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Introduction

The deep source in the soul for complete *menuchas hanefesh* (serenity of the soul) is *emunah* (faith in Hashem). With complete *emunah*, a person truly believes that everything is from Hashem and that everything He does is for our good, and that would give a person complete serenity. If the truth of *emunah* would penetrate into all of the layers in our soul and body, we would have complete *menuchas hanefesh*. The problem is, however, that because our *emunah* often isn't strong enough, it does not reach into the more outer layers of the soul, and then there are parts inside us which are left without *menuchah*.

To illustrate, if a person would truly believe, with *complete emunah*, that his livelihood is decreed on Rosh HaShanah until next year's Rosh HaShanah, he wouldn't even want to make effort to make a living, because he is clearly aware that it is not up to his efforts. You can only want something if you think you can get it, but if you know for sure that you can't get it, you don't entertain the thought of trying to get it. When a person knows for sure that he has a certain amount of livelihood that has been decreed for him, he knows that there is no point in trying to make more money than the amount that is supposed to be coming to him.

[So with complete *emunah*, a person would be able to truly be content and serene, with complete *menuchas hanefesh*, and he wouldn't have to worry about a thing]. The power of *emunah* can remove all of the obstacles that prevent *menuchas hanefesh*. However, that would only be true if we access *emunah* on a very deep level. There is almost no one who has complete *emunah* to the point that the *emunah* has penetrated all of the layers of his being. In the outer layers of our soul, where *emunah* hasn't yet reached, we have an *avodah*^[1] to quiet down the various anxieties that bother us.

Three Steps In Becoming More Serene

- 1)** First, one should at least figure out what are the *root* issues that bother him.
- 2)** Next, one should attempt to quell those anxieties [which we will speak about in the coming chapters].
- 3)** After doing that, one should slowly start to work on quieting even his minor nuances, and to keep doing so until he feels calm inside.

Serenity vs. Sleepiness

When the soul becomes calmed, a person reveals an entirely new source of vitality in himself: from his *menuchah* (serenity).

Before reaching *menuchah*, a person might have viewed resting and relaxing merely as a way to recharge his batteries and have strength to perform his activities. With that mindset, sleeping on Shabbos is seen as a way to feel refreshed for Sunday's work, and nothing deeper than that. Going to sleep at night is because if we don't go to sleep, we won't be able to get up the next day on time and be productive.

If that is our perspective towards *menuchah*, such *menuchah* is actually not *menuchah*, but sleepiness. It is not a *menuchah* that would bring us to what is called "*menuchas hanefesh*", and it wouldn't bring us to feel an inner kind of vitality.

By contrast, if a person truly learns how to calm his soul, he reveals an entirely new place in himself of *menuchah*, which is the opposite of anything to do with sleepiness. The Sages said that "sleep is a sixtieth of death". *Menuchas hanefesh* gives us a new source of vitality in our life; it gives us a new lead on life - whereas sleep is reminiscent of death. [So *menuchah* is clearly not the same thing as sleeping and resting, and furthermore, it is the very antithesis to anything to do with sleepiness].

Once a person tastes true *menuchas hanefesh*, he will want to strive constantly to get it, like a magnetic pull. Just like a hungry person wants to eat food and a thirsty person wants water, so will a person who feels what *menuchas hanefesh* is will long for it very much. A person who never experienced true *menuchas hanefesh*, though, wouldn't be interested in getting it.

If a person has never experienced *menuchas hanefesh* and one tries to explain to him that he needs *menuchas hanefesh*, it's like trying to describe color to someone who has been blind from birth. A person who has never seen light will not long that much to see it, because he cannot even conceptualize it. So too, a person who has never felt what *menuchas hanefesh* is; he will never long for it. The only *menuchah* he will ever know of is *menuchah* in the superficial sense, such as getting some rest or going on a vacation. He will not have an actual desire for *menuchah* itself. In his mentality, *menuchah* is just a way to get away from stress; it is not seen as *menuchah* itself.

