
❧ CARING FOR THE JEWISH SOUL ❧

Dynamics of the Body and the Soul

“Today we’re going to talk about the soul. But before we begin, I’d like to take an informal survey, so I can get a better idea of where you’re coming from. Please raise your hand if you believe you have a soul ... [many will raise their hands]. Wow! That’s amazing. Look around the room and see how many people are raising their hands. But you think I’m saying it’s amazing because I’m a rabbi/educator, and it’s my job to convince people they have souls. Actually, the opposite is true. Let me be the first card-carrying rabbi/educator to tell you that you do not have a soul. You think I’m joking, but I’m completely serious. Judaism states categorically that you do not have a soul. Rather, you are a soul, and you have a body. This is not mere semantics. It is this subtle confusion that is at the root of many of our misunderstandings in life, in relationships, as individuals, and as a society. And when I say confusion, I mean confusion. My asking you if you have a soul should be like my asking you if you have a person. You should be like, what are you talking about? I am a person. Our essence is soul. We are soul before we are born; we are soul after we die. And for the short time we are on this planet, we are soul fused with a body. Once we get this distinction clear, all the pieces of Judaism – and of our life – will fall into place.”

The existence of the soul is one of the fundamental underpinnings of Judaism. The Torah teaches that God creates each person with a physical body and a Divine soul, and it is the soul that is the person’s essence. Just as we need to attend to our body’s physical needs, we need to nourish the Jewish soul with spiritual fulfillment – through Torah study and mitzvot.

Every human being is constantly subjected to conflicting impulses. The body tries to pull the person toward physical gratification, while the soul struggles to attain spirituality. The question of how to deal with these impulses – whether to gratify the body’s desires or deny them, and how to accommodate the soul’s yearning – is also one of the most fundamental issues in understanding the Jewish concepts of spirituality and personal growth.

The goal of this class is to provide insight into the existence and nature of the soul and how this reality affects a person’s life.

This class raises such questions as:

- ❧ How do we know that there is an essential aspect of self called soul?
- ❧ What is the soul?
- ❧ Is the soul in conflict with the body?
- ❧ Is the body also important?
- ❧ What is the purpose of the soul?

It is recommended that this class be followed by the Morasha classes on Free Will to fully understand the dynamics of the body and the soul.

Class Outline:

Introduction. Who is the Real You?

Section I: Body and Soul

Part A. Creation of the First Person

Part B. Body against Soul

Part C. Body Complements Soul

Section II: The Body

Part A. Treating the Body Well

Part B. A Vehicle for Spirituality

Part C. Accommodating the Body while Resisting Its Pull

Section III: The Implications of Being a Soul

Part A. A Connection to God

Part B. Astonishing Potential for Spirituality and Personal Growth

Part C. The Individual's Unique Mission

Section IV: Caring for the Jewish Soul

Appendix: Structure of the Soul

INTRODUCTION. WHO IS THE REAL YOU?

Look at your hand. What do you see?

A part of your body, an appendage made of bone and sinew covered with flesh and skin. It is filled with nerves, blood vessels and lymph ducts, which run through it and connect it to your body, making it part of you.

You can open and close your hand. It obeys every command that your mind sends to it. It is yours, a part of you. But what are you? Who is the real you? What happens when you tell your hand to open and close? How does your mind will it to obey its commands?

Now point a finger at yourself. If you are an average person, you will point a finger at your chest. You think of yourself as your body. But is your body the real you?

Not too long ago, a person could consider his own body an integral part of himself. You were your body, and your body was you. But this is no longer the case. Scientific progress has changed the entire concept of human personality and identity.

Heart transplants are now an almost commonplace occurrence. They do not even make the news anymore. A man can live with another person's heart beating in his breast. If we would ask such a man to point to himself, would he point at his heart? Is this transplanted heart really part of him? Is the heart that beats within your breast the real you? Or is it something else entirely? ...

The real you is not your body or brain, but the information contained in your brain – your memories, personality traits and thought patterns.

What happens, then, when a person dies?

We know that the body ceases to function. The brain becomes inert, and the physical man is dead.

But what happens to the real you – the human personality? What happens to all this information – the memories, thought patterns and personality traits? When a book is burned, its contents are no longer available. When a computer is smashed, the information within it is also destroyed. Does the same thing happen when a man dies? Is the mind and personality irretrievably lost?

We know that God is omniscient. He knows all and does not forget. God knows every thought and memory that exists within our brains. There is no bit of information that escapes His knowledge.

So, what is it that happens when a man dies?

The Bible speaks of immortality of the soul (Ecclesiastes 12:7): "The dust returns to the dust as it were, but the spirit returns to God Who gave it." That means that there is a part of a man that is eternal, that lives beyond the lifetime of the physical body.

God created human beings as composite creatures, consisting of a physical body and a spiritual soul. Both of these parts of a person are creations of God. The difference between them is that the body withers and dies, while the soul lives on forever, housing a person's consciousness and his identity.

(Adapted from *If You Were God*, by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, NCSY Publications, p. 25-28, and personal correspondence of Rabbi Reuven Leuchter, Jerusalem).

A person is made up of a body and a soul, which are combined to experience life in this world. When a person dies, the body is buried, but the soul is eternal. Indeed, the belief in the eternality of our souls is the foundation of the ethics of personal responsibility. (See the Morasha class on Free Will.) Furthermore, the fact that we are comprised of an elevated, spiritual soul requires us to take steps to provide for our soul's needs by engaging in spiritual activities. The soul is the home of a person's identity, his true self.

SECTION I: BODY AND SOUL

PART A. CREATION OF THE FIRST PERSON

From the beginning of creation, we already find allusions to the soul. The Torah's description of Adam, the first human and the archetype for all future generations, indicates that he was composed of elements from both the heavenly and earthly realms.

1. Bereishit (Genesis) 2:7 – Man was created from the dust of the earth and from the “breath” of God.

God formed man of the dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the soul of life, and man became a living being.

וַיִּצְרֶה אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם, עָפָר מִן-הָאֲדָמָה, וַיְנַפֵּחַ בְּאַפָּיו, נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים; וַיְהִי הָאָדָם, לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה.

What does it mean that God “breathed” the soul into man and he became alive?

2. **Rabbi Jeremy Kagan, *The Jewish Self*, Feldheim Publishers, pp. 22-23 – The soul is the life-force that connects each person to the Divine Source.**

Man was initially formed from the earth. This gave him existence with mobility, sensory experience, and rudimentary emotions. What the Torah considers life however only came with the addition of a Divine soul. God blew his breath into man's nose and he came "Alive." The Hebrew term for soul, *neshama*, reflects this origin for it comes from the root *neshima*, meaning breath. The soul is the "breath" of God.

The Torah clearly wishes to convey the fundamental nature of the relationship between God and man. Breath is the basis of life. The breath of the Creator connotes the basis of His "life." Such a concept seems odd when applied to the Creator, the source of all existence. The meaning becomes clear when we realize that the Torah specifically associates the term "life" with physical expression of spiritual essence. The breath of God refers to the basis of His expression and connection with physical reality. When the Torah states that God breathed a living soul into man, it means that, as the Creator took on physical expression through the act of creation, man became the focus of that expression.

This definition of life also explains why man came to "life" only with the infusion of a Divine soul. This soul gave the man the ability to speak. Speech is the most rarified form in which spiritual essence takes on particular physical expression, and as such is the bridge across which the spiritual realm actually enters physical reality. God "breathes" through man, for man is the one through whom the Creator connects with his creation. We are man only when we fulfill this role, and every dimension of human experience offers its own unique opportunity for doing so. Whether through prayers to the Creator, contemplating the Divine root of our own being, or relating to the image of God which is everyone, we must always strive to connect the finite physical world to its Infinite Source.

Why was man created from both the earth (the dust) and the Heavenly?

3. **Rashi, *ibid.* – This creation indicates a dichotomy within man; he consists of elements of both the heavenly and earthly spheres.**

[God] fashioned him from the upper and lower spheres – the body from the lower spheres and the soul from the upper spheres.

עשאו מן העליונים ומן התחתונים גוף מן התחתונים
ונשמה מן העליונים.

The fact that a person is comprised of two polar opposites – an earthly body and a heavenly soul – leads to a fascinating dichotomy in the human condition. In some ways, the body struggles *against* the soul, while in other ways, it works in tandem *with* the soul. We shall examine this dichotomy in the following two parts.

PART B. BODY AGAINST SOUL

According to some commentators, the verse that describes the creation of man also indicates a relationship of unending struggle between body and soul.

1. **Kli Yakar, *Bereishit* 2:7 – Man was created to struggle against his physical impulses and allow his soul to overcome them; the mere existence of a soul is not a guarantee that he will reach the level demanded of him.**

For the "living soul" is the eternal, intellectual spirit. If you examine Who breathed [the soul

כי נשמות חיים היא הנפש המושכלת הנצחית, צא ולמד
מי הנופח ותמצא שזה מדבר בחלק אלוך ממועל,

into man], you will find that it refers to a Divine soul from above. But the verse tells us that even though God breathed an intellectual, living soul into man, nevertheless in the beginning of his existence, man was simply another living spirit, like all other creatures, for man is born as a wild animal and his perfection depends on the diligence of his efforts and the correctness of his choices when he matures with age.

However, at the beginning of a person's existence, even though a living soul was already placed within him, the soul is not yet actualized, but is merely potential within him, and if he does not gird himself with diligence to wage God's war, he will remain on the level of an animal. But an ox or a sheep or goat is born with its full level of perfection on the day of its creation, and it does not perfect itself further.

The Torah revealed this to us so that a person should not make the mistake of thinking that since he was born complete, he will achieve his perfection without effort. It is not so! Rather, everything depends on a person's actions; he always has the ability to exchange intellect for nature or nature for intellect. This is why the Torah does not say about the creation of man, "God saw that it was good," because when man was created, it was not yet apparent in what way he was good.

