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Absorbing A Point Before Continuing

In the coming chapters, we will bring many ways how to serve Hashem, but before we approach them, we should first give a general introduction that is very important, if we want to gain from the guidance here.

There is a well-known story told about Reb Zalman of Volozhin, the brother of Rav Chaim Volozhiner, student of the Vilna Gaon. Once the Vilna Gaon was giving a shiur, and Reb Zalman asked him to stop in middle. The Vilna Gaon asked him, "Why do you wish me to stop? Is the Torah not precious to you?"

Reb Zalman replied, "To the contrary, because they are so precious to me, I want them to last. I still haven't internalized yesterday's lesson, and if I hear new things today, then I will forget yesterday's learning, and it will be long gone."

He was saying a very important lesson. When you hear something, first think about it, and only then can you add onto that knowledge.

If a person lights two Menorah lights on the second night of Chanukah and then he extinguishes the first light, he never got to the second light, and whatever he adds on after that is nothing, because the first light never remained. The same applies with Avodas Hashem. When we hear about a certain point we need to work on, first we have to make sure we acquire it well, and then we can continue to the next point to work on.

Practice What You Learn

The Torah is called "Torah" from the word *horaah*, which means "ruling." The Torah shows a person the proper way to serve Hashem. When a person learns Torah, the *halacha* is the goal. *Halacha* means "to go" - when a person actually goes in the way of Torah and lives his life accordingly, it is then that the Torah is absorbed in him and it becomes a Torah of life.

In order for a person to build himself, he needs to take the Torah's knowledge and live by it, to practice it. He needs to think into it.

The amount that each person needs to think differs with each person. The Torah is the light that shows a person the path. But not every path is the same. Some paths need more time to be on, and some less. There are many paths to take that are all from the Torah, but not every path is for every

situation. There are points which we need to work on, and there are points which are detrimental to work on which need to be left for a different time.

The words of this sefer, although they are written in this order, should be used sensibly. Every matter in this sefer has its rightful time and place, as Koheles (3:1) says. Each of the points delineated in this sefer can only be practiced depending on if you're able to do them, if you have the strength for it. If you don't have the energy for these matters in this sefer, then it will only be detrimental to how you act.

Inspiring Yourself vs. Building Yourself

Generally speaking, there are two points necessary in serving Hashem. One point is *binyan*, building yourself up through a careful plan. The other point is *hisorerus*, inspiring yourself. We need both.

Avodas Hashem needs to be built up with a careful plan, step after step. Therefore, time shouldn't be an issue to us, and we need to be patient with each step of the way. The main thing we should want here is to have a true, founded plan to work with, and our time is required for this. You will thus have to set aside time to work on the matters here. That is one point, and it is the basis.

Another point we need together with this is that we will need to inspire ourselves from time to time. It is written, "*I am asleep, but my heart is awake.*" We need to use our heart, which is awake, to affect our sleep-like state.

If a person is at a high level already, he knows how to awaken himself from within himself. He knows how to use his heart to awaken himself, because he has purified his heart. He hears the "Heavenly voice" from inside himself.

But for someone who isn't on that level, he needs to get inspiration from an outside source. This leads to problems, though, because when a person seeks inspiration from outside himself, it leads to much confusion.

We have said that there are two points we need to make use of: *binyan* and *hisorerus*. *Binyan* means to take one point and work with it and build upon it. When a person serves Hashem in this way, he should not work on other areas at the same time. Although "for every rule, there is an exception to the rule", generally, we must stick to the rules. When we work on more than one point at the same time, this is detrimental to our growth. That is true when a person uses the method of *binyan* to serve Hashem.

But there is another way, *hisorerus*, which is that a person can inspire himself to improve on other areas he needs to work on. However, *hisorerus* is a special burst of inspiration which comes from Hashem, and it changes from day to day. This creates a contradiction in one's Avodas Hashem. *Binyan* makes a person focused on one point alone, while *hisorerus* is about a different matter each day. This is apt to make a person confuse *hisorerus* with *binyan* – a person will try to take his *hisorerus* and build upon it, which will make him lose the whole goal.

Let's say a person hears of a tragedy: someone lost her husband, or someone lost his parent. If this news inspires him to work on himself, he should look at it as *hisorerus*. He should let himself get inspired by it, but he shouldn't build upon that inspiration, because inspiration doesn't last. Instead, he should let the inspiration serve as an awakening for him to continue his *binyan*.

Hearing Inspiration

When a person confuses *hisorerus* with *binyan*, it's like a forbidden mixture. What is the solution

then? How can we know if something is supposed to serve as a mere inspirational awakening for us, or as something we need to build upon?

There are two kinds of *hisorerus*. There are people who have never entered Avodas Hashem. You can have a person who is totally self-absorbed in his various fantasies. If he wants to pull himself out of this, he needs to get rid of the spiritual dirt covering him. With this type of inspiration, he should use whatever works to get himself out of his spiritual rut.

But there is another kind of *hisorerus*, and that is for a person who already has a plan in Avodas Hashem, and it is just that he has a bit spiritually asleep; such a person needs to awaken his plan from time to time, when he needs it.

This is a whole different kind of *hisorerus*. The first kind of person needs to be awakened from the rut he is in, which is that he's wasting his time and full of all sorts of impediments from Avodas Hashem. He needs to be given a way of Avodas Hashem. The second kind of person we discussed, though, already has a way of Avodas Hashem, but it is just that from time to time, he loses his energy, and he forgets what he has to do. He needs to be inspired to return to his plan.

We hope that those who are reading this are like the second kind of person, because the first kind of person, who is caught up and wasting time, does not know how to use *hisorerus*. He doesn't have guidance in Avodas Hashem to begin with, and even when gets inspired to change, he doesn't have a way to go on. So hopefully, we are all past this stage.

We will thus focus on the second kind of *hisorerus*, which is to help a person get back to what he knows is true, and he just needs to be re-energized. Every person, if he really wants to serve Hashem, has to know what to work on first, what comes in the middle, and what is in the goal. One must know which point he is currently at, and to what he is aspiring for.

We can compare this to a person climbing a ladder. First, a person has to know which rung to begin climbing the ladder with. Then he sees which rung he is on. Finally, he sets his eyes on the top of the ladder and begins to climb it. If one of these three steps is missing, a person doesn't know where to begin and to where he is going, and he will fall from the ladder.

If a person doesn't know where he is holding, he is very confused in how to serve Hashem. He doesn't know what to work on, and what happens? He will work on matters that are above his level to work on, and his actions will not be in line with his heart. And if a person loses sight of his goal, he might know what he has accomplished so far, but he lacks purpose to his life.

Thus, in order to gain from listening to words of inspiration, a person first has to give himself order in his Avodas Hashem. When a person has that orderliness, then even when he becomes sleep-like in his Avodas Hashem, he will know how to awaken himself and see where he is holding, and be able to continue happily.