on the outside of it.

We can give an example of this. A person is in doubt if he should buy a certain item or not. How can he decide? The first basic piece of advice we can give for this is that he can imagine his brother or a friend asking him the very same question: “Should you buy it, or not?” And then he should think what his brother or friend would answer him.

How does this work? It is because as long as you identify it as being your issue, you are found within it, so you are stuck in it and you can’t see it objectively. But when you leave “your” issue and instead you view it as if it’s not your own issue, just something that you are being asked about by someone else, you are viewing the matter from the outside, where there is a clearer view.

Many examples can be brought which illustrate this idea, but the point should be clear: One can acquire the ability to leave his own view of a matter, and to instead view it from the outside of the matter. One can leave his view from the inside, and instead view a matter from the outside.

17. Revealing The “Chayah” Directly: Leaving The “I”

If you think deeply about this approach, you’ll discover that this is essentially the way to reveal the *Chayah* not by way of its “garments” (action, emotion, and thought), but through leaving the “garments”. One can find himself through feeling that a matter has no connection to him, and if he isn’t connected to it, he can see it from the outside. This inner shift of perspective is called *hafshatah*, “divesting” [alt. “removal” or “detachment”].

In this approach, I am not revealing the *Chayah* by way of the garments, but through the perspective that any matter, action, emotion, or thought is not relevant to me, and to that extent, I will be able to see the source of the vitality of the matter. When I see the source of the vitality of the matter, I can then see how it has extended.

This is the depth of the words of Chazal, “I have seen *b’nei aliyah* (those who ascend spiritually), and they are few.”^[13] [13] On one hand, there is an *avodah* of a person to be a *ben aliyah*, one who resides above in the spiritual, on a more permanent basis. As the Baal Shem Tov said, one must mainly live above in the spiritual, and at times he needs to descend to the materialistic parts of life, for practical purposes, as one who lives in an attic and only sometimes coming down onto the ground level of the house. On the other hand, a person must also be able to deal with the materialistic parts of life, when the need arises.

This corresponds to the two ways in how we reveal the *Chayah* part of the soul – we can get to the *Chayah* either by way of its garments, or by divesting its garments. When we use the first approach – accessing the garments – it is a descent into our “I”, where we are in touch with the personal actions, emotions, and thoughts that give us *chiyus/vitality*. Along with this, one also has a corresponding *avodah* to learn how to see a matter from outside of him. Herein is the root of the inner *avodah* of a person to come out of himself – to be able to exit his “I”.

18. Removing The “I”

We are speaking here of the *avodah*, the inner task, for a person, to remove his *ani*, his “I”. There is a verse in the Torah, “*I stand between Hashem and between you*”, which is explained by the *sefarim hakedoshim* to mean that the “I” of a person is a barrier between himself and the Creator. The

avodah of a person is to remove this "I", and the *avodah* which we mentioned until now is the way to take in order to remove the "I".

One needs to regress back and forth between the state of his "I", with the state of removing the "I". On one hand, one needs to identify which kinds of actions, emotions, and thoughts give him vitality. This is the state of his "I", for it intensifies the "I" by placing one's focus on his personal sources of vitality. Along with knowing one's personal sources of vitality, one must be able to see himself from outside of the self. In that state, the "I" does not draw vitality from anywhere, because it is outside of the "I".

Therefore, one needs to train himself to these two different ways of viewing – he should get used to seeing a matter both from within himself, as well as from outside of himself. And in order for a person to reveal his actual "I", he needs to see himself from outside of the self. We have added on a deep point here. Until now we explained that in order for a person to reveal the *Chayah*, he can do this either by revealing the "garments", or by removing the "garments" (*hafshatah*). Now we have explained that when one uses the second path, *hafshatah*, he should learn to see his "garments" in a different way, by seeing his "I" from a different view [a view from outside of the self, a state where there is no sense of the I].[\[14\]](#) ^[14]

19. Constant *D'veykus* With The Creator

Why is it that almost no one lives with higher awareness? Even in the few who do have awareness, it is only on a partial level and it is quickly lost. Only the *tzaddikim* live with constant *d'veykus* with the Creator at every moment. Why is it that almost all people are not found in a state of constant *d'veykus*, only on rare occasions?

The answer to this is because generally, people will only have a view that comes from their inside, and therefore their view is limited. How can a person see a more inclusive view? Only if he climbs to the top of the tallest building in the city, where he can view the entire city. Adam HaRishon was able to see from one end of the world to the other end, and the light which Hashem created on the first day shined throughout the whole world. It was a view from outside of the self, as opposed to a view from the inside. When one's view comes from inside the self, his view is only partial, but when he is viewing from outside of the self, he can see everything.

Our personal *avodah*, to reveal the *Chayah* part of the soul, requires two different viewpoints. On one hand, we need to access the *Chayah* by way of the garments of the *Chayah*: by discovering which actions, emotions, and thoughts give us vitality. Simultaneously, we also have an *avodah* to learn how to acquire an "outsider view", by means of *hafshatah*, divesting the self from involvement in a matter, to view a matter as if it has nothing to do with our self. When you view the matter as irrelevant to you personally, you can see the source of the matter, which allows you to see the inclusive view of the matter – because the source includes everything.

