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# AM I READY TO FIND MY SOUL MATE?

## PART II

### GRATIFYING YOUR DEEPEST DESIRES

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In *Discovering Your Infinite Self*, the first shiur in this series, we introduced the idea that each person is created with a soul, which is the essence of the persona. This class will further develop this concept. As we will learn, the better I understand the soul's expressions and desires, the more in tune I will be to the idea of building a soul connection with my marriage partner. The most profound level of relationship is at the level of the soul. Marrying someone for motivations that do not emanate from the soul means that I will be off the mark in terms of what is truly best for me. That might easily result in a very disillusioning awakening as I mature and become more aware of my soul attributes and desires, and realize that I've married the wrong person!

In our first class, we followed in the intellectual footsteps of Avraham and gained an appreciation for the gift of self-knowledge that he bequeathed to us. In this class we turn to the practical ramifications of this discovery. What difference does it make that I have a spiritual dimension? How does taking this part of me into account change the way I understand my life goals and how to go about achieving them?

In the course of this class we will discover that our most basic desires for happiness and fulfillment stem from an awareness of reality at the level of our souls. Yet, when we go about life without this understanding, we inevitably end up seeking merely superficial means of satisfying these basic desires. Finding a spiritual path to their fulfillment will prove to be much more deeply satisfying.

As such, we will be addressing the following questions:

- ☞ What is the ideal relationship between body and soul?
- ☞ How can we tell if our trajectory in life is going toward a dead end or not?
- ☞ How do our spiritual needs manifest themselves in our physical desires?
- ☞ Why do we seek honor, and what is the spiritual path to satisfying this desire?
- ☞ Why do we seek to accumulate wealth, and what spiritual reality does this desire reflect?

**CLASS OUTLINE:**

**Prologue.      Glimpses at the Soul**

**Introduction. Natural-born Talent**

**Section I:      Gratifying Our Deepest Desires**

**Part A.** Body and Soul

**Part B.** Identifying What I Really Want

**Part C.** Dead-End Identity vs. Expanded Identity

**Section II:     We Are Living in a Spiritual World**

**Part A.** The Physical World Resembles Its Spiritual Root

**Part B.** The Spiritual Roots of Physical Desires

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**Section III:    The Whole World Revolves around Me**

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**Part B.** The World Was Created for Me

## PROLOGUE. GLIMPSES AT THE SOUL

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After the first class on *Finding a Soul Mate* someone might ask, “How can I discern if I have a Jewish soul?” Some may answer with personal spiritual experiences – standing on a mountain top and feeling a connection with something greater, sitting with friends around a crackling bonfire while singing a moving melody, or approaching the Western Wall and reaching out to God in prayer. Yet sometimes the Jewish soul can be discerned by the way a person behaves:

*On Wednesday the 12th of February, Josh Stern was visiting New York City from Israel amidst a blizzard and freezing cold. Josh was scheduled to meet Malka Hirschfeld, a senior director of Camp Shira, to make summer plans. Braving conditions that should have kept him at home, Josh carefully drove his father-in-law’s Ford Taurus down one-way Avenue N in Flatbush. Traffic was sparse – but suddenly, Josh’s rear-view mirror was filled with the menacing image of a van barreling down the street.*

*Josh did what most drivers would have done in similar circumstances. He cleared to the right, held his breath and prayed for a modest collision. His prayer was fulfilled. He heard a crunch and felt the impact – not from the left where he expected it, but from the right. The Taurus’ right, side-view mirror had connected with the mirror on the driver’s side of a red Porsche. It was no garden-variety, used Porsche. It was the recently released 911 Carrera 4S. Designed for the racetrack with 450 horsepower, 0-60 MPH in 4.1 seconds, it cost a mere \$93,200.00. Taking the price tag and dividing by inches, the damage that Josh inflicted was easily a four-digit figure. Josh noticed a temporary paper license plate in the window featuring the date of issuance: February 11 – just the day before, a brand new car!*

*With the alarm screeching, Josh assumed the owner would be out any minute, but maybe because of the cold, or because sirens constantly sound in Gotham, no one emerged. Josh called Malka on his cell phone and asked her to come out, as she was only a few doors down. Malka took one look at the glistening car and observed, “This doesn’t belong to anyone on this block. If I were you,” she suggested, “I wouldn’t stick around.”*

*“I can’t do that,” Josh protested. “It was an accident, but I hit him.”*

*“I really don’t think you should stay here,” Malka insisted.*

*“I can’t just walk away – I have to let him know I did it.”*

*“Are you kidding,” Malka yelled. “This is New York. The guy’ll kill you! Plus if you stay out here any longer you’ll freeze. So either way you’re finished!”*

*“You go back to your house and I’ll be in real soon.” Josh wrote a note, placed it on the Porsche, parked his car and went up to Malka’s apartment to take care of his business. Josh still felt guilty even after leaving the note and deliberately positioned himself in a chair facing the street. After nearly two hours, he saw what must have been the owner peering at his car and...crying. The man, in his early thirties, was barefoot and wearing nothing but shorts. Josh pointed to the figure, but Malka claimed she did not know who he was. Josh threw on his coat and headed for the door despite Malka’s desperate pleas to reconsider.*

Josh silently walked over to the man who was breathing steam, slapping his sides for warmth and heaving as he sobbed industrial-strength tears. "Is this your car?" asked Josh. Nick Accordo replied, to no one in particular, "Brand new, brand NEW! I just got it; I just got it! Can you believe it? I don't even have it one day and look! If I ever get my hands on that –"

"I'm really sorry," Josh interjected at this critical juncture. "I'm so sorry, but I hit your car. It was an accident. I've been waiting here for about an hour and a half."

Suddenly Nick stopped heaving and started blinking as though the falling snow were actually freshly diced onions. "No way. You're messin' with me."

"Like I said, I'm really sorry."

"No way, no way," Nick said, again displaying his propensity for repetition. "I really don't believe you, dude; you from New Yawk?"

Suddenly, a woman appeared across the street and Nick called out to her, "Carmela, this guy hit my car! He hit me an hour and a half ago and he's been waiting here to tell me."

"You ain't from New Yawk, are ya," Carm affirmed, rolling her eyes in wonder.

Nick turned to Josh. "Nick Accordo, who're you?"

"Josh Stern. I'd like to give you the insurance details, but don't you think we should, er, do this inside?"

Either Nick didn't hear Josh's suggestion or it didn't register, but he had one thing to say and he repeated it several times. "I promise you, I will not take more than the repair cost, not a penny." Josh supplied him with his father-in-law's insurance information and apologized once again for all the grief he had caused. Three weeks later Josh's father-in-law received the following letter in the mail:

Dear Mr. Wasserman,

I wish to share my feelings with you about your son-in-law, Josh Stern. I've lived in New York all my life, and I guess – as they say – we New Yorkers have an attitude problem. I am aware of this. And I do expect things to go a certain way. But on that cold, wintry day, a day that I will never forget, Josh changed my philosophy. More importantly he changed my attitude. It was an emotional time for my sister and me for reasons Josh could not have known. My mother died suddenly the night before and at a time when I was basically angry at the world, Josh taught me that there are still individuals with a sense of responsibility, fair play, fundamental integrity, and kindness.

