



FROM MONSEY (הכרת כוחות ושימוש השמחה 012 רוח דרוח דעפר שמחה אמתית)

QUESTION

Since there is always an "ani", a person always has motives that are shelo lishmah, so will a person always be prevented from simchah? Is it a question of percentages, like if there's more ani involved then there is less simchah, and if there is more ayin involved then there will be more simchah?

ANSWER

One cannot always live in ayin (of always being totally surrendered to Hashem) but it is not good if one lives at the other extreme of only living in the ani. One's avodah is to keep going back and forth between the states of ani and ayin. This is called ratzu v'shov, "advancing and retreating", to go up to ayin and then come back down to ani, to cycle back and forth between the higher and lower levels – to go back and forth constantly between ayin and ani. This is the deeper reason of why people cannot have complete simchah, because people indeed cannot live all the time in the state of ayin.

QUESTION

So the more we live in ayin, then the more simchah we will have?

ANSWER

Yes, exactly, and as it was explained here, it is because ayin reveals the Creator's will into the picture, and once the Creator's will is unstoppable so the result will be joy. When one is focused on revealing his own will but not the Creator's, he is not revealing the Creator's will into the picture so he is using a limited kind of will, which won't bring joy.

QUESTION

When we go to the state of ayin, are we reaching our tikkun and doing what Hashem wants us to do?

ANSWER

Ayin is for the purpose of raising our ani to a purified state of existence, which in turn purifies our ani, and then afterwards when we return to our ani we are acting from a purer place in ourselves now that we have raised our ani to ayin and we have learned how to give over our ani to Hashem.

Ayin is about surrendering our will to Hashem's will – the concept of bittul: "Give up your will, because of His will." Without nullifying one's own will to Hashem, one is merely imagining that he is reaching ayin when he tries to access it. The real state of ayin is bittul, surrendering one's will to Hashem. How can one know if he is really reaching ayin or not? One can check this if he sees how he reacts when he wanted something and then it didn't happen and he didn't get what he wanted. Does he merely give up on getting what he wanted and he's disappointed, or does he surrender himself to Hashem now because of this? If he can consciously feel that he has let go of his wishes because he surrendered his will to Hashem, that's an indicator that he reaching ayin.

QUESTION:

When we are looking at the ner Chanukah (the flame on the Menorah) what should we be thinking? What kind of "light" are we receiving from it?

ANSWER:

The answer to this is also connected with drawing forth simchah from the power of ayin. The Bnei Yissocher and other sefarim hakedoshim as well teach that the ner Chanukah is [an aspect of] the ohr haGanuz, the original light from the first day of Creation which Hashem hid away for the tzaddikim in the future. Therefore Chanukah is really the "light of the future", which was hidden away for the future. That was the depth of why the jug of oil sealed by the Kohen Gadol was hidden away - and when it was found, it was a fulfillment of the verse, "The light of the righteous brings joy." The miracle of Chanukah came about through the Chashmonaim (Has-

moneans, or Macabees) who were few against many when they fought the Yevanim (Greeks) and there was no natural way for them to win, yet they were willing to give their lives for this and they showed mesirus nefesh, which really meant that they give up their personal ratzon (will), because nefesh is identified as the ratzon and by giving up their own ratzon (in order to fight for the ratzon Hashem) they were essentially giving up their nefesh, and it was this mesirus nefesh which made them win and bring about the entire miracle. The “light” revealed on Chanukah is therefore the power of giving up our own ratzon, and when we are divested from our ratzon, the will of the Creator takes over our will [enabling us to give up our will to do Hashem’s will]. That was the miracle of the jug of oil. Normally, constriction brings sadness while expansion brings joy, yet from this tiny, sealed, constricted jug of oil there was a joyous miracle which came about. The joy was really the depth of the miracle.

As a hint to all of this, the word Chashmonai (חשמונאי) can be rearranged into the words ayin yismach א״ן ישמ״ח which means “through ayin, we can be happy”, meaning that joy comes from accessing ayin, which is reached through bittul (surrendering) of our ratzon (our personal will) in order to do Hashem’s will.

QUESTION:

What is the connection between ayin and the “light of the future”?

