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## Bilvavi Part 5 - 293 Getting Higher

בלבבי חלק ה. "מילי דעבודה. פתיחה. ידע ולא ידע" עמ' רצג - שג

### **Chapter Fourteen**

#### **Two Kinds of Perception - "Knowing" and "Not Knowing"**

There are five levels of understanding. First, we will say what they are briefly, and then we will try to explain them. This is the order: *lo yeda* (to not know), *yeda* (to know), *yeda* (to know in a deeper way), *lo yeda* (to once again not know), and *yeda* (to completely know).

1. First, a person lacks the knowledge about something. This is called *lo yeda* (to not know).
2. Then, he knows about something on a basic level. This is called *yeda* (to know).
3. After this, a person reaches a higher kind of understanding, and this is a higher kind of *yeda*.
4. After this, a person is able to reach an even higher kind of understanding, in which he feels that he doesn't know anything, because he realizes that there is so much he doesn't know. This is called the higher kind of *lo yeda*.
5. Finally, a person comes to the ultimate level of knowledge, which is the uppermost level of *yeda*.

#### **1.**

At first, a person starts out in life not knowing anything. This is simply *lo yeda* - he doesn't know a thing. A person's perception at this level resembles a drunk person, who has temporarily lost his mind; or a retarded person, who does not have an able thinking mind. Or, he might also resemble a child, who has an immature level of understanding.

#### **2.**

A person then develops and gains *daas*, understanding. This is the first, basic kind of "*yeda*." It is a person's simple *daas*, and the Sages say (Sukkah 42b) that even a child can reach this kind of *daas*. A child can reach this *daas* once he is able to tell the difference between certain objects. Pharaoh wanted to see if Moshe was a smart child, by placing a plate of gold and a plate of fire in front of him, to see which one he would choose. That is also an example of the basic *daas* which even a child can get.

This basic level of *daas* is what accompanies a person throughout his life. This basic kind of *daas* is needed for any human being to survive, Jew and non-Jew alike. A person has to be a *bar daas*.

### 3.

A person is able to reach a higher kind of understanding, a higher *daas*. This is also called *daas d'kedushah* – holy understanding. Such *daas* is used when a person differentiates between what is materialistic, and what is spiritual. There are two stages in this kind of *daas*.

The first part is called *havdalah*, differentiating information. The second stage is called *chibbur*, connecting information together. In the initial stage, a person can use his *daas* to differentiate simply between materialism and spirituality, as we said above. After that comes a second stage: connecting to the spirituality that one finds.

A person can discover that not all spirituality is the same, and there are differing spiritual concepts. We need to know and recognize the different spiritual concepts that exist, and then, we need to know which concepts to connect to, because there is a time and place for everything.

Such *daas* is exercised by those who serve Hashem, who have a very structured daily schedule. Those who truly serve Hashem realize that there are three main pillars in serving Hashem – Torah, *Tefillah*, and *Chessed* – and that there is a time of the day for Torah, a time of the day for *Tefillah*, and a time for *Chessed*. They know how to use their *daas* and see how much time is necessary to spend on learning Torah, for *davening*, and for bestowing good upon others; as well as to discern what to learn in Torah, what to *daven* about, and what kind of *chessed* to do.

### 4.

Higher than this kind of *daas* is *lo yeda*, which means to “not know” – in other words, a kind of knowledge that is above the regular kind of knowledge. This level, *lo yeda*, is revealed especially on Purim. Chazal<sup>[1]</sup> state that on Purim, one has to get intoxicated until he reaches “*lo yeda*” – until he cannot tell the difference between “Cursed is Haman” and “Blessed is Mordechai.” This does not mean that one should simply become like a drunk person who has lost his *daas*; that would just be returning to the immature level of understanding, which is the first stage of *lo yeda*. Rather, on Purim, Chazal revealed that we have to elevate ourselves to a higher kind of *lo yeda* – a kind of understanding that is above even our mature kind of *daas*.

What is the higher kind of *lo yeda*? We will explain this.