The aggravation I went through with the car repair was more than worth it for this lesson and for the privilege of meeting an unassuming, honest person like your son-in-law. I told many people at my mother's funeral about what Josh had done and everyone was very impressed with his honor and humanity. I know that in Heaven, my mother is smiling because of Josh's kindness and uprightness. My mother always felt that I was too critical and mistrusting (she was neither born or raised in NY). Therefore, even though the events of that Wednesday delayed me, I trust she will forgive me for being late to her wake.

Respectfully,

Nicholas Accordo

(From Hanoch Teller, *The Great Divide*, in *Too Beautiful*, Feldheim and NYC Publishers.)

The following incident also provides insight into the Jewish soul through the actions of an entire community.

*There is a well-known Hasidic tale that recounts that, one Passover eve, the Berditchever Rebbe announced that he would not begin the Seder until a quantity of outlawed Turkish wool, Austrian tobacco and Oriental silk were brought to him from within the Jewish village. Within a short time everything that he requested was procured. Thereupon, he announced that one additional item was required: a crust of bread. His disciples were taken aback by this strange request but they unquestioningly set out to fulfil their master's command. They scoured the town, but to no avail – they were forced to return empty-handed. The Berditchever listened in silence as they reported their lack of success. Then, with a smile enveloping his face, he raised his hands and exclaimed, "Master of the Universe! The Russian Czar deploys thousands of guards to patrol his borders, employs countless numbers of police officers in order to enforce his edicts and administers a vast penal system to punish those who violate his laws. But look at the contraband that can be found within his borders! You, Master of the Universe, have no guards, no police, and no prisons. Your only weapon is a brief phrase in the Torah, forbidding Jews to retain chametz (leavened bread) in their possession on Passover, but not a bit of chametz can be found in all of Berditchev!"*  
(From Rabbi J. David Bleich, *Contemporary Halachic Problems*, Vol. III, pp. xiii-xiv).

All the members of the Jewish community of Berditchev meticulously kept the laws of Passover without any outside force compelling them to do so. This is not just a quaint Chassidic tale – it happens all over the world today, too. Why are observant Jews so exacting in keeping these laws? There is surely something much deeper and significant going on here, expressing an aspect of us which is hard to define – the Jewish soul.

You can't see the soul, but you can see the effects it has in shaping a person's character and actions.

## INTRODUCTION. NATURAL-BORN TALENT

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In the last class, we identified the primary aspect of "Self" as the soul. In this class we'll discuss how accepting this higher aspect of our identity gives us access to what we most deeply desire. But in order to do that, we must first come to recognize that those desires are not currently being met at the deepest level.

### PARABLE:

*Barney was six feet ten, graced with remarkable hand/eye coordination, and an ability to leap. Not only that, Barney could manipulate his wrist in several directions. For decades, basketball scouts had been searching for someone with all Barney's natural characteristics. All Barney ever wanted, his dream from age three on, was to play pro*

*basketball. The only problem was that Barney only drank water. He hardly ate. Emaciated, he moved slower than a turtle. Anytime anyone would suggest to him to eat, he'd chug down a glass of water and then point to his bloated stomach and say: "See how full I am. I can't eat a single bite."*

*Barney claimed to know himself best, and no one could convince him that if he'd eat, perhaps he would be a great basketball player.*

*In the story, Barney's talents and potential represent the "inner self" or "soul" waiting to be revealed through the actions of the life. His refusal to eat represents the "body's" control over the "soul" and its attempt to block inner potential from being actualized via choices and actions. Refusing to acknowledge his inner hunger, the "body" holds Barney back from shining forth as a superstar, leaving his utterly unique abilities stunted and hidden. Were Barney to start feeding himself, he would be able to fulfill his unique role as a top-class basketball player. When one recognizes and fulfills his spiritual hunger, accepting his soul, he similarly is able to fulfill his unique role in the world, actualizing his full potential for greatness.*

On some level, most of us sense how profoundly unique we are. We are each born with special characteristics, drives, and aspirations that allow us to make an inimitable mark on the world. The problem is that the body tells us we are satiated. We look at ourselves – at our job, our Facebook list of friends, our car, etc. – and we fall for it. We believe that there's nothing more to attain. Yet at that very same moment we are starving to be that person we sense we could be.

Every person has a soul. Accepting this aspect of ourselves – and taking the time to "feed" it – brings the real you to life. Twins may look exactly the same. What makes each unique is the soul that shines through each one. Just like Barney, who was meant to be a superstar on account of his unique qualities, so too the inner qualities that shine through each of us are meant to bring a special light to the world.

## SECTION I. GRATIFYING OUR DEEPEST DESIRES

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In order to enable our soul to shine, we need to get better acquainted with ourselves. What is it that we really want? Are we pursuing goals that will express the desires of the soul, or are we instead pursuing the desires of the body and starving the soul?

### PART A. BODY AND SOUL

Each of us has two sets of wants, and each set wants us to listen to its voice. Knowing which set of wants to listen to will determine whether life will take us toward a dead end, or whether it will expand our sense of self. Roughly speaking, these sets can be divided into the desires that stem from the body, our limited physical makeup, versus those that stem from the soul, our limitless spiritual core.



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

God formed man of 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,  
וַיִּנְפַח בְּאַפָּיו, נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים; וַיְהִי הָאָדָם, לְנֶפֶשׁ  
חַיָּה.

2. **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.

עֲשָׂאוֹ מִן הַתַּחְתּוֹנִים וּמִן הָעֲלִיוֹנִים גּוֹף מִן  
הַתַּחְתּוֹנִים וְנִשְׁמָה מִן הָעֲלִיוֹנִים.

So a person is made up of body and soul, but what is the relationship between the two? Are we supposed to deny the body so as to be more spiritual people?

We have a body for a reason. It's not just something in the way. The body itself is an integral part of the human being and can serve a lofty purpose when used correctly. 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.

3. **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 transgressed; 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 put two guards in the orchard, one lame and one blind. The lame one said to the blind one, ‘I see beautiful

אֵמֶר לִיה אַנְטוֹנוֹיְנוֹס לְרַבִּי גּוֹף וְנִשְׁמָה יְכוּלִין  
לְפָטוֹר עֲצָמָן מִן הַדִּין כִּי־צַד גּוֹף אוֹמֵר נִשְׁמָה  
חֲטָאת שְׁמַיִם שְׁפִירְשָׁה מִמֶּנִּי הֲרִינִי מוֹטֵל כְּאֶבֶן  
דּוֹמָם בְּקִבְרִי וְנִשְׁמָה אוֹמֵרֶת גּוֹף חֲטָא שְׁמַיִם  
שְׁפִירְשֵׁי מִמֶּנּוּ הֲרִינִי פּוֹרַחַת בְּאוֹר כְּצִפּוֹר.