A person who merits to divest the soul's garments from himself will reveal the very source of his vitality, and such a person will be able to live constantly with the Creator. The very source that empowers each thing is the Creator. Why isn't a person always aware that the Creator is the source? It is because he doesn't feel how he much needs this source to keep him going. When it comes to our physical body, we all feel the need to breathe, if our nose and mouth suddenly become blocked. We automatically sense that if we don't breathe, we would die. So why doesn't a person feel this way about our bond with the Creator, if we cannot survive without Him? It is because we usually are not aware of where we get vitality from in the first place, and therefore we are not aware of the Source which provides vitality to our very "I".

So first, a person must identify his personal source of vitality [in the areas of action, emotion and thought], and after that, he should identify that the Source of all vitality to his very existence is the Creator. After he exposes this awareness, he will feel his need to bond with the Creator no less than his need to breathe. He will fight every second to sustain this bond, just as he would fight to breathe if his mouth and nostrils would become stuffed and he is gasping for air. It wouldn't be perceived of as an "avodah" – rather, it would be a struggle to sustain his very life, for he realizes that the lack of connection to His source feels like death.

Why don't most people feel this true *chiyus* from the Creator? It is because they don't know what gives them vitality in the first place, so they certainly aren't thinking about the source of vitality. If they don't feel any vitality in their life, they don't feel that there is a Source that provides the vitality for everything.

This point corresponds to the second stage of *hisbodedus*, of bonding with the Creator, in which we have explained here that a person must learn to feel what gives vitality to his soul, both by way of the soul's garments [action, emotion and thought] and by way of being divested from the garments [disconnecting from the self and adopting a view as if you are an outsider to yourself, thereby seeing outside of the soul, which gives one the ability to have an all-inclusive view, enabling him to see that he is sustained by the Creator].

20. The Chayah - The Root of Our First Thoughts.

The *Chayah* level of the soul corresponds to *chochmah*, wisdom.

Chochmah enters the brain as a small dot of wisdom, which later becomes expanded by the *Neshamah* (a Jew's Divine soul) through the ability of *binah*, contemplation.

This process is oft-mentioned in the teachings of *Chabad Chassidus*: An initial "first thought" is revealed to the mind, which one cannot understand clearly. One will feel that there is something here, but he doesn't grasp it clearly. At times, when he analyzes the thought, the thought begins to multiply into several words and thoughts, forming a structured and developed thought. At other times, the initial thought remains as a mere dot of wisdom which he can't figure out. He can sense that something has entered his mind, but he doesn't know how to develop this thought and what to do with it.

Sometimes it may happen that a person is learning the weekly *parshah*, and he notices a tiny thought about it, and he doesn't know how to expand it further. This happens many times when a person is learning a *sugya* of Gemara. He feels that there is some point contained in the *sugya*, he identifies it, but his understanding of it is weak, so he isn't able to expand upon it and develop anything from it, nor can he draw forth any answers from it.

Let's try to understand this phenomenon. There is a well-known principle that the lower vessel receives illumination from the level above it, but it cannot receive the entire illumination, only a partial level of it. Applying this to the current subject, the *Neshamah* is at a lower level in the soul than the *Chayah*. The *Chayah* is the root of a thought, whereas the *Neshamah* develops the thought further. That is why the *Neshamah* is associated with *binah*, contemplation – the ability to reflect into a matter and analyze it and understand it.

Therefore, the thoughts of the *Chayah* do not always extend into the *Neshamah* below it. That is why not every thought can be developed. There are some thoughts which we can keep analyzing and we come to understand them better, but other thoughts simply cannot be developed any further.

22. How To Relate To Our First Thoughts

Most people, when encountering a small kernel of a thought or an idea entering their minds, tend to feel stuck with these “first thoughts”, as if there is nothing to do with them. This may be because they have other contradicting thoughts, which they have difficulty answering, or because they don’t see a continuation of the thought. Usually, a person will dismiss a “first thought”, either concluding that the thought is incorrect or simply non-existent.

However, from analyzing a certain event in our holy Torah, we can see that there is a different way to approach this matter. When Yosef was having dreams about his father and mother and brothers all prostrating themselves before him, the Torah says that “his father guarded the matter.” Although Yaakov knew that Yosef’s dreams contained a contradiction, for he could not rule over his mother Rachel who had already passed on, Yaakov did not dismiss Yosef’s dreams. Instead, he “guarded the matter”, and as Rashi explains, he sat and waited for the fulfillment of the dreams.

When a thought first falls into the mind, a person may not be able to take the thought further and make anything with it. He may not know how to act upon the thought, or even develop the thought further. But this does not mean that a person should dismiss the thought. Rather, he should protect the thought in his inner storehouse, in his mind and heart, and at a later time, he will be able to make use of the thought.