The Baal Shem Tov established a great fundamental: everything, in essence, is G-dliness. It only appears to us superficially that there isn't G-dliness in something; but in essence, the inner layer of anything is G-dliness. Therefore, everything contains G-dliness – whether it is good, or whether it is *evil*.

If there is G-dliness contained somehow in everything, even evil, if so, what is “good” and “evil”, if nothing is really evil?!

The answer to this is that what we call “good” is anything in which the good in it has become revealed out in the open, and that you can tell clearly that it's good, even just by examining its superficial layer. (And the more that the good is revealed in something, the more it gains holiness; this is a separate discussion, and let this brief explanation suffice for now, as it is a vast topic). By contrast, we call something “evil” when its external aspect is concealing the G-dliness within it.

Thus, we only see “evil” when we look at the external layer of something. When we look at the inner

layer of something, its essence, then all we will see is good – total and complete G-dliness.

## 5.

This is the secret behind our avodah on Purim. The avodah of the day of Purim is to realize that we shouldn't look at the superficial, external layer of something, and that instead we should see the inner layer of something and connect to it. The inner layer of everything is totally G-dly, and that is what we need to see.

Let's take, for example, Haman and Amalek – what we would consider classic evil. The root of Haman is good, and the root of Amalek is good!

On Purim, our inner mission is to arrive at our innermost depths. If a person merits on Purim to uncover this very deep perspective – which is the awesome spiritual light that is available to acquire on this holy day – then even after Purim ends, the inner perspective has been imprinted onto his soul. It is a perspective which goes straight to the root of all roots in Creation. Throughout the rest of the year, a person will then be able to see how everything is good at its root, and he will not just see “evil” in something he thinks is evil. He will be able to tell that something evil only appears to be evil on its outside, but on the inside, it too is good.

This was essentially the level that Rabbi Akiva reached, when he saw the site of the destruction.<sup>[2]</sup> He laughed, because even though he saw the destruction, he was aware that in essence, even the destruction contained good.

## 6.

If a person merits well to absorb this perspective in his soul, there will be a total overhaul in his whole life. He will transform into a person who lives inwardly, in G-dliness – and not someone who just lives superficially. This internal shift in his soul will change his whole view on life – as well as in the way he learns Torah.

Although a person even at this understanding will still feel that there are things that are evil, he will be able to realize that evil only appears on the outer layer of something, because the inner essence of something is always good, and that it is complete G-dliness.

On Purim, the Jews accepted the Torah again, willingly.<sup>[3]</sup> The depth behind this is that the generation reached the innermost understanding of Torah. When the nation stood at Har Sinai, we were forced to accept the Torah. We were afraid of being buried under the mountain, so our acceptance of the Torah did not show that deep down we loved the Torah. But on Purim, we accepted the Torah out of love this time, because the nation came to love Hashem out of the miracles He performed for us.<sup>[4]</sup> It was revealed then a new acceptance of Torah – an acceptance of love; to unify with the Torah. Since they accepted the Torah now in this way, they reached an inner understanding of Torah – and they then perceived the total G-dliness that is found in everything.

## 7.

On Purim, everything got turned upside down – “*V'nahafoch hu*”. Our enemy was plotting to destroy us, and the day that we would have been massacred ending up becoming a day of salvation, in which we all rejoiced.

What is the depth behind the matter of “*V'nahafoch hu*”?

Everything in Creation consists of two layers to it: an outer layer, and an inner layer. The outer layer

in Creation are the nations of the world, while the Jewish nation is at the inner layer of Creation. "Hashem, the Torah, and the Jewish people are one." In other words: it is exclusively the Jewish nation which is capable of revealing G-dliness in everything. By contrast, the other nations of the world cannot reveal the inner, G-dly essence of things. Although they are good too at their root – because everything is rooted in good – they do not even reveal the goodness.

At the time of Purim, the enemies of the Jewish people were seeking to massacre us. What was their real intention? They didn't just want to kill our physical existence. They wanted to destroy the Jewish people because the Jewish people represent the inner layer of Creation, which is G-dliness. They wanted to destroy G-dliness, and instead leave everything at its external shell, in which there is no revelation of G-dliness. Trying to destroy the Jewish people was thus their way of trying to destroy the inner layer of Creation: the G-dliness inherent in everything.