אֵמֶר לִיה אֲמִשּׁוּל לָךְ מִשָּׁל לְמָה הַדָּבָר דּוֹמָה  
לְמֶלֶךְ בָּשָׂר וְדָם שֶׁהִיא לוֹ פֶּרֶדָס נָאָה וְהִיא בּו  
בְּכוֹרוֹת נְאוֹת וְהוֹשִׁיב בּו שְׁנֵי שׁוֹמְרִים אֶחָד חִיגֵר  
וְאֶחָד סוּמָא אָמַר לוֹ חִיגֵר לְסוּמָא בְּכוֹרוֹת נְאוֹת  
אֲנִי רוֹאֶה בְּפֶרֶדָס בָּא וְהִרְכִּיבֵנִי וְנִבְיָאָם לֹאֲכֹלָם  
רֶכֶב חִיגֵר עַל גְּבִי סוּמָא וְהִבְיָאוּם וְאֲכָלוּם.

fruit in the orchard. Come and carry me, and we will get some to eat.' 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 of the orchard] immediately put 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."

לימים בא בעל פרדס אמר להן בכורות נאות היכן הן אמר לו חגור כלום יש לי רגלים להלך בהן אמר לו סומא כלום יש לי עינים לראות מה עשה הרכיב חגור 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.

4. **Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, Alei Shur Vol. I, pg. 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 a person 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 desire 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 have children. Jealousy impels us to try to earn a respectable living. Love of our 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 guard that can see is the soul. It sees the goal and can give our lives direction – what to strive for, whom to serve, what to achieve. The purpose of the soul in guarding the "orchard of life" is to ensure that we do not use our inborn abilities in vain, but direct

כחות הנפש וכחות הגוף שניהם "שומרים" לפרדס הנאה שהוא האדם ועולמו. ההבדל ביניהם הוא רק, כי כחות הגוף הם עוורים, וכחות הנפש פקחים. תאות החיים ממריצה אותנו לשקוד על בריאותנו ובסכנה היא מפעילה כל כחותינו כדי לשמור על גחלת החיים. תאות 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 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 לעבוד, מה להשיג. זהו ענין הנשמה בשמירת פרדס החיים, לבל נשתמש בכחותינו לשוא, ונדע לנצל אותם למטרה של אמת. חגירת היא, הנשמה, שאין לאל ידה לבצע



them toward our true goal. But the soul is lame. It does not have the ability to carry out its ambitions and desires on its own. For this, 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 necessary and important. We just need to strive for the right combination and the proper direction.

שאיפתה ורצונה בכח עצמה. בזה היא זקוקה לכלי הגוף.

הריגוף ונשמה ביחד משלימים זה את זה ובשמירת האדם והחיים: הגוף נותן את הכחות והנשמה את הצורה, הכיוון. כשההרכבה 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.

The problem is that we all too often let the body take the lead at the expense of the soul. In our last class we worked on identifying with our souls. Once we do that, we can establish a more balanced approach to the relationship between body and soul, physicality and spirituality.

## 5. **Drs. Judith Mishell and Shalom Srebrenuk, Beyond Your Ego – The body is a powerful vehicle, but it needs the direction of the soul.**

Picture the body as a horse and the soul as the rider. The main question is who is leading this tandem? Ideally the soul (the “rider”) should be the one that leads, counsels and makes choices; the body (the “horse”) should be the one that follows. When you know you are the rider, you love your horse and take very good care of it, but you do not let it lead. Picture a horse and rider, climbing up a mountain. They climb higher and higher. There's grass and water, and they eat and drink what they need. The horse gets tired and raises its head. The rider pats the horse and gives it a sugar cube to calm it down. “A little more, a little more,” he coaxes. The rider considers the horse's needs and desires and limits, but the rider sets the pace and determines the goal. The rider is in control.

Letting physical desire dominate life is like letting the horse be in control and lead the rider. We may stumble into a lot of unexpected trouble en route to a green pasture; worse yet, we will miss out on the most glorious aspects of being human. We will never know the deep joy and serenity that come from commitment to the higher goals set by our souls. Our yearning for immortality, our capacity for nobility, our ability to love selflessly and give generously, our ability to sacrifice our individual desires for a higher good, these are some of the goals of the soul. They are not sublimations of basic human impulses and they are not merely acts of self-preservation clothed in noble garb. The powers of the soul are from above not below.

Who should lead the way, the horse or the rider?

Without knowing which to follow, not only will we remain undeveloped, but we will have no way to actualize our potential and will ultimately lead an unproductive, unfulfilled life. So, practically speaking, knowing we have two parts, a body and a soul, is extremely useful. It gives us a map to expand ourselves, actualize our potential, and fulfill the deeper desires that drive us. It gives us a way to test and therefore pursue what we really want.

## **PART B. IDENTIFYING WHAT I REALLY WANT**

Each of us would love to have a clear litmus test to identify what we really want, a reliable tool to help us identify what we need to do to make us complete. This tool would show us which actions merely appear to fulfill us but in the end lead us nowhere. With such a tool we would know which courses of action to follow and which to avoid.

In truth, there is a very simple way to identify what we really want. Just ask yourself the following question: When I picture myself fulfilling a drive to the very end, does my identity expand or does the drive lead me to a dead end?

### **Exercise #1 – Getting vs. Giving**

We all love gifts.

- What makes you feel like a bigger person: receiving twenty gifts or giving one gift to someone that you know really needs and wants it?

Now let's exaggerate the example. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, count to three, and then imagine the radio calls to tell you that you've won an entire mall, plus a hotel and spa, on condition that you can use everything in it for yourself alone, without sharing it.

Obviously you will be ecstatic. But after your initial reaction, be honest:

- Will this prize make you a better person?
- Will getting it expand your sense of self?

Close your eyes for a few minutes and imagine this scenario. Try to get in touch with your emotions.

Now, recall the little act of giving a gift to someone who really needed and wanted it.

- Between owning the hotel spa and giving the gift, which do you think will expand your identity?

This is a simple example. Most people sense that owning a hotel spa with the greatest chefs, masseurs, and staff without being able to share it with others leads to an emotional dead end. Yet most people sense that by giving a gift, even if it demands effort to think about what the other person needs and to give up the money to buy it, they have expanded themselves in

some way. Remarkably, the simple act of giving a gift enables us to travel further along the path of becoming who we want to be than winning an entire mall and spa for life!

### PART C. DEAD-END IDENTITY VS. EXPANDED IDENTITY

There are things we believe will help make us complete, yet after pursuing them we still feel lacking. Even if these things appear to lead us somewhere meaningful, we may sense that following this path will result in failing to access our true potential.

For example, a lonely woman who wants to get married and have children becomes involved in an abusive relationship. Sensing this is a dead end, she breaks up and moves in with a very gentle man, who has made it clear that he will never marry her or have children with her. Although this might seem to be a happy improvement, ultimately this is also a dead end for her. She wants to be a married mother.