ויאמר אע"פ שנפח ה' באדם נשמת חיים המשכלת מכל מקום ויהי האדם בתחילת היותו לסתם נפש חיה כשאר בעלי חיים כי אדם עיר פרא יולד ועיקר שלימותו תלוי בחריצות השתדלותו וטוב בחירתו כשיפקח עיני שכלו בבואו בימים,

אבל בתחילת היותו אע"פ שכבר נפח בו נשמת רוח חיים מכל מקום אין הנשמה בו בפועל כי אם בכח לבד, ואם לא ישנם מתני זריותו לצאת בראש החלוץ ללחום מלחמת ה' הרי הוא נשאר בבהמיותו ונמשל כבהמה. אבל שור או כשב או עז כי יולד באותו יום נברא עם כל שלימותו ואין בו תוספת שלימות.

וגילה לנו הכתוב דבר זה שלא יטעה האדם בעצמו לאמר שבלא יגיעה ועמל יבא לידי שלימותו אשר כבר נוצר עמו ויסמוך על יתרון זה שנמצא ביצירתו, כי אין הדבר כן אלא הכל תלוי בפועל כפיו כי יש בידו תמיד להחליף ולהמיר הטבע בשכל והשכל בטבע. ומטעם זה לא נאמר ביצירת האדם וירא אלקים כי טוב, לפי שביצירתו עדיין לא ניכר מה טובו ומה יפיו.

Thus, we understand that humanity was created in a situation in which the drives of his body are constantly in conflict with the demands of his soul. That is because the body and the soul are polar opposites; the body comes from the earth and longs for physical pleasures, while the soul emanates from a Divine source and yearns for the sublime joys of spirituality. But why did God create man in such a condition?

2. **Ramchal (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto), Derech HaShem (The Way of God), 1:3:2, translated by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Feldheim Publishers, p. 45 and p. 47. – Dual nature of man.**

... The Highest Wisdom decreed that man should consist of two opposites. These are his pure spiritual soul and his unenlightened physical body. Each one is drawn toward its nature, so that the body inclines toward the material, while the soul leans toward the spiritual.

The two are then in a constant state of battle. If the soul prevails, it not only elevates itself, but elevates the body as well, and the individual thereby attains his destined perfection. If he

...גזרה החכמה העליונה שיהיה האדם מורכב משני הפכים, דהיינו מנשמה שכלית וזכה, וגוף ארצי ועכור, שכל אחד מהם יטה בטבע לצדו, דהיינו הגוף לחומריות והנשמה לשכליות.

ותמצא ביניהם מלחמה, באופן שאם תגבר הנשמה, תתעלה היא ותעלה הגוף עמה, ויהיה אותו האדם המשתלם בשלימות המעודד, ואם יניח האדם שינצח

allows the physical to prevail, on the other hand, then besides lowering his body, he also debases his soul. Such an individual makes himself unworthy of perfection, and thus divorces himself from God. He still has the ability, however, to subjugate the physical to his soul and intellect, and thereby achieve perfection.

בו החומר, הנה ישפל הגוף ותשפל נשמתו עמו, ויהיה אותו האדם בלתי הגון לשלימות, ונדחה ממנו ח"ו, ולאדם הזה יכולת להשפיל חומרו לפני שכלו ונשמתו, ולקנות שלימותו כמו שזכרנו:

The purpose of the dual nature of man is to place him in a position of struggle, so that he may earn eternal reward. After death, the struggle ends, and man receives his reward.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-49 – Striving in this world and earning reward in the World to Come.

Since the period of earning and that of reward are different, it is appropriate that man's environment and experiences be different in the two. While he is striving toward perfection, he must be in a setting containing elements necessary for such effort. The period of earning must therefore be one [where a maximum challenge exists and] where the spiritual and physical are in constant strife ...

In the period of reward, however, the exact opposite is appropriate. The more the physical would prevail, the more it would darken the soul and prevent it from being drawn close to God. During the time of reward, it is therefore appropriate that the soul prevail, and that the physical be totally subjugated to it and not restrain it at all.

It is for this reason that God created two worlds, this world and the World to Come. The environment and principles of the World to Come, on the other hand, are what are necessary for a person during the time that he receives his reward.

ואולם כפי התחלף זמניו, כך ראוי שיתחלף מצבו ושאר מקריו. כי כל זמן ההשתדלות הנה צריך שיהיה בתכונה אחת, שיוכלו לימצא בו כל הענינים המצטרפים לו לפי ענין ההשתדלות הזה. פירוש - כי הנה מוכרח שתמצא לו המלחמה שזכרנו בין השכל והחומר, ולא יהיה לו דבר שיעכב את החומר מלשלוט ולעשות את שלו כפי השיעור הראוי לו, ולא דבר שיעכב את השכל מלשלוט כראוי לו ולעשות את שלו. וכן לא יהיה דבר שיגרום לחומר להתחזק יותר מן הראוי, וגם לא יגרום לשכל להתחזק יותר מן הראוי.

...ובזמן קיבול השכר הנה ראוי לו שיהיה במצב הפכי לזה, כי הנה כל מה שיהיה החומר שולט באותו זמן, הנה לא היה אלא מחשיך ומעכב על הנשמה שלא תתדבק בבורא ית', ועל כן הנה ראוי הוא שלא ישלוט אז אלא הנשמה, והחומר יהיה נמשך אחריה לגמרי באופן שלא יעכב על ידה כלל.

ואמנם על כן נבראו שני העולמות, עוה"ז ועוה"ב, עוה"ז המקום והחוקים הטבעיים שלו הם מה שראוי לאדם כל זמן ההשתדלות, העוה"ב המקום והחוקים שלו הם מה שראוי לו בזמן קיבול השכר:

There are differing opinions regarding the exact nature of the World to Come and whether the body will also exist at that time; however, all opinions agree that it will lack the struggle against physical impulses, which characterizes the world in which we currently live. Please refer to the three Morasha shiurim on the World to Come.

PART C. BODY COMPLEMENTS SOUL

While the body's inclination is to indulge in physical pleasures, the body is not the *source* of these negative

drives. It is the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) that prods a person to do evil. The body itself is an integral part of the human being, and God intended that it would work in tandem with the soul to enable each person to reach his ultimate purpose. Evidence of this can be found in the following Talmudic analogy, which illustrates the complementary relationship between body and soul.

1. Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 91a – The symbiotic relationship of the body and soul

Antoninus said to Rebbe, “The body and soul can exempt each other in the Heavenly judgment. How so? The body can say, ‘It was the soul that is responsible for transgression; for since the day that it departed from me, I have been lying in the grave like an inert stone [and am not capable of doing anything].’ The soul can say, ‘It was the body that transgressed; since the day that I separated from it, I have been soaring in the air like a bird [and am not capable of sinning].’”

[Rebbe] said to him, “I will give you an analogy. This is like the case of a human king who had a beautiful orchard with delectable fruit. He placed two guards in the orchard, one lame and one blind. The lame one said to the blind one, ‘I see beautiful fruit in the orchard. Come and place me on your shoulders, and we will get some and eat it.’ The lame man rode on the blind man’s shoulders, and they fetched the fruits and ate them.

“Eventually, the owner of the orchard came and said, ‘Where are my beautiful fruits?’ The lame man said, ‘Do I have legs to walk with?’ The blind man said, ‘Do I have eyes to see?’ [The owner] immediately placed the lame man on the shoulders of the blind man and judged them as one. Similarly, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will bring the soul and cast it into the body and judge them together.

אמר ליה אנטונינוס לרבי גוף ונשמה יכולין לפטור
עצמן מן הדין כיצד גוף אומר נשמה חטאת שמיום
שפירשה ממני מוטל כאבן דומם בקבר ונשמה
אומרת גוף חטא שמיום שפירשתי ממנו הריני פורחת
באוויר כצפור.

אמר ליה אמשול לך מושל למה הדבר דומה למלך בשר
ודם שהיה לו פרדס נאה והיה בו בכורות נאות והושיב
בו שני שומרים אחד חגר ואחד סומא אמר לו חגר
לסומא בכורות נאות אני רואה בפרדס בא והרכיבני
ונביאם לאכלם רכב חגר על גבי סומא והביאום
ואכלום.

לימים בא בעל פרדס אמר להן בכורות נאות היכן הן
אמר לו חגר כלום יש לי רגלים להלך בהן אמר לו
סומא כלום יש לי עינים לראות מה עשה הרכיב חגר
על גבי סומא ודן אותם כאחד אף הקב"ה מביא נשמה
וזורקה בגוף ודן אותם כאחד.

The following source elaborates on the nature of the complementary relationship between body and soul.

2. Alei Shur Vol. I, p. 143 – The body provides the ability to act, and the soul directs it.

The powers of the soul and the powers of the body are both “guards” of the beautiful orchard, which is man and his world. The only difference between them is that the powers of the body are blind, while the powers of the soul have sight. The drive to live impels us to take care of our health, and in dangerous situations it activates all of our abilities to preserve our lives. The desire to reproduce impels us to establish a home and

כחות הנפש וכחות הגוף שניהם “שומרים” לפרדס
הנאה שהוא האדם ועולמו. ההבדל ביניהם הוא רק,
כי כחות הגוף הם עוורים, וכחות הנפש פקחים. תאוצה
החיים ממריצה אותנו לשקוד על בריאותנו ובסכנה
היא מפעילה כל כחותינו כדי לשמור על גחלת החיים.
תאוצה המין ממריצה אותנו ליסד בית ולהוליד בנים.
הקנאה ממריצה אותנו להשתדל להשגת פרנסה
מכובדת. אהבת הילדים ממריצה אותנו לטפל
בתינוקות ולגדלם. הרי כל הכחות האלה הם

have children. Jealousy impels us to try to earn a respectable living. Love of children impels us to take care of our offspring and raise them. All of our capacities, then, are excellent “guards” for a person. But they do not know why they are guarding us – they are blind.

