Bilvavi on Breathing

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Adapted from assorted hebrew shiurim
by the author of *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*

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CONTENTS

1 | THE AVODAH OF BREATHING	3
2 | Q&A WITH THE RAV ABOUT THE AVODAH OF BREATHING	9
3 | REVEALING THE "CHAYAH" LEVEL OF THE SOUL	12
4 | BREATHING – OUR PRIMARY SOURCE OF MOVEMENT	17
5 | BREATHING OF THE NOSE AND MOUTH	18
6 | VITALITY FROM OUR BREATHING	19
7 | DEEPENING OUR BREATHING	20
8 | COUNTERING ANGER THROUGH BREATHING	21
9 | PLEASURE FROM BREATHING	22
10 | RENEWAL FROM BREATHING	24
11 | JOY FROM BREATHING	27
12 | TRANSFORMING OUR GROANS INTO VITALITY AND JOY	28

1 | THE AVODAH OF BREATHING[1]

CHESHVAN – THE "SMELL" LEFT BEHIND FROM YOMIM NORAIM

We are now in the month of *Cheshvan*, heading into the winter, after all the festivals of Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, and Succos. We are taught by our Sages that every month contains a special ability which we can use to serve Hashem. In the *sefarim hakedoshim,* our Sages tell us that the power of the month of *Cheshvan* is the sense of *reiach*, smell.[2]

Smell is unique from the rest of the senses in that it continues to linger with us even after what we already smelled isn't in front of us anymore. The senses of sight, hearing, taste, and touch can only be sensed when you're sensing it in front of you. You can't see, hear, taste or touch something if it's not in front of you. But you can continue to smell something even when it isn't in front of you anymore. For example, when a person smells flowers, he can remember how it smelled long after the flowers aren't there anymore.

This is why the month of *Cheshvan* is connected with "smell." During *Cheshvan*, we are left with the spiritual 'smell' of the *Yomim Noraim*, long after they are gone. What is this sense of smell that we remain with from the *Yomim Noraim*, and how we can use it?

QUIET TIME DAILY TO REFLECT

Firstly, before we continue, we must know that if a person wishes to serve Hashem in a true and inner way, one needs to have quiet "heart time" every day.

In every month, our goal is the same: to live a more inner kind of life. This can only be done with our "heart time" that we must set aside every day. We need this heart time in order to internalize any *avodah* we do.

If someone doesn't set aside time every day for heart time, it is not possible to really understand any of the coming ways of *avodas Hashem* which we will speak about. We **must** have times of quiet every day in order to think and reflect into our inner world. Without this "heart time," we will we be prevented from actualizing any of *avodah*. We won't even understand any of the methods of *avodah* at all!

The purpose here is to open up our *pnimiyus* (inner world) and reveal a more inner kind of life. We must seclude ourselves a little from the world, in order to open up the internal world within us.

We have repeated this point several times, because it must be very clear. We must set aside time every day for "heart time." There is nothing to be gained from these words unless we have this time every day.

SMELL HELPS US SENSE OUR INNER WORLD

Having understood that, now we can start the *avodah* of this month: using our sense of smell (the *chush ha-rei'ach*).

When used in an inner way, the sense of smell helps us feel beyond the external dimension of things. When we smell something, we are sensing something more internal than what it appears to be.

Every Jew's soul wants to know of the inner world of the soul, but we cannot sense it with the other four senses. The sense of smell is the only sense that is able to sense any *pnimiyus* (inner, spiritual layer of reality) in our life. The Sages say that the only physical sense which our soul has pleasure from is the sense of

1 *from Rosh.Chodesh.Avodah.008.Cheshvan*

2 *Sefer Yetzirah 5:4. See also Bnei Yissocher (Maamarei Cheshvan) who explains the deep significance of the power of smell. To summarize: at the sin of Adam, all of the physical senses became spiritually corrupted, because all of the senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste) were all involved when Adam and Chavah ate from the Eitz HaDaas. Adam listened to Chavah (hearing), he saw the fruit (sight) and touched it (touch) and tasted it (taste), but he didn't smell the fruit. Hence, the sense of smell was not involved in the sin of Adam, therefore the sense of smell remains in its original pure state. For this reason, the power of smell is the most spiritual of all the senses and is able to connect a person to his soul. The sense of smell is also connected with Mashiach [as will be explained in the coming chapters].*

smell[3] which is the most spiritual kind of sense of all the senses. It is beyond the physical senses - it can "smell" spirituality. The external, superficial layer of our sense of smell can only smell the physical, but there is an inner use of our sense of smell, which can 'smell' the spiritual.

Our sense of smell has two layers: the external, superficial layer of smell is when we smell the physical, such as smelling the scent of a flower, and the inner layer of smell, which can smell the spirituality even in the physical. Our sense of smell is able to reach deep into the physical and 'smell' something spiritual in it. 'Smelling' spirituality can show us how something which looks only physical can really be spiritual.

THE POWER OF BREATH

Our nose has two functions: smelling and breathing. The power of breath[4] in us is essentially the *nishmas chaim* (the "breathe of life") that was breathed into us from Hashem.

It is written, "*Every soul praises Hashem,*"[5] and the Sages explain this to mean that "for every breath a person breathes, a person must praise Hashem."[6] Thus, the *avodah* based upon this statement is that one should become aware that his every breath comes from Hashem. If one is not aware of their breathing, they are not able to thank Hashem for it, because if one does not feel it, they cannot appreciate it. If a person is unaware of his breathing, maybe they will be able to express their gratitude to Hashem after every ten times that they breathe in and out, but will not be able to feel grateful to Hashem for every single breath. Only when one becomes aware of their breathing can they come to thank Hashem for every single breath that they breathe.

BEGINNING TO BECOME AWARE OF YOUR BREATHING

How does one begin to feel and become aware of their breathing? One needs to set aside time for this and **sit quietly**, and start exhaling and inhaling, with calmness. **Pay attention to the breathing**, and **listen, slowly, to the breathing**. Then you will begin to ***feel*** the breathing.

Quiet time is necessary for this. If, a person is harried (either by being mentally anxious or physically bombarded by something) then there is no chance that they will be able to feel their breathing and become aware of it. But, if a person sets aside just **5 minutes a day**, or even **3 minutes a day**, and tries to become aware of each breath that they breathe during this time, then not only when will they become aware of their breathing, but they will begin to feel a more *inward* kind of feeling as they are exhaling and inhaling.

Without having this quiet time to feel your breathing, your breathing is only being experienced superficially, as if it is one of the many various functions of the body. But when a person makes sure to have this quiet time during the day to feel his breathing and to pay attention to his breathing, he will begin to uncover the *p'nimiyus* (the inner depth) that is contained in every breath.

INHALING AND EXHALING TO REACH OUR P'NIMIYUS (INNER ESSENCE)

Today people are borrowing secular ideas that come from the gentile world. Many people are practicing a method of breathing where a person imagines that they are releasing any negativity from their body upon exhaling, and upon inhaling, the person imagines that they are breathing in new energy that will invigorate their body. However, this is just an external use of breathing. Our Sages revealed to us the inner way to use the power of breathing, which goes much deeper than this.

When we speak here of setting aside quiet time during the day to feel your breathing, we are not intending to copy the gentile approach. Our intention here is to tread the path that

3 *Tehillim (Psalms) 150:6*
4 *In Hebrew, "breath" is "neshimah". It is also known under the terms of neshimah (inhale) and neshifah (exhale).*
5 *Talmud Bavli Tractate Berachos 43b*
6 *Beraishis Rabbah 14:9*

our previous Sages took when it came to this power which they taught us.[7]

When we became aware of our breathing, we are essentially becoming aware that there is a *nishmas chaim*, a "breath of life," that was breathed into us by Hashem; and thereby become closer to Hashem from this depth that we reach. Our breathing, which is sustained by Hashem's breath, is thus our very life. We can find the very source of our life contained in our breathing. When we begin to become aware of our breathing, quietly and calmly, by listening to our breath, we begin to recognize and feel an entirely different and inner perspective towards life.

Let's explain what is meant here. In whatever action we perform, whether we use our sense of sight, hearing, speech, or anything else that we do, most of the time we are unaware of these actions. These actions are usually not connected to our awareness. Most of the time we are far from our own selves, and surely that will mean that we are far from Hashem – because most of the time, we are distanced from our own inner world.

Therefore, when we begin to take deep breaths and we are listening deeply to the breathing, we need to bring the breath into a deeper place in ourselves. Then we exhale that breathe and we go deeper from the deeper place that we have already reached. Slowly as we keep doing this, we can keep penetrating further and further into ourselves, deeper and deeper into ourselves.

From all of the senses, the sense of smell (which our breathing is enabled by) is the deepest and most inner kind of sense. When we see something, sometimes it can have a deep effect on us, and sometimes it does not. When we hear something, sometimes we are deeply affected, but sometimes we are not. When we touch something, we are feeling the physicality of something, and we are not feeling anything deep in this. But when we inhale the scent of something, using our sense of smell, we can sense it deeply. We can keep taking in the scent of something, where we continue to smell it more deeply.

In the same way, we can also deepen our breathing. We need to try this in the actual sense. For every breath that you exhale and inhale, you can take the breath deeper and deeper into yourself. Train yourself to slowly deepen your breathing, deepening your breathe each time.

This is an amazing ability which Hashem has given to His creations. It is a physical act of exhaling and inhaling, yet it is a use of the sense of smell, which is the only physical sense that our *neshamah* enjoys, as our Sages taught. It is the sense which we can use to penetrate deeply into ourselves. When a person gets used to this, sitting quietly and calmly, taking in deep breaths and listening to them, it can open up before him a great opening that will help him get to deeper places in his soul.