In the physical world, we can all understand the need for a storage place to keep various items in, so that when the time comes to use those things, we can remove them from storage. The same is true about the spiritual. We need a kind of ‘storehouse’ to keep all of our first thoughts in, meaning that we don’t try to verbalize the thoughts until a later time. There are two gains of this, as we will now explain.

23. Allowing A Thought To Develop Over Time

We understand that when we are in the midst of cooking a food, we cannot eat the food right away, until it is fully cooked. In the current time we live in, we have to wait until we can see results from something. The Sages state that “In the future, a woman will give birth every day”,^[15] without having to wait throughout nine months of pregnancy. In the time we live in, there is a period of pregnancy before the birth of a child, which lasts for nine months, and sometimes the process happens quicker and a baby is born after seven months. Moshe Rabbeinu was born after six months.

Just as there is physical pregnancy, where there is a slow process until birth, so is there a concept of ‘pregnancy’ in the thoughts – it can take time until the spiritual illumination which provided the thought can fully reach the mind.

For this reason, the *Arizal* said that whenever a person discovers an inner thought or understanding about something, he should not reveal it to another person for at least three months. Just as in the physical world we cannot recognize that a woman is pregnant before three months, so is it with the spiritual, that nothing spiritual can be developed before three months. If it is released before that time, it would be like a miscarriage. It is even worse if a person were to reveal his thought before 40 days have gone by, because just as it takes 40 days for a fetus to form, it takes 40 days for his thought to completely form.

The above is all illustrating the concept that a spiritual or inner kind of understanding about something cannot be developed immediately. It is a process that takes time. Usually when a person reflects about a certain point and he can’t understand it, he stops thinking about it, and he loses the root thought. But one should understand that it may take nine months until he can even absorb the thought.

Chazal^[16] state that a person doesn't understand his *rebbe* (Torah teacher) for forty years, meaning that it takes forty years until one can absorb the thoughts of his *rebbe*, even if he has known about these thoughts for the last forty years. If a person doesn't 'protect' these thoughts, though, he will not understand his *rebbe's* thoughts even after forty years, because since he didn't safeguard it in his memory, he will have already lost it, so it cannot be accessed again. But if he made sure to remember the thought – not just on an intellectual level, but to keep an inner connection to the thought – he has guarded it. When the time comes for his mind to become further illuminated, he will be able to connect new thoughts with the first thought, to form a structured, developed thought.

When a person learns how to live more inwardly, with his soul, he needs to train himself to understand that there are many thoughts which he cannot fully develop, and even so, he should guard them and store them in his memory. They should remain in his internal world, and over time, the thoughts may combine with other thoughts, but at other times, the thoughts will remain in their raw state. It is still important to hold onto such thoughts, because even if he cannot use these thoughts immediately, eventually he may be able to develop them, where they can last for generations.

There are thoughts which a person can sense, but he doesn't know how to interpret them properly. We explained earlier in the chapter about "*Thoughts of Ruach*" that a person should make a list of positive qualities about himself which he recognizes, but which he hasn't yet actualized. He can also write about certain interests he has. He may feel that he is drawn towards something, or that he feels a connection to something, or that he has a distaste for something – and he doesn't know why. He should hold onto these thoughts and he shouldn't disregard them. With the more than he becomes familiar with his own inner world, he will suddenly become aware of why he feels a connection towards certain things and why he dislikes certain things.

As is known, the Hebrew word for "wisdom", *chochmah*, is the combined letters of the words *koach mah*, which means "[Our] power, what is it [worth]?" With the help of Hashem, later in this chapter we will explain more about the implication of *koach mah*. However, first, before anything, we should know what the term *koach* is.

Chochmah itself is called *koach*, which also means "potential", because *chochmah* is the kernel of wisdom in its potential form. When the *chochmah* is absorbed, it graduates into *binah*, which takes place in the *Neshamah* area of the soul. At that point, the *chochmah* becomes actualized from its potential state. The original state of the *chochmah*, itself, is a potential state, where the kernel of wisdom is still in its raw form. If one cannot guard the *chochmah* when it is still undeveloped and in its potential form, he also will not be able to actualize it, because he has lost the raw state of the *chochmah*. But if one has guarded the *chochmah* in its potential form, it will not immediately be actualized, and instead, it will emerge at a later time, after it has been allowed to "cook" and develop.

When it comes to the physical world, we can relate very well to this idea. If a person has some spending money and he doesn't know where to put his money towards, he doesn't have to spend his money right away. He can wait for the right opportunity to use his money, and perhaps invest it when the time is right, so that he can reap the most benefits from his money. If he is so impulsive to immediately spend his money that he just made, he may not be able to gain that much from the investments that are currently available. The money is in its potential form, and a person can hold onto it for a later time, when it will be appropriate to invest. Then he will be able to actualize the real benefits of the amount of money he had.