And what did Hashem do? He turned everything around. The Jews ended up defeating their enemies – in other words, not only do the Jewish people serve to reveal the inner layer of everything, but even their enemies can reveal the inner layer, because when the enemies of the Jews are defeated, their very failure served to reveal how even evil can be good, because it brought the Jewish people's inner power of revealing G-dliness to the fore.

## 8.

After the higher kind of *lo yeda* comes the highest kind of understanding: *yeda*.

This final level of knowledge is that after a person reaches the perspective of *lo yeda*, in which he has seen how there is G-dliness at the root of everything, he connects totally to Hashem. Upon meriting this utter connection of ultimate *d'veykus*, the person receives a whole new *daas*. It is a *daas* that comes from the Creator. It is a *daas* of total G-dliness, which cannot be understood through human comprehension.

## 9.

This highest level was found by Betzalel, who was able to figure out how to make the Mishkan without having been told to make it. He was called Betzalel, which comes from the words "*B'tzail keil hayisa*" – "You are in the shadow of G-d." [5] In other words, because he was so close to Hashem, he merited to receive *daas* from the Creator, and therefore he knew what to do in making the Mishkan.

Of Betzalel, it is written that he possessed *chochmah*, *binah* and *daas*. The understandings of *chochmah* and *binah* is the third level of *daas* we described, which is called *daas d'kedushah*. This is within the bounds of human comprehension. Betzalel reached a higher kind of comprehension, the higher kind of *yeda/daas*, the *daas* that comes directly from the Creator, out of his great closeness to Hashem.

## 10.

The Ramchal, in *sefer Derech Hashem* (III:3) describes this as *ruach hakodesh*.

## 11.

If we wish to have any inkling of understanding about this kind of *daas*, we will quote a letter written by the *Sfas Emes* [6] (which is really describing a lower kind of *daas*, but it still a higher kind of *daas* than the regular kind of *daas* we are used to):

"There is a higher kind of understanding that exists, which is not the external kind of understanding

that we identify with simply. It is a kind of knowledge that is connected to the person, and it is no less powerful of an awareness to a person than the awareness of protecting one's life – which, although a person doesn't think about this all the time, it is also something that one never forgets, because it is a subconscious knowledge that has become attached to his very essence.”

There is an even higher level than what the *Sfas Emes* is describing, and that is when the awareness is coming from one's very essence (which is deeper than when the awareness becomes connected and absorbed internally in the person). Meaning, it's not just that this awareness has become internalized into my being – it is even more than that: just like the awareness that I exist is not some other knowledge, but a whole different kind of knowledge – an awareness that comes from my very existence – so can I be aware of certain truths, with the same conviction.

Understand this point well.

A Jew has to aspire throughout his life to reach this kind of understanding, and he must strive to reach it especially on Purim. At first a person should strive to reach *lo yeda*[\[7\]](#), and then he should strive to reach the higher *yeda*.

## 12.

What we have been describing here is the path towards fixing the primal sin of Creation – the sin of Adam. At first, Adam was in Gan Eden, and he had the highest kind of attachment with Hashem – the highest kind of *yeda/daas*. After the sin, man fell from this exalted kind of *daas*, to the level of intermediate kind of *daas*, which is *daas d'kedushah*. Chazal describe this demotion to our *daas* as “Yesterday (before sin), there was my *daas* (the *daas* of Hashem), and today (after the sin), I have the *daas* of the Serpent.”

Now that we are after the sin, our natural *daas* is the *daas* we gained from the evil *eitz hadaas*. In addition to what we lost after Adam's sin, the generations have fallen to an even lower kind of *daas*, which is a mundane kind of understanding; and after that, the generations feel into the lowest level, which is the first kind of *lo yeda*, in which there is basically no *daas* at all.