ENTERING OUR INNER WORLD

The *avodah* of a person is to enter into their inner world, and live an internal life, a life of the heart, a life of living the depth of the *neshamah*. The power of breathing which Hashem has given to man is one of the amazing powers which man can use to enter into his inner world.

Of course, the main *avodah* of a man is to learn Torah and to keep the *mitzvos*, and the main *avodah* of a woman is to keep the *mitzvah* of modesty. And the common denominator between all men and women is that we all have to work on our *middos*, so that our hearts can become more purified and so that the barriers between us and Hashem will be removed. Then we can enter into the inner depth contained in our heart. But there is also another way for us to enter into our inner world, which works in tandem with keeping the *mitzvos* (and it is not independent of learning Torah and keeping mitzvos, *chas v'shalom*): the power of breathing can help us enter more inward into ourselves.

7 *This avodah is explained extensively in the sefarim of Rav Abulefia, and was later mentioned in other sefarim that are not so well-known.*

At first, getting used to it will feel like a mere breathing exercise, and you will only feel it in the physical sense. But if you get used to deeply listening to your breathing as you take the deep breaths, concentrating deeply into this, you will suddenly feel that you have entered deeper places which you never knew about until now that were inside of you.

This is one of the powers that help us serve Hashem, but it is not necessarily meant to be the path that every person must take. Some people are more inclined to this *avodah*, and some people are less inclined to take this path. But for those who do feel inclined towards this path, this *avodah* can be a great key for them to enter their inner world.

It begins from a mere physical act of exhaling and inhaling, and at first it will not feel very inward or spiritual at all, but as you get used to deeply listening to the breathing, the breathing will first enter deeper into the physical heart, and eventually as you keep doing it, it will enter into the deeper and more spiritual parts. (This is the "*ruach chaim,"* the "spirit of life," which penetrates into the "*Ruach"* that is found in the heart).

A WORD OF CAUTION BEFORE BEGINNING THE BREATHING EXERCISE

We must emphasize that this *avodah* must be done calmly, slowly, and patiently. A person should not accelerate the process by taking in many deep breaths in quick succession of each other and anxiously trying to get inward with each breath. This is physically dangerous, and it is spiritually harmful as well. It must be done quietly and calmly, pleasantly, and not with pressure to get anywhere.

You need to strongly want to enter deeper into your inner world, of course, but it must not be forced and make you anxious. You need to want to get there calmly with serenity. You are calmly trying to get to get deeper into yourself.

We have had to give special caution about this, because it is very possible for one to harm himself if one is ignorant of these rules. Now we can begin, with Hashem's help, how to make this more practical. Although these are very subtle matters, we will try to explain it as much as Hashem allows us to, and to explain as precisely as we can.

STEP 1: BECOMING AWARE OF YOUR NORMAL BREATHING

The first step is to begin with your normal breathing. Become aware of your breathing, and don't try to manipulate your breathing in any way that you are not used to. Simply become aware of your normal breathing. This is the first step: sit with yourself each day for a few minutes, breathe normally, and just pay attention to the breaths.

STEP 2: DEEP BREATHS

After you feel that you have become more aware of your normal breathing and that this awareness has become more natural to you and that you're not straining yourself, now comes the next step. Try to deepen your breathing a bit more. Sit and take slightly deeper breaths than your normal breathing. The first time you do this, take a deep breath, and keep repeating this for a few times, with the very same kind of deep breath.

After you feel that you have reached a certain depth which is natural and you are not straining yourself to feel it, try to deepen the breathing a bit more. Concentrate a bit more deeply on the breathing, and breathe in more deeply than before, and keep repeating.

We need to keep doing this until we can do it easily without concentrating too deeply on it. Do not try to accelerate the process of trying to reaching a deeper place in yourself each time. Just go slowly in this process. Breathe in a bit deeper after a number of breaths, keep deepening the breathing this way, and slowly, you will see that you have reached a deeper place in yourself, but without concentrating so hard to get there.

STEP 3: SUDDEN INNER RECOGNITION

When you have reached a deeper place in yourself, at some point, you will suddenly recognize that you have the reached a deeper place in yourself. This might not happen to you right away as soon as you reach the

deeper place in yourself. You might feel it sometime after you have slowly gotten there, where it will suddenly dawn upon your awareness.

This does not mean that you have simply learned how to take deeper breaths. If you have done it correctly and have gotten further into yourself with the breathing, it is like entering into a new room in yourself, where you see what is inside of it. When you deepen your breathing and you have truly reached a deeper place into yourself, you will know that you are there. You will begin to recognize a deeper place in yourself that you were not aware of until now. If you do not feel that you've reached a deeper place in yourself, it must be that all of the deep breathing was done superficially, with not enough genuine intent to go deeper into yourself.

When you have reached a deeper place in yourself, you are now activating what *Chazal* refer to when they said, "For every breath, praise Hashem." The meaning of this statement is not that each breath is like the breath before it and that you must praise Hashem for the same kind of each of these breaths. Rather, it means that each new breath that we breathe can help us enter deeper into ourselves, which gives us greater inner recognition of ourselves. Thus, there is new reason to praise Hashem for each of these breaths.

The power of deep breathing can provide a person with a great opening, a key, to a greater depth of feeling and inner recognition, because it takes you to a deeper place in yourself. Therefore, we must emphasize that it needs to be done slowly, and to keep repeating the process described until you are calm enabling you to act from a deeper place in yourself.

Hashem says, "*My son, give your heart to me*."[8] Hashem wants our hearts, and the kind of heart that Hashem wants us to give to Him is, that we should give Him the very depth that we reach in ourselves. Reaching a deeper place in our heart, which we can reach through the power of deep breathing, enables us to *daven* to Hashem from a deeper and more genuine place in ourselves. It enables us to be kind to others from a deeper place in ourselves. It enables us to really use our hearts for Hashem; "Hashem wants the heart" (*Rachmana liba ba'ee*).[9]

There are many ways of how we can reach the depth of the heart: through exertion in Torah learning, through *tefillah*, through fixing our *middos*, and other ways as well. But an additional way to get to our heart, as we explained here, is to use the power of breathing- to get used to breathing deeply and to reach a deeper place in oneself from breathing.

When we reach deeper into ourselves, we are able to act from a more genuine place in ourselves, from our heart. When one gets used to this power and is regularly reaching a deeper place in oneself via the act of deep breathing, one will see a transformation in their life, where their actions will be emanating from their heart.

STEP 4: REACHING THE SELF

Let's try to continue explaining this *avodah*, although it's a matter that is very deep, subtle, and hidden.

After a person feels that they has reached a deeper place in themselves and they feel they have reached the deepest possible place in their self that they are aware of, now comes the next stage, where a person can slowly penetrate even further than this [as he continues the deep breathing]. One will eventually feel that they have reached the very essence of their "I" – the deepest possible place in oneself. One can reach it by continuing to breathe deeply, feeling that they are getting deeper and deeper into themself, until he eventually reaches his "I."

At that point, their breathing is helping them touch upon their very "I." Their breathing has brought them into the deepest possible place in oneself. It takes a lot of hard work before this in order to reach such a place and to be able to breathe deeply

8 *Mishlei (Proverbs) 23:26*
9 *Talmud Bavli Tractate Sanhedrin 106a*

to get there. It will take a lot of time and effort to get there, and again, it needs to be done calmly and peacefully. It will mainly require a lot of purity and holiness in one's life, which opens the heart more and makes it easier to get there. The more a person has purified himself internally, the more he has softened his heart, and his heart goes from being a "heart of stone" into a "heart of flesh." It will then become much easier for their breathing to get further into themselves, where one can penetrate into the deepest part of their self.

STEP 5: SENSING HASHEM'S EXISTENCE IN THE SELF

Finally, there is one more step to reach. Let us explain it, with *siyata d'shmaya*, although it is a very, very deep and subtle matter.

The final step is for one to deepen the breathing to the point that he senses the reality of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

It is written, "*I will dwell amongst them*,"[10] and the Sages explain this to mean, "It does not say "in him," but "in them" – in the hearts of each person."[11] Thus, we are taught that Hashem dwells in the heart of each Jew. This point is the deepest place to reach through breathing, and it is the true meaning of the *nishmas chaim* that was breathed into us by Hashem. When Hashem breathed into us a spirit of life, He breathed into us a breath of Himself, so to speak. That means that **we are breathing due to Hashem's own breath that was placed in us.**

When one accesses this kind of deep breathing, he is touching upon the revelation of G-dliness that is found deep in the heart. This is the deepest possible kind of breathing that a Jew can ever breathe.

IN CONCLUSION

Part of the reason why we have had to explain this exercise very specifically is because there are many "breathing exercises" which have been gleaned from modern, gentile sources. We have tried to present here one of the paths explained by our Sages that describes how to use the power of breathing in a way that helps us reach a purer place in ourselves. The power of breathing is a way for us to reach the "I" in us, the pure soul which Hashem creates us with. Even the more so, breathing can help us feel Hashem's breath as the source of our own breathing.

The words here were not ideas. They are about a way to reach an inner kind of life, of how to reach the depth of the *neshamah*, and of how to reach the Creator. But these are matters which require a lot of effort and training and getting used to, as well as holiness and purity and Heavenly assistance, in order for us to be successful.

May we merit from Hashem to have a desire to enter into our inner world, and to at least choose one of the paths that help us get there, even if is not necessarily through the power of breathing.

Let us stress one last point. The power of breathing is just **one of the ways** of how to serve *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. There are many other ways to serve Hashem as well which are proper and valid, and each person needs to choose one of the paths that are mentioned by our Sages. One should choose the path that speaks the most to their heart. The words here do not mean to imply that everyone must take this path [of using the power of breathing]; *chas v'shalom*. A person should only use this path of serving Hashem if it is close to their heart.