Identity expansion, on the other hand, comes from following drives that lead us to become the kind of person we want to be. Through them we become complete. Even if the change is subtle, slow, and sometimes indiscernible, we can easily understand that this path will lead us to true completion.

1. **Rabbi Itamar Schwartz, *Getting to Know Your Soul*, pg. 115 – Our deepest desire is to be in touch with the fact that we have a soul that was designed to help us get more out of life.**

We all want to grow and expand, but we must first find our SELVES. It is really the soul that seeks expansion, but it can only be satisfied if we are in touch with it. Otherwise we are only working with our various desires – external aspects of a person ...

If any of us would ... compose a list of fifty things that we want, the problem would not be 50 things but stopping there. Don't these many desires indicate a plurality of [my internal will or] *Ratzon* (will/desire) as well?

As we delve deeper...in fact, all our desires reflect a single drive: to fulfill what we are lacking. *Ratzon* (desire) comes from the word *ratz* (run), which is the same letters as *tzar* (limitation). We feel that we are limited and lacking, and so we run to fulfill our desires in order to become whole.

What we want most of all is to be whole. In Hebrew we call this *shleimut*, from the word *shalem*, complete, related to *shalom*, peace, wellbeing.

The big confusing question we all ask is: "What will make me complete?" The answer seems to come in the form of millions of wants: this car, that girl, this job, that guy, this movie, that interview...

We started with two very simple and easily-understandable examples (1. giving the gift vs. winning the mall and 2. leaving an abusive relationship to enter a relationship without marital commitment or children). These illustrate that some drives that we want to satisfy help expand us, and some do not.

## Exercise #2 – What is your deepest desire? (Based on “Gratifying Our Deepest Desires” by Rabbi Y.Y. Wenglin)

Imagine you found a bottle with a genie inside who came out and told you that it was ready to gratify five to ten of your deepest desires.

- What you would ask for?

Write it down. Don't hold back. Nobody is looking at this list except for you.

Now take two minutes to close your eyes and imagine that you got your whole list. Imagine you're ninety-nine years old, you've lived your life, and you got everything on your list except a sense of meaning, significance, or purpose. And the genie comes back and tells you: "In ten minutes you're going to pass from this world. I saved you one last wish. I'll give you a choice – either take the life you lived for ninety-nine years, or I can erase your memory and make you eighteen again. You may never get anything on your previous list. Instead I'll give you a life of great meaning, in which you'll take great pleasure in all the choices you make."

- What would you choose?

Disregard the fun factor and think,

- Which life makes you feel like your identity came to a dead end?
- Which life gives you the sense that "expanded your identity"?
- Why?

## KEY THEMES OF SECTION I

- ✧ Recognizing that we have a soul allows us to understand our deepest desires. First, we recognize that we each have two sets of opposing desires. Some expand our sense of self and offer deep satisfaction, whereas others offer mere counterfeit pleasures that ultimately lead us to a dead end. In simplistic terms, the former stem from the body and the latter from the soul.
- ✧ Judaism teaches that the body and soul are not at odds. The physical and spiritual are meant to co-exist. But the body lacks understanding and needs the guidance of the soul. Ideally, they should have a symbiotic relationship similar to a horse and a rider. The problem is that we all too often release the reins and let the horse decide where to go.
- ✧ If we want to know whether our actions will lead us to contentment or not, we need to ask ourselves whether fulfilling a certain drive expands our sense of self or rather leads us to a dead end. A simple example is the difference between giving to others versus focusing on ourselves. The path of the soul is the one that will expand our sense of self and bring us closer to realizing our true potential.

## SECTION II. WE ARE LIVING IN A SPIRITUAL WORLD

In our previous class, we discussed the power of identifying with one's spiritual "Self." Above, we learned a powerful ramification of taking the spiritual side of ourselves into account, namely that we all experience an internal pull between selfish and spiritual drives. We also came to recognize that following the path of the soul is more deeply rewarding than following the path of the body.

But we also learned that the body is not *bad*, it just requires direction. It needs the soul's guidance. So now we will explore how we can lead the body to attain a more meaningful existence. This starts by discerning the subtle voice of the soul hidden within the wishes of the body.

### PART A. THE PHYSICAL WORLD RESEMBLES ITS SPIRITUAL ROOT

Before we can explore the practical ramifications of what we have learned so far, we first need to clarify a fundamental philosophical underpinning. It is not just the human being that is made up of a physical body with a spiritual core. In Kabbalistic literature, a human being is called an *olam katan*, a miniature world. The entire structure of the physical world is a reflection of a spiritual reality. The spiritual world, the world of eternity, though hidden from our eyes, is in fact the true world. The Talmud tells us that what we experience is a "false world" or an "inverted world."

#### 1. Talmud Bavli, Bava Batra 10b – This world is the opposite of what it seems.

A similar remark was made by Joseph the son of R. Joshua. He had been ill and fell into a trance. [After he recovered], his father said to him, "What vision did you have?" He replied, "I saw an upside down world, the upper below and the lower above." He said to him: "You saw a clear world."

כי הא דיוסף בריה דר' יהושע חלש, אינגיד.  
א"ל אביו: מאי חזית? א"ל: עולם הפוך ראיתי,  
עליונים למטה ותחתונים למעלה. א"ל: עולם  
ברור ראית.

The spiritual world is often referred to as *Olam Haba*, which means the "World to Come." But that expression is a little misleading, because, while our existence in a *purely* spiritual world is yet to come, the spiritual world is already a reality right now. (Alternatively, it is called the World to Come because the nature of our ultimate existence there *comes* from how we act in this world – see Nefesh HaChaim 1:12.)

This world is merely a metaphor for what is going on in the higher spheres of reality. The following is a metaphor for the relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds.

2. **Rabbi Akiva Tatz, World Mask, pg. 64 – The physical world is like a two-dimensional replica of the spiritual world.**

Consider images projected on a screen: the forms and figures moving on the screen are no more than light dancing in two dimensions. They may look very convincing, and one may even forget for a while that they are only pictures. But in fact those images are very distant versions of the people and places photographed to produce them. However, and this is the critical point to remember, *they are exact replicas of the original*. They may be entirely illusory compared to their sources, but one who carefully studies that light dancing on that screen *will recognize those people and places when he meets them in the future*.

The analogy is clear: one who studies this world well is studying that which is a distant representation of a source which cannot be seen from here. But one day in the future, on that inevitable day when the transition must be made from this world to another, the one who has studied well will recognize every detail of reality. Then it will become apparent that this world, for all its beauty and sense of reality, is in depth a metaphor for the Divine Source of that reality.

If this is an accurate description of the world, then we need to rethink things.

3. **Ibid. – All human experience is a physical manifestation of a deeper spiritual reality.**

Every human experience holds and teaches more than it seems to contain at first glance. Every human experience is none other than the finite translation of an infinite idea. Human consciousness, while locked into a physical body, interprets deeper experience as superficial experience; our work is to translate that superficial experience back into its source in depth.