The soul is the guard who has eyesight. It sees the goal and can give our lives direction – what to strive for, whom to serve, what to achieve. That is the soul’s purpose in guarding the “orchard of life,” to ensure that we do not use our inborn abilities in vain. Rather, we will know how to direct them toward our true goal. But the soul is lame. It does not have the ability to carry out its drives and desire on its own accord. For that purpose, it needs the body.

Thus, the body and the soul complement each other in preserving man and his life. The body provides the abilities, and the soul provides the form and direction. When the combination is complete, they both achieve their perfection: the blind powers of the body serve an exalted purpose, and the soul’s spiritual drive is actualized.

Therefore, there is no reason to belittle the forces that are revealed within us. They are all crucial. We just need to strive for the right combination and the proper direction.

שומרים מעולים לאדם. למה הם שומרים אותנו – אינם יודעים. הם עוורים.

השומר הפקח היא הנשמה. היא רואה את המטרה, היא יכולה לתת כיוון לחיינו, אל מה לשאוף, לפני מי לעבד, מה להשיג. זהו ענין הנשמה בשמירת פרדם החיים, לבל נשתמש בכחותינו לשוא, ונדע לנצל אותם למטרה של אמת. חירת היא, הנשמה, שאין לאל ידה לבצע שאיפתה ורצונה בכח עצמה. בזה היא זקוקה לכלי הגוף.

הרי גוף ונשמה ביחד משלימים זו את זו בשמירת האדם והחיים: הגוף נותן את הכחות והנשמה את הצורה, הכיוון. כשהרכבה מושלמת באים שניהם על תיקונם: הכחות העוורים של הגוף משמשים לתכלית נעלה, והשאיפה הרוחנית של הנשמה נכנסת לכלל מעשה.

אין, איפוא, לזלזל בכחות המתגלים בקרבנו. כולם נחוצים וחשובים. אין לנו אלא לשאוף להרכבה הנכונה ולכיוון הנכון.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION I.

- ∞ When the first man was created, God “breathed” a soul into his body. That soul is the source of man’s true “life” and the means by which God connects with His creation.
- ∞ The body and soul exist in a constant state of struggle, with the body pulling man toward the physical and the soul drawing him toward the spiritual. The purpose of this conflict is for man to earn his ultimate reward in the World to Come.
- ∞ At the same time, the body and the soul complement each other. The soul provides direction but cannot act on its perceptions; only the body can put the soul’s will into action. Thus, both components of man are necessary.

SECTION II: THE BODY

PART A. TREATING THE BODY WELL

Due to the body's important role in helping the soul achieve its mission, we are instructed to care for the body and keep it healthy.

1. **Rambam (Maimonides), Hilchot De'ot (Laws of Conduct), 3:3 – It is incumbent upon a person to care for his body, so that he will be able to serve God.**

A person should ensure that his body is complete and strong so that his soul will be adequately fit to know God, because it is impossible to understand and fathom wisdom when a person is hungry, sick, or if one of his limbs is in pain ... Rather, his body should be complete and strong to serve God. And even when he is sleeping, a person should have the intention that he is allowing his mind and body to rest in order that he should not become sick, which would prevent him from serving God. Thus, his sleep becomes part of his Service of God.

... ישים על לבו שיהא גופו שלם וחזק כדי שתהיה נפשו ישרה לדעת את ה' שאי אפשר שיבין וישתכל בחכמות והוא רעב וחולה או אחד מאיבריו כואב ... עד שיהיה גופו שלם לעבוד את ה' ואפילו בשעה שהוא ישן אם ישן לדעת כדי שתנוח דעתו עליו וינוח גופו כדי שלא יחלה ולא יוכל לעבוד את ה' והוא חולה נמצאת שינה שלו עבודה למקום ברוך הוא.

PART B. A VEHICLE FOR SPIRITUALITY

Not only does Judaism not espouse asceticism, it even advocates using the body as a tool in the service of God. Physical enjoyment, when used properly, can be a vehicle for spirituality. There are many precepts in the Torah which even require man to experience physical pleasure. For instance, we use wine to sanctify Shabbat and holidays, and every holiday we're supposed to enjoy festive meals (See the Morasha classes on Spirituality). What is the purpose of all this food and drink? The following sources demonstrate that the purpose of the physical enjoyment is spiritual uplift:

1. **Friday Night Zemirot (One of the traditional Shabbat songs) – Celebrating Shabbat with a vast array of enjoyable foods.**

From the day before, we prepare all types of delicacies; while it is still daytime, fattened poultry are prepared. The table is set with different types [of foods], we drink aromatic wines, and there are delectable sweets at all three meals. To enjoy pleasures, fattened birds, quails and fish ...

מערב מזמינים כל מיני מטעמים, מבעוד יום מוכנים תרנגולים מפוטמים. ולערוך בו כמה מינים, שתות יינות מבושמים, ותפנוקי מעדנים, בכל שלש פעמים. להתענג בתענוגים, ברבורים ושלי ודגים ...

Even having an appetite itself can be a mitzvah.

2. **Talmud Bavli, Pesachim 99b and Rashi ibid. – One should refrain from eating on Passover eve, so that he will eat matzah with an appetite.**

On the afternoon before Passover, close to the afternoon prayer service, one should not eat until it becomes dark – So that he will eat the matzah [that is for the sake of fulfilling the] mitzvah, with an appetite, in order to enhance the mitzvah.

ערב פסחים סמוך למנחה לא יאכל אדם עד שתחשך.
כדי שיאכל מצה של מצוה לתאבון משום הידור מצוה.

What are the criteria for a physical action to be considered a mitzvah?

3. **Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, Alei Shur, Vol. I, p. 217 – One must eat *with* desire, but not for the *sake* of desire.**

We see that eating matzah with an appetite is an enhancement of the mitzvah, whereas one who eats the *korban Pesach* (Paschal offering) for the sake of excessive consumption is a sinner. The distinction is clear: Eating without an appetite is not called eating, and the more one increases his desire, the more he has enhanced the mitzvah of matzah. But Raba Bar Bar Chana considered a person eating solely to fulfill his desires a sinner, even if the eating itself is a mitzvah.

הרי לאכול מצה לתאבון הוא הידור מצוה, והאוכל פסח לשם אכילה גסה פושע הוא. והענין ברור: אכילה בלי תאבון אינה אכילה, וכל אשר מרבה תיאבון – הידור הוא במצה של מצוה. אבל האוכל לשם תאוה, אפילו אם עצם האכילה היא מצוה, רצה רבה בר בר חנה לקראו "פושע".

A striking illustration of the body/soul dichotomy is the case of the *nazir*. A *nazir* (described in Bamidbar [Numbers] Chapter 6) is a person who takes a vow to abstain from wine, haircuts, and coming into contact with the dead.

4. **Talmud Bavli, Nazir 19a – One who is ascetic is viewed as transgressing.**

R. Eleazar HaKappar B'rebbi said: Why does the Torah state, "And make atonement for him, for he sinned against the soul" (Bamidbar 6:8)? Against what "soul" did the nazir sin? It can only be because he denied himself wine. If, then, this man who did no more than deny himself wine is termed a sinner, how much more so is this true of one who is ascetic in all things!

ר' אלעזר הקפר ברבי אומר, מה ת"ל: (במדבר ו:ח) וכפר עליו מאשר חטא על הנפש? וכי באיזו נפש חטא זה? אלא שציער עצמו מן היין, וק"ו: ומה זה שלא ציער עצמו אלא מן היין נקרא חוטא, המצער עצמו מכל דבר על אחת כמה וכמה.

The Torah describes him as holy in light of his abstinence from wine – but also implies that he is a sinner. How is this dichotomy resolved?

5. **Rabbi Zev Leff, Outlooks and Insights, Aish.com – The Nazir is "holy" because he has chosen abstinence over pleasure, but he is a "sinner" because he has fallen short of the ideal, which is to use the physical, rather than retreat from it, to connect to God.**

כל ימי נזרו קדש הוא ליקוק
"All the days of his abstinence, he is holy to God." (Numbers 6:8)
עשה הכהן אחד לחטאת ואחד לעלה וכפר עליו מאשר חטא על הנפש וקדש את ראשו ביום ההוא

“The Kohen shall make one as a sin-offering and one as an elevation-offering, and he shall bring atonement on him for having sinned against the person; and he shall sanctify his head on that day.” (Numbers 6:11)

The *nazir* who vows not to drink wine is elevated to a level of holiness similar to that of the Kohen Gadol (High Priest). Like the Kohen Gadol, he is prohibited from defiling himself for the dead, even his closest relatives, and the Torah describes his hair, which he must let grow, as sanctified.

Yet this very same *nazir* must bring a *korban chatat* - a sin offering - at the termination of his vow. The Talmud explains that this sacrifice is to atone for the sin of denying himself the pleasure of wine. Thus the same vow which elevates him to a level of holiness also causes him to be adjudged a sinner. Why?

כל מה שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא בעולמו לא ברא אלא לכבודו

“All that the Holy One, Blessed is He, created in His world, He created solely for His glory.” (Avot 6:11)

God created the world for man to utilize in His service, not to be retreated from. Every aspect of creation can and must be utilized to aid one in understanding and drawing closer to its Creator. The Torah outlook on the physical world is diametrically opposed to certain Christian viewpoints which teach that the material world is inherently evil...

In the World to Come, we will be taken to task for everything in this world we could have enjoyed and elevated but did not. Every year we make a blessing over the blooming fruit trees to remind ourselves that God created good and beneficial creations for man's enjoyment.

Fruit of the Vine

The wine forbidden to the *nazir* can enhance our performance of various mitzvot and occasions of joy by helping us give expression to our innermost sentiments. When detached, however, from mitzvot and utilized as an end in itself, it degrades a person by robbing him of his most precious possession, his mind. Thus, one who “sees a *sotah* (woman suspected of adultery) in her disgrace,” i.e. brought to shame from an abuse of wine, and who recognizes a similar weakness in himself, should vow to abstain from wine for a period of time to control his weakness.

