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Da'as and Bittul (Nullification)

With the help of Heaven, we are learning about the concept of *da'as*. Let us explore here a particular aspect of *da'as*, which is a multi-faceted topic.

We find a common term used by our Sages: "He nullifies his *da'as* to all people."^[1] There is an ability we have that even when we disagree with how others think, we can still nullify our way of thinking to others.

From where does a person derive the strength to have this ability of *bittul* (self-nullification) to others?

Three Kinds of Bittul

We find several kinds of *bittul*. There is a concept of *bittul* when it comes to a mixture of food (a *ta'aruvos*), where part of the food can be "nullified by a sixtieth", or by the majority. There can only be *bittul* where there is a mixture; if something does not mix with something else in the first place, there can be no *bittul* on it.

There is *bittul* when it comes to mixtures, but there is also another kind of *bittul* we find: When something becomes nullified to something else. An example of this is when part of a *sukkah* is considered "nullified" to the ground; the *halachah* is that a *sukkah* higher than 20 cubits high is invalid for use, and the Gemara says that if we want to make it kosher, there are ways to cause part of the *sukkah* to be nullified to the ground, and then it is considered to be less than 20 cubits high.

But what does it mean that a person can nullify his *da'as* to others? We all have a certain *da'as*. How do we nullify our own *da'as* to others? Making the question stronger, the Gemara says that "Just as all faces are not equal, so are all *de'os* (ways of thinking) not equal."^[2] Each person has a different kind of *da'as*, a different way of thinking. So if each of our *da'as* is different from one another, how are we able to nullify our *da'as* to others? What would cause a person to nullify his *da'as* to another?

Da'as Requires Connection To The Da'as of Others

We must conclude that our ability of *da'as* is not an ability that stands on its own. Our *da'as* stems from a mixture, from a giant pool of a more collective understanding, and from there, each person receives his own unique *da'as*. And since our *da'as* comes from a mixture of all the many different *de'os* (opinions\ways of thinking) of others, it follows then that we can nullify our *da'as* to the *da'as* of others, because our *da'as* is ultimately connected with others.

The source of *da'as* is in the *Eitz HaDa'as Tov V'Ra* (the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil), which contained a mixture of both "*da'as tov*" (good and holy *da'as*) and "*da'as ra*" (evil *da'as*). From this we can see that all *da'as* comes from a mixture. This further proves the idea we are saying that the ability of *da'as* is not an ability that stands by itself, since all *da'as* is coming from a mixture that involves other kinds of *da'as*.

Another proof to this is that the Torah writes, "And Adam knew ("*vayeida*") Chavah", and here the word *vayeida*, a use of the word *da'as*, is referring to connection to another. This further shows us that *da'as* is always about connecting; *da'as* is never found alone and by itself.

We can now understand with greater depth why each person's *da'as* is different: because *da'as* can only be "*da'as*" in the first place when viewed in relation to others. Therefore, by its very concept, *da'as* has to be unique with each person.

When one cannot understand others' thinking, he is all by himself and wrapped up in his own way of thinking, and such "*da'as*" is not real "*da'as*". The ability of *chochmah* (wisdom) in the soul can be considered "*chochmah*" even if one does not understand the *chochmah* of others, but there is no such thing as having *da'as* one when is all alone in his own *da'as* and he cannot accept the *da'as* of others.

Thus, we can now understand the depth of why a person can nullify his *da'as* to others: it is because our *da'as* really stems from a place of connection with others. *Da'as* is always connecting outward from itself; it is never by itself.

To give an example, the Gemara says that every time a person betroths a woman, he is doing so based on the *da'as* of the Sages. Here again we see that *da'as* depends on others. If *da'as* would be by itself, my *da'as* would depend solely on my own *da'as*, and it would not depend on the *da'as* of the Sages. But since *da'as* is never by itself and it is always about connection, my *da'as* depends on a greater *da'as* that is beyond my own *da'as*. We also find that Betzalel was blessed with the ability of *da'as* to make the Mishkan; the Torah writes that he is called "*yodeia l'tzaref*", "the one who knows how to connect", implying that *da'as* is the ability to connect outward.