The common denominator with all people is that all of us need to enter our inner world, in order to live a more inner kind of life, so that we can reach our essence and reach a more complete recognition of our Creator.

10 *Shemos (Exodus) 25:8*
11 *Sefer Toras Moshe (Alshich) ibid, and sefer Shelah HaKadosh Maseches Taanis 60a*

2 | Q&A WITH THE RAV ABOUT THE AVODAH OF BREATHING[12]

Q1: ***What's the connection between breathing and the sense of smell? Is it simply because both of these come from the nose?***

ANSWER: A very good question. The sense of smell utilizes our nose, and then we are better able to deepen our breathing, which comes in through the nose. Before you begin the breathing exercises, it is indeed recommended to first inhale the scent of something holy, such as an *esrog* that was used on Succos, or *besamim* that was used for *havdalah*. This "opens" the power of smell in the first place, and then we can deepen the sense of smell, and from deepening the sense of smell we can develop a deeper power of breathing. Through a physical smell which is found on this world, one can tread its path to open the nose, and then enter the depth contained in breathing. It is therefore very recommended to start with inhaling a scent [of something holy] and use it is a way to enter into our breathing.

Q2: ***When a person supposedly "feels something" when he breathes in and out, how does he know if it's a real feeling and not it in his imagination?***

ANSWER: Usually, nothing is ever a total fantasy, nor is anything a totally real feeling. There is always some degree of fantasy in everything we feel, and there is always some truth to what we are feeling in every feeling that comes to us. This is because everything we come across in our feelings is always a mixture of fantasy and feeling, and the only issue is in the percentages: How much of the feeling is real, and how much of the feeling is just being imagined. We always need to sort out what we are feeling and try to discern which parts of the feeling are real, and which parts of it are in the imagination. In order to do this, we need to try to name precisely what we are feeling and refine our perception.

Q3: ***For those who haven't yet begun to recognize their inner world, how can they recognize if they are feeling something real about themselves, or if it is just being imagined?***

ANSWER: If a person begins to feel something deep, that is a sign that he is becoming connected to the real inner world. If a person is not used to it yet, he can get some idea of this at least when he goes through an even that awakens his deepest feelings, such as when he feels pain or when he feels joyous. The very fact that he is beginning to sense deeper things is already an opening to the inner world.

Q4: ***How is the sense of smell the most spiritual of all the senses?***

ANSWER: It is because we can turn something physical into the spiritual. The physical sense of smell can be turned into a spiritual sense. A clear example of this was when they would smell the *korbonos* in the *Beis HaMikdash*, which gave off a "pleasant scent" (*rei'ach nicho'ach*) to Hashem. When you smell the spirituality in something, smell becomes spiritual. This can be experienced when you smell something before it has been turned into physical uses (and on a deeper level, even if it has already been used for physical uses and it has been returned to its root).

Q5: ***How much time is needed for this breathing exercise? Also, after we have already gotten past the first step and we are at the second step, should we still begin each day from the first step, or can we begin immediately each day from the step?***

ANSWER: At first when you begin to get used to this it should not be more than 3 minutes a day. After that, the amount of time you will need to spend on it depends on how far you have advanced in the *avodah*, and if you are doing it correctly. However, no one should be spending more than 30 minutes a day on it. If you can try this *avodah* in the beginning of the morning, this is even better, as long as your schedule allows it.

Q6: ***After we succeed in the first step, can we go quicker with the second step?***

ANSWER: Yes. But we must make sure that we truly gotten past the first step and not try to move on quickly to the next step. First, we must feel that we have become connected to our breathing.

Q7: ***What should a person***

12 *from Rosh.Chodesh.Avodah.008.Cheshvan*

think during the first step, as he is beginning to take breaths?

ANSWER: In the first step, do not think about anything, other than the focus on your breathing.

Q8: ***Should a person try to rid anything from his thoughts that hamper his focus on the breathing?***

ANSWER: Quiet the thoughts. Try to become aware of the breathing, and then after that, try to think more deeply into the breathing.

Q9: ***Should we sit or stand during this time? Should we close our eyes?***

ANSWER: However you are more relaxed.

Q10: ***The Rav mentioned that there are gentile methods of breathing exercises – what exactly is the Rav referring to? Which parts of the non-Jewish breathing exercises are inappropriate for a Jew to use?***

ANSWER: The Torah's approach to the power of using breathing is not so that we should expel negative energy contained in the body and bring in positive energy. A Torah-approved method that that is being somewhat mirrored in the gentile practices of breathing is that a person can bring positive energy into his system. However, this is not being accomplished through the gentile methods. A Torah-approved method would be to imagine a thought about something holy and to imagine that it is entering him, or that it is his enveloping his body, or something similar to this. The gentile approach of breathing exercises, however, involves imagining a "light" that enters the body which supposedly purges all evil or negativity found in the body. This approach is heresy.

The purpose of the Torah's approach towards breathing is that breathing enables us to reach *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* found in the depths of the soul. Unlike the gentile methods, which are entirely self-focused, the Torah way of breathing exercises is to come to live with Hashem in our life, through the breathing exercises. However, that is only reached at a much higher stage of the breathing, as we explained. But we must be able to bear it in mind even as we begin to work with our breathing. We must know that the goal of deepening our breathing is because it enables us to live with Hashem in our life.

We can penetrate deeper and deeper into ourselves by imagining a holy thought that is entering us, and we can also think that it is purifying us. These two aspects of breathing exercises are acceptable according to the Torah. But to imagine a "light" entering the body and cleansing out all of the negativity – that is against the Torah, and it is basically a form of idol worship.

Q11: ***Does the Rav mean that one may imagine a certain holy thought entering his body as he is doing the breathing exercise?***

ANSWER: It may be done, by imagining that it is found outside of oneself and that one wishes to bring it inside of himself. The way we have described using the power of breathing here in this class is a way of how we can get inside of ourselves, as opposed to using external factors.

However, it is certainly an acceptable method for one to imagine a *possuk* or a certain holy thought about *emunah,* and to imagine that this is entering him and purifying him. But when doing so, the person must be aware that it is the holiness which is entering him, and not that some other outer force or power is entering him and cleansing him. To think that "A power is entering me" is a method that has originated in the gentile nations, and it borderlines on idol worship.

I have had to speak about length about this topic, because I am aware that many people are unfortunately using these improper methods in their breathing exercises.

Q12: ***Is the avodah of focusing on our breathing a separate matter from the power of "levad" (alone) which the Rav has spoken about in sefer Da Es Atzmecha, "Getting To Know Your Self")? Does it get in the way of "levad" or it is a part of "levad"?***

ANSWER: It is within the *avodah* of "*levad*." There is a general *avodah* of acquiring the power of *levad*, but what do you once you're in the space of *levad*? Part of the *avodah* of being in the "*levad*" is to focus on your breaths.

Q13: ***In the first step, when we just focus on our simple act of breathing, should we think that Hashem is providing us with our breathing and enabling me to breathe? Or should I just focus on the mere fact that I am breathing,***

without thinking of Hashem is in the picture?

ANSWER: In the very first step, the point is to become simply aware of your breathing, because the first step is to simply become aware of ourselves, way before we connect our self to Hashem. This is because in order to connect ourselves to Hashem, we need to first become aware of ourselves in the first place, and awareness of our breathing is one of the ways to accomplish this.

Q14: ***Is this avodah of breathing the same avodah as "hisbodedus" (meditation) and of talking to Hashem when we are alone? Is it an alternative to hisbodedus, or is it something we need to practice besides for hisbodedus?***

ANSWER: It is a separate *avodah* than *hisbodedus*, not a replacement to *hisbodedus*. It needs to be practiced outside of *hisbodedus*.

Q15: ***Should a person try the avodah of breathing before doing hisbodedus, or after hisbodedus?***

ANSWER: It doesn't make a difference if you do it before *hisbodedus* or after *hisbodedus*. Just like a person has to eat and sleep, so is there an *avodah* of breathing that is besides for the *avodah* of *hisbodedus*.

Q16: ***What does it mean to reach a 'more inner place' in oneself? Does it mean that you feel calmer? Does it mean that you feel more connected to yourself?***

ANSWER: Just like when you wade through a pool you feel yourself getting deeper and deeper into it, so do you experience yourself going deeper and deeper the more you try to enter your *pnimiyus*. The more you feel yourself, the more you can discern where you are. When a person becomes connected to *pnimiyus*, it is an experience, and you can feel it, and then there is no room for this question.

Q17: ***The sefarim of Rav Yurevitch speak about the power of deep breathing and how a person can heal his negative emotions and become closer to Hashem, through working with the breath. Can this approach [of breathing] be fused together with the Rav's approach?***

ANSWER: [There are three general areas of our *avodas Hashem*, beginning from most spiritual to least spiritual: 1. Working with our *Nefesh Elokis* (G-dly soul), 2. Working with our *nefesh habehaimis* (animal soul), and 3. Working on our *guf* (body).]

There is an *avodah* that we have to do with our G-dly soul (*nefesh Elokus*), which includes the 5 parts of our soul: the *Nefesh, Ruach, Neshamah, Chayah*, and *Yechidah*. This includes improving our actions (*Nefesh*), our character and emotions (*Ruach*), our analysis in Torah learning (*Neshamah*), the higher source of our Torah learning that is above regular thought (*Chayah*), and *d'vekyus* with Hashem (*Yechidah*). There is also an *avodah* we have with our animal soul (*nefesh habehaimis*): Repairing the 4 elements in our lower soul (repairing our earth, water, wind and fire). We also have an *avodah* with our body (*guf*), such as through working with our breathing, and this also improves part of our animal soul (*nefesh habehaimis*).