ANSWER:

Our world is a world of shelo lishmah, a world in which people naturally do things for self-gain, where people do mitzvos for the sake of reward and getting the Next World, etc. Man was originally created to serve Hashem lishmah, completely for Hashem’s sake and with no self-serving motives, but ever since we Adam and Chavah from the Eitz HaDaas mankind fell from the level of lishmah to the level of shelo lishmah. But of the Next World it is said, “For My Sake, for My sake, I will do it”, meaning that in the Next World all motivations are focused on Hashem and not on oneself. When a person does a mitzvah shelo lishmah, he is rewarded for it on this world, the place of shelo lishmah - and when he does a mitzvah lishmah, he is rewarded on the next world, the place of lishmah.

QUESTION:

Though the tzaddikim experience ayin in the Next World, we also know that in the Next World the tzaddikim are enjoying the radiance of the Shechinah, so isn’t this experience of enjoyment an experience of the “I”, the self?

ANSWER:

The enjoyment of the tzaddikim there is from the state of bittul of being nullified to Hashem.

QUESTION:

But the enjoyment shows that it’s still being experienced through the “I”, the self.

ANSWER:

There is ani (the self) and there is ayin (the divested self), and there is also a higher level above ayin, which is called “above the movement from ani to ayin”. For more on this see the last section of Michtav M’Eliyahu, volume 1 about the concepts of havayah and hasagah (essence and comprehending), and there the concept is explained more clearly.

QUESTION:

If there is indeed this simchah on Chanukah (which is reached through ayin, or bittul) then why is it that terms of simchah are associated only with Purim but we do not terms of simchah associated with Chanukah?

ANSWER:

On Chanukah the joy is [hidden] because there is a light of the future which is radiating even now and which we can feel a spark of. Purim was when we were saved from destruction by Achashveirosh and Haman, we were saved from death to life, but we are still slaves of Achashveriosh so we weren’t redeemed completely then, but we were completely saved from death and that is the celebration of Purim. But Chanukah is coming from the light of the future, and now we just have a spark of that light which will come, and therefore the joy we have on Chanukah is only a spark of the light of the future but not the light of the future.

QUESTION:

Should a woman think of all of this as well when looking at the Shabbos candles?

ANSWER:

Shabbos is a degree of the serenity (menuchah) of the Next World. The Shabbos of now is a semblance of the next world, it is partial taste of that serenity. Chanukah though is a spark of the light of the future, it is a partial light. Shabbos is about the serenity of the next world, and Shabbos is a semblance of the next world so it is a semblance of that serenity of the next world, while Chanukah is a semblance of the light of the future and therefore we have a spark, a partial degree of that light of the future. That is why Shabbos candles, which are for the purpose of shalom bayis, takes financial precedence over buying the lights for the Menorah, because Shabbos is about shalom, peace, perfection, shleimus, the next world. So the Shabbos candles is a semblance of perfection of the next world. Thus, both Shabbos and Chanukah are two different aspects of the same concept – the Next World.

FROM WOODMERE (הכרת כוחות ושימוש השמחה 012 אש דאש דאש עיקר השמחה)

QUESTION:

What should a person do if he's trying to feel emunah in Hashem but he can't feel it because of his aveiros?

ANSWER:

He should do true teshuvah on his current level, at that very moment. If his aveiros and their aftereffects really bother him, that means he will do teshuvah. If later he falls again, this doesn't take away his teshuvah. Chazal said that if someone sincerely wants to do teshuvah, at that moment he is called a tzaddik, and if he betroths a woman "on condition that I am a tzaddik", the betrothal is valid, because he is having thoughts of teshuvah and that makes him a tzaddik, at least for that moment. If one ever feels a darkness that comes as a result of his aveiros, he should be makebal ol malchus shomayim (accepting upon himself to do all the mitzvos), and even if afterwards he falls, at that moment he is pure. This will give him purity and he will find some feeling of spiritual pleasure in it, even if only a little.

QUESTION:

There are many people who decide that from today and on they will have emunah but then they fall into anger and various lusts. This cycle goes on for many years. What is the key to open the heart to always have emunah no matter how much a person falls?

ANSWER:

No one can get up in the morning and decide that from now on he will have total, complete emunah in Hashem for the rest of his life. This like wishing to fly up in the air to the top of the sky. The mistake is not when he fails eventually, but in making such a decision in the first place. There is no such thing as complete change and transformation in one moment. Most failures are not because the person failed, but because the person took upon himself a resolution or change that simply wasn't possible. Instead one has to try to live a bit higher than yesterday. Sometimes people fall from even that also. One has to try a little harder today to have a little more emunah than yesterday. Certainly we must aspire for complete emunah, but practically speaking if a person is asked "How are you working on emunah?", the answer is that we can only try to reach a little more emunah today than yesterday. Such a resolution can work. Then after a few years a person can grow like this. Wanting to achieve complete growth right away is always a fantasy. Wanting to grow little by little each day – is the proper way to go in. When done consistently and along with tefillah to Hashem to succeed, most of the time it will bear results.