We have brought many examples that illustrate the idea that *da'as* is not a trait that exists by itself; *da'as* always connects outward, in order for it to function.

This is the underlying essence that describes the entire concept of *da'as*.

The Connection Between Da'as and Bittul

Now we can understand how *da'as* enables a person to feel *bittul* (nullification) towards others. *Bittul* gets its strength from *da'as*. This is because our *da'as* depends on others' *da'as* in order for it to function; it is always connecting to other *de'os*. Each person's *da'as* is different, so how are we able to connect to others? Only through a *bittul* of our *da'as*.

Without being able to have *bittul* on our *da'as*, we would never be able to connect to others. We would be disagreeing with others all day and no one would be friends, because no one would know how to nullify themselves to others when there is a difference of opinion. But since *da'as* is all about connecting to other *de'os*, our *da'as* enables us to connect to others and have *bittul* to others.

Previously, we mentioned that the word *da'as* has the same letters as the word *oid* (more)^[3], and now we add on another implication behind this: it hints to us that *da'as* works when we connect to "more" than ourselves - when we nullify ourselves to others. So *bittul* enables *da'as* to thrive. If not for the ability of *bittul*, our *da'as* cannot function.

Another Difference Between Holy and Evil Da'as

Now we can understand better what “*da’as tov*” (good and holy *da’as*) is and what “*da’as ra*” (evil *da’as*) is, a concept we have begun to explain in previous chapters^[4]: “*Da’as tov*” is when I can have *bittul* on my *da’as* for others, whereas *da’as ra* is when I remain with my own *da’as* and I cannot nullify it to others.

Da’as tov is all about connection; *da’as ra* is all about disparity. *Da’as tov* connects *de’os* together, while *da’as ra* places each person’s *da’as* into a separate compartment, where there is no connection to other *de’os*. Upon a deeper look, *da’as ra* is not true *da’as*, because it doesn’t allow for *bittul*, and that is why such *da’as* cannot really thrive. This is essentially the “evil” itself that is contained in *da’as ra*: its unwillingness to accept the *da’as* of others. So *da’as tov* is always connecting to the *da’as* of others and nullifying itself, while *da’as ra* cannot cause connection and it only furthers disparity.

Nullifying one’s *da’as* to another is a kind of *da’as* that can connect to others; a *da’as* that understands that all *de’os* are really connected at their root, for it recognizes that all *de’os* are really connected under one unit. Therefore, the concept of being able to nullify your *da’as* to another is not simply so that you should nullify yourself to that certain person, but because we understand that all *de’os* are ultimately connected to each other. So although each person’s *da’as* is different, all the many *de’os* of are connected at their root, and that is why we should nullify our *da’as* to all people.

Thus, *da’as tov* is where a person’s *da’as* is causing him to connect to the *da’as* of others (and on the broader scale of things, when each person does this, it is a *da’as* that unifies us all together), whereas *da’as ra* is a kind of *da’as* where each person’s unique way of thinking causes him to be apart from another.

Now we can have a better understanding of the aspects of “*tov*” (good) and *ra* (evil) contained in *da’as*.

Two Sources of Connection: Ahavah\Love and Da’as

What is the power in our soul that fosters connection to others? The simple answer is the power of *ahavah* (love). That is true, but there is also another power in the soul that enables connection: *da’as*. These are two different sources of connection to others, and they are not the same mode of connection.^[5]

It is clear to us that *ahavah*\love connects us to others, but how does our *da’as* connect us to others? It seems that *da’as* is something that separates us from each other, being that we all have a different *da’as*. But this is only true when we view the external layer of *da’as* – the fact that we all have a certain way of thinking. In this aspect, we are certainly different from one another, and this does not connect us to others. But when we view the inner layer of *da’as*, we can see how *da’as* really connects us all together. We will explain.

Let’s understand how *ahavah*\love causes connection to others, and how *da’as* causes connection to others, and the difference between these two kinds of connection.

