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Section Six: Emunah\Faith: Chapter One The Chazon Ish on Faith

The Chazon Ish: the world is a “closed riddle”

The Chazon Ish writes (*Emunah U'Bitachon*, Chap.1), “The trait of *emunah*\faith is a subtle point in the deepest part of the soul. If a person is concerned for his soul, and he is calm from hungry desires, and his eyes are amazed at the sight of the height of the heavens and the depth of the land, he feels awesome trepidation, for the world is before him like a closed riddle, a wondrous secret; and this riddle surrounds his heart and mind....”

To whom is the Chazon Ish talking about?

We must understand who the Chazon Ish is referring to when he says that the “riddle of this world takes holds of him”. Is he talking about someone who doesn't believe, and he is on a quest to figure out who created the world? No - He is speaking about himself. Surely it applies to us as well, any true Torah student.

It is perplexing, though. Didn't the Chazon Ish know the answer? Why did he have to try to figure out anything which he already knew?

Herein lays the secret of *emunah* (faith). There is intellectual faith - and then there is a feeling of faith. The Chazon Ish is writing from his heart, from his highly developed feelings, and not from his mere intellect.

This is what a person needs to work on – to live with a faith in G-d that he feels, faith that is tangible to him no less than how he feels a table, chair or candelabra. Without this, a person is missing the main part of life.

How to have actual feelings of faith

How can a person truly feel faith in Hashem? There are two aspects here: in the thoughts, and in speech.

In a person's thoughts, a person should contemplate simply that Hashem created everything, every last detail, and reflect on how this happened: Who did this, and from where does everything come from, etc. (See *Chapter 6 in Section 5, Mussar*).

In the end of the day, a person has to have alive, awakening thoughts that everything was created by a Creator, and it should come naturally to a person to have thoughts of contemplation in everything, and this will lead him to see Hashem in everything.

Speaking about faith

Regarding a person's speech, it is written, "*I believed, for I spoke.*" The commentators expound, "*I believed*" – when did I believe? "*For I spoke*". This means that if I accustom myself to speak matters of faith constantly, I will have faith.

This is also the meaning of the *possuk*, "*Faith has been cut off, it is gone from their mouths.*" When is faith cut off from the heart? When it is "*gone from the mouth*".

Therefore, everyone has the duty to train his mouth to always speak words of faith in G-d.

These words do not have to be lofty, intellectual matters; they can be simple words of faith. All of a person's speech should be steeped in faith: when he walks, lies down, and when he gets up; all of his dealings should be connected to *emunah* (faith, a true connection, and not merely an external connection).

How to speak in matters of faith

We will give examples.

Before doing anything, a person shouldn't say, "*Baruch Hashem*, I will be successful." This is just a lip service.

He should instead say, "Master of the world, I know that if You do want me to be successful, I will be successful, and if not, not; therefore I am asking You, that if it is proper that I do this, that I should be successful."

When a person sits down to learn, he should say, "If You, Hashem, want me to understand what I will learn then I will surely understand, and if not, not. Therefore I ask of You that I should be worthy to understand my learning."

When a person is about to pray, he should say, "I know, Master of the world, that if You want to help me to pray properly then I will pray properly, and if not, not; please help me pray properly to You."

The same goes for everything else: a person should precede the matter with words of faith, in his thoughts and words, from an inner recognition and a simple feeling for the truth of these words; it should be words from the heart and not just from the intellect.

Faith is at all times and situations

Faith is the beginning of our service to Hashem, and it unifies all that we do. In every service we do, faith is at the core. Anyone who doesn't understand this doesn't know what faith is. He knows of it in his intellect, but he is lacking the main part of faith: in his heart. He is missing a faith that bonds him and attaches him to G-d.

R' Yechezkel Levenstein zt"l would say in his old age that he feels that if he would forget about matters of faith for even a few moments, he would immediately fall. There are people who think this is an exaggeration, but one who lives with true faith feels this very well.

