



Getting to Know Your Imagination - 002 Refining Our Imagination By Contrasting

The Outer And Inner Layers Of Imagination

We have mentioned the different levels of medameh, from the lowest level to the highest level. The highest function of medameh is to resemble the middos of Hashem, which are contained in the middos of the Torah. The middle function of medameh is to compare things with each other. The lowest function of medameh is imagination. This is the brief outline of all the functions of medameh, from highest to lowest.

Let us begin to learn about the main part of this discussion, which is about the middle and lower uses of our medameh - comparing and imagination.

In our imagination, there are two layers. The outer layer of it is the imagination we are all familiar with - to fantasize. This mainly happens when we sleep and have dreams, which is total fantasy. But it takes place as well when we are awake; even when we are fully awake and function, we still fantasize, although it's not as powerful as when we dream. This is all the outer layer of our imagination: the fantasy.

The inner layer of our imagination is called Binah - the ability to probe into the understanding of information, through comparing facts.

The more we refine our power to compare information, our Binah - the more we refine our imagination. Even our dreams will be clearer if we work to improve our Binah.

The secular approach is to only use the visual aspect of imagination, which is only the outer use of our imagination. But the way of the Torah is to use the inner layer of imagination, which is Binah - to compare information and come to understand it. By refining our ability to make comparisons, we refine the inner layer to our imagination, and through that, our actual fantasies will be improved as well to become more true and accurate.

Using Our Binah - Comparing Information

Imagination itself only gives a person a partial understanding of a concept. What we really need to do is to compare the information in the concept, and that will give us the more accurate understanding of something we are imagining.

Example One: Knowing The Lesson of a Parable (Moshol V'Nimshal)

We find this reflected from the fact that we have to know a *moshol* and its *nimshal* - a parable, and the lesson it imparts. Many people can hear a parable, yet they don't get the lesson. There are *sefarim* which bring parables to bring out a certain lesson, and it's very possible that a person is reading the *moshol* without getting to the *nimshal*.

In a *moshol*, we need to see how it compares to the *nimshal*, and vice versa. Without knowing how to compare information, people come to exaggerate the information.

Example Two: Learning The Words of Rishonim

Another example is when a person learns Gemara in-depth, studying the words of the Rishonim (early commentaries such as Rashi, Rambam, Ramban, Rashba and Ritva, etc.) When learning the words of *Rishonim*, we need to compare their words – to see how each of them are differing with each other.

In what points are they similar? In what points are they different? Notice the differences.

Getting Used To Discerning Between Information, In General

It is understandable that in order to learn Torah properly, the facts needs to be scrutinized and compared well. But what isn't so known is that in general, we need to really compare information well, or else we come to imagine things.

Without developing our *Binah*, our thoughts are taking place one after the other in the form of imagination. Thought B came after Thought A, because the person thought that the two facts are similar...and often they are not similar.

Our thoughts take place very fast – they come one after the other in the blink of an eye. When we don't develop them, what happens? Reb Yisrael Salanter has written that the imagination roams free. Imagination aren't true thoughts – they are a random jumble of thoughts which bear no connection one to another.

What we need to do is see the differences between Thought A and Thought B, and then we won't come to compare them so fast.

Example Three: Compare Esrogim

To give an example of how can refine our *Binah* in daily occurrences (by comparing facts), when you're looking for an *esrog*, make sure to compare the differences between one *esrog* and another.

Learning Torah Is The Main Way That We Develop Our Binah

Let us emphasize that the main aspect of our power to compare has to be utilized through learning Torah. When we learn, we can work on comparing facts, and this mainly develops our power to compare, which helps refines our imagination. We are just saying that in addition to this, one needs to also get used to comparing facts in general, such as in the example of comparing *esrogim*.

Women Should Also Use The Second Method

Learning Torah and scrutinizing the facts as we learn is something that is only applicable for men, understandably. Women who want to improve their imagination need to only use the second part of the solution, which is to get used to comparing information in daily occurrences.

Contrasting

Imagining is thus only the external layer of imagination. The inner layer of imagination is to *compare* facts – to *analyze*.

When we learn Gemara, we mainly use our ability to compare, which is the inner layer of imagination. To imagine what's going on in the Gemara in the *visual* sense is not so recommended to do. We

mainly have to use the inner layer of imagination when we learn, which is to compare and see the *contrasts* of facts.

How many things do we see from morning until night? We see countless things, and all of this is imprinted in our minds. All of these images in our head become jumbled together and form our imagination. When we don't work on developing our power to compare facts, our mind is left as it is – one big jumble of imagination. People go their whole life like this, unless they work on developing their power of *Binah*.

To work on this, take something you see and compare it with something else that looks similar. See how it's similar – and how it's different.

This is the beginning of developing a holy imagination. The more you get used to this, the more you will see that even your dreams are clearer.

A Deeper Method: Checking The Previous Thoughts

There is another, higher approach to work on this, which we will now explain. It can be practiced only for someone who is on the level of working at this.

Let's say a person tends to imagine a lot - understandably, things that are not forbidden to think about. How can he uproot this tendency?

He can check his thoughts: What is the difference between my previous thought, and my current thought? How did I come to compare Fact A with Fact B that I thought of them one after the other?

By getting used to this, we are essentially gaining control over our erroneous imagination by using our real power of thought. Our real thoughts can control our imaginative thoughts – and we access our real thought by checking our thoughts in this way.

A person in this way gets to know better what's going on his mental psyche – how he came to compare Fact A with Fact B, why he was inclined to think about the two thoughts together.

Our imagination has in it both good and evil, just like everything else in Creation, which is a mix of good and evil. Our avodah is always to sift out the good from the evil in everything, remaining with the good and throwing away the evil.

The good part in our imagination is our ability to compare two facts that are similar, while the evil in our imagination is when we compare two things that are really not similar. By always **checking our previous thoughts**, we separate the good from the evil in them – and then we slowly gain a refined, clear imagination that we can rely upon. The more we get used to this, the less we will imagine things that are erroneous.

Summary of the Three Methods How We Can Refine Our Imagination

To summarize, we gave three solutions to how we can work on refining our imagination.

The first method is to contrast the words of the different *Rishonim* as we learn Gemara, and this is the main method (for men, that is).

The second method is for both men and women: to get used to comparing two similar things, to contrast the differences. Men have to do this in addition to learning Gemara in order to be able to refine the imagination; women do not learn Torah, so they can only use this method.

The third part of the solution is only meant for those who are at the level of working on this: to check your previous thoughts and see how your previous thought lead up to your current thought. This is a more inner way to refine the imagination, and anyone who is capable of doing this should practice it.

Source: <https://dev.bilvavi.net/english/getting-know-your-imagination-002-refining-our-imagination-contrasting>