One can acquire a unique insight into the world in a manner which powerfully builds faith by examining all of human experience in the light of this idea. Why do we laugh? Why do we cry? Why do we long to travel and yet long for home when we are away? Each of these phenomena, and in fact every detail of human behavior and response, reveals a source in the soul which yields an immeasurable bounty of spiritual understanding.

We will now see a few examples of this principle that hopefully we can all relate to.

4. **Ibid. – Why is it that we long to travel but then also feel homesick?**

Why do we long for home? It is a universal human experience that when one is away from one's home, and particularly from the home of one's youth, one longs to be back there. A place has special beauty in the eyes of those who live there, even when that place has no particular natural beauty. "*Chen makom al yosh'vav* - A place has special



beauty for those who live in it.” If all of our experiences are none other than this-worldly parallels of higher experiences, what does this mean? The answer is that the soul is derived from a higher world; its true place, its true home, is that world where it enjoyed indescribable closeness with its Creator. It is sent into this world, immeasurably distant from that place of origin, to reside in the body of a mortal being. But it never forgets its home; it forever longs with a most powerful longing to return. However, this depth remains subconscious; the soul longs for its real home in the spiritual realm but the emotions read that longing as homesickness! After all, the realm of origin is not visible from here; the soul has lost sight of it, the mind cannot see it. And so the conscious mind interprets that deep experience of origin as a particular facet of the human psyche familiar to each of us.

And when we are home we long to travel! For all the soul's love of its origin, it nevertheless longs to move through this world, distant from its home, to enjoy the beauty of this world and to acquire its wealth - the true wealth of mitzvot and perfection of character. (In fact, the very trait of acquisitiveness is none other than the soul's interpretation of this depth!) The explicit, conscious psyche experiences this deep stirring of the soul as wanderlust, the longing to travel.

Each facet of human behavior and emotion must be studied closely for the clues it holds. No detail of the psyche or of the world is accidental, coincidental. If the world is a projection of a deeper reality, then each detail reveals the reality that projects it.

## PART B. THE SPIRITUAL ROOTS OF PHYSICAL DESIRES

The way we experience the world is mediated by the unseen yet underlying reality of the spiritual dimension. This fact is no less true about the way we perceive ourselves as well. What do we want out of life? Happiness? Wealth? Honor? Achievement? Love? Our most basic drives, as self-serving as they may sometimes seem, have two aspects to them - a superficial, physical manifestation and a deeper, spiritual one.

1. **Rabbi Eliyahu E. Dessler, Michtav Me-Eliyahu, Vol. I, pg. 100 – Our pursuit of worldly pleasures stems from a deep spiritual yearning.**

There is a an unfamiliar reason why human beings pursue worldly pleasures so avidly. It is because they have a subconscious urge to still the pangs of spiritual hunger. Everyone has this nameless inner yearning, the longing of the soul for its state of perfection. Nothing found in this world has the ability to satisfy this hunger. “No one dies with even half of his desires fulfilled,” for indulgence in worldly pleasures is just

וכל עיקר מה שאדם מתאוה לכל מיני תענוגי עוה"ז, הוא רק משום שהוא רוצה להשתיק, בדרך תחליף ודמיון, את הרגשת החסרון שהוא מוצא בעצמו - אשר באמת אינה אלא רעב רוחני, געגועי הנשמה למצב שלימותה. ורעב זה אין ביכולת דעוה"ז להשביעו, ועל כן "אין אדם מת וחצי תאותו בידו", "יש לו מנה רוצה מאתים" - כי הדמיון לא ישביע.

an illusory substitute...

When we think more deeply we see that not only the pursuit of luxuries, but life itself – the world itself – has no purpose or reality in itself. It is nothing but a means to an end.

כשנעמיק יותר במבט הרוחני, נראה שלא רק רדיפת המותרות, אלא גם עצם חיי האדם, ועצם העולם, אין להם תכלית ומציאות מצד עצמם, ואינם אלא הכנה לתכלית.

If we understand where these drives are rooted, then we can find a much deeper level of self, and our drives will be expressed in a way that is no longer superficial or self-destructive. To the contrary – they will be given expression and expand our sense of self.

## PART C. HOW TO THINK ABOUT WHAT WE WANT

### Exercise #3 – Defining our terms.

- Who is the smartest or wisest person in the world?
- Who is the strongest person in the world?
- Who is the richest person in the world?
- Who is the most honored person in the world?

#### 1. Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) 4:1 – Unconventional definitions of what we all want.

Ben Zoma would say: Who is wise? One who learns from every man, as it says (Psalms 119:99): “From all my teachers I have grown wise...”

Who is strong? One who overpowers his inclination, as it says (Proverbs 16:32), “One who is slow to anger is better than a mighty man, one who rules his spirit is better than one who captures a city.”

Who is rich? One who is satisfied with his lot, as it says (Psalms 128:2), “If you eat of the toil of your hands, fortunate are you, and it is good for you.” “Fortunate are you” in this world, “and it is good for you” in the World to Come.

בן זומא אומר איזהו חכם הלומד מכל אדם שנאמר (תהלים ק"ט) מכל מלמדי השכלתי

איזהו גבור הכובש את יצרו שנאמר (משלי טז:לב) טוב ארך אפים מגבור ומושל ברוחו מלוכד עיר

איזהו עשיר השמח בחלקו שנאמר (תהלים קכ"ח) יגיע כפיך כי תאכל אשריך וטוב לך אשריך בעולם הזה וטוב לך לעולם הבא

Who is honorable? One who honors others, as it says (I Samuel 2:30): "For to those who honor Me, I accord honor; those who scorn Me shall be degraded."

איזהו מכובד המכבד את הבריות שנאמר (שמואל א' ב') כי מכבדי אכבד ובוזי יקלו:

- What is the difference between the answer you, the participants, gave and those offered by Ben Zoma to the same questions we explored above?
- What is the common denominator of Ben Zoma's answers?

## 2. Maharal, Derech Chaim to Pirkei Avot 4:1 – Ben Zoma's definitions are intrinsic to the person.

Ben Zoma is teaching us that the virtues mentioned are *intrinsic to the person*, that they are not even considered virtues unless they are intrinsic to the person himself... not just because of someone else...[For example,] a person cannot be defined by his house. He just lives there and it does not define who he is...

Therefore, it is not appropriate to describe a person according to the wisdom he possesses, since this is outside him and not an intrinsic part of him...

And if someone is said to be strong because he can vanquish someone else, then his strength is only in relation to that person and it has no bearing on the winner himself. There is nothing intrinsic to him when he beat another person.

And so too if a person is only wealthy because he has a lot of money, this wealth is not an intrinsic part of the person and it is not appropriate to call him wealthy because of it.