The same goes for the soul. We need to understand that not every potential force that enters our inner world can be actualized right away. We can guard it in an inner place in the soul. Sometimes it will be actualized on its own, and sometimes only for later, for a different purpose. What we need is

the patience to hold onto our potential insights that come to us, and keep them safe in our soul, without trying to actualize them right away. It is really a two-fold job. We should try not to force any actualization of the dormant insights within us, but also need to make sure to guard them well, so that we don't lose them.

24. *The Advantages and Disadvantages of Our "First Thought"*

Until now we explained one angle of understanding, with regards to how a person needs to hold onto a dormant, undeveloped insight that enters his mind, guarding it in its potential form, even if it is only a tiny point of wisdom that cannot be expanded upon right now. Now we will turn to explain an additional inner angle of understanding.

Whenever a small dot of wisdom enters the mind – which is either called the “first thought” or an “illumination” (each person calls it something else), a person receives certain *chiyus* vitality from it. There is both an advantage, as well as a disadvantage, to this.

The disadvantage to it that when a person receives vitality from his first thought, this may have the negative outcome of him getting used to doing nothing with his thoughts. Instead, he will jump from idea to idea, from one flash of understanding to another, and none of his thoughts will lead to any practical action.

There are some people who live from their first thoughts. Every day they get a lightening flash of understanding, some new idea, and they feel energized from it. Often, these ideas never materialize, even when it is seven or nine months later. These kinds of people may write sefarim or books filled with their ideas, but which cannot be practiced. Sometimes they become advisors or social workers to others, which they can be good at, but they would not be able to do anything that involves practical action. If you try to direct them to take their work a step further which would actualize their ideas, you can't get anywhere with them, because they thrive on ideas themselves, not the actualization of their ideas. He would rather give advice to others than try to actualize the ideas.

If this would only be a problem that affects his dealings with others, it would be bad enough. But when this problem has negative bearings on one's own soul, the issue becomes much worse. There are some people who have ideas constantly flowing through their minds, at a rapid pace. Some of the ideas are total fantasies, some of them are a mix of fantasy and reality, and some are clear ideas which can be actualized. But if you ask them, “So, what practical steps will you take to implement this idea?”, he will answer, “Yes, yes, one of these days, I'll work on it.” You meet him some time later you ask him, “Whatever happened in the end?” and he doesn't even remember the idea anymore, because many other ideas have entered him since then.

One cannot be successful when he lives this way. Nothing ever comes of his ideas. Such a person lives solely from his first thoughts. It is living in a fantasy. In life, we need to be able to act upon at least some of our flash ideas and first thoughts.

The advantage of our first thoughts, however, is that they enable a person to explore the realm of thought itself, without focusing of how to act upon the thoughts.

It is not for nothing that Hashem created a person in a way that some of his first thoughts can be actualized, and others cannot be. The thoughts which he can act upon are limited, and those are the thoughts which we are able to actualize in the practical aspects of our life. But our soul is much vaster than what we are able to actualize of it in the practical realm.

Compare it to a funnel, with the hole of the funnel on the bottom, and the wider part of the funnel on top. On the bottom, where the funnel is small, lies our realm of practical action. The top part of the

funnel represents our world of thought itself, which takes up much more space than the practical realm below. That is why many thoughts remain in potential form, and only a small percentage of thoughts can be drawn down to the bottom of the 'funnel', where they can be actualized in the practical realm.

There is a deep saying of Rebbi Nachman of Breslev, that "Some people have [an allotted share of] Torah which is narrow above, and wide below." He meant that some people have only a few words of Torah to say, but they can speak a lot and produce volumes of *sefarim*, from these few points they know; whereas others have volumes and volumes of Torah thoughts at their root above, but since the bottom part of their 'funnel' is narrow, they can't draw down all of their Torah knowledge from their root above, and therefore they don't have much Torah to say.

When a person is always trying to actualize his "first thought", and he will only acknowledge it if he can make something practical out of it, and otherwise he ignores it, he would be constricting his soul. Even more so, he will stifle any first thought which he can't act upon right now, and in doing so, he would be limiting them, thereby constricting them.

Thus, returning to the original point that we mentioned many times, a person needs a balance: On one hand, he must be able to live with the clearly limited reality on this world, but on the other hand, he also needs to be able to live deeply with a space in himself that is unlimited by anything.

Perhaps we can use the following example from the laws of Shabbos to illustrate the idea. In the laws of Shabbos, a private domain is a space of four by four cubits. In this aspect, the private domain is a limited space. However, going upwards, it extends endlessly into the air above. If we are considering the ground space of the domain, it is limited. If we are considering its space in the air above it, it is unlimited.

The lesson from this is clear. On our 'ground' – the physical world we stand on – we must live with clearly defined boundaries and limitations. But when we rise above to the spiritual, we need to expand our horizons, and keep expanding. Although there are also clear definitions of the spiritual realm, it is ultimately a widening of our horizons, and we can keep expanding in that space.