Shabbos\Consistency\Serenity vs. Yom Tov\Renewal\Happiness

We have the times of Shabbos and the *moadim\Yomim Tovim* (the festivals), and in our own souls as well, we have abilities called "*Shabbos*" and "*Yom Tov*". Shabbos is a permanent, consistent event of the week which has been built into Creation by Hashem (*k'via v'kayma*).^[2] The festivals, however, were dependent on the sanctification of the new moon, which was determined by witnesses and *Beis Din*. We learn from this about the differing natures of Shabbos and Yom Tov, which are both contained in our personal soul: Shabbos, the time of our *menuchah*, is a time that does not need renewal, for it is consistent. Yom Tov, however, is not permanently in place as is Shabbos. It is empowered through renewal, through the new moon, and it offers us renewal. Furthermore, the festivals began with Pesach, where we left Egypt and we received a renewed status of becoming a people. The festivals are about renewal, as opposed to consistency. Yom Tov is the time of our *simchah*, our happiness. The power of *simchah* (happiness) in our soul is mainly reflective of Yom Tov, whereas the power of *menuchah* in our soul represents Shabbos (There is also *simchah* on Shabbos, but *simchah* is mainly connected with the concept of Yom Tov).

Simchah (happiness) is a kind of renewal to us. *Menuchah* (serenity) is different - it is drawn from consistency, as opposed to renewal. *Menuchah* is parallel to Shabbos, and Shabbos is permanently built into Creation, without being dependent on the new moon for renewal.

Thus it is Shabbos\ *menuchah* where we can have the deepest connection to Hashem, Who “*was, is, and will always be*” – the ultimate Source of consistency. “*I am Hashem, and I do not change*” – it is the connection we have to this consistent Source which gives us the greatest possible *menuchah*. In the Shabbos prayers we say, “*Your children will recognize and they will know, that from You is their menuchah [serenity].*” The kind of *menuchah* that this verse is talking about is not referring to sleepiness, but to a *menuchah* that comes from the light of Hashem, from the Source of all life – so it is a *menuchah* that is very much alive and life-giving.

The *Zohar* says that “The holy Shabbos – from it, everything is blessed.”^[3] Everything in creation receives blessing from Shabbos, for it is the source of vitality to creation [which Hashem provides us with]. Shabbos is the source of all blessing because it contains *menuchah*, and *menuchah* is the source of our vitality. So this cannot be referring to sleepiness, *chas v’shalom*. Although sleep on Shabbos gives us pleasure, that is only coming from the lower and non-spiritual aspect of sleep. The real pleasure of rest on Shabbos stems from the inner *menuchah* which is present on Shabbos.

Taking Care of Our Serenity

Once a person has reached *menuchas hanefesh*, he will find that as soon as he experiences anything that will take him away from it, he will not want to engage in that action. Compare this to a person when a fly is buzzing around his head. He doesn’t look for reasons of why he should chase away the fly. He simply chases away the fly because it is a nuisance to him. Once a person feels what *menuchas hanefesh* is, he will naturally get away from the things that are bothering him.

Here is another example of a person who values his *menuchas hanefesh*. If he’s in middle of sleeping and suddenly the phone rings, he will not answer it. When one doesn’t care to be disturbed, it is really a sign that he does not value his *menuchas hanefesh*. He doesn’t mind this jolt in middle of his sleep, even though this really disturbs his inner peace deep down. He quickly jumps out of bed to go get the phone. But if one has decided that this is the time where he must get his sleep, he will make sure to unplug the phone if it rings in middle, and then go back to his sleep. He is aware that the phone disturbs his sleep and that if he is woken in his sleep he will not be able to have proper rest for the next day’s work.