"Who is honorable? One who gives honor to others." Similarly, in line with what we have said, in regard to honor, someone is not honorable just because others give him

ובא בן זומא ללמד על מעלות אלו שזכר שהם שייכים בפרט אל האדם, שכל אותם מעלות אינם נחשבים מעלה כי אם כאשר הם באדם עצמו... ולא יהיה מצד זולתו. ... כי האדם אשר יש לו בית כיון שאין הבית תואר לעצמו של אדם רק שהוא דר שם לא יתואר האדם ממנו...

ולפיכך אין ראוי שיתואר האדם על ידי החכמה שהיא זולת האדם ואין החכמה אליו מצד עצמו...

ואם יקרא גבור אשר הוא היה מנצח את אחר אם כן מעלתו מצד אותו אשר היה מנוצח ואין זה רושם במנצח ואין זה מצד עצמו מה שהיה מנצח אחר...

ולא כאשר הוא עשיר ברבוי ממון שהוא בתיבתו שאין זה העושר באדם מצד עצמו כלל ואין ראוי שיקרא האדם עשיר...

ואמר אי זה מכובד המכבד את הבריות, ור"ל ג"כ כמו שאמרנו שאין לומר שיקרא מכובד מי שמכבדן אותו הבריות, הרי אין ראוי שיהיה

honor. The honor is not intrinsic to the person, but is dependent on others, who give him that honor.

בשביל זה נקרא מכובד שדבר זה אינו בעצמו של המתואר שהרי הכבוד הוא ביד אחרים המכבדים אותו...

Ben Zoma is telling us that the qualities we desire have to be defined in terms of intrinsic worth. In order to attain a virtue it must be yours in absolute terms, not just relative to someone else. If I am only strong because I can bench press more than that guy, then I'm not in essence strong. If I'm only smart because I scored in the 95th percentile on the LSAT, then I'm not intrinsically smart. If I'm only wealthy because I earn more than the guy who sits next to me, then there is nothing about me that is wealthy (the Sultan of Brunei would still consider me poor).

We all want to be strong, intelligent, wealthy, and honorable. The problem lies in how we translate these deep inner longings into reality in our own lives. We feel the desire and then attempt to satisfy it in the two-dimensional terms of the physical world. But there is another dimension to our existence that offers a deeper level of satisfaction of these very same drives.

By moving beyond superficial definitions, seeking fulfillment on the level of the soul, we will experience the expansion of self and a more meaningful fulfillment of what we really want most out of life.

In the remainder of this class we will show how the principles we have discussed so far play themselves out in relation to two of the drives mentioned above, namely honor and wealth. In the next class we will apply the same principles to our desire for love.

## KEY THEMES OF SECTION II

- ⌘ We started by asking how we can redirect the body to attain a more meaningful existence. We answered that we start by discerning the subtle voice of the soul hidden within the wishes of the body.
- ⌘ The entire structure of the physical world is a reflection of a spiritual reality. The real world is the spiritual one; the physical world is merely a metaphor for what is going on in the higher spheres of reality. In fact, all human experience is a physical manifestation of a deeper spiritual reality. An example of this idea is that what we experience as homesickness stems from the soul's longing to return to its source in the spiritual realm.
- ⌘ This principle applies to the way we experience ourselves as well. Our most basic drives, as self-serving as they may sometimes seem, have two aspects to them – a superficial, physical manifestation and a deeper, spiritual one. If we understand where these drives are rooted, then we can find a much deeper level of self. Our drives can be expressed in a way that is no longer superficial or self-destructive. On the contrary, they can be given expression and expand our sense of self.
- ⌘ It is human nature to want to be strong, intelligent, wealthy, and honorable. The

problem lies in how we translate these deep inner longings into reality. We feel the desire and then attempt to satisfy it in the two-dimensional terms of the physical world. But there is another dimension to our existence that offers a deeper level of satisfaction of these very same drives.

## SECTION III. THE WHOLE WORLD REVOLVES AROUND ME

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Our society is consumer driven. The consumer feels very powerful as his “material needs” drive society. Never have people been given so much opportunity to be self-focused. A great deal of the Internet caters to, individualizes, and feeds this focus on self.

The pursuit of honor and wealth stems from this tendency towards self-focus. Why all this focus on the individual, on ourselves? It is clear that fulfilling our selfish drives is ultimately not fulfilling. So we must ask ourselves: Why do we have such a strong drive to be so self-focused? The answer is that this drive points us to a deeper truth.

Let's examine the following:

1. Do our desires for prestige and prosperity expand us, or only simulate a feeling that the “world revolves around me”?
2. What deeper soul drive will these drives lead me to discover in myself?
3. Can we discover a deeper expression of these drives that will help expand us?

### PART A. WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE?

*The last several decades have witnessed an unprecedented increase in materialism. The sizes of today's houses are double what they were 50 years ago, with the average American spending somewhere between 30 and 70 percent more than he did 20 years ago. In 1968, more than three-quarters of American college students said “developing a meaningful philosophy of life” was “very important” to them, while only 43 percent said the same about “being financially well off.” By 1996, those figures were reversed. Shopping has become a national pastime, with more and more people buying things because of the “therapeutic effect.” In one poll, 93 percent of teenage girls rated store-hopping as their favorite activity, while fewer than 5 percent listed “helping others.” The average American spends six hours a week shopping and only forty minutes playing with his or her children. (From Rabbi Dan Roth, *Relevance*, pp. 81-82)*

#### Exercise #4 – Does getting what we want expand us or make us feel emptier?

- Have you ever seen or known a spoiled brat?
- Deep down are they happy when they get their way, or do they feel more isolated?

We all see that the more selfish a person becomes, the more isolated and disconnected he feels from himself and others. Getting seems to fuel the insecurity that “if they gave me so easily it must be that there’s something else I’m missing out on.” The reason a person feels this is because a deeper part of him is hungry.

Accumulation of “stuff” does not seem to make us very happy. Being only a selfish recipient can even be downright depressing, as the following story shows:

*A young man was once brought to me despondent and depressed, literally on the verge of suicide. When I asked him what so depressed him, he told me, “My parents have been divorced for a few years and I’ve been living with my father. Recently he met a woman he wanted to marry. She didn’t like having me around the house, so my father called me in one day and pulled out a set of keys from his pocket. He told me the keys belonged to a fully furnished apartment he had purchased for me. He pulled another set of keys from his other pocket and informed me that these were to a new sports car that he had bought for me. Finally, my father gave me a credit card on his account for food, clothing, and incidental expenses. He then shook my hand and wished me well. He made it clear that our lives were to go separate ways and that I shouldn’t bother to visit or call him, just give him and his wife their space to enjoy themselves.”*

*Some would say this sounds like a teenager’s dream: your own apartment, a car, and unlimited credit. However, every time this young man entered that apartment or drove that car or used the credit card, it reminded him that no one loved him or wanted him. What could be more depressing? (From Rabbi Zev Leff, Shemoneh Esrei, pp. 437-8)*

1. **Rabbi Eliyahu E. Dessler, Michtav Me-Eliyahu, Vol. I, pg. 100 – Getting what we “want” does not make us happy.**

People want to be rich and think that only if they succeed will they be happy. But one only has to glance at a newspaper to see that rich people, too, have their share of pains and troubles, anger and anguish, like anyone else. If they avoid the worries of the poor, they have other and greater worries in their stead. “The more possessions, the more worry” (Pirkei Avot). If they have more leisure, “lack of occupation leads to boredom...and to immorality” – and where is the happiness then?