Recognizing one's weakness and choosing abstinence over abuse renders one holy. But lest the *nazir* lose sight of the ideal, the Torah reminds him that he is nevertheless a sinner. He has not yet achieved the goal of life of elevating the entire physical world. Were he on the ideal level, he would not have to abstain from wine, but would instead utilize it for spiritual growth. Thus, the same vow that renders him holy is also a compromise of the true ideal.

There is one exception to the principle that one can channel one's physical desires towards an elevated spiritual purpose. Sometimes those desires need to be totally removed. This is demonstrated by the mitzvah of *brit milah* (circumcision).

6. Rabbi Yisroel Salantar, Ohr Yisroel, p. 312 – Not every desire can be properly channeled to spirituality.

Every person has the ability to rectify all his character traits that are in partnership with his material side, except for that part which Avraham was commanded to remove.

וכל אדם בידו ובכחו לתקן כל כחות נפשו המשותפים עם חומר. לבד החלק שנצטוו אברהם לכרותו.

7. **Rabbi Reuven Leuchter, Ohr Yisroel with Iyunim, p. 312 – Some desires must be eradicated, since they can be harmful.**

It does not seem that Rav Salanter is speaking about removing the body's *orlah* (foreskin); rather he is referring to the necessity of removing certain personal tendencies. Meaning, not all character tendencies are able to be rectified or directed to their proper channel. Certain character traits can only be rectified by removing them, as it is written [Devarim (Deuteronomy) 10:16], "You shall cut away the barrier of your heart."

We need to clarify which strengths can be channeled and which need to be eradicated, since they have no possibility of being directed towards good. See the Talmud Avoda Zorah 17 regarding Rabbi Eliezer Ben Dordaya; from that case it seems that an intense drive for idol worship or intense pursuit of [improper sexual] desires cannot be channeled in a proper direction.

לא משמע שרבינו ז"ע מדבר כאן אודות ערלת הגוף, אלא ישנם כנראה כוחות נפש שצריך לכרותם. לא את כל כחות הנפש אפשר לתקן ולכוון לאפיק הנכון. יש כחות שאין להם תיקון אחר אלא לחתוך ולכרות. כמ"ש בפסוק: ומלתם את ערלת לבבכם.

וצריך ביאור איזה כח ניתן לכוון, ואיזה צריך לכרות אחרי שמן הנמנע לכוונו הטוב. עיין בגמ' ע"ז דף יז המעשה עם ר"א בן דורדיא, שנראה משם שהכח של מינות, וכן התאוה כשאדוקים בה, אי אפשר לכוונם לטוב.

PART C. ACCOMMODATING THE BODY WHILE RESISTING ITS PULL

The body, then, is an implement, a tool to be used in service of the soul. Like any tool, it can be used for good or for bad. The challenge of the body is its relentless pull toward the physical. As we mentioned at the beginning of this class, we may find ourselves confused by the question of who our true "self" is. One source of our confusion is the message bombarded at us by society, "You're a body, you're a body, you're a body!"

1. **Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, Alei Shur Vol. I, p. 59 – Western culture views the body as an end unto itself; the Torah views it as a resource to attain spirituality.**

Bodily sensation is the foundation of all of Western culture. That is what brought about the development of science, art, sculpture, and sports in ancient Greece. (An indication of this is the "gymnasium," a place where sports were conducted by unclad athletes, and from which their schools developed.) The way of Torah begins with a person learning to view his body as a tool for the service of God, not for enjoyment. The holy books refer to the body as an "encasement for holiness."

ודע כי "הרגשת הגוף" היא היסוד של כל התרבות המערבית. היא שהביאה לפיתוח המדע, אומנות הציור והפיסול והספורט ביוון העתיקה (סימן לדבר: "גימנזיון" – פירושו: מקום ספורט בגוף ערום שמשם התפתחו בתי ספריהם). דרך התורה מתחילה דוקא בזה, שהאדם יתלמד לראות בגופו כלי לעבודת השם ולא להנאה. הספרים הקדושים מכנים את הגוף "נרתיק של קדושה."

One guideline which the Torah gives us is to exercise restraint as much as possible, desisting from excessive physical pleasures, even those which are technically permitted, while still making sure to meet our basic physical needs. This is often known as *perishut* – abstinence from material excess.

2. **Ramban (Nachmanides), Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:1 – There is an injunction in the Torah not to overindulge in physical enjoyment, even in ways that are technically permitted.**

The subject of this verse is that the Torah prohibited immoral relations and forbidden foods, but it permitted marital relations between a husband and wife, as well as consumption of food and wine. Consequently, a person who is subject to his desires might find an allowance to be overly indulgent in marital relations, drunkenness and gluttony, and to speak however he wishes about base topics, since that prohibition is not explicitly mentioned in the Torah. Then he would be considered “a glutton within the parameters of the Torah.”

Therefore, after the Torah enumerated the things that are completely prohibited, it added a general injunction to desist from excesses ... to sanctify oneself by minimizing his wine consumption ... to curb one's mouth and tongue from excessive eating and from foul speech ... until a person reaches the level of *perishut*, as is said about Rabbi Chiya, who never engaged in frivolous speech in his life. This general precept refers to these and similar things, after the Torah enumerated the things that are completely prohibited.

והענין כי התורה הזהירה בעריות ובמאכלים האסורים והתירה הביאה איש באשתו ואכילת הבשר והיין א"כ ימצא בעל התאווה מקום להיות שטוף בזמת אשתו או נשיו הרבות ולהיות בסובאי יין בזוללי בשר למו וידבר כרצונו בכל הנבלות שלא הזכיר איסור זה בתורה והנה יהיה נבל ברשות התורה.

לפיכך בא הכתוב אחרי שפרט האיסורים שאסר אותם לגמרי וצוה בדבר כללי שנהיה פרושים מן המותרות ... ויקדש עצמו מן היין במיעוטו ... וגם ישמור פיו ולשונו מהתגאל ברבוי האכילה הגסה ומן הדבור הנמאס ... עד שיגיע לפרישות כמה שאמרו על רבי חייא שלא שח שיחה בטלה מימיו. באלו ובכיוצא בהן באה המצוה הזאת הכללית אחרי שפרט כל העבירות שהן אסורות לגמרי.

This dichotomy results in a fascinating phenomenon: The very same physical activity can sometimes entail a severe transgression and at other times a great mitzvah – all depending on the circumstances, as illustrated by the following incident:

Shortly before Rosh Hashanah in 1951, Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz, an Agudath Israel deputy of the Israeli Knesset, was struck with typhoid fever, a debilitating illness. His doctors admitted him to the Assutta Hospital in Tel Aviv, where his progress and diet were carefully monitored by the medical staff.

As his illness lingered, Rabbi Lorincz was concerned that his doctors might not allow him to fast on Yom Kippur. And indeed, when he questioned them, they told him emphatically that, because he was taking a new type of medication, he had to eat periodically every day; Yom Kippur would be no exception. Disturbed by this response, Rabbi Lorincz asked his wife to consult the Chazon Ish (Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz, 1878-1953). Surely, Rabbi Lorincz reasoned, the gadol hador (eminent Torah scholar of the generation), with whom he had a very close relationship, would understand his repulsion at having to violate this sacred day.

Mrs. Lorincz presented all the pertinent data to the great Torah sage. After evaluating all that he had heard, the Chazon Ish said, “Tell your husband in my name that if Dr. Frei feels that he must eat on Yom Kippur, then I concur with his decision.”

Mrs. Lorincz went back to the hospital and relayed the Chazon Ish's message to her husband. He was devastated! It was bad enough being sick; eating on Yom Kippur would only add to his anguish.

On Erev Yom Kippur, after midday, Rabbi Lorincz was sitting up in his hospital bed when there was a knock on his

door. “Come in,” he said.

To his shock and disbelief, it was the Chazon Ish! The gadol hador himself! Rabbi Lorincz was overwhelmed. It was Erev Yom Kippur – only hours before Kol Nidre. What could possibly be important enough to bring the Chazon Ish to the hospital?

“I have come to tell you,” said the Chazon Ish, “that just as a person must be happy to fulfill the mitzvah of fasting on Yom Kippur, he must be just as happy to fulfill the commandment to tend to one’s physical health. Thus, you should be happy to fulfill the mitzvah to eat on Yom Kippur. I wish you a g’mar chatimah tova (a good inscription for the coming year) and a frielichen Yom Tov (a happy holiday)!” (Rabbi Paysach Krohn, *Along the Maggid’s Journey*, ArtScroll Publications, p. 131).

While this incident describes a conflict over a severe transgression – whether or not to eat on Yom Kippur – everyone faces similar, albeit more subtle, day-to-day struggles over how to respond to physical drives. This story illustrates the fact that the body is an instrument given to us by God, and our task is to use the body and its impulses for holiness.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION II.

- ≈ The Torah does not advocate denying the body its needs. We must maintain our body and keep it healthy.
- ≈ Physical pleasure is not inherently negative. Often, physical indulgence or appetite can represent the fulfillment of a mitzvah. The Torah ideal is to use the physical world as a means to achieve spirituality rather than an end in itself; we are not meant to eschew it. However, intense desire for idol worship and improper sexuality must be eradicated.
- ≈ The difference between the Torah and Western culture is that the latter views the body and its satisfaction as an end in itself, whereas the Torah views it as a tool to be used in the service of God. Toward that end, however, we must be cautious not to overindulge in physical pleasures.

SECTION III: THE IMPLICATIONS OF BEING A SOUL

PART A. A CONNECTION TO GOD

What do we know about the soul? Since we cannot see or examine the soul, we have very little understanding of its true nature. We know that the Torah tells us that the soul is what was created when God “breathed,” as it were, His Divine essence into Adam, the first man. Our soul is described as being “a part of God”; therefore, we have an intrinsic connection to God.