We mentioned the concept that at our root, all *de’os* are connected. But what is it that actually connects us all together? Simply speaking, it is because there is only one true *Da’as* that exists [the recognition of Hashem], and we are all nullified to that *Da’as*. All *de’os* can be nullified to that *da’as*, no matter how much of each of the *de’os* differ from other, because ultimately, we all agree to that one *Da’as* that we are united under. That is one way of how we can see that all *de’os* are connected.

But there is a more subtle way of explaining how all the *de’os* are connected. It lies in the

understanding of the difference between how *ahavah* causes connection to others and how *da'as* causes connection to others. With *ahavah*, I love another, but I am not nullified to him. But if I connect to another out of my *da'as*, I can nullify myself to him.

This can also be explained in terms of *ahavah* (love) and *yirah* (awe). *Ahavah* connects two people together, and *yirah* nullifies each person to the other. For example, a person of lesser stature must have *yirah* towards one who is greater than him; he must nullify himself to him. There is also a concept of a greater person nullifying his own *da'as* to a person who is of lesser stature than him.

So *ahavah* connects two people together, and *yirah* nullifies each person to the other; it nullifies the smaller person to the greater person. But with *da'as*, even the greater person is nullified to the smaller person. Thus, it is *da'as bittul* which connects all people together.

We have explained thus far there are two ways of how *da'as* connects everyone together, in spite of the fact that each person's *da'as* is different. One way to explain it is because all people are ultimately nullified to one *da'as*. The other way of understanding how it works is that when there is *bittul* in each person's *da'as* to the *da'as* of others.

Bittul is not limited to when a smaller person nullifies himself to a greater person, being that he understands that the greater person knows more than him. The Sages state that in certain cases, a greater person should know how to nullify his understanding to a person with lesser understanding.^[6] To clarify, I should know how to have *bittul* to others not because I must learn how to see the truth in others' thinking. Even if I don't see a truthful way of thinking in others, my *da'as* can still enable me to nullify myself their thinking.

Two Ways of How To Reach Da'as

Until now, we have explained two ways of how our *da'as* enables us to connect to others. Now let us understand a deeper point about *da'as*.

We have been discussing here concepts that can apply very practically in our life. Now we will see how these concepts can practically apply in our own life: there is a way for one to reach the holy and true kind of *da'as* - by nullifying his own *da'as* to others.

There are essentially two ways to reach the power of *da'as*. One way is to reach *da'as* is by constantly trying to get to the truth of a matter and to keep refining how well we understand something [when it comes to our Torah learning]. We keep digging deeper and deeper and probing our understanding, in order to get to the truthful understanding of the matter.^[7] This is one way of how we can reach *da'as*.

But another way to reach *da'as* is by nullifying our *da'as* to the *da'as* of others; by accepting that others also have their own way of thinking. When one has nullified his own understanding to others, he has become connected to others, and since all others are united under collective *da'as* as a whole, the person who has nullified his *da'as* receives *da'as* from the higher source that all of the *de'os* are connected to.

This is not just another aspect contained in the concept of *da'as*. It is the very way to reach *da'as*! When one nullifies himself to another's *da'as*, even when he disagrees with him, not only has he learned to accept what another says; he receives an illumination of spiritual light, a higher *da'as*, in connecting with the other's *da'as*. He receives it because he has essentially nullified himself to it - by nullifying his own *da'as* to another's *da'as*.

Higher Da'as

There is also a third, deeper way to reach *da'as*.

Da'as touches upon the highest spiritual dimension, which is referred to as the plane of "*echad*" (oneness). There are external and inner layers to *da'as*. The external layers of *da'as* are many, but at the inner layer of *da'as*, it is entirely one point of *da'as*.