I do not deal that much with teaching about breathing, and the reason for this is because many times, if someone is not spiritually pure enough, instead of using breathing as a way to leave behind his physical pull and reveal his soul more, the person will actually become even more involved with his body and more attached to it. Also, when people focus a lot of their inner work on breathing, they are often following their imagination, and imagination naturally gravitates towards the body's physicality, because imagination is *medameh*, from the word *adamah* (earth), hinting to the connection between imagination and the earthy materialism of the body.

Also, working with breathing is an approach that is very popular with the gentile nations, and therefore I am very concerned that if people involve themselves a lot with their breathing, they will be led from there into non-Jewish approaches of breathing exercises.

3 | REVEALING THE "CHAYAH" LEVEL OF THE SOUL [13]

FEELING THE SOURCE OF OUR BREATHING – BY FIRST FINDING OUR PERSONAL SOURCE OF VITALITY

Today, there are many practices which really stem from our early *sefarim* which involve focused breathing, and on how to inhale and exhale properly, etc. These matters are explained in the writings of Rav Abulefia and by others. Without getting into the details, let us first understand what the source of this *avodah* is.

It is written, *"The breath of our nostrils, Hashem's anointed.… under whose protection, we had said, we would live among the nations*."[14] The verse attributes *ruach*, the air, to the nose. The main source of our life-giving vitality comes from the air that we mainly breathe though our nose. While we are also able to breathe from our mouth, our main source of energy comes from breathing through our nose. This is true both on a physical level as well as on an inner level. Thus, our main source of vitality, which comes to us through the act of breathing, is coming to us by way of the nose.

The idea of learning how to breathe properly, on the inhale and exhale, is, on an inner level, a way to become connected to the source of our energy.

We need to understand that when people work on their inhale and exhale, this is not simply a superficial act which we are familiar with from the various breathing exercises that exist today, in which a person discerns how rapid his breathing is, from which place in the body it is coming from, etc. That perspective is just a language of the body, which originated from the gentiles, and it is not the language that speaks to a Jew.

A Jew has to feel that the source of the vitality in the breathing comes from his *Neshamah,* from his soul. When inhaling, a Jew must return the source of the vitality to his inner root, which is the *Chayah* part of the soul that is within him. And on the exhale, he should feel that he has released this source of his vitality.

When one works with his breath, this is really an *avodah* for one to reach one's inner source of vitality. When inhaling, one needs to feel that he is taking in the source of his vitality from outside, and when exhaling, one needs to be aware that his releasing this source of vitality outward. But in order to reach this understanding, one first needs to feel that the source of his vitality that is within him.

If the breathing exercises are done without feeling the inner source of one's vitality, they are simply external physical breathing exercises which calm the body, and perhaps it can calm the heartbeat as well and moderate it better, as well as calm the thoughts. But this alone will not lead a person inward to the source of the vitality coming in, because the person is missing the root of connecting to his inner energy source.

Therefore, in order for one to turn breathing into an inner *avodah*, one needs to reveal the *Chayah* point in the soul. How can one do this? Every person has a certain **path** that can connect him to the source of his vitality – meaning, every person has a path from which he can use to nurse forth his inner source of vitality.

DISCOVERING THE MAIN SOURCE OF CHIYUS (VITALITY) IN OUR ACTIONS, EMOTIONS, AND THOUGHTS

The *Chayah* point in the soul is also known as *ohr makif*, "enveloping light," for the *Chayah* surrounds and envelopes the *Nefesh, Ruach* and *Neshamah.* In clearer terms, the *Chayah* is the source of *chiyus* (vitality or energy) found in our "*Nefesh*" level, which is our area of action; it is also the source of energy found in our "*Ruach*," which corresponds to the character traits and emotions; and it is also the source of energy found in our

13 *from Torah.Way.To.Enlightement.012*
14 *Eichah (Lamentations) 4:20*

"*Neshamah*" level of the soul, which corresponds to thought.

Action *(Nefesh):* Let us first identify the source of *chiyus* when it comes to our area of "action" [which corresponds to the *Nefesh* level of the soul]. If a person works as a farmer, he is involved with planting, digging, reaping, etc. Another kind of person may be a blacksmith, and another person is involved with construction. People who do physical work are deriving some level of *chiyus* from their actions. Each person derives a life-giving vitality from various forms of physical work, and one should identify it.

Just as there is a kind of physical activity which we each derive vitality from – all of us on some level, more or less – so is there a primary emotion (corresponding to the *Ruach* level of the soul) which we derive vitality from, meaning that our main source of emotional vitality comes from a certain emotion, which we should identify. Going deeper, there is also a primary kind of thinking (corresponding to the *Neshamah* level of the soul) which we gain vitality from.

If a person wishes to reveal the *Chayah* level of the soul, he must reveal what the source of his *chiyus* (vitality) is. In order to do this, one needs to deeply examine his activities, emotions, and thoughts, and to see in each of these areas where he is deriving life-giving energy from.

This inner work, of clarifying where you get *chiyus* from, is a very personal kind of *avodah,* which each person needs to do with his own soul. Understandably, most people in the world have not even touched upon knowing where they get their *chiyus* from. They never think about what mainly energizes them; they never clarify to themselves what makes them feel more alive.

If we take a person and we ask him at the end of the day, "From where do you get vitality from?," we will get all kinds of answers that are superficial, such as a kind of physical pleasure which the person enjoys the most and which he lives from. We will not even speak about this here. Let us instead speak about the more inner aspects of where people get *chiyus* from. If we ask a blacksmith, "Where do you get *chiyus* from?," he may answer, "Today I built an *Aron*. After I was finished, I looked at it for 10 minutes and I felt a certain feeling of vitality from what I did." People also like to take pictures of their work after they are finished, so that they can remember it. Their work makes them feel more alive. There are people who have constructed buildings, and if they are passing by, they will want to stop in and see their building. They live from the satisfaction that comes from their finished product.

Clearly, we are not discussing at this point anything about a spiritual source of *chiyus*, which is a deeper kind of *chiyus*. This is rather a first, basic step of knowing where one gets *chiyus* from: by seeing which kind of physical work he does which he finds a sense of vitality in.

Emotion (*Ruach*): After considering which kind of physical activity you get vitality from, the next step is to identify the primary emotion which you receive vitality from.

There are those who souls are more rooted in "*kav yemin,"* the "right line" [which represents *chessed* (kindness)]. These kinds of people mainly derive their emotional energy from *ahavah*, love. Others are more rooted in *kav smo'el*, "left line" [which represents *gevurah*\strength], and they mainly derive their emotional energy from *yirah*, from seriousness.

These two main roots of the emotions, *ahavah* and *yirah,* are very general terms. *Ahavah*\ love divides into many different kinds and levels of love, and the same goes for *yirah.* There are many emotions, but *ahavah* and *yirah* are the roots. One needs to figure out which of the emotions he mainly receives vitality from.

For example, some people need to feel loved by others, and this is their basis of vitality. Others do not care if people love them or not. Another kind of person does not need to feel loved by others, but if he does get love from others, he receives vitality from it. Yet it isn't his main source of vitality, because

he doesn't need it that much. He receives vitality from a different emotion, perhaps from acts of giving or the like.

Each person has a certain emotion which he derives vitality from, and one must identify it. It may be a positive emotion, or a negative emotion.

Thought (*Neshamah*): Next, a person rises to the level of thought. One needs to identify which kinds of thoughts give him vitality.

We can have a person who goes to seven *shiurim* during the week from seven different people, and you ask him, "From which *shiur* did you get *chiyus* from?," and he answers, "From all of them!" But this just shows that he is confused. Of course, it is possible that all of the seven *shiurim* which he heard are all *"The words of the living G-d"* and therefore they are all true. But each person has an individual soul, which has its particular source of vitality. Does a person have the soul of *Mashiach*, which is an all-inclusive soul that can receive vitality from everything equally? No! Each person has a kind of thought where he derives his main vitality from.

To give examples, some people mainly derive vitality (in the thoughts) from an interesting insight of the Torah, practical *halachah*, while others mainly enjoy in-depth learning of *Gemara*. In-depth learning itself divides into several different styles of learning. Others mainly enjoy the depth of *pnimiyus haTorah*, the inner dimension of Torah.

Often, when a person is starting off his path of spiritual growth, he learns a *sefer* and feels enjoyment from it, so he immediately decides that it is his source of vitality. However, we already explained in the past that a person is not able to have clarity right away. It is a process. It takes time for one to recognize himself, throughout different periods of life. It also takes time for one to amass the necessary information of the words of our Sages, in all their many different 'colors'. Only after this learning process can a person identify where his source of his vitality [in his area of thought] is.

KNOWING YOUR PERSONAL SOURCE OF VITALITY – IN ACTION, EMOTION, AND THOUGHT

The *Chayah* part of the soul is essentially the point where we are getting *chiyus*\vitality from. If a person wishes to reach its innermost point, which is the root of life, the point where there is G-dliness – as the *Baal Shem Tov* said, that each person has a point of G-dliness within that sustains him – one cannot jump straight to this inner point. Rather, a person must first identify his more external sources of *chiyus* – the vitality he gets from certain actions, from certain emotions, and from certain thoughts.

When one traverses this path, firstly, he receives a "clear world" within him. As explained earlier, a person can never have 100% clarity, but one can certainly receive a clearer understanding, to the extent that he has become clear about what he wants.

When a person feels a sense of dissatisfaction from life, and he doesn't know how to identify what gives him vitality, he won't know how to fill the void. In contrast to this, when a person knows what gives him vitality, he at least has an 'address' of where to go. Compare this to a person who runs out of milk in the house, but he knows of a store nearby where he can get milk from. When a person feels a void in himself, as long as he knows where he can go to get *chiyus* from, he will be able to help himself, because he is clear about where the source of his *chiyus* is.