1. Talmud Bavli, Berachot 10a – Similarities between God and the soul.

Just as God fills the entire world, so does the soul fill the entire body.

Just as God sees but is not seen, so too the soul sees but is not seen.

מה הקב"ה מלא כל העולם אף נשמה מלאה את כל הגוף.

מה הקדוש ברוך הוא רואה ואינו נראה אף נשמה רואה ואינה נראית.

Just as God gives nourishment to the entire world, so too the soul gives nourishment to the entire body.

Just as God is pure, so too the soul is pure.

Just as God dwells in inner chambers, so too does the soul dwell in inner chambers.

Let the one who has these five things come and praise the One who has these five things.

מה הקב"ה זן את כל העולם כלו אף נשמה זנה את כל הגוף.

מה הקב"ה טהור אף נשמה טהורה.

מה הקב"ה יושב בחדרי חדרים אף נשמה יושבת בחדרי חדרים.

יבא מי שיש בו חמשה דברים הללו וישבח למי שיש בו חמשה דברים הללו.

As the following source indicates, this passage from the Talmud sheds some light on what the soul teaches us about the nature of the world.

2. **Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, Alei Shur Vol. II p. 651 – Just as God is hidden, the soul is hidden; this alludes to the fact that the true nature of the world, its spiritual character, is hidden from us.**

All five attributes that our Sages list here are positive qualities besides that which it is "not seen." What would have been lacking if they had said, "Just as God sees the entire world, so the soul sees the entire body"? ... What do they add by telling us that it is "not seen"?

In fact, they are teaching us something great. Let us think for ourselves; the difficulty of our mission to reach clear, definitive faith stems from the fact that God is not seen! We see a broad physical world, but we have to know that the true reality is God, Who is absolute spirituality. The world that our eyes can see conceals that which is "not seen." Yet, all the blessings and spiritual influences come only from this spiritual world, and "the hidden and concealed One" sees us and watches over us and knows all of our words, thoughts and deeds. We see, then, that the hidden world is the main world – not the world that we perceive! How much effort and struggle does it take for us to reach clear, definitive faith and belief in this fundamental matter!

A clear illustration of this is our soul, which also "sees and is not seen." We know that we have a soul, even though we do not see it. Our intellect and power of speech are only manifestations of it. The soul is a part of God; it is rooted in the concealed world, but it affects us and fills and sustains the entire body. And just as it affects us, it also attaches us to the world of spirituality.

כל חמשת המעלות שחז"ל מזנו כאן כולן מעלות חיוביות הן, חוץ מזו ש"אינו נראה." לכאורה, מה היה חסר אם היו אומרים "מה הקב"ה רואה את כל העולם אף הנשמה רואה את כל הגוף" ... ומאי קא משמע לן בזה ש"אינו נראה"?

אולם דבר גדול קמ"ל בזה, ונגיע נא בעצמינו: כל קושי העבודה להגיע לאמונה חושית וודאית נובע מזה שהקב"ה אינו נראה! עולם גשמי רחב אנו רואים לפנינו, אבל עלינו לדעת ולהאמין שהמציאות האמתית הוא הבורא יתברך, שהוא רוחניות מוחלטת. העולם הנראה לעינים מסתיר מפנינו את ה"אינו נראה." והנה כל הברכות וההשפעות באות רק מעולם רוחני זה, וגם "ההוא טמיר ונעלם" רואה אותנו ומשגיח עלינו ויודע כל דיבור, כל מחשבה וכל מעשה שלנו. הרי העלמא דאיתכסיין עיקר ולא העולם הנראה לעינים! וכמה עמל וגיעה עולה לנו להגיע לאמונה ברורה וודאית, ממש חושית, בדבר גדול זה!

אכן, ציור לעיני גדול זה יש לנו מהנשמה שגם היא "רואה ואינה נראית." אנחנו יודעים שיש לנו נשמה אף על פי שאיננו רואים אותה. השכל וכח הדיבור אינם אלא גילויים ממנה. והנשמה היא חלק אלוך ממעל – שרשה הוא בעולם דאיתכסיין, אבל היא פועלת בנו ומלאה זונה את כל הגוף. וכמו שהיא פועלת בנו כך היא מקשרת אותנו אל העולם הרוחני...

The hidden yet fundamental nature of the soul, then, points to an important axiom of Judaism: that the *entire* material world is nothing more than a veil concealing the deeper world of spiritual truth.

PART B. ASTONISHING POTENTIAL FOR SPIRITUALITY AND PERSONAL GROWTH

The knowledge that a person's essence is a soul connected to God should lead us to the realization that our existence in this world is meant for greater purposes than merely amassing all of the pleasures and wealth that the material world has to offer. Rather, we are here for a higher, spiritual purpose – and we should act accordingly.

1. **Ramchal, Mesillat Yesharim (The Path of the Just) Ch. 1 – The existence of the soul is a clear indication that the purpose of man's creation was not merely for him to succeed in the physical world.**

Not only that, but if the purpose of the creation of man had been for his station in this world, it would not have been necessary for such a distinguished and sublime soul to be placed in him. The soul is greater than the angels themselves, and certainly it does not derive any enjoyment from any of the pleasures of this world. This is what our Sages taught us in Midrash Kohelet (Kohelet Rabbah 6): “And the soul will also not be filled” – This is analogous to an ordinary citizen who marries the Royal Princess. Even if he brings her everything in the world, it means nothing to her, since she is the King's daughter. Similarly with the soul, even if we bring it all the physical delights of the world, they mean nothing to it since it comes from the upper spheres.”

ולא עוד אלא שאם תכלית בריאת האדם היה לצורך העולם הזה, לא היה צריך מפני זה שתנופח בו נשמה כל כך חשובה ועליונה שתהיה גדולה יותר מן המלאכים עצמם, כל שכן שהיא אינה מוצאה שום נחת רוח בכל עינוגי זה העולם. והוא מה שלמדנו זכרונם לברכה במדרש קהלת, זו לשונם (קהלת רבה ו'): “וגם הנפש לא תמלא, משל למה הדבר דומה, לעירוני שנשא בת מלך, אם יביא לה כל מה שבועולם, אינם חשובים לה כלום, שהיא בת מלך כך הנפש, אילו הבאת לה כל מעדני עולם, אינם כלום לה, למה שהיא מן העליונים.”

Once we come to the understanding that the material world is not the purpose of our existence, we will have a clear guideline for many things in life.

2. **Ibid. – Since the purpose of life is to come close to God, we must pursue any endeavors that bring us close to Him, and flee from anything that detracts from our relationship with Him.**

Thus, we have learned that the main purpose of man's existence in this world is solely to fulfill mitzvot, to serve God and to withstand trials. The pleasures of this world are meant to serve only as an aid to man so that he should have peace of mind and be able to devote himself to the work that he must do.

Indeed, a person should seek only the Creator and should have no other purpose in anything he does, whether great or small, other than coming close to God and breaking through all the barriers that separate him from his Creator, which are all the material things and everything

נמצינו למדים, כי עיקר מציאות האדם בעולם הזה הוא רק לקיים מצוות ולעבוד ולעמוד בנסיון, והנאות העולם אין ראוי שיהיו לו אלא לעזר ולסיוע בלבד לשיהיה לו נחת רוח וישוב דעת למען יוכל לפנות לבו אל העבודה הזאת המוטלת עליו.

ואמנם ראוי לו שתהיה כל פנייתו רק לבורא יתברך, ושלא יהיה לו שום תכלית אחר בכל מעשה שיעשה אם קטן ואם גדול אלא להתקרב אליו יתברך ולשבור כל המחיצות המפסיקות בינו לבין קונו, הן הנה כל עניני החומריות והתלוי בהם, עד שימשך אחריו יתברך

that is associated with them. [A person should strive] to draw towards God the way that metal is drawn to a magnet. Whatever a person feels is a means to achieve this closeness, he should pursue it, grasp it, and not let go. And anything that a person feels is an obstacle to this purpose, he should flee from it as he would flee from a fire, as the verse states (Psalms 63:9), "My soul has cleaved to You; Your right hand has supported me" – since the purpose of his coming to this world was only for this end, i.e. to attain this closeness by having his soul flee from anything that prevents it or detracts from it.

ממש כבדול אחר אבן השואבת. וכל מה שיוכל לחשוב שהוא אמצעי לקורבה הזאת, ירדוף אחריו ויאחז בו ולא ירפהו. וכל מה שיוכל לחשוב שהוא מניעה לזה, יברח ממנו כבורח מן האש, וכענין שנאמר (תהלים סג ט): "דבקה נפשי אחרריך בי תמכה ימינך", כיון שביאתו לעולם אינה אלא לתכלית הזוה, דהיינו, להשיג את הקרבה הזאת במלטו נפשו מכל מונעיה ומפסידיה.

Not only is the existence of such a soul indicative of the fact that man's ultimate purpose is not success in this world, it also indicates the extent of spiritual greatness that a human being can achieve. As we have seen, the soul is, in a sense, a "piece" of Godliness; this means that a human being can attain astonishing levels of spirituality.

3. **Rabbi Shimshon Pincus, Nefesh Shimshon on the Siddur, p.90 – The soul endows a human being with limitless potential for greatness.**

What sort of greatness can a person achieve? When our body (with its desires) stands on one side, and our soul on the other side ... what level of greatness can we reach as a result of the essence of the soul that God placed in every person? To what exalted level can the soul within us bring us?

If a person examines even the simple meaning of the verse, "He blew into him a living soul," (Bereishit 2:7) as our Sages explained – as it were – "when one blows, he blows from himself," [he will conclude that] this means that the soul that God blew into us has a point of holiness – as it were – from Him ...

By nature, every Jew, no matter who he is, can reach infinite greatness! This is the simple meaning of the text. A human being possesses a sacred soul; this means that God gave him a piece of Himself, as it were. Not just that God said that we should have a soul, but – "You blew it into me!" "He blew into his nostrils a living soul." By nature, a person can attain boundless greatness in Torah, prayer, fear of Heaven and service of God.

