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## Getting to Know Your Inner World - 006 Quality Over Quantity

### **Two Differing Attitudes About Life**

We will continue on our discussion on how to have an inner kind of life, a kind of life that is “*sof maaseh b’machshavah techilah*” – having our end goal already realized somewhat even in our beginning.

We have spoken about how to use *menuchas hanefesh*, and we have spoken about using both our intellect and heart in understanding matters. That is a brief discussion; now we will continue to the next step.

The *Chovos HaLevovos* writes that smaller, purer amounts are better than bigger amounts. This shows us that there are two abilities in our soul – *aichus* (quality) and *kamus* (quantity).

There is a great wisdom contained in knowing the difference between what’s considered “quality” and what’s considered “quantity.” Focusing on “quantity” (*kamus*) is basically a gruff, superficial attitude to have in our *Avodas Hashem*, while focusing on “quality” (*aichus*) in our *Avodas Hashem* is the refined, internal attitude which we should want to achieve. If a person hasn’t worked on himself, then quantity in *Avodas Hashem* will be more important to him than quality in *Avodas Hashem*.

### **Quantity Should Precede Quality**

*Chazal* also refer to these two abilities as “*ligmar*” and “*lisbar*”. When a person learns Torah without trying to understand it, this is *ligmar*; it is all about quantity. When a person tries to delve into what he learns, this is *lisbar*, and the focus of his learning is on the quality of how well he understands it.

*Chazal* say that *ligmar* has to come before *lisbar*; first, a person has to have years and years of exertion in learning, gathering and amassing knowledge in Torah. Only after that should he attempt to acquire the second stage of learning, *lisbar*. In other words, although quality is the goal, quantity has to precede quality.

People are naturally inclined toward superficiality, and thus they are more concerned about quantity over quality. Quantity totally contradicts an inner kind of life; it is all about “more, more, and more”.

Even if a person is seeking always to increase his learning, his *davening* and his *middos* more and more, he might just be more into “quantity” of his *Avodas Hashem*, rather than being into “quality” of

his *Avodas Hashem*.

### **How To Acquire the Attitude of Quality**

The *Chovos HaLevevos*, that “smaller, purer amounts are better than bigger amounts”. If a person thinks deeply into this and he absorbs the concept, he is able to acquire the attitude of quality over quantity.

Again, we must mention that first a person needs to have “quantity” in Torah before he seeks to improve the “quality” of his Torah; *ligmar* must precede *lisbar*. But after a person has exerted himself in Torah for a few years, he can begin to reflect on the concept of quality over quantity and then absorb it well.

We cannot advise *what to actually do* in order to get to this attitude; there is nothing to “do” in order to acquire it. One has to first amass a lot of Torah knowledge and exert himself in it, and only after that can he be able to absorb the concept of “quality over quantity” after reflecting deeply about it.

Even if someone has three *sedarim* (learning sessions) a day and he enjoys the logic of Torah, it will still be hard for him to understand the concept of quality over quantity. It is a concept which has to be absorbed very well, and it can only come after a person has learned Torah for a long time on at least a basic level. If the concept isn’t absorbed well, then a person is only doing half his job. He might have quality Torah learning, but his *actual daily life* is missing quality. He’s one way in his learning, but he is another way in how he actually lives his life....

Once a person does absorb the concept, though, what will happen? He will find himself battling an internal kind of war. He will find himself battling his desires – the desire for quantity vs. the desire for quality. He should then listen to himself (using the heart, as described in the last chapter) and hear from inside himself what he wants: quality, or quantity. When a person becomes aware of himself, he can know if his desires in life are more about quantity or quality.

When a person truly listens with his heart to what’s going on inside himself, he will discover how much his desire for *quantity* is overpowering his desire for quality!

### **The Difference Between Quantity and Quality**

“Quality over quantity” is not a simple matter; it spans a wide amount of areas in life. Quantity is about being superficial, while quality is about being internal. When a person is concerned mainly for *quantity* over quality, he is essentially always *outside* a matter, because he is having a superficial understanding based on various externalities.