When a person can only relate to first thoughts that can be actualized, he is limiting the vitality of his soul, because he would only relate to something that he can actualize on this world, constricting his soul in the process. The amount of our soul which we can actualize on this world is very limited, so he would be stuck in a limited realm, using very little of his potential. But if he knows how to live with his first thoughts even when they can't be actualized, he is expanding his limitations, allowing himself to receive a vast amount of vitality from his soul, even though he cannot actualize the potential right now.

We should emphasize, however, that this is a very subtle point about our soul. For if a person will only live from his first thoughts, he will become disconnected from reality, yet on the other hand, if he only confines himself to the limited reality of this world, he would be losing the expansiveness of the soul. He would also be cutting himself off from the flow of the soul's inspiration. The first thoughts always come from the inner flow of inspiration in the soul, and if one loses it, he would be living without a source of true, spiritual vitality in his life.

Therefore, a person needs to guard his first thoughts, by sometimes trying to actualize them, and at other times, to simply just feel vitality from them, without trying to actualize them. One needs to be aware that his first thought is just a first thought, which cannot always be actualized, but which he can definitely derive inspiration from.

Here is an example. A person gets an idea to build or develop something, and he thinks about he can develop his idea, but when he thinks about how to actualize the plan, he discovers that only 50% of his dream can make it to reality. The other 50% will remain merely as a good idea, which he currently does not have the tools to actualize. From where should he draw his vitality from here? He needs to feel inspired from both parts – from the part of the idea which can bear results, and also from the part of the idea which he can't actualize. One needs to be able to draw vitality from the mere aspiration and will to broaden his horizons. It is just that he needs to keep one condition – he has to know that there is 50% of his idea which he cannot actualize, at least not right now.

The problem with most people is that as soon as they get a certain inspiration to do something, and they don't have the tools right now to actualize the idea, they forge ahead with the idea anyway. They make the mistake that the idea will come to fruition very soon, and they act as if they are already seeing the results. We are all aware of the following expressions: "There is no problem. Trust me. In a little bit of time, I will begin, or get it done."

For example, a person sees an advertisement for a home that is worth half a million dollars, being sold for \$350,000. He jumps at the opportunity, thinking, "This is a real find! I must grab it!" But he should really stop for a moment and ask himself: "Wait a second. Do you even have the \$350,000 right now? You don't even have \$100,000! The fact that you came across a really good deal doesn't mean that you can do anything right now to get it.

The closer that an idea is to reality, the less it will disconnect a person from reality, and the further it is from being actualized, its main use is for a person to acquire expansiveness from it. But as mentioned, a person must have a balance between how much he can actualize right now and how much he cannot, otherwise he will become delusional.

When one can live from his aspirations, this is a true source of vitality, but only on the condition that the person clearly recognizes it as an aspiration, not reality. A person must be careful not to mix aspiration with reality. One must be balanced between his aspirations and reality, by knowing which parts of his aspirations he can actualize, and which parts he cannot.

Thus, a person is able to use his fantasies which Hashem has implanted in him, as a source of vitality. This is on the condition that he identifies it merely as a source of vitality to him, and he is aware that it is merely an aspiration, which cannot be actualized right now.

We have so far explained two different ways to receive vitality from our "first thoughts".

25. Identifying and Connecting To The Source of the First Thought

Finally, there is a deeper point about we will explain about how we should relate to our power of "first thought": When a person identifies the **source** of the first thought.

We can give an example of it. As mentioned above, there are some people who will only advise others what to do, but they cannot actualize their own advice. What can they do to take their ideas further? They need to seek ideas from others in how to execute their plans.

How is it that the advisor himself cannot develop his thoughts further, whereas the second person is able to? What is the difference between them, if they are both working with a first thought? It is because the second person is able to draw inspiration from an inner source in him, whereas the first person, the advisor himself who couldn't actualize his own ideas, doesn't have a connection to this inner source.

Thus, whenever a person gets a first thought, he needs to have the **inner awareness** to connect to

the source of the first thought. The term that the Sages use for this is, “*And wisdom, from where is it found?*” [The verse is saying that wisdom comes from a source, which is called ‘where is it’, which in Hebrew is called *ayin*, lit. “nothingness”].

Earlier we explained about the *avodah* to connect to the source of our vitality, and now we are explaining an *avodah* to connect to the source of our thoughts. These two ways of *avodah* correspond to each other. We can either receive vitality by drawing it forth from the vitality itself, or it can come to us by way of thought, which is a “garment” for the vitality.

Applying this to our current discussion, where we are learning about the *Chayah* part of the soul, we need to know that the *Chayah* draws forth vitality from a deeper source in the soul. The *Chayah* part of our soul nurses its energy from either one of two ways: Either by way of the feelings, contained in the heart, or by way of the thoughts.

The matter known as *ruach hakodesh* [lit. “spirit of holiness”, a higher inspiration] can be revealed to a person in one of two ways: It may be revealed to him through an intense feeling of the heart, or through an intense increase of thought. These are the two existing forms of *ruach hakodesh*. With regards to where the *Chayah* nurses its vitality from, a person needs to identify the source of the vitality to his feelings, as well as the very source of his thoughts.