מבקשים עשירות ומדמים שאם אך ישיגוה יהיו מאושרים. – והרי צריך רק להביט בעתון כדי לדעת שגם העשירים יש להם מכאובים ודאגות, כעס וצער, ככל אדם! אם הם ניצולים מדאגותיו של העני, יש להם אחרות, ויותר גדולות, במקומם, כאז”ל “מרבה נכסים מרבה דאגה”. אם הם פנויים ממלאכה – הבטלה מביאה לידי שעמום, וגם לידי זמה... ואיה האושר?

Looking at man’s drive toward consumerism, and realizing that nothing in the world can satisfy such a drive, our wise men logically concluded that our insatiability expresses our limitless identity. If the main part of us is our soul, how can all the riches, palaces, vacations, and pleasures in the world give it what it’s looking for?



2. **Rabbi M. C. Luzzatto, Mesilat Yesharim (Path of the Just), Ch. 1, pg. 23 – Our soul cannot be satisfied from the pleasures of this world, just as a princess cannot be satisfied by the gifts of a commoner.**

(In Midrash Kohelet Raba) our sages [ask on the verse in Kohelet/Ecclesiastes], “and the soul will not be filled [i.e. satisfied].” What is this analogous to?

To the case of the common city boy who married a princess. If he were to bring her everything the world has to offer, it would mean nothing to her, inasmuch as she is the king’s daughter. So too, it is with the soul. If it were to be brought all the delights of the world, they would mean nothing to it. This is because the soul is from the upper worlds.

וז"ל (קהלת רבה ו') וגם הנפש לא תמלא מלה"ד  
לעירוני שנשא בת מלך אם יביא לה כל מה  
שבעולם אינם חשובים לה כלום שהיא בת מלך,  
כך הנפש אלו הבאת לה כל מעדני עולם אינם  
כלום לה למה שהיא מן העליונים.

And yet we want more money and more status. Why? Where is this drive coming from, and how can it be used productively?

## **PART B. THE WORLD WAS CREATED FOR ME**

Why do we want to acquire so much? Why do we feel that everything we want should rightfully be ours? Does the soul have a spiritual need that might account for this phenomenon?

This drive to be self-focused has a deeper purpose. It is meant to lead us to discover that “the world was created just for me.”

1. **Sanhedrin, Mishnah 4:5 – The whole world was made for me.**

Adam was created alone to teach you that anyone who causes the loss of one person’s life ... is considered to have destroyed a whole world, and anyone who gives life to one person ... is considered to have given life to a whole world ... Therefore each person is obligated to say, “The world was created for me.”

לפיכך נברא אדם יחיד, ללמדך שכל המאבד  
נפש אחת ... מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו איבד  
עולם מלא וכל המקיים נפש אחת ... מעלה  
עליו הכתוב כאילו קיים עולם מלא. ... לפיכך כל  
אחד ואחד חייב לומר, בשבילי נברא העולם.

If the “world was created for me,” should this not make me selfish? Or can self-focus be used as a tool to teach us to value all life?

2. **Kohelet Raba 7:13 – When God told Adam, “I created the whole world just for you,” He was giving him a great responsibility.**

[On the verse] “See the handiwork of God...” (Kohelet 7:13) – When the Holy One Blessed Be He created Adam, He took him and had him pass before all the trees of the Garden of Eden. He said to him, “See how beautiful and praiseworthy are my works; and all I have created I have created for your sake. Take heed that you do not damage and destroy my world.”

ראה את מעשה האלהים כי מי יוכל לתקן את אשר עותו, בשעה שברא הקב"ה את אדם הראשון נטלו והחזירו על כל אילני גן עדן ואמר לו ראה מעשי כמה נאים ומשובחים הן וכל מה שבראתי בשבילך בראתי, תן דעתך שלא תקלקל ותחריב את עולמי.

Ownership engenders responsibility. We value what is ours, and tend not to value as much something that belongs to others. A parent loves his own child, but not the child next door. When something belongs to me, I learn to take responsibility for it. If I fail to, I feel the pain of the loss, because it is my loss. It belonged to me, and now I lost it. By giving Adam the world, God taught him to value everything and to care for it. Feeling that I am the center of the world will make me selfish. But feeling that all my actions affect the world does the opposite – it has the potential to make me totally selfless.

3. **Based on class, Rabbi Noson Weisz, Jerusalem, 2013 – With so many people in the world, how can the world be made for me alone?**

Seeing a lion at the zoo is not the same as seeing it in the wild. We only truly understand what a lion is about by seeing it in the wild. There is a habitat made for each type of creature. The full expression of that creature needs its own special place. Just as the lion has its habitat, so does the monkey. In order for something to exist, it needs its own space, a mini-world. The same is true for a Jew. There is a world that was designed just for me, my own special habitat, to bring out who I am supposed to be. Right next to it there is a world that was designed just for you, your own special habitat, to bring out who you are supposed to be.

God is a sophisticated enough designer and planner to put us side by side with the appearance that we share the world. We don't really. Like the lion and the monkey, we are both supported by unique circumstances that will foster in each of us a unique ability to thrive. There is however a big difference between us and animals. I can put any lion into the lion habitat and he will do fine. There is a world made for all lions of a certain type. A Jew has *hashgahah pratit* (Divine intervention) which means the whole world was meant for him alone. Just as different animals coexist side by side each in its own world, this also works on an individual level. Your world is designed just for you. No one else can live in it or do well in it, just like a lion can't swing from trees, and a monkey can't chase gazelles. No one can become you. A whole world was designed to bring out your potential to flourish and fill it with your unique purpose.

God's ability to make a world for each creature is hinted in His appellation – “Designer of Worlds.” He can design endless worlds, all next to each other, seamlessly.

*Imagine there was a peasant girl who was in love with the prince. It happened to be that the peasant girl looked just like the princess. What did she do? She kidnapped the princess and moved in with the prince so the prince would love her instead. After a week of living with the prince, she was crying and depressed. She realized that even though she looked like the princess, the prince loved only the princess. He did not love her; he simply mistook her for someone else. Her heart was broken and empty.*

This analogy applies to many of us. We see other people's lives and reject our own seemingly “petty” existence. We ignore the world that was tailor-made made for us. Even if we finally attain the “dream life,” we are heartbroken, because deep down each of us senses that “the whole world was made just for me.” In other words, just as the lion will not satisfy his hunger by looking for food in the trees like a monkey, we will remain hungry and not grow into greater people by trying to be who we are not, or emulating a lifestyle that is not for us.

