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Physical Calm and Inner Calm

We have begun to discuss *menuchas hanefesh* (inner calm, or serenity of the soul). There are actually two kinds of *menuchah*: of the body, and of the soul.

Calming the body involves two factors. One part of it is to live a life of orderliness, and another part of it is to act calmly; for example, not to do two things at once. These are the two general factors that are needed to calm the body.

But we aren't discussing this kind of *menuchah* here. We are discussing *menuchas hanefesh*: to have a calm soul.

Without having a calm soul – *menuchas hanefesh* – we cannot have any real calmness. Without *menuchas hanefesh*, a person doesn't live with an awareness to his soul faculties, and as a result, all the forces in his soul are in turmoil, similar to how Yaakov and Esav were fighting in their mother Rivkah's womb.

It's possible for a person to reach physical *menuchah* even without thinking too much how to get it; you can figure out on your own how to live a calm lifestyle and act calmly. But *menuchas hanefesh* is something internal, which a person can go by his whole life never even knowing about it. He never recognized his soul and never attempted to give some order to his soul's faculties, and thus he never came to have *menuchas hanefesh*.

Using Our Soul's Faculties To Give Us Menuchah

The faculties in our soul have two roles. One role they have is to be utilized separately; each soul faculty needs to be accessed for the sake of just learning how to make use of our abilities. That serves as the way to have *menuchas hanefesh*.

Another role they have is that they are needed to give us even physical *menuchah*. They can serve to put calmness into how we act; without being aware of our soul's abilities, the physical actions we do are lacking calmness.

The soul faculties are connected to each other; if a person isn't aware of his soul faculties as he does any physical action, his soul faculties gets scattered around as he does something.

Most actions that people do on this world are lacking this awareness. The more a person is aware of his soul, however, the calmer he will act.

The ideal way for a person to do things is to be *aware* to what he's doing in the simple *physical* sense, as well as to be aware of how his *soul* is being used when he does something.

Our awareness has to include these two factors: when you do something, concentrate on *what* you're doing – simply put – and in addition, know *why* you are doing it. This will give you *menuchas hanefesh* as you do something; by getting used to this, you will find that the habit to do two things at once will lessen more and more with time, since you have become aware of what you're doing.

This will help you come to do things more patiently, for two reasons – first of all, because your actions will have become bettered and calmer, and secondly, because you will know why you're doing something.

Hopefully we will get to finish this discussion – incorporating *menuchas hanefesh* with physical *menuchah*. For now, we will continue the discussion we spoke of earlier, which is to use *menuchas hanefesh* as a way to give order to our own soul.

The Difference Between Your Essence and the Rest of the Soul's Faculties

Before, we mentioned the roots of this discussion: a person has an essence, which is called *havayah*, and every other ability we have is a garment that covers over our essence.

The garments are (beginning from the highest garment to the lowest garment): *Emunah*/faith, *Ta'anug*/pleasure, *Ratzon*/will, the thoughts (*Chochmah*/wisdom, *Binah*/Contemplation, *Daas*/"Knowledge"), speech, the seven main emotions, and the actions. These are the roots of our soul's abilities.

When we speak of *menuchas hanefesh*, we are essentially describing how to achieve an inner peace in all our soul's abilities.

Our *havayah*, which is our essence, stays put where it is. It needs to be brought out to its potential. The soul faculties are what actively bring out our essence. The purpose of all our soul's faculties – from *Emunah* all the way down to our actions – is to utilize our essence and bring out our true potential. Without the soul's faculties, we would not be able to fulfill the potential of our *havayah*/essence.

When our soul faculties are working properly and bearing results, this shows that they are working together with our essence. But even when they are working properly, they are still not the same thing as our actual essence. The soul faculties are totally the opposite of our essence! This is because our essence is inactive, while our soul faculties are always in action.

Each person works differently, but the common denominator between all people is that the essence of the soul doesn't act, while the faculties of the soul are always in action. Anyone who is in touch with his soul can recognize this idea, that the soul faculties by very definition contradict the actual essence of the soul.