If we want to return to the way things were supposed to be – to the *daas* we had from the *eitz hachaim*, which was actually the true *daas* of the Creator – then we need to come out of the *eitz hadaas*. In order to exit the *eitz hadaas*, which is the initial level that we all start out with, we need to enter *lo yeda*. After reaching *lo yeda*, we can then advance to the highest *daas*, which is to gain the *daas* of the Creator.

## 13.

Let us explain this matter more.

The *Eitz HaChaim* contained the true *daas* of the Creator, and it is the *daas* of our holy *neshamah* (soul). Man is currently at the level of the *Eitz HaDaas*, the lower kind of understanding – even since Adam ate from it. If a person attempts to gain the *daas* of the Creator while he is still at the level of *Eitz HaDaas*, this is impossible, because he will not be able to contain such spiritual illumination. He only has human understanding, which cannot comprehend the higher *daas*. Therefore, it is impossible for a person to use his regular kind of comprehension to try to understand what higher *daas* is.

This is the meaning of the “fiery, churning sword” that Hashem placed at the entrance of Gan Eden, after He drove out Adam and Chavah. It was to show that we cannot receive the higher *daas* using our human comprehension, which is really the lower *daas* – the knowledge that entered us after the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas*. The “fiery, churning sword” alludes to how we will only get confused if we

attempt to gain higher *daas* while we are still at the lower understanding, just like something that churns takes things and turns them over and over, mixing everything up.

It's actually a very good thing that Hashem placed the "fiery, churning sword" to guard the higher *daas*. If not for this, people would think that they understand perspectives from the higher *daas* by using their regular comprehension, and in reality, they wouldn't be understanding anything. They would only be fooling themselves. It would be a degrading to the great spiritual light as a person attempts to lower it to his human understanding.

However, at the same time, it shows us how our lower understanding of the *Eitz HaDaas* can become fixed. How? When a person tries to understand things, he realizes that he doesn't really understand, and that he's very mixed up. The "fiery, churning sword" which guards the *Eitz HaDaas* in Gan Eden is stopping him from knowing what the knowledge of the *Eitz HaDaas* is, and it confuses the person as the person attempts to understand it. This itself makes a person realize that his *daas* is not the true *daas* - and through that, he is able to actually come to "*lo yeda*". He realizes that he does not know anything; "*lo yeda*."

Thus, one of the ways how we can fix our impaired *daas* which we received from the *Eitz HaDaas* is by learning about things that are way above our comprehension, and by realizing that we do not understand these things, our soul will realize that it does not have true *daas*. What will then happen? Our soul will lose value for the current *daas* we have, because it has now become aware that our current comprehension is not yet the true comprehension.

(A person must be very careful with this, however, that he should not make the mistake of thinking that he indeed understands the perspective of *lo yeda*; he must be aware always that he does not understand anything. If he doesn't have this mindset, he will only fall lower, *chas v'shalom*.)

This is actually the secret behind why on Purim, "one is obligated to become intoxicated until he does not know ("*ad d'lo yoda*") the difference between "Cursed Is Haman" and "Blessed Is Haman". The *halachah* is that one has to become drunk on Purim specifically with wine, because wine reveals the secrets - the secrets of Torah. Through learning the secrets of Torah - matters that are really above our human comprehension - we can realize that we indeed do not understand it, and then we will be able to humble ourselves before the Creator and nullify our understanding. That is precisely what will bring a person to "*lo yeda*."

#### 14.

The climax of *lo yeda* is reached when a person comes to the level of that "*no man knows of his burial (Moshe's) until today*." Let us explain this.

There are two perspectives of understanding that a person has: the understanding from our *neshamah*/soul, and the understanding of our *seichel*/intellect, which is our physical human comprehension, present in our body.

Our *neshamah*'s understanding has the higher perspective of *lo yeda*. Our *neshamah*'s understanding is not regular human comprehension, so it cannot be comprehended with our intellect. Therefore, it is only our *neshamah* which can gain the *daas* of the Creator.