Anyone who feels what *menuchas hanefesh* is will naturally avoid anything that creates a disturbance in him. (This of course does not include any actions that he is obligated in according to *halachah*, which he must do no matter what, even if he is bothered). He recognizes that the things which bother him are not suitable for him to be involved with. There are no given rules to this, being that the situation can change, and what bothered him one day might not bother him some time later if he were to do it.

To illustrate, a child is bothered by certain things, and when he becomes a teenager, different things bother him, and as an adult, those things don’t bother him anymore and now he is bothered by different things. So it is with our *menuchas hanefesh* – what bothered us one time might not be a bother for us at a different time.

It can also be compared to the following. When a person is in business, what will he get involved with and what will he avoid? He will only get involved with something that can be of profit. If it will cause him a monetary loss, he will avoid it. The same is true of *menuchas hanefesh*. Any action which takes away our *menuchas hanefesh* is an action that we need to avoid doing. Actions that let us remain with our *menuchas hanefesh*, by contrast, are actions that we may be involved with.

Two Kinds of Disturbances

Maybe a person will react to this by saying, "Okay, so I will no longer do anything anymore that exerts me, because anything that I do will take away from my *menuchas hanefesh*." With this attitude, a person might do away with all of his *avodas Hashem* (*chas v'shalom*). Let us clarify the idea here.

This is what we are trying to get at: there are two types of acts that take away our *menuchas hanefesh* – actions that are complete disturbances to us, which make it very hard for us to get back our *menuchas hanefesh*, and actions that are only minimally bothersome, which temporarily takes away our *menuchas hanefesh* but which we can return to our *menuchas hanefesh* soon after doing them. It is only the first kind of action that we should want to avoid doing: actions that disturb us to the point that it will be very hard for us to get back our *menuchas hanefesh* afterwards. It is only those kinds of actions that we want to avoid in order to protect our *menuchas hanefesh*; if it will only temporarily take away your *menuchas hanefesh* and you can soon return to being calm afterwards, then by all means, do not refrain from doing such actions.

Compare this to the following. If a person was typing a manuscript for a book on his computer and his entire file gets erased, he has lost his entire work, whereas if he forgot to save only his previous work, he only loses his most recent work, and he still has most of his manuscript on file. In the first scenario, where a person has lost all of his work, he will have to start again from the beginning, and this will be a lot more difficult. In the second scenario, it is a lot easier for him to return to his work, because all he has to do is start from where he left off before his most recent work got erased.

In the same vein, there are certain actions which take away a person's *menuchas hanefesh* to the point that he would have to start again from scratch in order to get back his *menuchas hanefesh*, and there are other actions which allow a person to easily return to his *menuchas hanefesh* even after he has temporarily lost some of his *menuchas hanefesh*. [Ideally, we should want to avoid the first kind of action, not the second type.]

For example, the Rambam says that one must interrupt his Torah learning if he is presented with a *mitzvah* that cannot be accomplished by anyone but himself, but then he must immediately return to his learning.^[4] Sometimes when a person is doing a *mitzvah*, he loses his calm thinking a bit and he can't think so clearly, but his mind is not frazzled, and he is still serene for the most part. It is not the same as when he is totally calm, but it is that not much of a disturbance, if he can immediately return to what he was doing before.

Compare this to a person who isn't in a deep sleep and he gets woken up by something in middle of this sleep. Although he has been bothered, it is relatively minimal, and he can easily return to his sleep and still be able to fall into a deeper sleep than before.

If a person will do a certain action that will totally take away his *menuchas hanefesh*, to the point that he would have to get back his *menuchas hanefesh* from complete scratch, he should consider that action to be forbidden to do.

In addition to this, even if it is an action that doesn't completely take away his *menuchas hanefesh* if he were to do it, and it will be a minor disturbance to him, he should avoid doing it if there is no pressing need to do this action. (The exceptions to this would be, of course, if it is a life-threatening situation, or if refraining from doing this action will insult another person).