All of us have “first thoughts” that fall into our mind, more or less. Some people have a more revealed “*Chayah*” point in their souls, so they experience more of these first thoughts. In others, the *Chayah* point of their souls is not as revealed, so they experience less of these first thoughts. But in any case, every person has first thoughts that fall into him. The only issue is if a person is identifying the source of the inspiration that led to these first thoughts.

A person will may not be aware of the first thoughts even when they fall into him. He may suddenly realize that some thought has entered his brain, and he identifies the thought, but it is already after it happened, so he doesn’t identify the flow which it came through.

Compare this to opening a sink and filling a cup of water with it. One person looks into the sink and he sees a cup of water, but he didn’t see the water pouring into the cup from the sink. He is simply aware that if there is a sink here, so he knows that is how the water got into the cup. Another person, though, was there when the sink flowed into the cup, so not only does he know that the water entered the cup by way of the sink, but he was actually aware of the flow of the water in the sink as it entered the cup.

In order for a person to connect to the source of his thoughts, it is not enough to be aware of a thought after it has already entered his brain, when he tries to wonder where it came from. Rather, he will need to connect to the source of the thought while the thought is actually flowing into him, when he can sense it.

The less inner awareness that a person has to this, he will only be able to identify with a thought after it has entered his mind, when it will suddenly dawn on him that there is a new thought here. It will be like opening a drawer and suddenly finding an object there. In contrast to this, when a person has more inner awareness, he can identify how there are new thoughts flowing into his consciousness. The keener that one’s awareness is towards the flow of thought when it comes, the stronger level of *ruach hakodesh* it will be.

26. Bittul (Self-Nullification)

Until now we have briefly explained about the concept of our “*Chayah*” level of the soul. Now we turn, with the help of Hashem, to touch upon the innermost level within the *Chayah*.

The *Chayah* is known as “*koach mah*”, “what is [our] energy?” As is well-known in *sefarim hakedoshim*, the term “*koach mah*” is associated with the concept of “*bittul*”, self-nullification. Moshe Rabbeinu said, “*V’nachnu mah*” – And we, what are we?”^[17] [17] The word “*mah*” (what) is the point of *bittul*. The *gematria* of the word “*Adam*” in Hebrew is 45, equal to the value of the word *mah*, which is also 45 – a hint that the *avodah* of a person is, essentially, the *avodah* known as “*bittul*”.

Firstly, we shall emphasize that there are two levels of *bittul*. There is *bittul* at the “*Chayah*” level of the soul, and there is *bittul* at the “*Yechidah*” level of the soul. Here we will be discussing the *bittul* of the *Chayah* level, not the *bittul* on the *Yechidah* level (which we will later discuss, with Hashem’s help).

The *Chayah* level of *bittul*, itself, consists of two steps, which are parallel to the first two stages of *hisbodedus* that we outlined in the beginning of this *sefer*: Recognizing the self, and bonding with the Creator. The concept of *bittul* obviously cannot apply to the third stage of *hisbodedus*, which is the Infinite, for we cannot nullify the Infinite, *chas v’shalom*. We can only have *bittul* with regards to nullifying our own self, and with regards to nullifying ourselves to the Creator.

We are currently discussing the first stage of *hisbodedus*, revealing the self, by way of the power of thought, and in the *Chayah* level of the soul. Therefore, the *bittul* which we will discuss here is a *bittul* in relation to the self, and not a *bittul* in relation to bonding with the Creator (which we will explain, with Hashem’s help, in a later chapter).

27. The Meaning of Bittul (Self-Nullification)

The basic level of *bittul* is when a person nullifies his understanding of attributing success to his own powers and strengths, which result from conceitedness and from fantasies.

It is the tendency of most people to attribute their success to their own abilities, when the truth is far from this. A considerable amount of people will naturally take a lot of work upon themselves, which is really much more stressful than what they can handle. Even if they don’t actually do it, they are still readily prepared to take upon so much work, because they think that they have a lot of their own superpower.

This attitude really comes from an erroneous perspective. The person is failing to acknowledge the reality of our human limitations. We explained earlier about recognizing basic reality, when we explained the “*Nefesh*” level of thought. The basic level of thinking, which is at the “*Nefesh*” level of the soul, is for one to recognize his capabilities and limitations. This is also known as *chochmah tataah*, “lower wisdom”, the lower, basic use of the power of *chochmah* (wisdom).

Currently, where we are discussing the *Chayah* level of the soul, we are discussing the higher use of *chochmah*, which is *chochmah ilaah*, “higher wisdom”. We are speaking here of a real, existing power in the soul, not of something imaginary. When considering this power that exists within my soul, there are two different perspectives: **(1)** One way to look at it is that it is my own power. **(2)** From the “*Chayah*” point in the soul, I realize that all of my *chochmah* (wisdom) is *koach mah* – lit. “what is [our] energy?” – where I nullify the perspective that I have “my own” energy.