Our *avodah* is to nullify our regular intellectual understanding (by realizing that we indeed do not comprehend anything). When we do this, our intellect itself will then be able to gain the perspective of *lo yeda*, and our *neshamah* will shine its understanding upon our *seichel*/intellect.

(This is the secret behind *ruach hakodesh*. There is an even deeper understanding than this, and that

is the ultimate kind of *lo yeda*: when our *neshamah* reaches an even higher understanding, in which it becomes aware that even a *neshamah* does not truly comprehend the Creator, because Hashem is really endless. It will suffice just to mention this briefly, and we will not delve into this subject).

If a person merits to reach *lo yeda*, there is still a higher level to reach, and that is to get even his very physical body to sense the understanding of *lo yeda*. It is written (Tehillim 35:10), “*All my bones will speak of this.*” The *possuk* is hinting to us that there is a level in which even our very body is aware of Hashem.

The only person to ever reach this was Moshe Rabbeinu, as he was leaving his body; his body became so sanctified that it reached the level of *lo yeda*. Since his physical body had reached *lo yeda*, for this reason, “*no man knows of his burial*” – in other words, no human being, who is only at the level of *yeda*, can know of Moshe’s burial place, where his body lies; because Moshe’s body reached *lo yeda*, and our perspective of *yeda* cannot comprehend the perspective of *lo yeda*.

## 15.

The Gemara (Bava Basra 12b) states that ever since the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, prophecy has been removed from the prophets, and it has instead been given to the mentally ill and to children. What is the meaning behind this?

It is because both a mentally ill person and a child do not have *daas*. Since they are each simple-minded kind of people, they do not possess *daas* of their own – and therefore, they are actually in the state of *lo yeda*. They are therefore able to reach the *daas* of the Creator. Although their level of *lo yeda* is not due to having worked upon themselves to nullify their *daas*, still, they have a certain simplicity in them. This is written by the Maharal in many places, in all different kinds of phrases.

One of the Sages also said (Berachos 57a) that if a person wakes up and a *possuk* suddenly comes out of his mouth, it is a small prophecy. This is because right when a person wakes up, he has no *daas*, because his *daas* hasn’t started working yet properly. A person who has just woken up resembles in some way the state of *lo yeda*, and therefore it is possible that a *possuk* will fall into his mouth – something rooted in the *daas* of the Creator; it resembles *ruach hakodesh* and prophecy.

## 16.

Even after a person merits to nullify his *daas* and thereby come to enter the understanding of *lo yeda*, it doesn’t end there. The Ramchal writes in *Derech Hashem* that no matter how much a person merits to comprehend even through *ruach hakodesh*, he can keep understanding more, the more he realizes that he still does not understand things.

No matter what level a person is on, he has to always keep davening to Hashem that he be drawn closer to a truer understanding. As long as a person lives on this world, *davening* for this should not stop. (To bring out the concept, we mentioned before that “*lo yeda*” implies that we never truly understand, and even if we reach *lo yeda*, the understanding of our *neshamah*, we can still realize that we do not understand things.)

## 17.

This is the meaning behind the famous statement, “The purpose of knowledge is for us to know that we do not know.”<sup>[8]</sup> Simply, it means that the purpose of our human comprehension is to come to understand *lo yeda*, and after reaching *lo yeda*, a person receives *daas* from the Creator as a gift. But there is a deeper meaning behind this statement. The deeper explanation of it is that the purpose of knowledge – even the higher knowledge, which is a *daas* poured down from the Creator – is not yet

the goal, because even our higher *daas* has to become nullified.

When we keep nullifying our *daas* more and more – even our higher *daas* – we reach higher understandings, and it's endless to how much we can do this.

Understand this.

***The Following Is Meant For Those Who Desire (Or Have Already Entered) To Learn Inner Torah***

**18.**

In more recent generations, and especially in our own generation, many people are desiring to learn *Chochmas HaEmes* (Inner Torah), to taste the true *daas*, the *daas* of the *Eitz HaChaim*. After Adam sinned, he was sent out of Gan Eden, away from the *Eitz HaChaim*. Hashem placed a “fiery, churning sword” to guard it ever since, as the *possuk* in *Beraishis* states clearly.