Exciting Undertakings Can Ruin Menuchah

Even within one's *avodas Hashem* one needs to avoid doing things that take away his *menuchas hanefesh*. If it is something that is obligatory according to the *halachah*, then we should not even consider how this will affect our *menuchas hanefesh* and we are obligated to do whatever *halachah*

requires of us. But if we are dealing with an action that is non-obligatory, the measuring stick always has to be: If it weakens my *menuchas hanefesh*, it is not on my level to do this action. If it doesn't weaken my *menuchas hanefesh*, I should do it, and this level is for me to do."

The Sages say to "run after a *mitzvah*."^[5] How do we know if we should run to a *mitzvah* or if we shouldn't? If we can maintain our equilibrium and calm thinking as we are running, then we should run to do the *mitzvah*, because then it is within our current level to do. But if running to do a certain *mitzvah* will cause us to lose our calmness, then running to do the *mitzvah* would be acting on a pious level that is above our current level, which isn't suitable at this point for us to do.

Another barometer that shows us if this is something we should be doing or not is, to know if we have the proper energies to do it or not. A person has to know that just as a person who can't make ends meet should not be opening up a money-lending organization to do *chessed*^[6] and lending 1000 dollars to any person who comes to him, so do we need to measure if we are truly capable of doing certain acts of kindness or not for others. If someone doesn't have the energy to start doing *chessed* all day, he should not be doing it, because it will take him away totally from any serenity.

I once knew a wonderful person who diligently studied Torah all day, and he desired to become a big *baal chessed*. What did he do? He opened up a *gemach*^[7] which took up most of the time of the day. Soon after, he was getting many phone calls and he was busy trying to be both a big *masmid* and a big *baal chessed*. His wife got dragged into all of his *chessed* as well, and she had become a nervous wreck from all of it, trying to juggle her family's needs together with all of the *chessed*.

Their intentions were wonderful: doing kindness for people. But this couple was acting on a level that was way beyond their actual capabilities. Usually people do not consider what their capabilities and limitations are, and they will do "what has to be done", which is usually what they perceive or imagine has to be done. The attitude usually is, "What difference does it make if I feel that this level is for me or not? A person must do the *mitzvos*, regardless of how he feels! After all, should a person only do the *mitzvos* only when he 'feels' that it is on his level to do? Doing kind acts for other people is like any of the other *mitzvos*, which I must do because I have to do them, regardless of how I feel."

It is true that we must do all of the *mitzvos* simply because Hashem has commanded us to do them and because we have to do it, and it is also true that we need to have *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice) in doing the *mitzvos*; we certainly need to have *mesirus nefesh* in our Torah learning, in our *mitzvos*, and in doing *chessed* - but we must only do something if it is within our current level and capability. Chazal said, "Many tried to do like Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, and they were not successful."^[8] Why didn't those people succeed? It was because they were acting too beyond their current capabilities.

Once when I was young, I went to bake *matzos*. As is well-known, in a *matzah* factory, every possible stringency is observed - but you will not find that much *menuchas hanefesh* there. I was responsible for standing next to the oven to make sure that there was no possibility of *chametz*, and suddenly I saw that a person began to put something into the oven. I began to shout. My brother was there and he said to me, "What's more important - the *matzos*, or you?"

My intentions were good, and it was for a *mitzvah*, but if a person is going to do a *mitzvah* that takes away all of his calmness, it is beyond him right now to do. Maybe we can consider it "*mesirus nefesh*" if he does it, because he is acting beyond his capabilities, and he's giving over himself to Hashem, but it is not true *mesirus nefesh* if a person is not calm. *Mesirus nefesh* means to give away our own *daas* (mind) to Hashem, but that does not mean that we need to lose our minds as we do a *mitzvah* with *mesirus nefesh*! Any action that will cause a person to lose his *daas* takes away from his status as a sensible person, and then a person cannot act with genuine *mesirus nefesh* from there.