The essence of our soul (*havayah*) resembles Shabbos, in which we have *menuchah* and don't do any work. On Yom Tov, certain labors are permitted, such as *oichel nefesh* (common needs); Yom Tov thus represents the rest of the soul faculties [from the faculties of *emunah* all the way down to *shiflus*], which are active and do work.

Thus, our soul faculties alone cannot give us *menuchah*, because they are always moving and active. Only our essence can give us *menuchah*, because our essence stays put and doesn't move.

The Cycle of our Soul

There are two totally different worlds going on in us! On one hand, there is a deep part in us which is unmoving and totally calm, and on the other hand, there is a part in us that is always in action.

What we are supposed to do is to go from actions to rest, and then from our rest to acting. This is like the six days of the week, which are days of action that lead up to Shabbos, when we rest. The rest of Shabbos enables us to continue on into the weekday, and it is actually what enables us to act.

That is the way we are supposed to lead our lives – acting, then resting, and then going back to act again. This is the ideal cycle in which our soul is built upon, which we want to achieve here. It is the cycle which we must go through our entire life – acting, resting, acting, etc.

In terms of our soul, we must use our soul faculties to get to our essence, and reaching our essence we can return to using our soul faculties with renewed vigor. The cycle should keep being repeated throughout our whole life.

The Basic Menuchah: Acting Calmly

When a person is acting upon *menuchas hanefesh*, it has to be a kind of action which is a total detachment from the previous stage. He has to “leave” his previous situation totally. If he's doing something and he wants to start doing something else, he has to leave the previous action. That is the basic kind of *menuchas hanefesh* – doing actions calmly, which can only be achieved with this frame of mind.

To illustrate this concept, the Rambam writes that although a person must interrupt his learning in order to do a *mitzvah* that will not be fulfilled unless he does it, he must immediately return to his learning. The point behind this is because a person has to be totally focused on what he's doing right now.

A person can't learn all at once *Chumash*, *Neviim* and *Kesuvim* if he wants to learn properly; this is not the way to do things. He has to be totally focused on the subject at hand. You have to finish something before you proceed to the something else, or else you're disconnected from what you're doing.

When a person gets used to living in this way, he begins to learn how to concentrate. He has a basic kind of *menuchas hanefesh*; it is only attained when one is able to detach totally from what he was doing before.

The Inner Kind of Menuchas Hanefesh

This ability to “detach” totally will not be enough, though, to help a person arrive at the inner kind of *menuchas hanefesh*. The inner kind of *menuchas hanefesh* is the actually the opposite of basic *menuchas hanefesh*.

If a person wants the inner kind of *menuchas hanefesh*, he has to be able to hold onto a little of the previous point even as he starts a new thing. He has to protect the inner point and take it with him in whatever he does.

We will need to make use of both kinds of *menuchas hanefesh* when we deal with our soul.

We are able to detach from each of our soul abilities and come to reach our essence. That is one ability we have – the ability to totally leave something and start something else. If we don't develop this ability, then we won't be able to reach our essence. We will be trapped in our own souls – we will be imprisoned inside of ourselves.

But after we reach our essence, we need to be able to detach from that state and enter back into our soul faculties, which are the garments that cover our essence. In this kind of detachment, we must hold onto a little of our essence even when we go back into our “garments”.

Avoiding Sins Is Obvious

We are not discussing how one can remove himself from sinning. That is a clear concept which is obvious – we must be far removed from sin. We are speaking of a different kind of removal: when we remove ourselves from our garments of the soul and come to our essence (and then put our “garments” back on after that).

The fact that we must avoid sins is something else; that is about avoiding something negative. This is an elementary stage which must come before all this.

What we are speaking about here is to remove ourselves sometimes from parts in our soul, which are good, but sometimes they need to be left alone. This will enable us to put more holiness in our actions.

Therefore, detaching from our soul layers is necessary so that we can come to improve our actions. We won't be able to come to the proper actions unless we learn how to do this.