We can possibly say that almost all people are not clear about where they feel vitality from. Instead, they are just taking life as it comes. But one needs inner clarity about which actions give me vitality, which emotions or *middos* give me vitality, and what kinds of thoughts give me vitality.

When one becomes clear about himself like this, he gains immensely. Firstly, he will be able to get back to a source of vitality when he is going through a stressful period or dissatisfaction in his life. Even more so, when he is involved with the activity\emotion\thought that gives him vitality, he will receive even more vitality from it than before, now that he has become clearer that it gives him vitality.

Why is it that way? Until

one becomes clear about where he gets vitality from, we can compare his life to the sun on a cloudy day, which isn't able to shine. When he clarifies what his source of vitality is, it's as if he is removing the 'clouds' of confusion that are covering his soul, where the 'sun' in his soul can now shine strongly. In the words of the *Gemara*, there is a terminology found "If the matter is clear to you as the sun."[15] How does a person reach a level of clarity that is as clear as the sun? By removing the obstacles and placing them to the side, we have created an opening and now the matter can shine clearly in the soul. When a person clarifies where he gets vitality from in the areas of action, emotion, and thought, this clarity gives him an additional burst of vitality to those areas where he was already getting vitality from, because he has now become clearer about his vitality from these areas.

Although we are discussing this matter is relation to revealing the *Chayah* part of the soul, we can all understand that this is the implication of the words of one of the Sages, "You see a clear world."[16] From where do you get vitality from? What energizes you? When you live with clarity! A person must recognize where he gets vitality from. The inward result from this will be that a person will reveal an inner flow of vitality within him. In contrast, when a person does not identify what gives him vitality, he cannot identify any inner source of vitality in him.

Every person goes through many different things which he receives vitality from, but he doesn't always identify it. If he doesn't identify it, he doesn't connect to it, because he is not aware that it can provide him with vitality. Compare this to a person who comes across water and he drinks from it, and he is unaware that the water is really coming from an underground spring. His experience of this water is not nearly what it could have been, because he thinks he is drinking from some gathered rainwater, rather than from a spring.

It is the same with a person. As long as a person has not yet done any inner clarification with himself, even if he does touch upon an inner source of energy for himself, he will not sense it, so he will not derive any revitalizing energy from it. In contrast, when a person becomes clear about where he gets vitality from, he will sense that he is touching upon a personal source of energy for himself when he encounters it, and then he will become revitalized from it.

FEELING ALIVE

Each of us has a certain path, which can be used as a means to connect to the root of our personal energy source. When a person connects to the source of vitality in his areas of action, emotion, and thought, he will suddenly feel that he has become **alive.** He is clearer about where he draws his vitality from, and therefore he can focus on this source of vitality and feel that this is where his vitality from. It is not simply that it results in feeling more alive – it is rather a feeling of an inner revelation, which is called *mekor haneviah* (inner source of energy).

It is difficult to express this any further in words. We should understand that the meaning of an "alive person" is a rare phenomenon in the world today. Many people do receive vitality, but they are not receiving it from the *mekor haneviah*, from an inner source of vitality. If we take a look at where most people are receiving vitality from, it is either from various desires of this world, such as food, etc. or from receiving a little honor. But these forms of pleasure are not an inner source of vitality.

A person might be involved with Torah study for his whole life, yet he hasn't even touched upon an inner source of *chiyus* in himself! Why? He learns Torah either because he knows that there is a *mitzvah* to learn

15 *Talmud Bavli Tractate Sanhedrin 72b*
16 *Talmud Bavli Tractate Pesachim 50b*

Torah, or because out of an obligation to know *Shas*, or because he needs to know *halachos.* Although that is all true, where he is "he" found amidst all of this? We ask, *"And give us a portion in Your Torah"* – where is this person's personal portion in the Torah? One's personal portion in Torah serves as his vitality in learning Torah.

The Sages state that there are 600,000 letters in the Torah, parallel to the 600,000 souls of the Jewish people. Thus, each person has a personal source of vitality in the Torah, and he must reveal it. If one never reveals his personal source of vitality in the Torah, he will never study his personal portion in the Torah. It is not only people in the street who are lacking real vitality in their lives. Even a person who is sitting in the tents of Torah and immersed in deep study of Torah, will be lacking true vitality in his life if he has never done any inward clarification with himself.

Although the Torah is called "Torah of life," and we say of the Torah "For they (the words of Torah) are our life," this does not necessarily mean that a person's Torah learning is emanating from his inner source of vitality. When a person is not getting vitality from the inner source, he is missing the root of his *chiyus*, because he is not touching upon the inner root of his *chiyus*, and as a result, the *chiyus* that he does receive from his Torah learning will only be minimal.

IN SUMMARY OF REVEALING THE CHAYAH BY WAY OF THE SOUL'S GARMENTS

Studying the *Chayah* level of the soul begins with getting in touch with the "garments" of the *Chayah*, which are action, emotion, thought. After that, a person can then reach the understanding of the *Chayah*, which is his inner source of vitality. From there onward, one can go on to reveal the very Source of life that sustains him from within.

If a person skips over the stage of revealing his own inner vitality source, he will not be able to reveal the very Source within him that sustains his energy. First one needs to reach the root of his energy, and after touching upon it, one needs to go after the Root of his vitality source, the light of the Infinite, which sustains the very source of his energy. The light of the Infinite is cloaked in each person, in the "unifying point of Creation" which is present in each person, as explained in the beginning of this chapter.

We should understand that it is impossible for one to skip over this step. Only after a person reveals the source of his own personal energy, can he reveal the very root of his energy source, the Infinite, the "G-dly spark" that sustains one's *Neshamah*.

Earlier, we discussed focused breathing. We should understand that if a person has not identified where he gets vitality from in his actions, emotions, and thoughts, his breathing exercises will be acting from a very superficial place. When he inhales and exhales, he won't touch upon his the source of his breathing, because he does not recognize the source where he draws his vitality from.

Only after a person recognizes his source of *chiyus*\vitality\ energy, can his acts of inhaling and exhaling bring him to the source, for he can feel within him what his source of vitality is, thus he will be inhaling and exhaling from an inner place.

4 | BREATHING – OUR PRIMARY SOURCE OF MOVEMENT[17]

We understand clearly that movement and action is a sign of being alive. A dead person cannot move and he cannot do anything. But when it comes to our daily living, do we actually feel more alive from movement? Often, we are living life like a dead person. We generally will feel more alive from what we possess, but not from the movements and actions in our life. But the truth is that a person really does live from movements and actions, and not just from what he has.

The *Gemara*[18] brings a dispute if the land of *Eretz Yisrael* is inherited by those who left Egypt, or by those who entered the Land. According to one opinion in the *Gemara*, it is inherited by those who left Egypt, who were already deceased by the time the nation entered the Land, because there can be "inheritance in the grave," whereupon the deceased person has an acquisition of his inheritance and now passes on the inheritance for his children. Without getting into the details of this discussion, the point we want to take out from this is that even a dead person can acquire something, at least momentarily. Therefore, acquisition or possession of something does not symbolize life, for even a dead person can acquire something.

What, then, is life? Life is only when there is action and movement. A person really derives vitality from the effort of trying to acquire something, and after he acquires it, he no longer derives vitality from it, and he is onto acquiring the next thing. It is like the verse, "Stolen waters are sweet" – from whatever I already have, I do not derive vitality from, and I only derive vitality from the act of the movement towards that which I want to acquire.

The truth is that even a dead person has some degree of vitality which keeps it intact. This is called *kista d'chiyusa*.[19] It has this minimum degree of life, and without it, it wouldn't be here at all. Today, the *chiyus* (vitality) of people resembles this small degree of life that even the dead have. There is barely any genuine *chiyus* today.

However, **the more a person learns how to derive vitality from movement, the more he can tap into this source of energy at every moment, and become revitalized from it. Even if you are physically still, but your emotions or thoughts are active, you can derive vitality from this kind of inner activity.**

On a subtler level, even the physical body is always in movement. When a person is completely still, he won't be able to feel this, because the movement is so subtle. **But from the act of breathing, one can feel his abdomen moving, and the like. This movement is the root of our *chiyus*.**

This understanding, that we can derive *chiyus* from the mere act of moving, is really a perception which comes from before the sin of Adam. However, as with all other powers available in Creation, it can also be misused, such as when a person moves in order to do something evil, *chas v'shalom*. But the root of the perspective itself, of deriving vitality from movement, is a perspective which comes from before the sin. As emphasized, it is not a feeling of vitality derived from what we acquire and have, but from our acts of movement.

17 *from Torah.Way.To.Enlightenment.017*
18 *Talmud Bavli Tractate Bava Basra 117a*
19 *Zohar Beraishis 83a*

5 | BREATHING OF THE NOSE AND MOUTH[20]

Before the sin of Adam *HaRishon*, man was mainly a creature of movement, and after the sin, man is mainly defined as a creature of speech. Movement corresponds to the "*Ruach"* level of the soul. The primary mode of man before the sin was movement*Ruach*, and after the sin, the primary mode has become speech.

We can see both of these modes apparent even now: we breathe in and out through the nose (in Hebrew, nose is "*af,"* and the term for "breath of the nostrils" is *"ruach apeinu,"* thus the breathing through the nose corresponds to the "*Ruach"* level of the soul), as well as through the mouth (corresponding to speech). We find two forms of movement, which are each primary aspects in man – movement through the nose (breathing), and movement through the mouth (speech).

Thus, before the sin, where the "*Ruach*" level of the soul was more apparent, man could connect to the Creator through the mere act of breathing in and out. This *avodah* is explained extensively in the *sefarim* of Rav Abulefia, and it was later mentioned in other *sefarim* that are not so well-known. Through breathing in and out, man can connect to the root of all creations: movement. Now that we are after the sin, we perceive the force of movement in man as the power to lead, which is personified by the power of speech.