Even if he’s learning Torah and very involved in it, if he’s concerned mainly for quantity, he is really outside his own learning; his learning is not a part of him. He might learn Torah very in-depth, but he can still be very outside the Torah, since he is mainly concerned about the “quantity” of his in-depth learning than about the actual quality of his in-depth learning.

But when a person is concerned for *quality* rather than quantity, he’s not interested in what’s going on in the superficial aspects of a matter. All he is interested in is getting to the *root* of a matter.

Quantity is all about getting “more and more” from outer factors, while quality is all about to get to the roots of a matter, to get to the essence of a matter.

Such a drive can only come from after a person gains *menuchas hanefesh* (as described before), as well through listening with the heart (described in the last chapter). This puts a person into a clear

way of living, and from there, he is able to focus on the root of a matter and not be concerned about superficiality. It's a whole different kind of life than someone who only cares for quantity.

Why aren't people reaching closeness to Hashem? It is really because they aren't focused on the quality of *Avodas Hashem*. A person can work very hard at trying to become close to Hashem, but if he isn't concerned for refining how much quality his *Avodas Hashem* has to it, he never gets there. When people want "more and more" in their *Avodas Hashem* - quality over quantity - this itself contradicts what it means to have real *Avodas Hashem*.

Now the concept of the *Chovos HaLevovos* becomes clearer. We have to be concerned always about what the root of a matter is; anything else that has to do with it is just tools to get there.

The root of a matter is always one point, and it defines the essence of the matter. When a person is concerned for quality, he will discover that to simply "increase" what he knows actually mars the quality of what he's trying to accomplish. He realizes that "more" isn't necessarily "better."

With quality as the goal, the soul becomes calmer.

### **Quality Is To "Taste" Matters**

Quality is to essentially look for only one root point in a matter.

The word "*me'at*", small amount, has the same letters as the word *taam*, taste. When a person is more concerned about smaller, purer amounts than finding bigger, less pure amounts - he truly "tastes" the matter. That is our goal - we want to find the true "taste" that is in everything. With "tasting" a matter, you can begin to touch a matter.

When a person absorbs the concept well (that smaller, purer amounts are better than bigger amounts), he will realize that he has nothing else he'd rather have than a quality understanding.

When a person lives the inner kind of life we have been describing up until now (*menuchas hanefesh*, listening with the heart, and quality over quantity), he actually begins to "taste" matters in his life. *Taam*, which means taste, can also mean "reason" (*taamei hamitzvos* - the "reasons" for the *mitzvos*, which are a way to "taste" the *mitzvos*). When someone tastes matters through the internal kind of life described here, he is more connected to the reasons behind everything.

In the Torah, there are *osiyos*, which are the letters, and there are *taamim*, which are the way you pronounce the words. The *osiyos* represent the superficial understanding of a matter, while the *taamim* represent the internal understanding of a matter.

Usually, people just live their lives on this world and never hear the inner voice in what's going on in something. People usually don't really "taste" what's going on in their life; even when people learn Torah, they are usually just learning it through their lowest part of the soul (the *nefesh habehamis*/lower, animalistic part of the soul).

### **Examples of "Tasting" Matters**

To give an example, *Chazal* say that "Anyone who says *Perek Shirah* will merit *Olam Haba* (the World to Come)." When a person says *Perek Shirah*, is he aware that this is something which brings him to have *Olam Haba*? What is he thinking as he says it? *Perek Shirah* doesn't mean for a person to "sing" the *Shirah*. What is the song of the *Shirah*? The *Shirah* is a deep understanding that comes to a person if he has removed whatever obstacles are holding him back from the *Shirah*.

When a person listens to what's going on inside a matter, it is then that he tastes it.

We are not referring to having enthusiastic feelings about something. When a person has feelings of love or gratitude, which are feelings of enthusiasm, this alone does not help him understand a matter. We are referring to an inner kind of understanding in which a person has a deeper kind of feeling in everything he comes across, and it can only come from listening with your heart to what's going on. Only this will help you really "taste" a matter.