If God gave us a holy soul, He gave it to us so that we should use the power it contains, as the Mesillat Yesharim says. . . .

לאיזו גדלות אדם יכול להגיע? כאשר בצד אחד עומד הגוף שלנו, התאוות שלנו, ומאידך הנשמה שלנו ... לאלו מדרגה וגדלות אפשר להגיע מחמת עצם הטבעיות של המושג "נשמה" שהקב"ה נתן בכל אדם? לאיזו גדלות הנשמה שבקרבנו יכולה להביא אותנו?

אם יתבונן האדם אפילו על פשוטם של דברים, מה משמעות הפסוק "ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים" (בראשית ב,ז), וכפי מה שביארוהו חז"ל – כביכול – "מאן דנפח מדיליה נפח", ופירושו שבנשמה שהקב"ה נפח בתוכנו מונחת נקודה של קדושה – כביכול – ממנו יתברך ...

באופן טבעי, כל יהודי, יהיה מי שלא יהיה, יכול להגיע לגדלות עד אין סוף! זוהי פשטות הדברים. אדם שיש בתוכו נשמה קדושה, פירושו של דבר שהקב"ה נתן בו ממנו כביכול. לא רק שהקב"ה אמר שתהיה לנו נשמה, אלא – "אתה" נפחתה בך! "ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים." אדם מטבעו יכול להגיע לגדלות בתורה, תפילה, יראת שמים ועבודת ה' בלי שום גבול.

אם הקב"ה נתן בנו נשמה קדושה, הוא נתן לנו אותה כדי שנשתמש בכח הטמון בה, וכלשון המסילת ישרים...

How important and desirable is it, then, that we recognize the greatness of the soul within us. As a result we will value and appreciate it, and consequently we will know how to use its powers to our benefit throughout our days.

כמה חשוב ורצוי, איפוא, שנדע את גדלות הנשמה שבתוכנו, וממילא נחשיבה ונייקרה, ומתוך כך נדע להשתמש בסגולותיה לטוב לנו כל הימים.

Not only does the soul contain limitless potential for the person himself; it can also have an elevating effect on the entire world.

4. **Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, Derash Moshe, p. 303 – A person's soul can have a great elevating effect on the person himself and on all those with whom he comes in contact.**

Thus, a person should understand that the soul inside him is holy and pure and has the ability to influence and sanctify his body. When he is sanctified, he will also exert an influence on his surroundings, so that anyone who associates with him will learn from his deeds and will also become holy and pure, and thus he will bring sanctity to the entire world.

וכמו כן ילמוד האדם שהנשמה שבתוכו שהיא קדושה וטהורה ויש לה כח להשפיע ולהמשיך גם על הגוף קדושה, וכשהוא קדוש ישפיע גם על כל מושבו שמי שידבק בו ילמד ממעשיו ויהיה קדוש וטהור, וכן ממשיך קדושה על כל העולם כדביארתי.

A person who comes to know his soul, who develops its mastery over his body and attains the desired spiritual heights, will be a person who can choose to follow the dictates of his soul over those of his body. The following story is merely one example of a human being who did just that.

The comfort of another Jew meant everything to [Rabbi Shimshon Pincus], while his own convenience was unimportant. Reb Avraham once drove him to Jerusalem, to the yeshivah Ahavat Shalom of Rav Yaakov Hillel, where Rav Shimshon would study Kabbalah. Rav Shimshon had a small room where he would sleep when he spent the night there.

As Reb Avraham approached the building, Rav Shimshon asked him to park some distance away, saying he preferred to walk the rest of the way. Reb Avraham understood that there was something that the Rav didn't want him to see in his room, and peeked in. He immediately noticed that there was no bed, merely a blanket and pillow on the floor.

On the way back to Ofakim, he asked the Rav why there was no bed, but of course he waved off the question. Finally, when Reb Avraham persisted, the Rav explained that a young man about to be married had come around the yeshivah, collecting money for household necessities, saying he was so poor that he didn't have a bed. Rav Shimshon asked him to wait a minute, he just happened to have an extra bed ... (Yisroel Besser, Warmed by Their Fire, Artscroll/Mesorah Publications, p. 211)

It goes without saying that the human body demands – and often needs – the comfort of sleeping in a bed, and most would balk at giving it away to another person. How did Rabbi Shimshon Pincus have the strength to give away his bed to someone in need, leaving himself without one? His soul valued the act of kindness more than the physical comfort of sleeping in a bed, and he had reached the level of spiritual greatness where he was able to choose the soul's demand over that of the body.

This is not to say that such an extraordinary act of self-sacrifice is expected from everyone. On the contrary, only people who would be *happy* with the choice should opt to deny themselves such a

basic need as a bed in which to sleep. But the story can serve as a paradigm of the lofty heights to which our soul can take us – if we only let it.

PART C. THE INDIVIDUAL'S UNIQUE MISSION

The fact that God created each of us with a unique soul teaches us that we each have a unique mission to achieve in our life.

1. Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, Alei Shur, Vol. I, p. 168 – The profound importance of each individual and his purpose in life.

Every person needs to know that he has great value. Not an imagined value, in that he “considers himself special”... rather a deeply profound, even astonishing, importance.

The Talmud states, “Each and every person must declare, ‘The world was created for me’ (Sanhedrin 37a). Rashi explains that this means I am considered as important as the entire world, so I will not drive myself out of this world by committing one transgression.

“Like the entire world” – This is the one-time life experience of a particular person, since there was never a person like him, nor will there ever be a person like him throughout history. I – with my special character strengths, my particular parents, born at a specific time period, and in a certain environment – certainly there is a unique challenge that is placed upon me. I have a special share in the Torah, and the entire world is waiting for me to actualize that which is incumbent upon me. For my role cannot be exchanged with anyone else in the world!

כל אדם חייב לדעת, שיש לו חשיבות. לא חשיבות מדומה שהוא “מחשיב עצמו בעצמו”. . . אלא חשיבות בעלת משמעות עמוקה ואף מזעזעת.

“כל אחד ואחד חייב לומר: בשבילי נברא העולם”- רש”י: “כלומר: חשוב אני כעולם מלא, לא אטרד את עצמי מן העולם בעבירה אחת.” (סנהדרין לו, א)

“כעולם מלא” – זוהי חווית חד-פעמיותו של האדם, שלא היה עוד כמותו ולא יהיה כמותו עד סוף כל הדורות. אני עם המיזוג המיוחד של כוחותי, בן לאותם אבות, נולד בתוך אותה תקופה ובאותה סביבה- בודאי עבודה מיוחדת מוטלת עלי, חלק מיוחד לי בתורה, וכל הבריאה מחכה לי שאתקן את המוטל עלי, כי את עבודתי לא אוכל להחליף עם שום אדם אחר בעולם!

KEY THEMES OF SECTION III.

- ≈ Just as the soul is hidden, God is hidden. This teaches us that the true “reality” is not the world that we perceive with our physical senses, but the hidden spiritual realm that is the basis for our material world.
- ≈ The existence of a soul should prove to us that we have incredible potential for spiritual growth and greatness. The soul’s lofty nature clearly indicates that it was not given to us merely to enjoy the bounty of this world, but to reach the exalted level that every Jew can attain. And in fulfilling the soul’s potential, one can have a tremendous impact on the people around him as well.
- ≈ Every Jew’s unique soul indicates that he was brought into the world with a special mission to complete in the context of his distinctly crafted life circumstances.

SECTION IV. CARING FOR THE JEWISH SOUL

It may sound somewhat peculiar to speak of the need to care for the soul, but some thought will reveal that, in fact, it is eminently logical that such a need does, indeed, exist. After all, a person must care for his body; the body must be fed, cleaned, clothed, and sheltered – and that's just for starters! Does it not make sense that the soul should also require some form of nutrition and protection?

Indeed, the soul does have needs, and a person who recognizes the existence of his soul must also care for it and provide for its needs. This is particularly important when we consider the fact that, as we saw in the introduction, our identities are housed in our souls. It is the soul which lives on after the body dies and continues in the afterlife, where it will be judged and then will face accountability based on the person's actions during his lifetime. So in a sense, it can be said that providing for the soul's needs may be even more important than providing for the body's needs – since in the case of the soul, the impact is eternal.

1. **Rabbi Yissochar Frand, *An Offer You Can't Refuse*, ArtScroll Publications p. 34 – The soul is our most precious asset.**

Each and every one of us has a *neshamah* [soul]. It may not necessarily be as sublime and exalted as the *neshamot* of Adam and Chavah (Eve), but it is pure and holy; it is a spark of the Divine. The *sefarim* (books on Jewish thought) refer to the *neshamah* as the *bat melech*, the daughter of the King, and that is indeed what it is. It is, as it were, a part of the Almighty Himself, a glimmer of His essence. And that is why He is so eager, so to speak, to gather it up into His arms and cleanse it and soothe it and bring it back to its original state, if only we call out to Him. It is His daughter, His baby.

You ask people to describe their most precious asset, and you will get all sorts of answers. Some people will mention their homes. Others may mention their investment portfolios. Yet others, who have a bit more insight, might speak of their families, their health, their talents, skills and faculties. But all these answers are wrong, totally and completely wrong.

Your most precious asset is your *neshamah*. There is no other *neshamah* in the universe that is quite like your *neshamah*. The Almighty has placed it in your case, and it is your responsibility to return it in good condition. There is only one Mona Lisa in the world, and it is kept under lock and key. There is only one Hope Diamond in the world, and it is kept secure in a vault. Well, the *neshamah* given to each of us is far, far more precious than the Mona Lisa and the Hope Diamond put together, and it is our responsibility to do everything in our power to protect and preserve it.

What sustains the soul and provides for its needs?