Thus, both speech and breathing are expressions of movement, but there are two levels of perception: there is a perception where man connects to his movement aspect just through breathing (this was the level before the sin), and there is a perception where man connects to his movement aspect through speech. When I have the understanding that speech personifies the reality of man as a moving force, this is the "*Nefesh*" level in speech.

In the past, we explained the concept of defining our reality as constantly being in motion, as well as the understanding that our reality is always being guided [by Divine Providence of the Creator]. The first level of perception is the "*Ruach*" level. This level is reflected by the personal *avodah* of focused breathing, of concentrating on the inhale and exhale without doing anything else; on a deeper level, it is to connect oneself to our very reality of movement.

20 *from Torah.Way.To.Enlightenment.017*

6 | VITALITY FROM OUR BREATHING[21]

One can feel each moment that there is a Source that is renewing Creation each moment, and then he can become aware that he receives *chiyus*\vitality from this, and then he can easily feel the *chiyus* being taken away from him – and he thereby connects himself to the Source of all vitality and life. There is a lengthy *avodah* brought in the *sefarim* of Reb Abulefia, regarding breathing, where one focuses and becomes aware of his inhale and exhale. (As is the way of the world, the gentiles have taken this from the works of the Sages of the nation of *Yisrael*, but it has really been described first in the *sefarim* of Reb Abulefia as a lengthy form of *avodah* in which a person focuses and becomes aware of his inhale and exhale.)

On a superficial level, this *avodah* is seen as a relaxation technique. Anyone can feel, upon becoming clearly and consciously aware of the breath, that it is calming. When you become aware of the inhale and the exhale, it provides you with a sense of orderliness to your breathing, and this itself is calming, for a person cannot be calm when he is unfocused and internally scattered [and therefore, the way to become calm is to provide a sense of inner orderliness].

This is the external and superficial aspect of breathing, and it is this aspect practiced by those who meditate on their breathing.

But this external act of focusing on the breathing is not yet the "*Chayah*" level of the soul in which one becomes aware that he is constantly receiving renewed vitality. At best, getting used to these breathing exercises can be a step of training in order to reach the perspective of the *Chayah* – as we will now explain. The inner aspect of breathing [the *avodah* described by R*av Abulefia*] is that when a person is inhaling, he feels the Source of the breath, meaning that he feels that he is breathing in *chiyus* (vitality) from the Source of this *chiyus*. And, upon exhaling, one feels that his *chiyus* is leaving him, feeling that this loss of *chiyus* is like death.

Thus, building the "*Chayah*" level of the soul is to actually feel the Source of all vitality; to feel the renewal and cessation of all life. It is not just an external act of focusing on the inhale and exhale. It is a more inner experience of the breathing. At the inhale, the avodah is for a person to feel the Source of the life that is being given to him as he breathes in, and upon exhaling, the person feels that he is dead, that he has returned his vitality to its Source. One then repeats the cycle. That is how a person can receive life-giving energy from becoming consciously aware of his breathing.

People love to drink water from a spring, "mineral water," as opposed to drinking water from the sink. What is the reason for this? It is really because people can feel how spring water is "living water," water straight from the source. In the soul as well, there is also an inner wellspring of "living water," which is the Source of all vitality. When one reaches that source, he will always find himself in that inner wellspring, and he will feel that it is the Source of all his vitality, for he will feel each moment that there is a constant cessation and renewal to his life, as in the verse, *"And the Chayos run and retreat."* There one can feel the constant cycle of life, death, life, death.

21 *from Torah.Way.To.Enlightenment.006*

7 | DEEPENING OUR BREATHING[22]

Either we can take **deep breaths** *without* smelling something deeply, or we can **smell** something **deeply** *without* taking deep breaths. The common denominator between either *avodah* is that it helps us reach a deeper place in ourselves.

We need to keep deepening our sense of smell in this way, more and more, until we feel ourselves entering a deeper place in ourselves. By getting used to this, we will uncover a great inner calm – and it is a very deep feeling.

The truth is that deep smell can only be reached after we calm down the rest of our senses. When we start out *hisbodedus*, we cannot jump to this higher stage, and we have to just get used to breathing or smelling deeply. Only later can we begin to deepen our sense of smell as a way to access our inner self.

THREE WAYS TO DEEPEN OUR BREATHING

1- Air is "avir" in Hebrew, which has in it the words "ohr" (spiritual light) and the letter "yud." This hints to an avodah in which one can imagine in front of him air with a white hue, and then breathe in this air which is luminous, pure and clean. That is one way to breathe in air: as you breathe, imagine that you are breathing in this "ohr" contained in the air.

2- A second way to gain from breathing air is to breathe in air that is clean.

3- A third way is for one to imagine a possuk in the air and then breathe it in. By thinking about a possuk and then saying it verbally, we purify the air that enters us as we breathe it in.

In today's times, there are all kinds of breathing exercises. The basic idea between all these methods is that the person imagines that he is inhaling something pure into himself so he can purify himself, and he is exhaling something impure from himself so he can expel his impurity. We cannot say that these methods are incorrect, but they are not brought in our holy *sefarim*, The methods which we brought, though, have been written in our holy *sefarim*, such as in the *sefarim* of R*av Abulefia* and the *sefer Yesod Tzaddik*, written by Reb Shlomo of Zhevil. The *avodah* of breathing merits its own discussion, but let us return to our main point.

22 *from Inner.Silence.Series.Preparation.003*

8 | COUNTERING ANGER THROUGH BREATHING[23]

Now we will explain how one can use the sense of **smell** to calm down anger.

A) Scent. One can try smelling *besamim*, inhaling the scent deeply. The sense of smell can be greatly calming to the soul.

Once again, a person has to make sure not to get too carried away with smelling things too much. But to a certain extent, one can try getting used to smelling things that are pleasant to smell, in order to gain a degree of calmness. One should try to get used to smelling pleasant things on a regular basis, allowing himself inhale the scent, slowly, deeply, and calmly. He should allow the scent to enter him deeply as he inhales and breathes it in, and this creates a certain calming effect. It is hard to describe this in words, but a person can keep deepening the inhale, smelling it more deeply each time, until he feels a certain feeling of calmness.

B) Breathing. Alternatively, even if a person doesn't have something pleasant in front of him to smell, one can deepen his breathing, by focusing on his inhale and exhale. If one gets used to practicing this on a regular basis, he will become a calmer person in general, and he will have an easier time with anger when it sets in.

We know that when a person is angry, his breathing rate changes dramatically, and it can get thrown out of balance to the point that a person may even have a heart attack. By working with our breath on a regular basis, through getting used to deeply inhaling and exhaling the air, a certain calmness results, and then we are better equipped to deal with anger. We will automatically feel how the anger is throwing our breathing rate out of balance, and we will quickly want to get our breathing back to normal, when we are angered. So improving our breathing will motivate us greatly to leave the anger.

It would seem that improving our breathing has nothing to do with conquering anger. But when we reflect into this, we can see that there's a strong relationship between breathing and anger.

23 *from Fixing.Your.Fire.Anger.014*

9 | PLEASURE FROM BREATHING[24]

MOVEMENT IS THE ROOT OF PLEASURE

Let us examine what the deep root of pleasure is. What is pleasure all about?

When we have pleasure, we are really enjoying a certain kind of movement. *Taanug,* pleasure, is related to the word *tenuah,* which means movement. The greatest *taanug* is experienced by a true Torah scholar, who is always moving towards Hashem. So pleasure comes from enjoying a certain 'movement'.

Taanug, or *oneg*, is when a person moves toward something that is worthy to pursue. When a person moves away from the right kind of pleasure, such pleasure is called *nega*, the opposite of the word *oneg*. *Oneg*/pleasure is thus based on *tenuah*/movement.

Using this concept, we can now see how to gain control of our desires to engage in movement: the more we become **aware** of our movements, the more we gain *oneg*, because we will be gaining pleasure from our movements.

BECOMING AWARE OF OUR ROOT MOVEMENT: BREATHING

We are always breathing in and out. Do we ever derive enjoyment from this?

Chazal say that for every breath, our soul should praise Hashem. If a person pays attention to the fact that he breathes in and out, he can derive great enjoyment from this, because he is aware of his constant movements. Hashem is breathing new life into us every time we breathe in. If we think of our breathing in these terms, we will derive tremendous pleasure from our breathing.

When people lack true pleasure, they search for it in other unsavory places. On Shabbos, we are supposed to have *oneg Shabbos* – a deep pleasure in the holiness of Shabbos. This is to access our pleasure in spirituality, and the main time to access is on Shabbos. The deep *oneg* we can have in Shabbos is what can supply us with true *oneg*. When people don't have real *oneg Shabbos*, they don't know how to derive pleasure from proper movement, and they will seek all kinds of crazy, unhealthy pleasures during the six days of the week.

The idea we see from this is that when we have real pleasure, we won't seek it elsewhere. Therefore, if we learn how to enjoy our breathing – which is the root of all our movements – we will have access the pleasure that comes from the main movement in our life, and then we won't need to seek pleasure in various other movements.

This is a subtle concept. Most people do not enjoy the fact that they breathe in and out. If people would feel the enjoyment in breathing in and out – not to just to know about it intellectually, but to actually ***feel*** enjoyment in it – they would have the root of all pleasure.

Most of the movements going on in the world do not supply us with pleasure. How many people are constantly searching for new places to find pleasure! They keep moving from place to place in the hope of finding pleasure. But if only they would have the pleasure in the root of all "movement," they wouldn't need to search for pleasure in any of the "movements" going on in this world.