If we can act with *mesirus nefesh* as we are maintaining our *daas*, this is true *mesirus nefesh*, and this was the *mesirus nefesh* personified by our forefathers. But if a person has *mesirus nefesh* in a way that causes him to lose his calm thinking and his serenity, there is no presence of a “person” here to have *mesirus nefesh* and to hope to get anywhere with it.

Knowing What Makes You Anxious

The question before us now is: how can we know what we should be doing and what we shouldn't be doing?

For a person who has never yet experienced *menuchas hanefesh*, it is hard to know this. But if one has even a little bit of *menuchas hanefesh*, there is a clear measuring stick for this: **(1)** One knows clearly that there are certain actions where he can maintain equilibrium, which he may do; **(2)** Certain actions which cause minor disturbances, which he may also do; and **(3)** certain actions which completely take his equilibrium – which one should not be doing.

Similarly, the *Mesillas Yescharim* writes that if a person wants to get to the desired goal of life, which is to become close to Hashem, he will only things that bring him closer to Hashem, and he will avoid anything that distances him from this closeness. And it works the same way in the physical side of life: we know what we like to eat and what we don't like to eat; we eat what we like to eat, and if we don't like it, we will not eat it. The same is true for our *menuchas hanefesh*. Our soul is aware of what takes it away from feeling serene, and these are the actions that we will want to avoid doing and push away from us, like a fly that is buzzing around our head and disturbing us.

Living An Inner Life - A Life of Menuchas Hanefesh

An inner, deeper kind of life is a life that is built upon *menuchas hanefesh*. After one is accessing his *menuchas hanefesh*, he will find an entirely new world opening up to him.

It will be no different than a person who was used to learning *Chumash* and now he begins to learn *Mishnayos*, or a person who was used to learning *Mishnayos* and then discovers Gemara, or a person who was used to learning just plain Gemara with Rashi and then he begins learning it with *Tosafos*, where he goes from superficial learning into in-depth learning. Through each of these steps, a new world is opened to the person. The same is true for our inner dimension: when a person begins to reach *menuchas hanefesh*, an entirely new world is opened to him.

Menuchas HaNefesh Enables You To Derive Vitality From Your Existence

After a person reaches *menuchas hanefesh*, he can reach greater levels of closeness to Hashem. There are generally two ways of how attain greater recognition and closeness with Hashem: through recognizing what He does, by viewing the Creation and recognizing that it is all from the Creator; and through recognizing His very existence.

To understand the difference, we will give a parable to explain. Everyone knows clearly that he exists. He doesn't need proof for this. If we ask him, “How do you know you exist?” he will balk at the question. If someone comes and says, “I can prove to you I exist - I am a carpenter, and I build wooden objects. The fact that you see a wooden object that I produced is proof that I exist.” He would clearly be regarded as a fool if he says this. The fact that we each exist is so clear that it doesn't need any proof. We recognize that we exist, simply because we exist. There is no room for any “why?” about this. We have a recognition of our existence which simply stems from the fact that we exist.

However, when it comes to recognizing other people, we usually do not recognize them because they exist, but from various superficial factors. We see a person in front of us and then we know he exists,

because we see him. If we can't see another person, we can still know he exists if we see some things he has done, which tells us that he exists. We see that a chair moved from one corner of the room to the other. How did it move? Ah, someone must have been here, and he moved it. Yet, this is a superficial way to recognize the existence of others, because I am recognizing his existence based on external means: an action that he must have done.

So a person knows that he exists simply because he recognizes his existence, without any proof to this, whereas anything that is outside of ourselves is only perceived by us when we pick up on any external stimuli, which makes us aware that others exist.

Let's ask the following question. Does a person live with the knowledge that he exists? Does a person recognize himself as an existing entity? Usually, a person is recognizing only his superficial layers, and that is how he is aware of himself. He is aware that he has emotions, thoughts, a certain personality, but he does not gain any vitality from ever thinking that he *exists*. As a substitute, he recognizes virtues in himself, and that is what he lives from. A person's virtues, however, are not describing his actual essence.