28. “*Koach Mah*” – I Cannot Complete Anything On My Own

Since we are discussing the kind of *bittul* where a person nullifies his sense of his own power and strength, which is not a *bittul* in regards to bonding with the Creator [but simply a *bittul* for the purpose of becoming more humble], we must understand what the concept behind this *bittul* is.

The Sages describe this kind of *bittul* in a teaching in *Avos*: “The task is not upon you to complete, nor

are you so free that you are exempt from it.”^[18] [18] When the Sages state “The task is not upon you to complete”, they are implying that a person cannot complete anything on his own.

The *Ramchal* bases the sefer *Mesillas Yesharim* on ten steps of growth, laid out by the sage Rabbi Pinchos ben Yair. The highest stage in this ladder of growth is *kedushah*, sanctity, and the *Ramchal* says that it only comes to a person as a gift, which one must work hard for in the beginning, and which is only acquired in the end as a gift. What we see from this is that a person, by himself, really cannot finish anything – whether in the spiritual, or in the physical. Only the Creator can finish any work. On our part, we cannot complete a thing. On a larger scale, we cannot complete our task in this period of exile, because the exile will only be completed by *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, Who will send *Mashiach*. In the same vein, we as human beings are not able to finish anything on this world, on our own.

One needs to be awake and aware to this concept. Our focus here, at this point, is not about Who be the One that finishes everything. Rather, here we are focusing on the fact that “I, as a human being, cannot complete anything.” (We need to subtly differentiate between these two aspects.)

With this, we shall explain the meaning of “The task is not upon you to complete”. Since the task is ultimately not “upon you”, you don’t have the energies to do it. If it would be your task, you would have received the energies to do it. Since you do not have the energies for it, it is not upon you to do. So you are not able to complete any task or work. Furthermore, Chazal state that the seal of Hashem is truth.^[19] [19] Only Hashem can give the final ‘signature’ on something. A person cannot complete anything on his own. When one understands this, that “I cannot complete anything on my own”, that is how he will reach the perspective of *koach mah*, recognizing that he has no power of his own. He understands that his own strength is worthless.

Consider the following. A person wants to go to a wedding in Tel Aviv, and he lives in Jerusalem. If he would know that he only can travel to Tel Aviv but he won’t be able to get to the wedding hall, would he leave his house to go to Tel Aviv? Of course, he wouldn’t. He would only leave his house if he knows he can get to the wedding hall. If he can’t, there’s no point in traveling there. What we want to take out of this illustration is, that if a person thinks he can get somewhere, he will try to reach it, but if he realizes that he cannot get to that place, he knows that it is worthless to try to get there, and he won’t bother himself at all, because there is no point.

There is a deep place in the soul which recognizes the perspective of *koach mah*, that we have no power of our own. To the extent that I recognize that I cannot complete anything, my power is worthless.

There are some who raise the argument that although one person cannot do anything on his own, it is still possible to have two people who can complete an act together. We shall deal with this argument. There is a discussion in the Gemara is two partners buy an item, and one of them pays 99 coins for it and the other partner pays one coin.

The Gemara concludes that the partner who paid 99 coins gets to keep 99% of any profit from the item, while the partner who paid 1 coin gets to keep 1%. However, before the Gemara concludes this, the Gemara assumes that each of the partners should get to keep 50% profit from the item, because the item was worth 100 and therefore it could only have been bought by both of them together, so they are equal partners in it. According to that argument in the Gemara, owning 99% of the item is not worth anything, because it doesn’t get them anywhere.

Meaning, if it would be possible to acquire 99% of the item, then owning 99% of the item would be something. But since the item can only be bought with 100 coins, the Gemara held that even if one of

them paid 99 and the other paid 1, adding up for a total of 100, none of them own it, not even the one who paid 99. Why? Because the 99 is not enough to acquire the item. Therefore, his payment of 99 for the item is worthless. It's not that he owns 99% of the item – rather, he owns nothing of it.

Applying this to our own souls, one needs to reach the point where he concludes that he does not have any strength of his own, and that his own strength is worthless. The Sages state “And when I am for myself, what am I?”^[20], meaning that “my” own strength is nothing. When one reaches this understanding, he recognizes his nothingness. Why is he nothing? Because his own power cannot do anything.

In the second stage of *hisbodedus*, a person connects outward, whether towards others or towards the Creator. Currently, we are dealing with the first stage of *hisbodedus*, which is to negate the I. It is for one to understand, “When I am for myself, what am I?” It is essentially the realization that I am nothing, and that I do not have any power of my own – *koach mah*, “what is my energy worth”?

The soul's deep point of *koach mah*, of recognizing the futility and worthlessness of our own power, is essentially the realization that our actions do not make anything happen.

