



# Honest Accounting חשבון הנפש

אאמו"ר אמר: קריאת שמע שעל המטה איז, אין זעיר אנפין, ווי דער ווידוי וואס קודם צאת הנפש מהגוף. נאר יעמאלט גייט מען שוין אינגאנצען אוועק פון יריד, און עס ענדיגט זיך שוין דער מסחר פון היום לעשותם, און אין קשעהמ"ט [קריאת שמע שעל המטה] פון יעדער נאכט האלט מען נאך אין מיטן יריד, און מען קען נאך אויפטאן. (היום יום ו' כסלו).

My father said that the reciting of *krias shema she'al hamitta* is, in miniature form, like the confession before death. But then one leaves the marketplace permanently, and the commerce of "Today to perform them" [i.e. the *avodah* of performing Torah and mitzvos in this world] is finished. With *krias shema she'al hamitta* every night, however, one is still in the middle of the "market" and can still accomplish and achieve... (Hayom Yom 6 Kislev).

## Performance Efficiency

Perhaps the *maamar Razal* most oft-quoted by the Rebbe was the statement of the Mishna: "אני" כל מעשיך יהיו לשם—I was created to serve my Master [Hashem]." At any given moment of any given day, we always have a job and a mission to accomplish. As the Rambam rules: לשם—everything we do must be permeated with the ways of Hashem.<sup>1</sup>

With such an important job on our hands, it is only natural that from time to time, one needs to pause for a moment and weigh in on where he stands, and how efficiently he is performing his task.

Traditionally, there are various stages in a *cheshbon hanefesh*, each one accounted for at its designated time (as we will elaborate further on).

But on the most basic level, a daily *cheshbon hanefesh* is done when reciting *krias shema she'l hamitta*. This is based on the practice described by the Shalah (quoted in *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*<sup>2</sup>), that before retiring at night one should search out his

deeds of the previous day and do *teshuvah* over his misdeeds.

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## OBSERVE THE PICTURE

The *avodah* of *krias shema she'al hamitta* doesn't mean that one must pull hairs out of his head or bang his head against the wall. Rather, he must make an honest *cheshbon* of his deeds throughout the previous day. Look at them as if he was looking at a picture. This *cheshbon* should take half an hour, an hour, or a quarter of an hour. If [he realizes that] some of his deeds were inappropriate, he must come to a strong conviction that from now on he will act better. If his deeds were okay, he must decide that tomorrow he'll do even better.

(*Sefer Hasichos* 5703 p. 126)

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## Each to Their Own

The Friediker Rebbe writes in a letter (part of which is quoted in *Hayom Yom* 6 Kislev), that there are different types of *krias shema she'al hamitta*, unique for each person. The *ba'al esek* (business person) has his type of *krias shema*, and the *yoshev ohel* (Torah scholar) has his.

Even within each of these groups, there are also various categories. Within the *yoshevei ohel*, you can't compare the *krias shema* of the *shul shamash* or the city's *shochet*. Likewise, there's a difference between the *krias shema* of the children's melamed and the rav of the town.

Each person must revisit the occurrences of the previous day; the good things, the not-good things, and the very bad things.<sup>3</sup>

## Keep the Wheel Spinning

At the very base of the *cheshbon hanefesh* there lies one most important component: it must further one's drive to do more, and do it better.

One of the times during the year that we are expected to hold a *cheshbon hanefesh* is on one's birthday. The Rebbe writes in *Hayom Yom* (Yud-Aleph Nissan): "On his birthday, one should spend time in seclusion. He should recall his experiences and think deeply into them. He should then do *teshuvah* and correct those (of his past deeds) that need correction..."

In a *sicha* on Yud-Aleph Nissan, the Rebbe expounds on this point. Everything in this world is

here for purpose. The purpose of the past year that was given to you was to fill it with Torah and mitzvos.

The *cheshbon* on your birthday needs to be done by asking yourself: Did I indeed utilize the time during my past year for the purpose that it was given to me?<sup>4</sup>

But if contemplating on the *cheshbon hanefesh* doesn't allow the person to grow and leaves him stuck in a rut and unable to move forward, then it is in fact discouraged.

For this reason, the Rabbeim taught that a *cheshbon hanefesh* is only to be performed from time-to-time.

During one Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen, the Friediker Rebbe drew upon the example of a businessman:

"Business people know that at certain times, one must not engage in making *cheshbonos*. If he would, it would only make him feel dejected and unable to proceed with doing what has to be done.

"There was once a *chassidisher Yid*, a large-scale and successful businessman, who had acquired many stocks... At one point, although his financial situation was a bit tight, he decided to go ahead with a few business deals, relying on the stocks he owned. At that moment, his bookkeeper walked in and showed him the balances of his debts. 'Fool!' said the businessman. 'Now is not the time for balances!'

"Business people know that there are times when one is not to look at the sum total. You need to utilize the money you have now; keep the wheel spinning and trust that Hashem will help you..."<sup>5</sup>

## Everything In Its Time

The Rebbe explained this concept many times. In a lengthy *sicha* at a Chanukah farbrengen, the Rebbe teaches that *cheshbon hanefesh* is indeed necessary to keep up with your *avodah*, but it needs to be done in proportion.