Just like I can see virtues in myself, so can others see those virtues. If we reflect even deeper, we can discover that we are often recognizing ourselves in the same way that others perceive our existence, and that is where we get vitality from. Of course, we definitely recognize ourselves a lot better than how others see us. But this is still a shallow kind of self-recognition, because it is using the same kind of perception that others have towards us, so it is superficial. This is generally where people get their vitality from, though – a superficial kind of vitality. People are often getting their vitality from superficial factors such as excitement about something, or by the fact that they know that make a blessing each day of “that You did not make me a gentile” or (for a man), “that You did not make me a woman.”

The very fact that a person exists is his true source for vitality. But when one does not have *menuchas hanefesh*, the knowledge that he exists will remain as intellectual knowledge to him, and perhaps regarded as very fundamental, but he will not actually derive vitality from it.

We have explained here two powers in the soul, which parallel the two abilities we spoke about in the beginning of this chapter: consistency and renewal. The “renewal” aspect in ourselves can only identify with the external and the superficial, that which is outside of us; whereas the “consistency” point in ourselves, which describes the point of our actual existence that is in ourselves, is the point in ourselves which can recognize something from its existence.

Seeing From Our Souls

If one only has a superficial recognition towards himself, that is also the way of how he will view others, and he will also have a very superficial recognition towards Hashem. He might be able to know that there is a Hashem when he looks at creation and he realizes that there is a Creator who created all of it, and this is of course a truth that he has come to, but it is entirely a recognition that is coming from the external layer of his soul, and not from the actual essence of the soul.

Only when a person reaches *menuchas hanefesh* does he reveal his true “I”, the unchanging aspect in oneself. Anything else that a person experiences other than his actual “I” are all subject to change, for they are all but “garments” that “I” must go through, and “garments” are always being switched, like clothing.[\[9\]](#)

When a person reaches *menuchas hanefesh*, he is not living amidst any of the turbulences that are outside of his “I”, and instead he lives the actual “I” in himself. When one is living the “I” itself, he

reveals a source of vitality that comes from the knowledge that he exists, as opposed to any other external aspects. When he receives this vitality contained in the depth of his being, he will live in a world that is entirely serene.

Tolerating Others' Faults

There is a verse, "*Man is seen by the eyes, and G-d sees into the heart.*" When a person is living the "I", in this deep place of serenity, instead of seeing how "*man is seen by the eyes*", all he will see is how "*G-d sees into the heart.*" [In other words, he will be able to look past the faults of others, which is the superficial view of others, and instead he will see into the goodness that is in others, for he appreciates the existence of others and that is how he sees them - as follows.]

When one is living with the knowledge that he *exists* and he is gaining vitality from this, he will also find that he can better deal with others' faults. Since he views others as existing people, not as mere personalities or feelings and thoughts, they become more than a mere collection of various faults and virtues to him. They become "existing" people with an inner essence in his eyes. He can then acknowledge that their faults are not who "they" really are, and that is how he will be more tolerant of others' negative behavior.

For example, when we see someone lose his temper, the natural reaction is to think that such a person is "an angry person", a "not good" person. This is really a superficial awareness to another's existence. If we have *menuchas hanefesh*, we are aware that we are all pure souls, and we are just covered with a physical body and other "garments" that aren't very fitting for the purity of the soul. We will be able to view the person's temper simply as a "garment" upon who he really is. And when we see someone who overeats, we won't view him as a glutton who can't control himself, but as a pure soul, whose his eating habit is to viewed as a dirty "garment" on top of his pure soul; we are more focused on his existence as a soul, and then we are able to see past his faults.

This resembles how "*Hashem sees into the heart.*" The actual heart of a Jew is pure, but there are two "hearts" in us, one of which contains the *yetzer hora* (the evil inclination). One of the prophets said that there are "soiled garments" on top of the heart, which need to be removed.