“Wearing” and “Removing” Your Abilities

Why must we do this? Why is it necessary for us to remove our garments of the soul?

It is because really, you can't “wear” something unless you know how to “remove” it. In other words, if you don't know how to detach from your soul faculties, you will not know how to use them.

There is a story told about Rav Chaim Volozhiner *zt”l* that he wanted to open up a yeshiva, and he asked his teacher, the Vilna Gaon, if he should do it. The Vilna Gaon told him, “No.” A few months later he came to him again and asked him if he should open up a yeshiva, and this time, the Vilna Gaon agreed that he should open it. Rav Chaim Volozhiner asked him what changed since a few months ago.

The Vilna Gaon responded, “When you first came to me that you wanted to open a yeshiva, you were enthusiastic about it. If so, your desire to open the yeshiva was based on excitement. Now, you have had some time to think about it.”

The depth behind this story is that the Vilna Gaon was teaching Rav Chaim Volozhiner how to detach from his will, which is one of the soul faculties. He wanted to give Rav Chaim Volozhiner time to think it over, so that he could decide again without such willpower and excitement; he was trying to show him how to not be trapped from his soul. Of course, Rav Chaim Volozhiner knew how to detach, but in this particular situation, the Vilna Gaon knew that it wouldn't happen so fast and that his student needed some time to learn how to detach from his will.

If a person can't detach from an ability in his soul, then he doesn't really know how to utilize the ability in the first place. This physical world is really like one big prison, and in our own soul, we are imprisoned as well when we don't know how to detach from a part in our soul.

For example, Rav Zeira had to forget the entire Toras Bavel in order to learn Toras Yerushalayim, because a person has to be able to detach from information; we are not speaking about a regular person – we see this even from Rav Zeira! Every person needs to know how to detach from everything. One has to be careful not to take this ability to an extreme. If someone never exerts himself in his learning because he is constantly prepared to forget it all - because he is trying to learn how to detach - this is evil. Such a person misuses the ability to detach and destroys all his learning with it. One needs a lot of subtle wisdom to be able to know how to utilize his ability to detach.

Detaching From Your Emunah

Let us proceed with this discussion.

There is a faculty in our soul called *Emunah*/faith. This is a garment of our essence, and it also needs to be removed sometimes – just like all the other garments of the soul, which we must learn how to remove sometimes.

Why should we remove our *Emunah*? Isn't *Emunah* the most important garment we use in our soul? It is, but it is still a garment; it is not our actual essence. Therefore, it needs to be removed, at times, so that we don't confuse it with our essence.

As we said before, we have an intrinsic essence, which is our actual self, and on top of that we have many garments in our soul that cover it over. *Emunah* is the highest from all the garments and it is closest to our essence, but it is not yet our actual essence.

If someone doesn't know how to detach from *Emunah* sometimes, he is trapped by his *Emunah*! He will never reach his essence, and his *Emunah* actually traps him from reaching his essence, since he has never learned to remove it and get past it. On one hand, *Emunah* is a sublime power which we can use to know what's right. Without *Emunah*, a person only accesses his power of *bechirah* (free will) to choose between good and evil, and then evil is considered to him as an option.

But when a person uncovers his ability of *Emunah*, he can go above his free will and see that there's really only one option – to do what the right thing is, to do what Hashem wants.

On the other hand, *Emunah* can be detrimental. How can it be detrimental? It is detrimental when it traps a person inside himself, so to speak. This is when a person identifies his *Emunah* as his "I." If a person thinks that his "I" is his *Emunah*, then he takes *Emunah*, which is a garment of the soul, and identifies this ability as his very essence.

What happens from this? He doesn't differentiate between his "I" and his *Emunah* – he thinks that he **is** *Emunah*. What will happen from this is that you can have people who do wrong things, and when asked why they acted improperly, they will amazingly justify themselves with: "Hashem did it...Everything is all from Hashem..."