Practically speaking, to work on this, the first step is to reflect **intellectually** about the concept of your breathing process, and then, try to **feel** pleasure in it as you breathe in and out. When you derive pleasure in the root of all your movements – the fact that you breathe in and out – you won't need to get pleasure in any other extra kinds of movements.

This is the root of the solution; there are also "branches" of the solution which we will soon mention, but the main part of

24 *from Fixing.Your.Water.006*

the solution is to use this root of the solution. Without using this concept, which is the root of the solution to these desires, a person will lack pleasure in movement, and he will search for all kinds of unhealthy pleasure.

This is the general outline of the solution we will use to solve desires for movement.

IN SUMMARY

To summarize, we need to uncover our pleasure in our root movement, which is in our inner world [enjoying our breathing; on a deeper level, enjoyment from our deep feelings and thoughts in Torah; on yet a deeper level, enjoyment in our relationship with Hashem, which is endless].

Along with this, we also need to practice a bit of restraint on our movements as we are enjoying the movement, depending on which of the four elements the desire for movement is coming from, as we explained in previous chapters.

We must point out that if we just practice restraint on our movements and we don't learn how to derive pleasure from our inner source of movements, then we are missing the main part of the solution.

10 | RENEWAL FROM BREATHING[25]

THE ONGOING REVIVAL IN CREATION

In the second blessing of "ו ו ו" *Shemoneh Esrei*, we say You revive the" – "ו ו ו ו ו dead." It is written, *"Hashem revives the dead with His expression."*[26] Our Rabbis point out that there are five times in this blessing which we mention how Hashem revives the dead. The first time we mention the revival of the dead, it is referring to the general revival of the dead which will be in the future.

But as we know from the words of our Sages, Hashem is constantly reviving the world. Just as He supports life all the time - as we say later on in this blessing, ו ו ו ו ו ו ו ו ו ו ו - so does He revive the dead all the time.

The simple understanding of this is that when a person goes to sleep, he returns his soul to Hashem, and when he gets up in the morning, Hashem gives him back his soul; this is the simple understanding of how Hashem revives the dead every day.

But the deeper understanding is that Hashem revives the various parts of our soul. The five times we mention the revival of the dead in this blessing are an allusion to the five parts of our soul. Generally speaking, there are five parts to our soul. The highest part of our soul[27] is our *ratzon* (will), followed by our power of *machshavah* (thought) then *hisbonenus* (reflection), then our *middos* (emotions and character traits) and finally, our actions, which are the lowest layer of our soul.

It is written, *"Hashem renews, in His goodness, every day, the act of Creation."*[28] This does not just mean that Hashem revives the world every day, but that He revives one's personal soul, every day.

THE RENEWAL OF OUR RATZON\ WILL

We will start with the highest layer of our soul, our *ratzon*. How does our *ratzon* get renewed every day? We are referring to a *ratzon* for holiness, not *retzonos* for various physical pursuits. How do we feel any *ratzon* for holiness?

It is really engraved deeply in our soul to always strive for holiness. "It is our will to do Your will, but the yeast in the sourdough [the evil inclination] prevents us."[29] Our *ratzon* gets revived all the time because there is a personal revival of the dead that is constantly taking place in one's personal soul. Whenever I want to do learn or daven or do something spiritual, my *ratzon* is getting awakened, and this can only happen if **I recognize that Hashem is reviving me**. It is not enough for a person to know about this intellectually - he must have an inner recognition of it.

When a person isn't connected inwardly to the concept, then it doesn't work for him, and he is kind of asleep in his soul. Just like our body goes to sleep, so can our soul be 'asleep' – when it is not connected to spiritual realities. But when we believe and recognize that Hashem keeps reviving us, our *ratzon* is revived, and then we are able to keep having a *ratzon* for anything holy.

From where does anyone get the power to sit and learn Torah every day? It is because they have a *ratzon* which is active. What is the difference between someone who shows up to the *Beis Midrash* every day to learn, on a regular basis, and someone who only comes once in a while, when he feels like it? The first person has a *ratzon*. He is connected to the concept of the soul's revival, and therefore his

25 *from Tefillah.034.Revival.of.The.Living*
26 *Recited on Friday night after the Shemoneh Esrei (Silent Prayer) of the Maariv prayer*
27 *These five layers of the soul are the external layers of the soul, but our actual essence of our soul is deeper than our will. It is our actual "I" – our neshamah, which is a "piece of Hashem." Refer to the author's Getting Know Your Self.*
28 *Recited in the blessings preceding the Shema, during the Shacharis (morning) prayer*
29 *Talmud Bavli Tractate Berachos 17a*

ratzon is always ignited.

To give another example, when people begin *Daf HaYomi,* their *ratzon* is active, but as *Daf haYomi* goes on, many people lose interest. Their *ratzon* stops. Why do people lose their *ratzon*? It is because they don't realize that Hashem can keep reviving us. The only ones who are able to last through any spiritual undertaking are the ones who understand that Hashem keeps reviving our *ratzon*, and that is where they get strength from. Those who lose their *ratzon* are unaware of the concept of how their *ratzon* can constantly be revived by Hashem.

THE RENEWAL OF OUR ACTIONS

From where do people get the ability to always be active in doing the mitzvos? How can people just do, do, and do more good deeds? Don't we need *menuchah* (rest)? How are certain people able to always be doing so many *mitzvos* and never cease doing *mitzvos*? It is because they are connected to the soul's revival. Therefore, their actions are constantly getting revived by Hashem. They are constantly experiencing an ongoing *techiyas hameisim* (revival of the dead) in their realm of action.

The Renewal of Our Middos

From where do people get the strength to always work on the *middos*? There are many people who were working on their *middos* when they were younger, but then they got married and "move on" with their life, leaving their aspirations behind, and they stop working on their *middos.* They have "*tekufos*" (periods) where they work on their *middos*, and "*tekufos*" when they don't work on their *middos*….

But there are people who are constantly working on their *middos*, for years and years. How are they able to work so hard on themselves? It is because they are connected to the power of the soul's revival. They realize that their *middos* need to always undergo *techiyas hameisim*, and that is how they get the strength to work on themselves.

ELUL AND BEYOND

People work on themselves every Elul, but very few people remain with their progress. How are people to continue their growth? Inspiration cannot build us. We need to build and develop in ourselves a power in our soul that can keep us going. That power is to connect ourselves to the ongoing *techiyas hameisim* in Creation. This will supply us with a constant, inner source of revival.

ATTACHING YOUR ENTIRE SOUL TO THE ONGOING REVIVAL

All of us **know** – in our minds, at least - that Hashem exists. But do we ***feel*** it? We **know**, intellectually, that Hashem keeps us alive, but do we actually feel that way? When we have a *ratzon*, we should feel that it is being enabled by Hashem. When we reflect deeply, we should feel that it's coming from Hashem. When we think, we should feel that it's coming from Hashem. When we work on our middos, we should feel that it's only possible because of Hashem. When we do any act, we should feel that it's only because Hashem helps us.

LISTENING TO YOUR BREATHING

It is written, *"Every soul praises Hashem,"* and Chazal interpret this *possuk* that for every breath a person breathes, a person should thank Hashem. Based upon this, we should try the following *avodah*. Every day, for a few minutes, take some quiet time and listen to your breathing, and feel how Hashem is allowing you to breathe.[30] (Of course, don't try doing this a whole day. We are not on the level of angels.)

Our power of breathing is something that we actually can feel; it is not just something that we know about. Pay attention to your breathing, feel yourself breathing, and make sure you are very calm when you do so. You can begin to feel how Hashem is keeping you alive with each breath, reviving you every second with each breath.

We all know in our mind that Hashem keeps us alive, but in order to feel it, we must be able to clearly feel it. Listening to your breathing is a good way for you to more clearly feel

30 *For more specific guidance on how to do this breathing exercise, refer to Chapter 1 (The Avodah of Breathing)*

Hashem's existence. If you do this throughout the day, you will uncover a deep closeness with Hashem, feeling how Hashem is constantly giving you life. (This won't be effective, though, if you just do this mechanically and superficially.)

If someone practices this with inner calm, every day, he will slowly begin to actually feel his *ratzon* for holiness. His entire life will feel like an ongoing *techiyas hameisim.* This can be applied to the entire spectrum of our soul – our will, our deep reflection, our thoughts, our middos, and our actions – that Hashem is supplying us with energy to do any of these things.

When you get up in the morning and you say *Modeh Ani,* you can feel how Hashem has given you back your life. In the same way, you can constantly feel how Hashem is giving you your life, when you connect throughout the course of the day to the concept of the ongoing *techiyas hameisim.* When this becomes your way of life, you will uncover a deep connection with Hashem, in all your soul layers – all the way from your *ratzon* down to your actions. This will happen slowly, not all at once.

This is the *maayan hamisgaber* (mighty wellspring) that a person can access in his own soul.

THE POWER TO GET PAST ALL FAILURES

This is how we can gain a constant renewal and always start anew, no matter what failure we went through that day. When you connect to the source of your life – Hashem – and to believe that He is constantly reviving you – you will be able to get past all your major failures. Even when you fail, you will be to immediately get up from the failure, because you are tapping into the power of your soul's constant revival.

The root of all failures is really because after a person fails, he doesn't believe he can get up again afterwards. He isn't connected to the concept of the constant **revival**, therefore, he doesn't feel renewal in his soul.

WORKING ON THIS CONCEPT

This is a matter which does not come to you just by knowing about it intellectually. You need to actually connect yourself to the concept, to actually feel where your source of life is coming from [Hashem]. To work on this, take some quiet time and sit in a calm, quiet place [as the Chazon Ish writes to do, in *sefer Emunah U'Bitachon*] and try to feel this concept we have described here.