That is how one can see himself, when he focuses on his actual existence (his *havayah*). The thoughts and the emotions need to be viewed as garments that are atop the soul. Your main vitality needs to be derived from the knowledge that you simply have an existing *havayah*. You can also get vitality from your holy thoughts and feelings, and you also get vitality from the more outer layers of your being, but your main vitality needs to come from your existence.

A person like this will live serene and calm. When a person merits to recognize his actual "I", he becomes serene. This *menuchah* does not merely come from removing all of the "noise". It comes from revealing a new source of vitality in a person, where a person finds serenity from - the very "I" itself. That is where a person can connect to the essence of all life, to life itself, to his very *havayah*.

What concludes from these words is that there are two factors of self-recognition: recognizing oneself from one's *havayah* (his very existence), and recognizing oneself based on *hispaalus* (reaction to external stimuli). As long as a person doesn't yet have *menuchah*, he will only be aware of from having *hispaalus*, from reacting to various outer means, from movements, from renewal, from thoughts and emotions, from knowing his virtues and faults. By contrast, one who has reached *menuchas hanefesh* can have self-recognition of himself that comes from his very self.

Beyond Self-Recognition

Yet, that is still not reaching our purpose in creation. We are meant to utilize these two factors of our

self-recognition to deepen our awareness of the Creator.

One means of how we come to better “recognize” Hashem is through being amazed at His creation, which is *hispaalus*. We can analyze the wonders of Creation and realize that He is behind all of it; and we can see the renewal of Creation and be awed in wonder from it, attributing it all to Hashem.

This is also the mode of the festivals. The festivals are times of joy to us, and the renewal of our feelings which the joy that the festivals give us is a portal to recognizing the Creator. On Pesach, we can be awe at the redemption that took place. On Shavuot, we can be in awe when we remember the giving of the Torah. Each festival offers us a different vista of renewal, where we reflect into the unique mode of conduct of Hashem that was displayed during those events in our history. We can reach *hispaalus* from all of this and we gain a greater sense of recognizing the Creator.

Yet this all but the external means of how our soul gains recognition of the Creator. When a person reaches the truth on his own, recognizing that Hashem exists simply because He exists, and he has no doubt about His existence just like he doesn't doubt his own existence, that is how we will relate to Hashem.

It is written, “From my flesh, I see G-d.” [10] There are two aspects to this. One can “see G-d” through the external actions of his soul and body, and one can “see G-d” by knowing that just as he clearly exists, so does Hashem exist.

The truth is that one who isn't at that perception cannot understand how this kind of clear recognition is possible. A person who feels ‘apart’ from Hashem is not in touch with the concept of “The Blessed One and Yisrael are one” [11], thus he does not know where this recognition can come from in himself. He struggles with the concept of Hashem's exists, no less than how one would struggle to understand how it could be that he exists. But when one recognizes the depth of his “I”, his very existence, he can have the actual recognition towards Hashem.

In Summary

Every person has these two abilities, renewal and consistency. In every person, there is the essence of the soul, and there are garments atop the soul. The essence of the soul is the unchanging, constant *havayah* (existence) of a person, which is tied to Hashem, where “The Blessed One and Yisrael are one.” That is where a person can become connected to the ever-constant reality of Hashem.

Firstly, a person needs to recognize these two abilities exist within him, to become aware of them. He should ask himself, “What are the factors that I recognize from my very existence, and what are the things I recognize through external means?”

On a deeper note, our *neshamah* recognizes the essence of our soul (our *havayah*), whereas our body can only be aware of the “garments” over the soul. Recognize what a body perception is and what a soul perception is. Recognize that all actions and feelings are not the actual “I” itself, but garments atop the “I.” The “I” in us is permanent, unmoving, and unchanging. Identify anything which removes you from *menuchas hanefesh* (serenity) – the things which prevent you from having a conscious recognition of your “I”. In anything you encounter, you can identify these two different aspects.