2. **Chofetz Chaim, *Introduction to Mishnah Berurah Vol. 1* – The nourishment of the soul is Torah and mitzvot.**

We know that all of the creations, both those that exist here on earth, from mankind and below, and those that are located in the heavens and are called the Heavenly legions, and even the greatest of them all, need God's Divine input, for the ultimate perfection is found only in the One God ... However, their nourishment is not like ours. Rather, it is a refined, spiritual substance.

כי הנה ידוע דכל הנבראים הן מה שנמצאו פה בארץ
ממין האדם ולמטה והן מה שנמצאו בשמים והם
המכונים בשם צבא השמים ואף הגבוה שבגבוהים
כולם צריכים להשפעת השם יתברך, כי שלם בתכלית
השלימות אין לנו רק ה' אחד ... אך אין השפעת מזונם
כמו שלנו, שהוא מזון רוחני ודק...

In light of this, it is evident that even the soul, when it leaves this corporeal body, needs sustenance. Just as the human body does not cease to need sustenance, when it changes on Erev Shabbat from its weekday clothes to its Shabbat clothes, so it is with the soul. When the soul divests itself of its raiment, which is the flesh and skin ... should that make it no longer require sustenance to live?

The nature of its sustenance is as follows. When the soul is in this world, cloaked in its physical covering, the Holy One, Blessed be He, dictated that its nourishment also be something that can be absorbed by the physical senses. However, afterward, it can no longer subsist on tangible matter, firstly because that substance is physical, and furthermore because physical nourishment is created in this world, which is bound by time. Therefore, even if it were the best nutrition in the world, it would sustain a person only for a short time – a day or two, or a bit more – but certainly not forever. The soul, however, is eternal, and its sustenance also must be an eternal, spiritual, refined substance. Therefore, the Holy One, Blessed be He, in His great mercy, gave us the holy Torah, which is also eternal. When we observe the Torah, the light of God shines upon our souls, and we bask in that light, for it is a form of spiritual pleasure ... It is the greatest delight that can exist in the world, and it is what sustains us for eternity ...

In conclusion, the holy Torah is simply spiritual sustenance for the soul, just as bread is sustenance for the body. That is why the verse states (Proverbs 9:5), “Go consume My bread, and drink the wine that I have poured.” Bread is symbolic of the laws of the Torah, and wine is symbolic of the mystical secrets of the Torah that are hidden within it, just as wine is hidden within the grapes. Therefore, just as a person strives with all his might to earn money so that he can at least purchase bread to sustain his body and prevent it from being weakened by hunger and his life from being shortened, how much more so must he prepare sustenance for his soul. [That sustenance] is the fulfillment of the Torah and its mitzvot, so that his soul does not wither away and die an eternal death, Heaven forbid.

ולפי זה פשוט דאף הנשמה בצאתה מגוף החומרי צריכה מזון, דכמו בשר גוף האדם בעת שפושט ממנו בערב שבת קודש המלבוש של חול ולבוש של שבת וכי סלקא דעתך שלא יהא צריך למזון מחמת זה, כן הדבר ממש בענין הנפש, דכי משום שפשטה לבושה מעליה והוא העור והבשר ... לא תהיה עוד צריכה למזון שיחינה?

וגדר מזונה כך, בעת אשר הנפש מסתתרת בעולם הזה בלבוש הגשמי שלה קבע הקדוש ברוך הוא מזונה גם כן דבר שיכולין לקבלו בחושים הגשמיים, מה שאין כן אחר כך אינה יכולה לחיות מדבר הגשמי, אחד מצד שהוא גשמי, ועוד שהמזון הגשמי מכיון שבריאיתו פה הוא בעולם הגבול תחת הזמן אף אם המזון הוא טוב מאד לא יזון את האדם רק לימן קצר יום או יומים ומעט יותר, אבל לעולם בודאי לא, והנשמה הלא היא שם נצחית וצריך גם כן שיהיה מזונה ענין דק רוחני נצחי, לכך הקדוש ברוך הוא ברוב חמלתו נתן לנו התורה הקדושה שהיא גם כן נצחית, ועל ידי קיומה מאיר אור ה' על נפשנו, ומאותו האור אנו מתענגים שהוא מין תענוג רוחני ... והוא העידון הגדול מכל העידונים שבעולם שיכולים להמצא והוא המחיה אותנו נצח....

היוצא מדברינו שהתורה הקדושה היא בפשיטות מזון רוחני להנפש, כמו הלחם שהוא מזון לגוף, וזהו שכתוב (משלי ט:ה) “לכו לחמו בלחמי ושתו ביין מסכתי.” וכידוע שהלחם הוא רמז להלכות של התורה ויין הוא רמז לסודות התורה הצפונים בתוכה כמו היין הצפון בענבים, אם כן כשם שהאדם מחפש בכל כחותיו להשתכר מעות לקנות על כל פנים לחם לזון את גופו שלא יחלש ברעב ויתקצרו ימיו, על אחת כמה וכמה שצריך להכין מזון להנפש, והוא קיום התורה ומצוותיה, כדי שלא תכלה נפשו וימות מיתה נצחית חס ושלום.

On this note, it is worthwhile to remember that our soul is the immortal part of our identity. After death, a person lives on through his soul, and the Torah teaches us that in the future we will be resurrected with our souls. Although we continue to live on in our souls, we refer to this as God taking away and returning our souls.

3. Complete Artscroll Siddur (prayer book), Morning Blessings – God gave us our soul, and He will take it from us at the end of our lives and return it to us in the World to Come.

My God, the soul You placed within me is pure. You created it, You fashioned it, You breathed it into me, You safeguard it within me, and eventually You will take it from me and restore it to me in Time to Come.

אלקי נשמה שנתת בי טהורה היא. אתה בראתה אתה יצרתה אתה נפחתה בי ואתה משמרה בקרבי ואתה עתיד ליטלה ממני ולהחזירה בי לעתיד לבוא.

This is important for us to remember because it gives us all the more reason to take care of our spiritual needs, and hence our souls, during our lifetimes.

4. Chofetz Chaim al HaTorah, Parshat Naso, Maasai LaMelech p. 192 – Since we receive the same soul in return when we are resurrected, we should take care to keep it intact.

In the blessing “My God, the soul,” which states “You will restore it to me,” [the Chofetz Chaim] used to emphasize the term “restore it,” [as indicated by the Hebrew grammar]. This means that the very same soul that a person receives when he enters this world is the soul that will be returned to him in the Time to Come – that soul and no other – and therefore it is incumbent upon him to take care that it not become blemished.

בברכת אלקי נשמה שנתת בי “ולהחזירה בי” לעתיד לבוא היה מדגיש את המלה “ולהחזירה” שנכתבה במפיק הא, כלומר אותה הנשמה בעצמה שנתנה לו לאדם כשירד לזה העולם, אותה הנשמה בעצמה יחזירו לו לעתיד לבוא, אותה ולא אחרת, ואם כן מהראוי להשגיח עליה שלא תהיה פגומה.

The following analogy will help to explain this point.

Have you ever borrowed someone’s car – someone’s new car, someone’s fancy, expensive car – and dented it? Well, let me tell you, I have. The memory is painful, but I’ll tell you about it anyway.

It was back in 1972. I was seeing the young lady who would eventually become my wife. In those days, who had money for renting cars? The young men in the yeshivah didn’t rent cars. They borrowed them. And that is exactly what I did. But instead of borrowing some old near-jalopy, I borrowed someone’s brand-new expensive car. It was a 1972 Buick LeSabre, a huge car, a veritable tank, a vision in gleaming chrome.

The young lady lived in Far Rockaway, New York, but this time we met in Baltimore. I took her out in that gleaming chariot, and we went to Pennsylvania. We had a wonderful time, and when it was over, I impulsively offered to take her back to Far Rockaway and spare her a long ride on a Greyhound bus. So I did. As I was trying to squeeze this hulk of a car into a classic New York parking space better suited for a large motorcycle, I dented the fender.

To say that I was mortified would not even begin to describe my feelings. I will never forget that long, interminable ride back to Baltimore. I remember stopping for gas on the Turnpike and taking another look at the dent. Perhaps, hoping against hope, it was not quite as big as I was making it out to be in my imagination. I took one look and felt the blood rush from my head. The dent was even worse than I had first thought.

I remember going to the owner of the car the next morning and telling him I had dented his beautiful new car. Of course, I would pay every last penny it cost to fix it. In the end, it cost \$110, a fortune in those days. Above all, I remember the shame, the embarrassment, the humiliation of having to admit that I had returned the favor by denting his car. I will never forget it.

*Is this what we will feel like when we return our neshamot [souls] to the Almighty after one hundred and twenty years? He entrusted to us these precious treasures, these singular works of Divine art, these sparks of the Divine. Will we return them to Him full of scratches and dents? (Rabbi Yissochar Frand, *ibid.*, p. 38)*

KEY THEMES OF SECTION IV.

- ⌘ Just as the body has physical needs, the soul has spiritual needs. It subsists on spiritual “nourishment”—Torah study and the performance of mitzvot.
- ⌘ The soul that we are given at birth is the same soul that we will “return” to God at the end of our lives. At that time, it will reflect how it was treated during the course of our life and whether we engaged in pursuits that were virtuous and meritorious or if we spent time unproductively or worse. It is incumbent upon us to keep this in mind and strive to return our soul in pristine condition, in a condition of which we can be proud.

CLASS SUMMARY:

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT THERE IS AN ESSENTIAL ASPECT OF SELF CALLED SOUL?

Man's essence is his soul. The Torah tells us quite plainly that when man was first created, God endowed him with a soul that emanated from the heavenly spheres. If you examine a human being and try to identify which part of the body houses the person's identity, you will find that it is difficult to ascribe this feature to any part of the physical body, even the heart or brain. The person's identity, then, rests in his soul.

WHAT IS THE SOUL?