A person has to have *Emunah*, but he also has to learn how to "not" have *Emunah*; in other words, he must know when to use this ability. It is a garment of the soul, and each garment of the soul has the proper time and place. When a person thinks that he is any one of the garments of the soul, the effects are always detrimental. You have to learn when to use each ability, and when not to.

So there are sometimes when you have to detach from *Emunah*. You have to "believe" yet "not believe", depending on the situation.

Detaching from Your Ta'anug

Let us continue to the next step.

The next garment in our soul is *ta'anug*/pleasure. "A person was created in order to have pleasure and delight in the spiritual pleasure." That is the way Hashem designed the world; people want pleasure. People only do things if they enjoy it; if someone doesn't get pleasure out of something, he naturally doesn't do it.

Chazal say that one should not say he likes one part of Torah and not another part of Torah; although we were created to have enjoyment, we can't only do things for pleasure.

There is an opposite force in Creation which we also make use of, and that is the ability of *ameilus* (exertion). When a person is exerting himself in learning Torah, he's not just exerting himself; he is actually removing himself from *ta'anug* during this time. A person has to be aware of this as he is having *ameilus* – he must know that he is right now detaching himself from *ta'anug*.

Let's say a person learned Torah for a nice amount of time in the day, and then he comes across a physical desire that he loses control over. Why did this happen? What is the root of the problem here?

It is because while he was learning Torah and exerting himself, he wasn't aware that he is detaching from *ta'anug*. If he would have been aware that he is detaching from *ta'anug* as he learns Torah, he would have been used to this ability to restrain himself from going after what's pleasurable, and upon encountering the temptation, he would be able to control his desires, because he has already learned to detach from pleasure.

But if a person wasn't aware while he exerted himself in learning that he is essentially detaching from pleasure, then as soon as he encounters a physical pleasure when he's done learning, he hasn't changed one bit, and he will find himself in a full-fledged war with his physical passions.

Of course, learning Torah even without this awareness always purifies a person somewhat, because Torah always has some effect on a person. But without the kind of awareness we are describing, a person is only exerting himself in learning simply because he knows in his mind that *Chazal* say one has to have exertion in learning.

Such a person will not have the ability to withstand evil temptations, because he hasn't learned how to detach from pleasure. He wasn't aware as he learned Torah that he was detached from pleasure, and thus he hasn't yet developed his ability to restrain himself from pleasure.

It is not enough to know that the main part of our life is to have exertion in learning. A person has to be aware as he learns Torah that having exertion in learning is essentially a detachment from pleasure.

When a person gains this clarity, he identifies with his *ta'anug* in his soul, and he is aware if he's accessing his *ta'anug* or not. He develops an awareness to *ta'anug*, and to what the opposite of *ta'anug* is – *ameilus*.

With this awareness to himself, he will be able to control himself when he encounters an evil temptation. He will be able to even come to understand that there is a place in himself which doesn't need any *ta'anug* – his very *havayah*, which is the innermost point of the soul. He won't even need the *ta'anug* of having *emunah* in Hashem, because he will reach a place in himself that doesn't need *ta'anug* – it is a deep awareness of the Ultimate Essence, Hashem, and it is an awareness which is independent of any pleasure in it.

We gave the first two examples of how to "wear" as well as "detach" from our garments of the soul –

emunah and *ta'anug*. With the help of Hashem we shall continue to explain how to wear and detach the rest of our garments of the soul. But we need to first understand that we have to know and recognize all these garments of the soul^[1], and that they all have to be “worn” (which is when we use them) as well as to sometimes be “removed”.

^[1] *These are the thirteen faculties of the soul: emunah/faith, taanug/pleasure, ratzon/will, Chochmah/wisdom, binah/contemplation, daas/knowledge, and the seven main emotions (these are explained in Getting To Know Your Soul and Getting To Know Your Feelings). Besides for these thirteen faculties, there are also our actions, our power of speech, and our five senses, which are also part of the soul's makeup. We will also learn how to detach from these parts of our soul, in the coming chapters.*

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