4. **Rabbeinu Bachya, Duties of the Heart, Section 8: Gate of Self-Accounting, Ch. 3, Part 30 – God is running the world as if it was made just for you.**

Imagine that the whole world was yours alone and had no other inhabitants. This would not increase the means of livelihood accorded to you to the end of your days as much as a mustard seed.

Conversely, if the number of people in the world were multiplied many times over, this would not diminish by as much as a mustard seed the sustenance predetermined to be yours.

ואלו היית מעלה על לבך, כי העולם כולו לך לבדך, נשאר מאין יושב, לא היה זה מוסיף בטרפך המגיע אותך אל אחרייתך כשעור חרדל.

וכן אלו היו נוספים אנשי העולם כפלים רבים, לא היה חסר לך מטרפך הנגזר לך כחרדל ולא פחות ממנו ולא יותר.

One of the biggest freedoms a person can attain is freedom from the illusion that his life is lacking in comparison to someone else's. The more we clarify that we have a unique world which nobody can add to or take away from, the more free we are to see how unique and how filled with opportunities for growth our life really is. As we will learn in the fourth class in this series, *What's the Jewish Connection*, each person's soul mate is tailor made for him, as well.

5. **Based on Rabbi Noah Weinberg, by A.H. Friedman – God is your “life coach”; the world your training ground.**

Accepting that there is a “world just for me” is similar to a runner taking on a coach to bring out his full potential. Every day the coach designs a race track for a skilled runner with new obstacles. So too the Designer of all the worlds fills each day of each of our lives with exactly the tests we need to become greater and greater. He gives us “instructions” (Torah). Some people ignore the coach and try to make do without his

instructions and make the same mistakes over and over. This is like a runner who can't get past the next challenge so his coach makes him run the same level again and again. After a while he gets very frustrated because he doesn't see life advancing. His life is designed perfectly for him. The problem is that he is ignoring his coach. He just goes in circles. An ambitious runner, however, understands that the coach is there just for him. The coach wants more than anything to raise him every day to a higher and higher level until he is the greatest in the world at his sport. This runner will relish the instruction he gets. He'll listen carefully to apply it, every day becoming greater as he advances to new challenges. So too with our lives, understanding the "world is made just for me" allows me to pay attention to the Designer of my life. That means I will accept that my life is designed for me, and use the Coach's lesson book to figure out how to rise higher and higher until I become as great as I am supposed to be. It is a victory only I can accomplish.

The more I see that "the world is made just for me," the more I feel unique, and the less I will be bothered if others are successful as well. On the contrary, I will be less selfish, because there is nothing I can take from anyone else. Trying to do so will make me a lesser person.

**6. Rabbi Noah Weinberg, summarized by E. Coopersmith on The Six Constant Mitzvot – The mitzvah of acknowledging that "God Is One" includes realizing that every other person's needs are also my responsibility.**

The Mishnah tells us that Adam was created alone so that every human being could say, "The whole world was created for me."

Isn't that being a bit egocentric?

On the contrary. It is the recognition that everything in the world – which includes the needs of every other human being – was created for you. These are your challenges. Everything on earth, which includes all the problems, as well as all the beauty, offers us opportunity.

All of it was tailor-made by God. Every experience is something that you alone have to learn from, at the time you need it most. Every human being you come in contact with was God-sent because you needed it at that time, whether it is something you have to learn from the person or something you have to learn to do in order to help the person. Look around at absolutely everything and ask, "What is this asking of me? Why was this sent to me as part of that road to perfection?"

## KEY THEMES OF SECTION III

- ⌘ The world is becoming ever more consumer-driven, with the individual becoming more self-focused, endlessly pursuing personal honor and wealth. Yet, we sense that fulfilling our drive to be selfish is not ultimately so fulfilling, as the accumulation of “stuff” does not really make us happy. If the body cannot be satisfied with all this materialism, certainly the soul can’t be either.
- ⌘ The deeper spiritual truth behind this drive for selfishness is the soul’s awareness that “the world was created just for me” – that God created the world for the sake of mankind. Guided by the soul rather than the body, this awareness should fill us with a deep sense of responsibility for the world.
- ⌘ Feeling that I am the center of the world will make me selfish. Whereas feeling that all my actions affect the world does the opposite – it has the potential to make me totally selfless.
- ⌘ One of the biggest freedoms a person can attain is freedom from the illusion that his life is lacking in comparison to someone else’s. As we will learn in the fourth class in this series, one’s soul mate is also tailor made. The more we clarify that we have a unique world which nobody can add to or take away from, the more free we will be to see how unique and how filled with opportunities for growth our life really is.

## CLASS SUMMARY:

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### WHAT IS THE IDEAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BODY AND SOUL?

- In the quest to fulfill our deepest desires, the body and soul seem to pull us in different directions; the body pursues superficial satisfaction while the soul seeks deeper fulfillment.
- However, Judaism maintains that they are not fundamentally at odds. The body exhibits blind passion while the soul employs the intellect to direct us along the path to personal growth.
- We need to listen to the body’s desires but look to the soul in order to figure out how to satisfy them in a truly fulfilling way.

## HOW CAN WE TELL IF OUR TRAJECTORY IN LIFE IS GOING TOWARD A DEAD END OR NOT?

- A simple litmus test to help us understand the direction of our life's goals is to imagine fulfilling them in full detail and then ask: "What next?" Does this fantasy expand our sense of self, or not? Will we feel better about ourselves, in the knowledge that we have grown spiritually and used our potential, or will we be bored to death on a beach somewhere?

## HOW DO OUR SPIRITUAL NEEDS MANIFEST THEMSELVES IN OUR PHYSICAL DESIRES?

- The physical world is merely a reflection of a deeper spiritual reality. All the experiences we have in this world are mediated through an awareness of this spiritual realm, whether we are conscious of it or not.
- Most often, the desires that we feel stem from this spiritual root, even though we seem to experience only their physical manifestation. This means that if we only pursue superficial satisfaction we will ultimately be left wanting, because we have not addressed our desires at their core.

## WHY DO WE SEEK TO ACCUMULATE WEALTH AND HONOR, AND WHAT SPIRITUAL REALITY DOES THIS DESIRE REFLECT?

- We would like to be wealthy and admired, and for that matter, we have a great many other things we feel we deserve. This sentiment of entitlement leads to greater and greater self-centeredness, and the pursuit of money and other acquisitions.
- The spiritual awareness underlying this focus on the self is the soul's awareness that "the world was created for me." That is, God created the whole world for the sake of just one person, Adam. Once aware of our value, each of us will begin to feel that even the "seemingly mundane" tasks of life are as significant as winning a Nobel Prize.
- Instead of being a motto for "taking," the fact that the world was created for me indicates the great responsibility to use the world correctly and to care for it and its inhabitants. Rather than a call to take, it is a call to give to others. Doing so expands our sense of self, rather than leading us to an ultimate dead end.

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Once a person is in touch with his soul, he can begin to discern the soul attributes of a potential spouse. Then he is ready to explore the deep emotional soul expression of a relationship – love. This will be the topic of the next class.