Chapter Two Faith Is The Root of Everything

Faith is the unifying matter of all our avodah

The *possuk* says, "And the righteous man will live by his faith." The holy book *Noam Elimelech* explains that it is what unifies all the aspects of our service to Hashem into one unity.

Rectifying character traits through faith

We know and accept that a great part in rectifying our bad traits is by having true *emunah* (faith). We will explain here how even bad *middos* (traits) can be rectified by faith.

Let's take jealousy, for example. Jealousy is to when I cast an eye on a friend's object, and I want it for myself. Sometimes I even wish to be cruel to him so I can get it; as long as my friend doesn't have more than me.

How does a person rectify jealousy? With faith!

We will explain. A person must know clearly that Hashem created the world, and that He created it with a purpose, and that everyone has the tools necessary to reach his purpose. No one is lacking anything he needs to serve Hashem, and whatever I don't have, I don't need. Everything that I have is exactly what I need.

Also, whatever my friend has is exactly what he needs in order to fulfill his purpose. If I would have my friend's item, it would only be detrimental to him. The same is true for my friend; if my friend would have my items, he wouldn't be able to reach his purpose either.

In short, a person doesn't have anything on this world that is his. Anything that one has is a tool to serve Hashem with, and Hashem gave everyone their unique tools to serve Him. Just as no one serves Hashem in the exact same way that another serves Him, so is there no person who has the same tools as his friend.

So really, someone who desires another's objects is deficient in his faith. He must review with himself the facts, that Hashem created the world, and He created him with a unique purpose, and with specific tools to serve Him. There is thus no place for jealousy.

The question

Many people have a question, though: Why did Hashem create me with this specific purpose with these specific tools – why couldn't He give me a different purpose, with different tools?

The answer to this is the *possuk*, "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts.*" Only HASHEM really know what's best for a person, and no one can comprehend it.

This is a deep and fundamental point: everything HASHEM does is good, even though I do not understand His ways at all. This is a total nullification of one's desires. A person must understand that HASHEM's thoughts are endless and cannot be comprehended. A person can reach this understanding by nullifying his desires, something which takes a lot of self work.

Deep Faith In Hashem Also Cures Depression

When a person lives like this, he will also be happy.

A depression can only come on a person when he feels that he is lacking something. However, if a person internalizes a deep faith in his mind and heart and realizes the truth about G-d – that whatever he has is exactly what he needs, and what he doesn't have he doesn't need, and if he would have that thing it would only be detrimental to him – this will remove any depression from him. He will not feel that he's lacking anything, because he isn't lacking anything. With *emunah*, he will realize that there is nothing that he needs that he doesn't have.

The root of joy

When depression is removed from the person, joy can enter. The reason for this is that the soul of a Jew is a piece of G-d from above. About G-d it is written, "*Glory and joy are in His place.*" The soul is intrinsically happy. What holds back joy? The body! The body wants various desires and feels that they are necessities. Feelings of lacking are created, and this makes one depressed.

If a person is in control over his body, and he nullifies his feelings of any lacking, he will remove the covering of the body from the soul, and then the soul will naturally return to its ordinary state: "*Glory and joy are in his place.*"

Chapter Three The Viewpoint of Free Will Vs.

The Viewpoint of Knowledge

Rectifying hatred and anger through faith

In this chapter we will explain how to rectify the traits of hatred and anger, through *emunah*\faith. We will begin by examining anger.

The nature of a person is to get angry if things aren't going his way, or if someone belittles him. The reason for anger is rooted in egoism – the feeling of “Me”. A person naturally thinks, “I decide what should happen, and I am very important. Who is anyone to be brazen enough to start up with me?”

How to we rectify anger? With faith!

Let us explain: faith means that a person knows and believes that “a person cannot point a finger downwards unless it is announced above in Heaven.” So therefore, if I am on my way and someone comes and hurts me, the person did not hurt me; HASHEM sent him to do this, and “HASHEM told him to curse.” If this would not have been decreed Above, so-and-so couldn't have hurt me. If so and so hurt me, then it was the will of the Creator that he do so.