IN CONCLUSION

Thus, based upon what we have explained here, the meaning of these words of *Shemoneh Esrei*, that Hashem is **מחי' מתים** (He revives the dead) is not just that Hashem will revive the dead in the future. He revives us every moment – that is, when we believe in the concept of the ongoing *techiyas hameisim,* which is an actual force in Creation that we can connect ourselves to, and thereby access to it.

11 | JOY FROM BREATHING[31]

One should also try the following, when one is about to rest, so that he can always feel like he in a state of movement. One should try to add on some tiny amount of "movement" even when he's resting, so that he doesn't become completely inactive.

For example, whenever one is taking a break from work or from any other activities, he should try doing some small "movement," so that he doesn't become completely non-moving. A good example of this is by becoming aware of the simple movements of his breathing.

When one is lying on his bed, he can try becoming aware of his breathing. There are two basic kinds of breathing: (1) Focusing quietly on your soft breathing. (2) Taking quick, deep and strong breaths, on the exhale and inhale, with acute awareness of the breathing.

When one becomes aware of his breathing - first on an intellectual level and then on an experiential level, where he can feel his breathing more acutely – even as he's lying on bed and doing nothing, he will be accessing some movement. This keeps him in a state of movement, so that his rest doesn't become total and deathlike, and this allows him to remain in a joyous state.

It should be noted that we are not speaking here of how to draw joy from any higher levels of the soul, but on a very basic level, from the *nefesh habehaimis* (the "animal" level of the soul), within the realm of basic emotions (which is called "*koach hamargish*").[32] There are deeper levels of joy as well, which are a higher experience than the feelings of the *nefesh habehaimis*, and it requires a different *avodah* to reach.[33] Here we are speaking about a simple ability present even in the "animal soul": an ability to listen to, and sense, the inner movements of the soul.

There are different ways to go from sadness from joy. One of the ways, which we have described in this lesson until now, is by increasing movement. But there is also another way. Since we live in a world of movement, a person is always able to find movement. We are not speaking about the constant movements of planets and stars in the Creation, which we cannot feel. We are speaking of a constant movement that we can feel and sense from within ourselves: the movements of the soul.

One can become aware that he is using his power of action, or his power to feel emotions, or his power of thought. But even when one isn't performing any action, and even when his emotions and thoughts are quieted (relatively speaking), he can still feel the movements in his soul, by becoming aware of his inhale and exhale.

When one becomes aware of the simple movement of his breathing, he will always be in a state of joy, because he is accessing the movements of the soul, which provide joy and which don't allow for sadness to set in.

31 *From Fixing.Your.Earth.Sadness.02.Maintaining.Inner.Vitality*

32 *Refer to commentary of the Gra on Yeshayah (Isaiah) 11:1, who lists the 70 abilities contained in the nefesh habehaimis (animal soul), which includes the "koach ha-margish, the "power to feel" [the source of basic human emotions and which also includes the senses].*

33 *Refer to Fixing.Your.Earth.Sadness.09.Reviving.The.Spirit*

12 | TRANSFORMING OUR GROANS INTO VITALITY AND JOY [34]

The *Baal HaTanya* and others explained that the difference between *atzvus*\sadness and *merirus*\bitterness is, that sadness is a crushing state which leads to despair and a deathlike existence, whereas *merirus*\bitterness leads to vitality, energy and more life. Whenever a person groans out of disappointment, this can either be expressed as a physical groan of frustration, or, it can be used as an opportunity to gain vitality. We will explain how.

When groaning is coming from sadness, the breath (air/wind) of a person escapes from his throat, and he stays where he is, kind of paralyzed. This resembles death, when everything in the person goes still. Such a groan is an expression of the person's sadness at being disappointed, that something has not come to fruition, and this is the kind of groan which the *Gemara* is referring to when it says that "a groan breaks the entire person's body."[35] The kind of "groan that breaks a person's entire body" is when a person groans out of sadness, frustration, disappointment, and it leaves a person in a deathlike state, where he is still and he doesn't budge from his place.

However, in another scenario, a person will let out a groan of disappointment, but it doesn't deplete his energy. He is 'alive' after the groan, as opposed to being 'dead' in the previously mentioned scenario. Such a groan is the kind of the groan that breaks 'half' the body – but it does not break the 'entire' body.

Only when a person becomes deathlike after groaning, does the groan break the entire body. This is the depth behind the argument in the *Gemara* if a groan breaks half or the entire body. A groan causes the breath/air/wind of a person to escape outward. When one's spirit has gone outward and it doesn't return to him, this groan will cause a person to be sad, because it resembles a state of death. In contrast to this, a person's breath/air/wind can leave a person and then return to him, in the form of focused inhaling and exhaling. In this scenario, the breath hasn't merely gone outward from the person. It returns to the person, and it renews his spirit, filling him with renewed vigor and energy. If a person groans in this way, his groans actually infuse him with more energy.

A dead person doesn't breathe in and out. He has no breath, no air. He has lost his "wind." He is missing the *ruach chaim*, the "spirit of life," which personifies a living person. The dead person's air/wind has gone entirely outward, and it hasn't returned to him. A groan, when it is emitted on an impaired level [without conscious awareness, as will soon be explained] is a debilitating act which is deathlike to a person. This is the depth behind the matter that being in a state of sadness causes the soul to depart from a person.

In contrast to this, a groan can also be emitted in a way that brings more life to a person. It is written, *"It is good to go to a house of mourning, and the living will take to heart."*[36] When one goes to a house of mourning, where people sigh and groan, because they are in sadness as they mourn and grieve the deceased, this is a constructive kind of groan which provides a person with more vitality. Such a groan doesn't just escape outward from a person, it re-enters him afterwards, renewing the person with a new sense of life. It is a holy kind of groaning.

The idea here is that when a person groans, he needs to make sure that he 'breathes back in' the air/wind that has left him. Practically speaking, this means that after one groans, even if he is doing so because he is disappointed and frustrated about something, he should feel that the groan has renewed his soul.

This is the depth behind how going to a house of mourning brings more vitality to a person.

34 *From Fixing.Your.Earth.Sadness.03.The.Groan.of.Disappointment*
35 *Talmud Bavli Tractate Berachos 58b*
36 *Koheles (Ecclesiastes) 7:2*

A groan doesn't have to sap the energy and life out of a person. To the contrary, it can give more vitality to a person. The air/wind emitted from such a groan resembles the holy wind that is referred to as "*Ruach apeinu Moshiach Hashem*," "The breath of our nostrils, the messenger of Hashem."[37] This is also the depth of the statement, "On the day of the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, the *Moshiach* is born."[38] The "wind," the life-giving air that has left us – and on a deeper level, our spiritual source of vitality - can be returned to us. And when it returns, it is a more renewed, spiritual kind of air that is a new source of energy for us. This is also the implication of "One who mourns Jerusalem, will merit to see it rebuilt."[39]

Thus, there are two kinds of groans. One kind of groan is destructive to the spirit and to the body, for it increases the element of earth in the soul, which in turn causes sadness. The other kind of groan is holy, and it gives renewed vitality to a person.

GOING TO SLEEP WITH THE AWARENESS THAT MY SOUL WILL RETURN UPON AWAKING IN THE MORNING

Sleep is called "a sixtieth of death."[40] When a person sleeps, his soul leaves him. In different terms, his "wind" leaves him as he sleeps. His "spirit of life" returns to its Source above as he sleeps, and his body lies still. When a person goes to sleep, he knows that he is giving over his soul to Hashem and he is confident that he will wake up the next morning, with his soul returned to him, and with a renewed spirit. There are a few people who, unfortunately, go to sleep wishing they won't wake up the next day. But most people believe that they will wake up the following morning, and they want to. [However, this confidence is usually only in the subconscious, so it is often a lost opportunity for growth].

One should become consciously aware, before going to sleep, that his spirit will be leaving him, and that it will be returned to him upon awaking. When one has this awareness, his sleep becomes an experience of renewal for him. He becomes consciously aware that the body goes silent as he sleeps, and that his wind/soul returns to its Source and becomes renewed, and then returns to the body in the morning, whereupon the body and soul are both renewed. In this way, sleep can be an opportunity to access a holy kind of "groan," when a person is aware that his absence of spirit when he sleeps is actually a means to renew the spirit.

TRANSFORMING OUR GROANS INTO A SOURCE OF VITALITY-GIVING ENERGY

When a person feels exhausted and depleted from physical energy, naturally, he groans. If one groans without any awareness, it leaves a person feeling kind of dead. The result will be that he becomes immobile and he simply stays where he is, feeling like he can't do anything, and this resembles being dead. Instead, a person can use the groans of his disappointment as a way to become consciously aware that his spirit is leaving him and then returning to him renewed, and that this, itself, is renewing him. One can become aware that as he is groaning, he is letting his "wind" escape outward, and that his wind can return to him and renew him.

Without being consciously aware of this, a person simply lets out groans and sounds of frustration, whenever he meets disappointment. This kind of groaning does not renew him, and it will only increase his anxiety. Instead, when a person meets disappointment, he can groan with the awareness that his groan is an escape of breath that can return to him and renew him. For indeed, the breath that returns to him is a completely new breath. The groan should be released with this conscious awareness that it is an act of renewal - as opposed to a

37 *Eichah (Lamentations) 4:20*
38 *Eichah Rabbah 1:51, Yerushalmi Berachos 2:4,*
39 *Talmud Bavli Tractate Taanis 30b*
40 *Talmud Bavli Tractate Berachos 57b*

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7 ספרי קודש	8 דרשות	9 פרשת השבוע
10 מועדי השנה	11 אוצר אותיות	12 תורה, גמרא, שו"ע
13 צורת אדם	ליקוט 14 צורת אדם ועבודתו	עבודת הנפש 15 לפי עשר הספירות

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