

## DAILY CHESHBON HANEFESH #15

### PART ONE OF TOOL #9

The previous two tools showed us that

- we must regard ourselves as servants to the King: “Your wish is my command.”
- we must serve him for altruistic motives and not for ulterior motives.

In tool #9, we will see how to do this.

Let’s return to the parable of the king: If the king gave you a job to do that would require physical exertion, you would give every possible effort into getting the job done. You would try your hardest in a physical sense.

Now, if the king gave you a job that required thought; for example, giving him advice or counsel – you would put all your energy into concentrating on the thoughts that would eventually give you good ideas on how to advise the king in the best way.

If, on another occasion, you were required to praise the king or acknowledge his kindness through various poems or songs, either printed or oral, you would surely compose the most elegant works, using the most beautiful figures of speech and even devising choreographic movements to complement these artistic creations in praise of the king. You would put your deepest emotions into these paeans, despite the fact that the king is a human being and in a few years he won’t be here any longer.

If you would do all this for a king of flesh and blood, how much more should you be doing for the One Master! The intelligent person will serve Hashem with all the energy he possesses. Realize what service to Hashem is required in a given situation and do it to the best of your ability.

The Chovot Halevavot elaborates on three types of services one can do for Hashem.

#### Mitzvot Dependent on the Heart Alone

In this category, we find mitzvot such as

- Bitachon in Hashem
- Cheshbon Hanefesh
- Six Constant Mitzvot

#### Mitzvot Dependent on the Heart and the Body Simultaneously

In this category we find mitzvot such as

- Prayer
- Torah Study
- Singing Praises to Hashem
- Learning certain wisdoms necessary for the understanding of Torah
- Trying to influence other people to do what is right or avoid what is wrong

#### Mitzvot Dependent on the Body Parts Alone

(The only connection to the heart is that, before doing these mitzvot, you should know you are doing them for Hashem. After acknowledging this, you go ahead and do the mitzvah. ) Examples are

- Sukkah
- Lulav
- Tzitzit

- Mezuzah
- Tzedakah
- Keeping Shabbat and holidays

Thinking of other things while doing the mitzvot in this category will not diminish their value.

Today we will look at the first category – Mitzvot Dependent on the Heart Alone.

When you do these mitzvot, you must remove from your mind any other thoughts in the world. Any disturbing thought must be cleared away, and you should be thinking only of Hashem.

The Chovot Halevavot tells of a tzaddik who would add the following to his prayers. He would say:

”My G-d, grief for Your sake has undone all my other grieving, and anxieties on Your behalf have estranged me from all other anxieties.”

We are told that G-d would accept this tzaddik’s actions in a very favorable fashion.

The idea here is that doing a mitzvah of the heart requires 100% effort. And when a mitzvah of the heart needs to be engaged with the mind, 100% of the mind must be involved in that moment. Doing anything less than that would not be giving 100%.

For example, you have reached a moment in your life when you have to show your bitachon in Hashem. However, what if there are other things in your mind that are taking up space? What if you’re thinking, “What am I going to do tomorrow?” while you’re supposed to be totally focused on having bitachon in Hashem?

You may be trying to make a cheshbon hanefesh at the end of the day, and you may even be in the midst of reading this essay, but at the same time you’re thinking of other things. At that moment, you’re not serving G-d with all your resources. You may be serving him with 50% of your mind at that moment, but this means that the other 50% is engaged elsewhere.

### ***Today’s Exercise:***

Reflect on the different Chovot Halevavot; i.e., mitzvot that are dependent on the heart; mitzvot that are performed with our mind. Think of those you did today. Think whether, during the time you did them, you did them with pure concentration on that mitzvah alone.

Better still, reflect on what you’ve just read. Were you thinking only about trying to do a cheshbon hanefesh while you were reading this? Or were you looking at some of your other e-mails at the same time you were looking at this one? [It doesn’t hurt to plug my own material!] If you’re reading with less than total concentration, you are not giving the full dedication of a servant toward a master. If the servant takes total pleasure in serving the master, that pleasure has to manifest itself through a 100% engagement of the thought processes in what he is supposed to be thinking at that moment.

If you haven’t given it your all, perhaps it is a good idea to reread this e-mail. Before you start reading it, clear your mind of every other thought. Stay totally focused. The only thing you should be thinking about now is how you are going to evaluate your service to Hashem. Try to get new insights on how to serve Hashem properly. Only when you have finished reading, then you can let your thoughts go on to other things.