Knowledge vs. free will

Don't ask: “Why is the one who belittled me punished for belittling me? If Hashem wanted it to happen, it's not in his free will anyway! I thought it was *supposed* to happen...!”

This question was actually asked in earlier generations, and many answers were already given:

1) It was decreed upon me that I should suffer belittlement, but it was not decreed who should do it to me. Therefore the one who carried out the abuse is punished, because he chose to be the emissary of abuse.

2) There is a deeper answer, and it is even more truthful: There are two different viewpoints to have.

The lower viewpoint is called *bechirah* ("free will"), and the higher viewpoint is called *yediah* ("knowledge").

From the viewpoint of *bechirah*, it is logical for me to want to feel hurt, because the abuser used his free will to hurt me. The one who meted out the abuse was supposed to choose not to hurt me, and I am naturally upset at him for hurting me, because he is responsible for his actions.

But from the higher view, *yediah*, I know that Hashem already knows what will happen, and He decreed for whatever reason that this person should hurt me, so there is no real reason to be upset at this person who hurt me.

From the victim's view

Let's say someone starts cursing me. I have to view the situation from a viewpoint of "*yediah*". I should not think that the other person has the free will to curse me; I should instead think that Hashem wanted this to happen. Otherwise, it's basically being angry with Hashem (G-d forbid). Just like if a person trips on a rock and falls, he doesn't complain to the rock for hurting him - because he knows that it's from Hashem, and the rock was just an emissary of Hashem - so must I view a person who hurts me.

So should I view myself from the *other's* point, not from *my* viewpoint. The other person who hurt me was just an emissary of HASHEM, and I have to view this that it had nothing to do with his free will.

Even though this way of thinking seems to go against the rule of free will (because the abuser used his free will to hurt me, so logically, I should be upset at him), still, the Rambam quotes of this matter the *possuk*, "*For My thoughts are not their thoughts.*" This is because the viewpoint of *yediah* is also logical, but it is just that human comprehension cannot understand it.

The human mind cannot comprehend an answer to this apparent contradiction, and a person's duty is to accept that his mind is limited and cannot comprehend even a little of these matters. Even in what appears logical to a person, one has no real proof that it is logical, because according to the real facts, which are endless are in their comprehension, it may very well also make no sense. So whatever a person can comprehend with his mind cannot make any difference. We do not understand.

It follows then that a person should serve HASHEM simply for what He says to do, and not solely from a logical perspective. In situations that HASHEM wishes for a person to use his intellect, he may do so,

but if HASHEM doesn't want a person to try to understand, then he shouldn't try to understand.

Reacting to anger is such a case - here, Hashem's will is that we should not use our logic, because we do not understand how the abuser can be justified.

From the abuser's view

So the proper way to view a situation is as follows: If someone wants to curse and hurt someone, the *abuser* should know that he will be punished for it, because he has free will. But even if he does choose to curse or abuse, the *victim* should know that Hashem wanted this to happen, and the abuser didn't do anything.

Although this is an apparent contradiction, herein lies the secret of *emunah* \faith in Hashem: there are two viewpoints going on at once, and it is upon the victim to understand that he was supposed to be hurt by the abuser, in spite of the fact that the *abuser* is not allowed to justify himself with hurting him. This is a very deep matter.

The same applies for the trait of hatred. If a person knows that something was supposed to happen to him, he cannot come to hate the abuser. The abuser should be viewed by the victim as someone who was forced to do so; why should someone hate another who was forced to do something to him...?

Summary

To summarize: a person must understand that Hashem decides everything. If a person has complaints, he should know that he is complaining to Hashem. He is thinking that what Hashem did is not good. So he really doesn't believe fully that Hashem is entirely truthful and good; he lacks a basic part of faith. A person must know that Hashem does everything, and everything He does is good and true. I do not understand how it is true and how it is good, but it is.