"One might think, being that making a *cheshbon tzedek* is so important, he won't spend only an hour on it; he'll spend a few hours! The problem is that with such an approach, he'll never have time to engage in practical *avodah*, learning Torah and doing mitzvos. That's why the Torah sets guidelines: the daily *cheshbon* should be more basic and short, the monthly *cheshbon* a bit longer, and the yearly one even longer, etc."<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps the most famous example of this concept is the story of Rabbon Yochanan ben Zakai: Before he passed away, he told his *talmidim*, “I don’t know which direction I will be shown; Gan Eden or the opposite...” The Rebbe explains in a *maamar* that the reason he felt that way was because throughout his lifetime, he never had a moment to think of where exactly he was holding and on which spiritual level he stood. He was always busy seizing every moment and filling it with Torah and mitzvos.<sup>7</sup>

To someone who complained about his “deficient spiritual situation” the Frierdiker Rebbe writes in a letter:

“Even the worst businessman doesn’t make a calculation of his dealings several times daily, occupying his mind with such thoughts only. The same applies with your *avodah*: these assessments must be done only at specific times. Do not allow this to take away all your energy; you need it for doing your *avodah*...”<sup>8</sup>

In many letters, the Rebbe offers similar advice to people who seemed too preoccupied assessing their spiritual standing. “Your approach of making these calculations so often, again and again... is contrary to the teachings of the Rebbe, *nessi Yisroel*...” the Rebbe writes in a letter.<sup>9</sup>

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וכמדומה שכבר כתבתי להם פעם במכתבי מיוסד על אחת השיחות של כ"ק מו"ח אדמו"ר אשר אף שמוכרח שהאדם יעשה חשבון בנפשו בכל זה מוכרח ג"כ שלא יה' זה אלא בזמנים מיוחדים כי בלא"ה מרובה ההפסד על השכר, וכלך מעשיית חשבון הנפש בכל יום או אפילו פעם בשבוע, ומוטב אשר תשקיע כשרונותי בפעולות טובות בהשפעה על סביבה, והקב"ה משלם מדה כנגד מדה אלא שכמה פעמים ככה.

(אג"ק ח"י עמ' כב)

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## With Simcha

The main reason why the Rebbe discouraged the *cheshbon hanefesh* in these instances was because they brought about feelings of dejection and depression.

“In your instance,” the Rebbe writes to a Chossid, “I see from your letter that the *cheshbon hanefesh* you write about is dampening your excitement in your holy *avodah* of *chinuch*. It is therefore safe to say that this is a scheme of the *yetzer hara*...”<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, the Rebbe always maintained that even while making a *cheshbon hanefesh*, one must still remain joyful.

But how can one be *besimcha* while making an honest account of all his accomplishments? At times, the results of the *cheshbon* are not so positive; how are we to still be happy and upbeat, continuing our *avodah* in good spirit?

The Rebbe explains:

When the Torah tells someone to make a *cheshbon tzedek* the result must be that he does even more good than until now. The problem is, when one realizes that there is so much more he could have accomplished, this may lead to depression, *chas veshalom*.

The solution: by recognizing that we were given all the necessary *kochos* to overcome any challenges, we can always be happy.<sup>11</sup>

## Look in the Mirror

Often at farbrengens, when reprimanding Chassidim for not doing enough in a certain area, the Rebbe called on each one to make an honest *cheshbon*, how much they had accomplished over the past while. On one occasion, when speaking of the soul-searching that Chassidim need to do, the Rebbe used the expression, “Let each one sit down in front of a mirror; a mirror is the best *mussar-sefer*...”<sup>12</sup>

On Yud-Beis Tammuz 5748, the Rebbe again called for a *cheshbon hanefesh*; this time with an added twist: Every person should write down on a piece of paper three additional things he has accomplished over the past year, since last Yud-Beis Tammuz.

We constantly speak about all the things that need to get done, the Rebbe said, and yet some people still haven’t accomplished anything! The reason we are asking everyone to write these things down is so that those who haven’t done anything new will be ashamed of themselves and begin to do the things that the [Frierdiker] Rebbe wants!<sup>13</sup>

The same holds true when speaking of our yearning for the *geulah*. The Rebbe once explained that the reason why people are so uncomfortable with his speaking so often about Moshiach, is because they themselves never think about it as a reality. “Each person should make a *cheshbon tzedek*, when was the last time he thought about the *geulah* in a personal

manner... Seclude yourself in a room within another room, and think about it. This way, you will certainly awaken a thought of *teshuvah* within yourself and this will finally bring the *geulah*...<sup>14</sup> **T**

## FURTHER READING:

*Farbrengen Motzoei Zos Chanukah 5741 - sicha 1*

1. See Likutei Sichos vol. 3 p. 907
2. Siman 71 se'if 3. Shala"h 123a.
3. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRaYaTz vol. 4 p. 125
4. Yud-Aleph Nissan 5733; Sichos Kodesh 5733 vol. 2 p. 12

5. Yud-Tes Kislev 5691 (תרצ"א)
6. Motzoei Zos Chanukah 5741; (Sichos Kodesh 5741 vol. 1 p. 681)
7. Maamar Loi Si'hiye Meshakeila, 5712; (Toras Menachem vol. 4 p. 332)
8. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRaYaTz vol. 8 p. 318
9. Igros Kodesh vol. 11 p. 98
10. Ibid. vol. 8 p. 97
11. Sichos Kodesh 5738 vol. 1 p. 578
12. Shabbos parshas Mikeitz 5744
13. Hisvaaduyos 5748 vol. 4 p. 6
14. Ibid. 5746 vol. 2 p. 556