The Torah tells us that God "blew" a "soul of life" into Adam's nostrils. The soul is a spiritual entity created by God, and it houses man's identity. It is a person's immortal essence, which lives on even after the physical body dies, and it is held accountable in the Heavenly court for the person's actions in this world.

IS THE SOUL IN CONFLICT WITH THE BODY?

In a sense, there is a constant struggle between the soul and the body. In fact, man was placed in the world in order to experience this struggle and to emerge victorious, and thereby earn his eternal reward. The body, with its earthly impulses and desires, constantly pulls man toward satisfaction of his physical cravings, while the soul pulls man in the opposite direction, toward spirituality.

On the other hand, a person's desire for wrongdoing does not *emanate* from his body. The body is merely *inclined* to indulge in the pleasures of this world. The body and the soul also have a symbiotic relationship, whereby the faculties of the body are the means by which the soul actualizes its drives and fulfills its purpose in this world. Man is a composite creature, and both body and soul must be used together to fulfill the purpose of his existence.

IS THE BODY ALSO IMPORTANT?

Although the body and soul are in conflict, Judaism does not maintain that one should completely negate the body and not fulfill its needs. On the contrary; we are enjoined to care for the body and to preserve its health and well-being. Many mitzvot are also fulfilled through physical pleasure. In and of itself, the body is not a "bad" thing. A person must simply be certain that the fulfillment of his physical drives are geared toward his spiritual needs and not used as an end in themselves.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE SOUL?

The soul is the essence of man; it gives him his identity and forms the basis for the task that defines his presence in the world: utilizing one's free will to reach one's potential and connect with God. The soul gives humanity the ability to attain infinite levels of greatness. With a soul, man is much more than an "intelligent animal." He is in a completely different class than any other living thing – he is a spiritual being.

APPENDIX: STRUCTURE OF THE SOUL

The soul is a complex entity, consisting of various levels or components. Furthermore, there are five fundamental characteristics of the soul, which are outgrowths of its Divine nature.

1. Bereishit Rabbah 14:9 – The soul has five names.

The soul has five names:
nefesh, ruach, neshamah, yechidah, and chayah.

חמשה שמות נקראו לה:
נפש רוח נשמה יחידה וחיה.

These five names actually represent five distinct components of the soul.

2. Ramchal, Derech Hashem (The Way of God) 3:1:4 – The five parts of the soul.

Even though we have generally called [the soul] a single spirit, it is actually composed of many parts and many levels. Thus, we can say that there are many souls that are connected to each other like the links of a chain. Just as a chain is composed of all its links, all of these levels of the soul compose a single spirit, and they are all connected to each other, and the last one is connected to the lower spirit, which is connected to the blood, as we have mentioned.

It is possible that some of these parts may be removed at certain times and return later, or have levels added to them which will subsequently be removed, without any indication of this appearing in the body at all. For none of these souls' actions have any discernible impact on the body, and they do not add to or detract from its vitality or feelings. Rather, they affect the true essence of a human being and his relationship and connection with his spiritual roots. Included in this is the concept of the "extra soul" which comes on the holy Shabbat and leaves at the departure of Shabbat, and its arrival and departure are not perceived by the body.

The soul consist of five parts, called *nefesh, ruach, neshamah, chayah, yechidah*.

ואמנם אף על פי שקראנוה על דרך כלל נפש אחת, הנה באמת היא בעלת חלקים רבים ומדרגות שונות, וכבר נזכר לומר, שנפשות רבות הן שמתקשרות זו בזו כטבעות השלשלת, וכמו שמכולן נבנית השלשלת ההיא כמו שראוי לה, כן מכל אלה המדרגות הנפשיות נבנה כלל הנפש העליונה שזכרנו, וכלם קשורות זו בזו, והאחרונה בנפש התחתונה, והתחתונה בדם, וכמו שזכרנו.

וכבר אפשר שישתלקו קצת מן החלקים האלה בזמן מן הזמנים וישובו אחר כך, או יתוספו עליהם מדרגות, וילכו להם אחרי כן, ולא יראה רושם מכל זה בגוף כלל, כי כבר אין פעולת הנפשות האלה בגוף דבר מורגש, ואינם מוסיפים או גורעים לא בחיות ולא בהרגש, אלא פעולתם במה שהוא ענינו של האדם באמתו, ויחסו עם השרשים העליונים כפי מה שהוא ראוי ליקשר בהם. והנה מכלל זה הוא ענין הנשמה יתרה שבאה בשבת קודש והולכת לה במוצאי שבת, ואין ביאתה ולא יציאתה נרגשים לגוף.

והנה כלל חלקי הנשמה מתחלק לחמשה ונקראים נפש, רוח, נשמה, חיה, יחידה.

The levels of *nefesh, ruach*, and *neshamah* correspond to three different dimensions of the human experience: action, speech, and thought.

3. Rabbi Chaim Volozhiner, Nefesh HaChaim, Gate 1, Chapter 14 – The parts of the soul correspond with the division of action, speech, and thought.

These three aspects of action, speech, and thought are the three dimensions of a man's inner essence, which are the *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah*.

Action corresponds to *nefesh*, as the verses state, "The nefesh that will do," "the nefashot that do," and many similar sources. "For the blood is the nefesh," i.e. the nefesh rests and cloaks itself in man's blood; therefore, its primary dwelling is in the liver, which consists entirely of blood, and blood circulation throughout the limbs – the organs of action – gives them the vitality and ability to move and awaken so they can act and do whatever they are capable of. If the circulation of blood were to cease from a particular organ, that organ would dry up and not be able to move or do anything; it would be a dead organ.

Speech corresponds to *ruach*, as the verse states (Samuel II 23), "The ruach of God spoke within me," "With the ruach of His lips" (Isaiah 11), and as Onkelos translates the verse "Man became a living spirit" (Bereishit 2) as "a speaking ruach." This is easily discernible, for in every utterance that a person's mouth produces, air or breath emerges from the mouth. The primary dwelling place of the ruach is in the heart, because the breath of speech primarily rises from the heart.

Thought corresponds to the *neshamah*, which gives a person wisdom and understanding to know the holy Torah. Therefore, the primary dwelling place of the neshamah is the brain, the organ of thought, and it is the most elevated of the three.

ואלו הג' בחי' מעשה דבור מחשבה הן כלל הבחינות פנימיות של האדם שהם הג' בחי' נר"ן

כי המעשה הוא מבחי' הנפש כמ"ש והנפש אשר תעשה הנפשות העושות והרבה כיוצא כי הדם הוא הנפש שהנפש שורה ומתלבש בדם האדם ולכן עיקר משכנה בכבד שהוא כולו דם ומרוצת הדם בכל פרטי חלקי האברים כלי המעשה הוא הנותן להם חיות התנועה וההתעוררות שיוכלו לפעול ולעשות את אשר בכחם ואם יומנע מרוצת הדם מאבר א' אותו האבר מתיבש ואין בו שום תנועה לעשות שום דבר והוא אבר מת.

והדבור הוא מבחינת הרוח כמ"ש (ש"ב כ"ג) רוח ה' דבר בי וברוח שפתיו (ישעי' י"א) וכמו שת"א ע"פ (בראשית ב') ויהי האדם לנפש חיה. לרוח ממללא. וכן נראה לעין שבכל דבור שהאדם מוציא מפיו יוצא רוח והבל מהפה ומשכן הרוח עיקרו הוא בלב. כי רוח והבל הדבור עיקרו וראשיתו הוא עולה מהלב.

ומחשבה היא בחינת הנשמה שהיא המלמדת לאדם דיעה ובינה בתוה"ק. לכן עיקר משכנה הוא במוח כלי המחשבה והיא הבחי' העליונה שבהם.

We do not discuss *chayah* and *yechidah* because they exist on spiritual planes that no human being has ever succeeded in grasping since Adam HaRishon (the first man) (Nefesh HaChaim Gate 2 ch. 17).

Why should the division of the components of the soul concern us, and what impact does the nature of each part have on our lives? Beyond the value of the knowledge itself, awareness of the soul's divisions helps us to understand the nature of our task in this world. If we are aware that we have a *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah*, which correspond to action, speech and thought, respectively, then we will invest thought and effort into refining each element of our behavior in order to perfect each part of our soul.

4. Ibid. ch. 17 – The importance of perfecting oneself in all three areas

A person should contemplate to what extent

ויתבונן האדם. כמה הוא צריך להשגיח ולהתבונן על כל

he is required to examine and reflect on all of the details of his service of the Creator and ensure that his service is complete, holy and pure. He should constantly examine all of his actions, words and thoughts, which are the aforementioned three dimensions, to determine if he has properly fulfilled God's will in accordance with the root of his soul. Throughout his life, he should constantly invest more effort in Torah and mitzvot in order to perfect his nefesh, ruach, and neshamah and make them pure as when they were given.

פרמי עניני עבודתו לבוראו ית"ש. שתהא עבודתו תמה
ושלימה קדוש' וטהורה. ויראה לפשפש ולמשמש
תמיד בכל מעשיו ודבוריו ומחשבותיו שהם הג' בחי'
הנ"ל. אולי לא השלים עדיין חפצו ורצונו יתב' לפי
שורש נשמתו. בהשגה. וכל ימיו יוסיף אומץ בתור'
ומצות. להשלים נפשו ורוחו ונשמתו מטהרים כאשר
נתנם.

The Torah contains mitzvot that regulate both our actions and our words. In addition, pure thoughts and intention are extremely important goals of the Torah, and there are even mitzvot pertaining to our thoughts (such as mitzvot relating to belief in God). Awareness of the divisions of our soul will help us focus on each of these dimensions of our task in this world.

RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL READING AND SOURCES:

Ramchal (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto), Derech HaShem, The Way of God (translation) by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Feldheim Publishers

Ramchal, Da'at Tevunot (The Knowing Heart), with commentary of Rabbi Chaim Friedlander.

Rabbi Yirmiyahu Ullman: www.rabbiullman.com/selfs.htm