Chapter Four Fixing Arrogance Through Faith

Rectifying arrogance through faith

In this chapter we will explain how a person can remove arrogance from himself and come to have humility – through faith.

The Ramban writes in his famous letter, “And now my son, know and see, that one who is arrogant in his heart on others is rebelling against the kingship of Heaven, for he is glorifying himself in clothes of Heaven, as it says (Tehillim 91:1), “*HASHEM is King, He wears clothing of glory.*” Why should a person be arrogant? If he has wealth, it is written, “*HASHEM makes destitute and wealthy.*” If it is honor, only of G-d it is written, “*Wealth and honor are before You.*” How can a person glorify himself with honor that belongs to his Creator?! And if he does glorify himself because of wisdom, it is written, “*He gives language to the faithful ones, and takes the taste from the elders.*” So everything is equal in regards to Him, “*for in His wrath He can humble arrogant ones and in His will he can uplift lowly ones.*”

Nullifying arrogance

It is apparent in these words of the Ramban that everything that a person has is from HASHEM. There is therefore no place for arrogance, and if he is arrogant then he is denying HASHEM and claiming that his achievements are his own.

Similar to these words are the words of the *Mesillas Yesharim* (Chap. 22), “However one who has an upright intellect, even if he has merited great wisdom, should really reflect that he has no place to be arrogant and have pride. For someone who has more intellect than others is only acting upon his nature, just as a bird flies because that is its nature, and an ox can work due to its strength because that is its nature, so is a wise person only acting upon his nature; and one who is not as wise as him can also be as wise as him, so there is no place for arrogance and pride. What can this be compared to? To servants of a house, in which everyone is given a specific job.... there is no place for arrogance.... when this becomes clear to him, then he can be called a truly humble person, for in his heart and inside he is humble.”

How to view yourself and another

A person has to know that since everything comes from HASHEM, he must view himself with this outlook, and thus attribute no personal honor towards himself because of his accomplishments. When you look at other people as well, however, the view should be the opposite: they are fully deserving of honor.

The Ramban writes in his letter, “Every person should be greater than you in your eyes, whether he is wise or wealthy – it is upon you to honor him, and if he is poor while you are wealthy or wiser than him – think in your heart that you are guilty while he is innocent, and even if he is a sinner, think that he is mistaken while you are intentional.”

You have knowledge, while your friend has free will

Anyone who sees these words and thinks into them will find this very hard: How does it make sense? If I am wealthy, I should not attribute it to myself, but to HASHEM; why, then, should I honor another because he is wealthier than me? Doesn't wealth come from HASHEM? If so, why is my friend to be to be honored from this...?

There are many answers to this, but we will say the deep answer. In the previous chapter, we explained that there are two perspectives – *yediah* (“knowledge”) and *bechirah* (“free will”). *Bechira* is the lower perspective, and it implies that since people have free will, it is logical for me to feel hurt at someone else for treating me wrong. *Yediah*, the higher perspective, is to see everything from a viewpoint of faith in Hashem. It is to believe, “I was supposed to be hurt, so I cannot be upset at this person who has wronged me, even though he was wrong for making such a choice. I was supposed to get hurt, because that is what Hashem decreed.”

This concept was applied before to the traits of anger and hatred, and now we can use it as well to solve arrogance. When it comes to my own accomplishments, I have to use the view of “*yediah*”, which is that I have nothing due to my own accord, since everything is from Hashem. But when it comes to how I view another, I must honor him due to his various accomplishments, because then I have to use the view of *bechira*.

This seeming contradiction is only a contradiction when I look at the things from the viewpoint of *bechirah*, but if I use the perspective of *yediah*, then there are no contradictions, because it is essentially a viewpoint of faith in Hashem – that every matter is entirely from Hashem.

Chazal state that “Humility is greater than all these things.” (Talmud, Avodah Zarah 20b). This meaning behind this is because the essence of humility is to totally nullify oneself and integrate with the Creator.

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