The Gemara says that there were three instances in which Hashem's *da'as* agreed with Moshe's *da'as*. The depth of this is that Moshe's *da'as* was united with Hashem's *da'as*. That is how Moshe reached Hashem's *da'as*. It is not simply that Moshe did something and then Hashem agreed, *chas v'shalom*. Rather, it means that Moshe's *da'as* reached such a high level that it touched upon the very oneness of Hashem. Moshe's *da'as* become intertwined with Hashem's *da'as* and that is how Hashem's *da'as* "agreed" with Moshe's *da'as*.

We find a reoccurring theme that the concept of *da'as* is usually associated with the number 3^[8]. Moshe used his *da'as* three times where Hashem's *da'as* agreed. The understanding of this is because when there are two points, a third point in the middle serves to connect them. But even though *da'as* causes three points to occur, it stems from one point; it is rooted in a place of oneness. The root of *da'as* is always one point, for *da'as* is rooted in "*echad*".

Thus, we can now have a deeper understanding of how all *de'os* are connected together: because there is only one true *da'as* in the world, and all *de'os* are connected to that point.

The Gemara says that one of the students of Rabbi Meir said he never saw the end of Rabbi Meir's *da'as* until after forty years of understanding him. What is the difference between the beginning of Rabbi Meir's *da'as* and the end of *da'as*? The beginning of *da'as* is when it is in three points, and the end of *da'as* is when it is one point.

To be clearer about this, at the lower plane, which is our current dimension of understanding, *da'as* forms three points; thus there are "many" *de'os*. But on the higher plane of reality, *da'as* is entirely one point. On this world, we see many *de'os*; everyone has different opinions and different ways of thinking. But on the higher plane of reality, there is only one *da'as*.

The *de'os* on this world are many; people disagree. In the Gemara, we find many disagreements of our Sages, and it seems to us that one of them must be the correct opinion while the other is wrong. But the Gemara says, "*Their words, and their words, are the words of the living G-d*" – that even if one of the Sages says a certain *halachah* is forbidden and the other Sages says it is permissible, Hashem is learning their words in Heaven and He is saying, "They are both correct."^[9] This is because in the higher plane of reality, there is a higher *da'as*, in which there many arguments in the words of our Sages do not have to imply that only one opinion is the correct one; rather, all of the *de'os* are true, because their *da'as* is connected to their higher root, which is a place of oneness.

Because we live on this lower plane of reality, we must decide between two opposing *de'os*. This is because we live in a "world of action", and we must know how to act, therefore, we have no choice but to "decide" between the two different *de'os* on how to act. But even so, we must know that above in Heaven, Hashem agrees with all of the *de'os* of our Sages, because all of their *da'as* is rooted in His oneness.

"Higher *da'as*" is not about knowing what the *halachah* is in case where there are two differing *de'os* of our Sages and to decide which opinion is the most truthful. Rather, higher *da'as* is to see the matter in all of its totality, to see all its dimensions; to see above the matter and below the matter, to see in front of the matter and behind it as well.^[10]

In contrast, "lower *da'as*" sees certain parts of the situation; it only sees divisions, and from that

viewpoint, it decides what the truthful understanding should be.

Arguments are called *machlokes*, from the word *cheilek*, “part”, because when there is a *machlokes*, each person is only seeing certain parts of the situation, and not the totality of the matter. Lower *da’as* contains many different *de’os*, and therefore there is *machlokes* in the lower plane of reality that we live on, because each person’s *da’as* sees different “parts” of a situation.

Korach argued with Moshe. As is well-known, Moshe represents *da’as*. Korach saw only a part of the situation; thus he thought he could argue with the *da’as* of Moshe, because he perceived the *da’as* of Moshe only through his ‘partial’ understanding; thus he didn’t see the total picture. He argued with Moshe’s *da’as* because he had only a divided kind of *da’as* which could only see divisions.

By contrast, when a person has reached higher *da’as*, he sees the totality of the situation, and not just certain parts of the situation. Higher *da’as* can understand that something can either be forbidden or permissible.

Of course, there is no such thing as one person who can say that something is forbidden and permissible at once; each person must have his own *da’as* towards a matter that he sticks to, otherwise he contradicts himself. But one person can say it is forbidden and another can say it is permissible, and they can both be right in Heaven - from the viewpoint of higher *da’as*.