We have explained here that every thought begins with a first thought that falls into the mind. The question is: How does it fall into the mind in the first place? The mind takes the first thought and develops it further, but how does a first thought come to me at all? Many of the wealthy people in the world all began with ideas which no one else thought of. From where did their original ideas come? How did they get the first thought to acquire a certain business? There was definitely some factor that spurred on the first thought to begin with. Where did it come from?

A person cannot create his first thought. Everything a person does begins with a first thought, and he is not able to create the first thought on his own. When a person contemplates this, he realizes that his “I” cannot produce anything on his own. This realization enables a person to nullify all of his actions, for he realizes that his actions do not cause anything to happen. As it was explained, an action which cannot be completed is worthless.

When a person needs to get somewhere and he can only get half of the way there, it not worth anything to him if he only gets halfway there.

The implication of “And when I am for myself, what am I?” is a negation of my I, a realization of the futility of my power and actions. “There is nothing besides Him” – according to *chassidus*, it is explained that the sense of one's own nothingness is what enables a person to realize that there is nothing else besides for the Creator. A person, on his own, is not able to do a thing.

29. In Conclusion

When a person reaches this perspective in the soul, he reaches the inner source of his vitality. As long as a person identifies himself as a being that has independent power of his own, the inner source of energy is blocked. Only when he nullifies the self can he reach the inner energy source of both his feelings and thoughts, as explained earlier. The factor which blocks a person from reaching his inner source of energy is, “*I stand between Hashem and between you*” – in other words, it is the “I”, the sensing of one's own independent existence, which creates a divide between the person and the Creator.

When one nullifies that “I”, by feeling his nothingness, he essentially removes the divide between him and Hashem, and then he touches upon his inner source of energy.

As explained earlier, this concept of *bittul* (self-nullification) is with regards to one's actions, meaning

that one realizes that he cannot complete any of his actions, which leads him to a feeling of being nullified to the Creator, when he realizes that he cannot complete anything on his own. As explained, the appropriate kind of action to work on this kind of *bittul* is when a person does something which ends up being in vain, and especially in a case where it was not only a pointless action but one that harms him in some way.

When such a thing happens, it is the proper time to work on the concept of *bittul*, for can he realize the fruitlessness and nothingness of his actions.

It was emphasized that this level of *bittul* is only regarding the actions of a person. There is also a deeper level of *bittul* than this, which is through the “*Yechidah*” level of the soul, which is the subject of the next chapter.[\[21\]](#) ^[21]

[\[1\]](#) ^[22] *Koheles 7:12*

[\[2\]](#) ^[23] *Tehillim 104:24*

[\[3\]](#) ^[24] *Koheles 8:1*

[\[4\]](#) ^[25] *Avos 5:1*

[\[5\]](#) ^[26] *Rosh HaShanah 32a*

[\[6\]](#) ^[27] *Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, famed 16th century kabbalist and author of Mesillas Yesharim (Path of the Just), Derech Hashem (Way of G-d), Daas Tevunos, Kelach Pischei Chochmah, Maamar HaChochmah, and many other classic works of Jewish thought.*

[\[7\]](#) ^[28] *Yeshayahu 43:7*

[\[8\]](#) ^[29] *Beraishis 2:7*

[\[9\]](#) ^[30] *Iyov 28:12*

[\[10\]](#) ^[31] *Eichah 4:20*

[\[11\]](#) ^[32] *Sanhedrin 72b*

[\[12\]](#) ^[33] *Pesachim 50b*

[13] [34] Succah 45b

[14] [35] Editor's Note: This point is explained further in Chapter 17 (Bonding With The Creator Through Scent-Movement)

[15] [36] Shabbos 30b

[16] [37] Avodah Zarah 5b

[17] [38] Shemos 16:7

[18] [39] Avos 2:16

[19] [40] Shabbos 55a

[20] [41] Avos 1:4

[21] [42] Editor's Note: Due to the lengthy material of this chapter, we will provide a summary which outlines the general points of this topic - revealing the "Chayah" level of the soul via the power of thought.

(1) Identifying, both on an intellectual and emotional level, what the **Source of my energy** is (which is the Creator). This can be worked upon when **breathing**: upon inhaling, feel the source of your breathing (the Creator), and upon exhaling, feel how you are returning your energy source to the Creator.

(2) Identify **the main kind of physical work which you enjoy doing**; identify also **the main positive emotion which you receive vitality** from (i.e. love, etc.), as well as **the main area of Torah thought** which you receive vitality from (i.e. Halacha, in-depth Gemara study, chassidus, etc.)

(3) Learn how to **view yourself from "outside" of yourself**.

(4) **Identify your "first thought"** that enters your mind before it develops into a detailed thought. Feel vitality from your aspirations and positive fantasies.

(5) Work on the concept of **bittul (self-nullification)**: Whenever you do something which turns out to be pointless or damaging, realize that you cannot complete anything on your own, and that only the Creator can complete everything.

Source: <https://bilvavi.net/english/torah-way-enlightenment-008-thoughts-chayah---vitality-source-self-nullification>

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