What is the lesson of this? It is to show us that even when we desire to taste the true *daas*, which is Inner Torah/*Chochmas HaEmes*/the *daas* of the *Eitz HaChaim*, we cannot remain connected to the lower knowledge we got from the *Eitz HaDaas*. It has to be this way; why should a lowly human being, who often sins and rebels against the Creator, be allowed to cross into Gan Eden and taste of the true *daas*? Only after a person purifies himself – by separating himself from the knowledge of the *Eitz HaDaas* – can he be permitted to return to man's original source, Gan Eden, and taste of the *Eitz HaChaim*.

**19.**

How, indeed, can a person remove himself from his current level of *eitz hadaas*?

Hashem has really revealed it to us in the Torah: the *Eitz HaChaim* is guarded by the “fiery, churning sword.” In addition, He placed there *keruvim* (angels) that hold the sword. This shows us that there are two aspects to the fiery, churning sword: the sword itself, as well as the angels who wield it.

We explained how we “guard” the *Eitz HaChaim* through the “fiery, churning sword”, before: by returning ourselves to *lo yeda*, which can enable us to receive *daas* of the Creator. In addition, we also need the “*keruvim*” who guard it – let us explain what this is.

Between the Aron, there were two *Keruvim* placed; when the Jewish people does the will of Hashem, they face each other, and when the Jewish people does not do the will of Hashem, the *keruvim* turn away.

The *keruvim* that Hashem placed to guard Gan Eden are similar to the state of the *keruvim* when they turn away from each other. The *keruvim* placed at the entrance to Gan Eden are serving to turn away, which resembles the *keruvim* when they are turned away from each other. The *keruvim* turn away whenever there is a lack of a relationship between the Jewish people and Hashem. So if someone wants to enter Gan Eden and taste of the *Eitz HaChaim*, he first needs to turn them around to face each other. In other words, he has to truly love Hashem – the state of the *keruvim* when they faced each other.

Therefore, besides for reaching *lo yeda*, a person also needs to have a tremendous love for Hashem, if he wants to taste true *daas*. The love of Hashem has to be burning within his heart. Without a great love for Hashem, a person will never properly understand Inner Torah, and any attempts to do have only proven to be a failure.



## 20.

Therefore, those who seek to learn Inner Torah, the true *daas*, must make sure that they have these two prerequisites: 1) to have a very strong, burning love for Hashem. 2) To nullify one's *daas*, which enables one to reach *lo yeda*; from thereon, Hashem can merit the person to taste of the *Eitz HaChaim* – the *daas* of our *neshamah*, the *daas* of the Creator.

We can reach both of these prerequisite to the *Eitz HaChaim*, on Purim. On Purim, the Jewish people reached a great love for Hashem, by accepting the Torah again. We also can reach *lo yeda* on Purim – through the wine of Purim, in which a person has to reach the point of “*ad d'lo yoda*”, the point where he cannot tell the difference between Haman and Mordechai.<sup>[9]</sup>

For this reason, the Sage say that “in the future, all of the festivals will disappear – except for Purim”. It is because Purim enables a person to reach the understanding of the *Eitz HaChaim*, which is eternal.

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[1] Megillah 7b

[2] Makkos 24b

[3] Shabbos 88a

[4] Rashi, ibid.

[5] See Rashi to Shemos 37:22

[6] *Sfas Emes, Avos* p.56

[7] As explained before, the higher *lo yeda* is to realize that everything is good in its essence, even evil. The higher *yeda*, which comes after the higher *lo yeda*, is to be aware of Hashem's goodness not just as another fact of life, but in the same way that one realizes that he exists.

[8] *Sefer "Bechinas Olam"*, 13:45.

[9] In the series *Getting To Know Your Happiness (Da Es Simchasecha)*, the Rov explains that through the wine of Purim, one can reach a level in which he does not differentiate between good and evil, because he realizes that even evil can turn out to be good; this is the meaning between not knowing the difference between Haman and Mordechai.