In Summary

In summary, the difference between “lower *da’as*” and “higher *da’as*” is, that “higher *da’as*” sees all the dimensions of a matter, whereas “lower *da’as*” sees one “part” of a situation, and decides from there.

Applying “Higher Da’as” To Our Torah Learning

When we only use our “lower *da’as*” as we analyze a matter in the Torah, we are either separating or deciding in the information; these are the abilities of *da’as d’havdalah* and *da’as d’hachraah* which we have learned about previously. But if we remain at that level, we will only have a partial and divided understanding towards the matter, which is incomplete. But if we access the understanding of higher *da’as* - which is essentially the depth behind the power of *da’as d’chibbur* - then we can see all of the dimensions to the matter, as opposed to seeing just certain parts of the matter.

The Depth of Exile and Redemption

Today there are many *de’os* in the world; there is much arguing and there are so many different opinions that people have. But in the time of the future redemption, there will be oneness, and all *de’os* will be unified. In today’s times, each person sees something else in the very same thing. This defines the depth of exile: we can only see partially, as we are in exile. In the redemption, we will see things in their totality.

Summary of The Three Ways To Nullify Our Da’as

This is the depth behind the concept of nullifying our *da’as* to all others. To summarize, we have explained three ways of how to nullify our *da’as*.

The first way, we explained, is when one is concerned to get to the truth of the matter, and he keeps refining his understanding until he gets to the truthful understanding. The second way is to actually nullify ourselves to others’ *da’as*, and this enables us to receive the collective *da’as* that we are all connected to. The third way we have explained is that nullifying ourselves to others’ *da’as* means to

nullify ourselves in the sense that we all realize our mutual connection to each other.

The third way, which is the deepest method of all them, is essentially a yearning for the higher *da'as*. It is not simply because there is one *da'as* that unites all our *de'os* together. Rather, all of our many *de'os* are part of one reality. This is the perfected level of *da'as*, and it is the depth of nullifying our *da'as* to all others.

Da'as That Is Unwilling To Nullify Itself: Imagination

There are many *de'os* in the world. When are our *de'os* nullified to others, and when are they not nullified to others?

When one's *da'as* is genuine, when his opinion is valid, such as *da'as* is a part of the collective *da'as*, in which all *de'os* are valid. But if one's *da'as* is apart from any of the *de'os* in the collective *da'as*, such *da'as* is not valid *da'as*, because it has no part in the higher plane of reality, and therefore it has no place on this lower plane of reality either.

What is such *da'as*, then? It is not *da'as*; so what is it, and where does it come from, if it is not *da'as*? It can only be *da'as ra*! We have explained in the past that *da'as ra* is synonymous with the concept of *medameh* (imagination)[\[11\]](#), which is actually not a genuine kind of *da'as*.

To explain more the difference, if my *da'as* is part of the collective *da'as*, it is valid *da'as*, even if my *da'as* differs with others. In the future redemption, the *da'as* of each person will be recognized; all *de'os* will be seen as valid, for all *de'os* will be seen as part of the collective whole of *da'as*. In our current times, one's opinion has no validity if it differs with the majority, but in the higher dimension, it is still regarded as valid, and this will be fully revealed in the future. But if one's *da'as* is not part of the collective *da'as* [as we explained, this is when he doesn't know how to have *bittul* on his *da'as*], such *da'as* is "*da'as ra*", and it is *medameh* \imagination. This kind of "*da'as*" is "nullified" to others in the sense that it is totally disregarded, for it cannot be valid.

Our Initial Level of Da'as Is Stemming From "Medameh"

Let us now return to the original question we began with. What causes us to nullify our understanding to others? In summary, we explained three different approaches.