This will connect you to everything in a whole different way than you are used to.

To give another example, we know that one is not allowed to inflict pain on animals (*tzaar baalei chayim*). A person who sees an animal with a heavy load is supposed to unload the animal. Let's say a person is unloading the animal; does he feel the animal's pain, or is he just doing it because the Torah says it's a *mitzvah*? If a person has worked on his ability of listening with his heart, he will be actually be able to feel the pain of the animal, because since the animal's pain is the reality in front of him, he is more in tuned to reality, and thus he will feel the pain of the animal.

### **Connecting To Creation**

When a person listens with his heart, he connects to everything in a whole different way. This is not an "Avodah" or any other similar definition. It is a way of life! It is a way that connects you to everything in your life, in a whole different way than you're used to. We have been describing all this time a way that actually connects you to everything that's going on in reality.

If someone never arrives at this kind of connection to reality, it is because he doesn't have *menuchas hanefesh*. As a result of his lack of *menuchas hanefesh*, he lacks clarity in his life, and he doesn't know how to listen to what's going on. Because he doesn't hear what's going on, he never really connects to anything.

In *Tehillim* it is written, "Ears they do not have." There can be a person who has had ears for seventy or eighty years in his life, but he is spiritually deaf; he doesn't "hear" anything that's really going on behind something.

In order to have this inner understanding of life, a person needs to experience a whole different kind of place than what he is used to.

When a person acquires the ability of deep, internal listening of the heart to what's going on, he is able to know what to draw close to, and what to stay away from.

What a person has to do in order to reach this awareness is to *look for only one point in a matter* - to only be interested in the *one inner meaning* that is behind a matter.

### **We Also Need Exertion**

Practically speaking, a person gets to this by living a life of *menuchas hanefesh*. There are two parts to this - a superficial layer and an outer layer.

The superficial part is to get used to doing things slowly. The inner layer of it is to absorb the concept of "quality over quantity" well and realize that being concerned over quantity contradicts a life of quality.

We do not mean to imply that one should avoid quantity and not exert himself in his Torah learning. Of course a person needs to have exertion in learning! But that is only physical exertion. The body

has to be exerted in learning – and that is the first stage we must go through in our life and work on. But then comes another stage in life – exertion of the soul.

The Vilna Gaon says that every person is on this world to break a certain bad *middah*, and if he doesn't reach this goal, there is no point in living. This is how we exert our souls – to break our bad *middos*.

After working on this (of course, we cannot be perfect in this, but after working on our *middos* to a certain extent, we can proceed further) comes a third step, and that is to “break our desires.” The way we can break our desires is through a living a life of calmness, in the way have been describing. This is also takes a lot of exertion of the soul; it is a true kind of exertion.

These are three kinds of exertion – we need to exert ourselves physically in the Torah, we need to exert ourselves by working on our *middos*, and we need to exert ourselves in order to arrive at inner calmness. We need all three kinds of exertion.

Anyone who thinks that *menuchas hanefesh* doesn't take hard work is only having imaginary calmness; it takes hard work! But it is a more inner kind of hard work; it is an exertion of our soul. We will have to exert our souls in order to get *menuchas hanefesh* – we have to work hard at it, with the goal of arriving at *menuchas hanefesh*.

In fact, our main hard task on this world is to exert ourselves at this – to work hard at trying to arrive at inner calmness in life.

Let us review this again so it should be very clear: only with *menuchas hanefesh* can a person be able to listen with his heart to all that's going on in his life. This will enable him to pursue quality over quantity, which is essentially to only look for the one root that's behind every matter he comes across.

When a person reaches that point, he can then attempt to deepen his listening of the heart and hear the “subtle, refined voice” which is contained in everything.

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**Source:** <https://bilvavi.net/english/getting-know-your-inner-world-006-quality-over-quantity>