You can determine it as follows. If you meet someone and you aware that he has certain qualities, and you find him likeable because of these various good qualities you see in him, you will like him, and if you meet someone who possesses negative aspects in his personality, you will recoil from him. Either of these reactions is living in the mode of *hispaalus* [because you are recognizing others based on how you react, to their outer layers]. When we are more reactive towards others, although we will see good in others and we will be in awe from the good we see in others, we will also see the evil in

others. We will be drawn towards those whom we can easily get along with and we will avoid from those who are harder to get along with.

But if you are in touch with your "I" on its deepest level, then you will also be able to appreciate the "I" of others, for ultimately, the deep place in our "I" recognizes that all of the Jewish people are one unit. That is where we can feel an absolute connection to all of the souls in the Jewish people. The inner place in our soul has the perspective of, "He does not see sin in Yaakov, he does not see pointless exertion in Yisrael."^[12] When one is in touch with his *havayah*, his reactions do not depend on circumstantial factors, because the "garments" do not concern him. The "garments" he sees in others may be dirtied, but he knows that it does not affect the *havayah* of others.

This is essentially how a person can come to the trait of "*ayin tovah*", having a "good eye", towards oneself and towards others. It can only be accomplished when one senses and feels the actual existence of others' souls, which enables a person to see beyond externalities [both of himself and of others].

So the true recognition of ourselves, and of others, and of how we recognize the reality of Hashem, is a recognition that must come from our very *havayah*. As long as a person hasn't gotten to that level of recognition, he is like an outsider towards himself, and he views others from the outside as well. He will also be 'outside' of Hashem. But when one recognizes the actual "I" as it is, he recognizes himself from his *havayah*, he recognizes others because he is aware that they each have a certain *havayah* (and this is what it means to have absolute *ahavas Yisrael*), and he has the absolute level of recognition of Hashem, from the place in of "The Blessed One and Yisrael are one" that is deep in his essence.

Avraham Avinu first recognized his Creator, as the Rambam explains, by analyzing creation. He searched the sky, the land, the moon, the stars, and wondered: Who created all of this? But in the end, his recognition of Hashem did not come because he saw Hashem or from comprehending Hashem. Rather, "Hashem showed him that there was an Owner"^[13]. What did this mean? Hashem showed Avraham his own *havayah*, the *menuchas hanefesh* that comes from recognizing the soul, which are both rooted in the same unit, and they are really one and the same.

When one does not recognize his "I", he cannot have complete *menuchas hanefesh*, and he surely won't be able to recognize his soul well. By contrast, one who recognizes the "I" can have *menuchas hanefesh*, and he can recognize the soul.

Until a person reaches that recognition, he is like a person who is groping in the dark, in a house full of glass shards - he will keep tripping on the glass and injuring himself. But when one has recognition of himself that comes from his soul, he is like a person carrying various tools and he knows what each of them is for, and he will know how to use them properly. He lives in a 'clear world'^[14]. He sees things clearly. Just as he sees himself clearly, so will he see others clearly, and he will also be able to clearly see Hashem, and he will be of the *tzaddikim* in the future who will point to Hashem with his finger and say, "This is my G-d that I hoped for."^[15]

^[1] spiritual task

^[2] Chullin 101b

[3] Zohar Shemos 63:2

[4] Rambam Hilchos Talmud Torah 3:4

[5] Avos 4:2

[6] kindness

[7] money-lending organizations

[8] Berachos 35b

[9] Tikkunei HaZohar 65a

[10] Iyov 19:26

[11] Zohar

[12] Bilaam's praise about *Klal Yisrael*

[13] Nedarim 32a

[14] Pesachim 50a

[15] Yeshayahu 25:9

Source: <https://bilvavi.net/english/search-serenity-002-what-life-serenity-looks>