One reason is when a person is concerned to get to the truthful understanding. The second reason is because the very concept of *da'as* requires *bittul* in order for it to function. The third reason is because just as *medameh* is considered nullified; for it is disregarded and apt to be destroyed. This is based on the verse, "*We were like dreamers*", which implies that in the future, we will realize how we lived in a dream-like reality, like when we wake up from a dream and we realize that it wasn't real. Imagination ends up destroying itself; imagination is only a temporary state, and eventually, it disappears.

Based upon the above, we can now conclude with a deeper understanding of how our *da'as* is nullified to all others: our current level of *da'as* is stemming from *medameh*, and therefore, it is "nullified" - it is disregarded when contrasted with reality.

However, we can ask: If imagination is only temporary and it eventually destroys itself, why is it that there are many fantasies in the world that people have, which continue to remain? Why aren't those fantasies disappearing?

But it is because those fantasies only exist so long as they aren't contrasted with the *de'os* of others. Once we compare the fantasy with the *da'as* of others, the reality of *da'as* will prove how the

imagination is false, and the imagination is cleared up.

Using Our Da'as To Sort Out The Imagination

As long as a person has never yet reached *da'as*, he is missing the ability to sort out his fantasies and clear them. When a person begins to use his abilities of *da'as d'havdalah* and *da'as d'hachraah*, he is able to differentiate and decide; he can decide between what his *chochmah*\intellect is telling him and what his *medameh*\imagination is telling him; he can throw out the imagination and listen to reality.

Thus, our *da'as* is nullified to others only when our *da'as* is deciding between listening to intellect\reality over imagination. Nullifying our *da'as* therefore refers to our ability of *da'as* to clear out the imagination and “nullify” it.

On a deeper note, nullifying our *da'as* to others requires a higher revelation from Above. Without this revelation, we aren't able to nullify our *da'as*, because our *medameh* will dominant and it won't let there be *bittul* on our *da'as*. Only when we have a revelation of the higher *da'as* can we nullify our own *da'as*.

Thus, nullifying our *da'as* to others can only be accomplished when we nullify our *medameh*\imagination.

Acting “Based Upon The Da'as of Tzaddikim”

There is a well-known matter that a person is able to do certain action based upon the *da'as* of the *tzaddikim*, based upon the words of the Gemara that when one betroths a woman, he is doing so based upon the *da'as* of the Sages. For example, before a person is about to perform a certain deed, he can think, “I am doing so based on the *da'as* of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai”, etc. This custom is brought in our *sefarim hakedoshim*. What is the depth behind this custom? It is an attempt to clear out our *medameh*\imagination and connect it to the higher, holier *da'as*.

It is well-known matter to do actions “based upon the *da'as*” of certain *tzaddikim*, but here we have explained the depth behind it. Without being aware of this point, a person will just be acting out of a place of imagination in himself when he does the act. But by being aware that one is acting upon the *da'as* of a holy person, this is the depth of nullifying his own *da'as* to others, and this clears up his *medameh*\imagination. It connects his *da'as* to the perfect and higher *Da'as* that connects all *de'os* together.

[1] Berachos 35a; Shabbos 70a

[2] Berachos 58a

[3] See previous chapter

[4] See ***Utilizing Your Da'as*** chapters **04**, **07**, and **08**

[5] For more on the difference between connection based on *ahavah*\love and connection based on *daas*, see ***Getting To Know Your Thoughts - Chapter 08***.

[6] Editor's Note: Perhaps the source for this is the Mishnah in *Avos*, "I have learned much from my teachers, and even more from my friends, and from my students, I have learned the most."

[7] See ***Getting To Know Your Thoughts*** - Chapters 02, 03, 04

[8] Editor's Note: There are also "three" kinds of *da'as*: *da'as d'havdalah*, *da'as d'hachraah*, and *da'as d'chibbur* - see ***Utilizing Your Da'as*** chapters 01-03

[9] Gittin 6b

[10] Editor's Note: In other places, the Rav has mentioned that the spiritual dimension contains six directions: north, east, south, west, above, and below.

[11] In ***Utilizing Your Daas_04_Separating The Imagination***

Source: <https://bilvavi.net/english/utilizing-your-daas-09-nullifying-your-da>'