QUESTION:

How can a person work on emunah even when he doesn't have difficulties, and what is the practical advice to take on?

ANSWER:

A person has to work on emunah in any given situation, how to work on it when he doesn't have difficulties is that either a person can think about the good that Hashem does and also on what Hashem didn't give me. When we are calm we can think of all the good Hashem does for us, that's what Chovos HaLevovos says to do and that's what the approach of that sefer is, to connect to Hashem from amidst the positive and good. This is not just to connect to the good that He does for us but to realize that there is a Giver here Who has given us this good, we are connecting to Him by realizing the good He does for us, but the good He does for us is only a revelation of His love to us, but we need to connect to the One Who loves us and that's the main point. To use what He gives us as a way to connect to Him. Like this, when we are going through a difficulty, we can remind ourselves that He loves us. Also when you are calm, think of all the things that

are missing from the world, we are missing Mashiach and the revelation of His Name on the world, the world is filled with troubles and suffering, and we can have emunah that Mashiach will come, but generally a person should think about this only when he's going through a difficulty and he is missing certain things, he should think how the world is filled with troubles.

QUESTION:

How can a person know for what reason Hashem has brought him the suffering or difficult situation?

ANSWER:

The Rambam says that in the times of the Beis HaMikdash, a person would go to the Navi and find out what his tikkun is. Now with no Nevuah or Ruach HaKodesh, we are all groping in the dark. Practically speaking when a person is going through difficult suffering he should first try to see the middah k'neged middah (Hashem's measure-for-measure conduct) and to try to see if it's obvious or not. If it's obvious how Hashem is dealing with him middah k'neged middah, then he can know that it's because of middah k'neged middah. But if it's not obvious, then what does Hashem want from him? To realize what he needed to work on until now and how this situation will enable him to improve that area. Heaven is sending him a message, but if he doesn't decipher the message then what is Heaven conveying to him and why would he get a message? If he understands what Heaven is sending him, fine, but if he can't figure out, he should use it as an awakening to improve on something in his life that he needs improvement in.

Sometimes a tragedy strikes, Rachmana Litzlan, and the tzibbur (community) is told that they all need to improve on a certain area. An asifah of 3 Rabbonim come and each of them says that the tzibbur has to improve in a different area and they hear of 3 different areas to improve in. Sometimes the tzibbur in that place does need a certain area of tikun, but if it is not obvious what the tikun of the tzibbur is, then individually each person needs to use it as an awakening from Heaven to improve in an area that he knows he needs to improve in. And this will be different with each person, understandably.

QUESTION:

How can a person change what his initial reaction should be to challenges so that he will react in the proper way, in his thoughts and emotions, to each situation?

ANSWER:

There are two parts of how a person can work on it. First a person can purify himself in general and as a result of that, his initial reaction will be purer. The second part is that after he becomes aware of what he is thinking, he can control his thinking and emotions. There are both thoughts and emotions involved, with some people the emotion comes first and with others the thought comes first.

QUESTION:

One who is on a very low spiritual level, how can he face a challenge without falling into all kinds of aveiros and bad behavior?

ANSWER:

The Gemara (Nedarim 32a) says that "When the yetzer hora is present there is no mention of the yetzer tov", meaning that when the yetzer hora is burning in all of its intensity, there's nothing to do. The main avodah in winning the yetzer hora is rather to prepare before the temptation arrives. While the actual challenge is taking place, one feels strongly connected to evil, and certainly we can tell him "Don't do it", but will he listen? There is clear, practical advice to know about before the temptation arrives. (1) The first thing to do is to push off giving in to the yetzer hora for a few minutes, for example to delay doing the aveirah for another 5 minutes or so - as much as one feels he is realistically capable of doing - and this begins to weaken his yetzer hora. (2) The second thing to do is that even as one is in the midst of falling and giving in to the yetzer hora, he should keep interrupting what he's doing so that he doesn't do it all at once. (3) Finally, he shouldn't do everything he wanted to do, and he should leave the act unfinished. These are the 3 steps of how to deal with evil temptations when they are burning intensely, and by following these 3 steps one can weaken his yetzer hora even as it's burning intensely.