



A Collection of Letters from Rabbi Yehoshua Gerzi

May the ones that have graduated our world be remembered and have an alia!

In memory of Mrs Raizel Bas R Yitzchak & R Shlomo Ben R Alter Mordechai Turetsky

These letters were written as a string of emails between Rabbi Gerzi and some of his students. After leaving Eretz Yisrael in 2010, they had some questions about Avodat Hashem, which they had been learning with Rabbi Gerzi throughout the year. The letters have been modified for publication in this forum.

Letter #12

Can you please further explain each group that was mentioned in the previous letter?

Response to letter #12

Let us begin with a few words about the first group: Daat - Sechel - Bechira - Emet, which are all connected to Ruach.

Sechel: This is the place of asking the question. The core questions are, ‘What am I physically feeling?’; ‘What am I emotionally feeling?’ and

‘What am I thinking?’ We can suggest that it is the first *Livush* or layer of clothing covering Da’at. It is this questioning which leads to deeper processes.

I have long wished I could go back and ask my mentors if Sechel has qualities beyond questioning. As this question still remains to be answered, we must take into consideration that there could be more to it. Thus, keep in mind that we are freeze-framing a dynamic and active system for the sake of education. In truth, this multi-layered process of Avodat Hashem occurs in mili-seconds within our consciousness.

The more that we can stop, think, and ask questions, the stronger our Sechel becomes.

Daat: This is our place of awareness and pure consciousness. It is associated with awakening, stillness and quiet. From this vantage point we witness the lower and higher self. Most people perceive reality through the lens of the ego which is akin to the Nefesh, which lacks awareness of self. Paradoxically, it is from this state of Ruach that we should be perceiving reality.

We can get into the experience of this state by asking the three core questions mentioned above in Sechel: ‘What am I physically feeling?’; ‘What am I emotionally feeling?’ and ‘What am I thinking?’ We are to ask these questions one at a time and nonjudgmentally witness and take note of what happens. This process of observing and witnessing is the place of Da’at called *Da’at Tachton* (as in ‘lower’).

A higher level of Da’at is *Da’at Elyon* (which has varying degrees). In this place one encounters a calm, quiet, yet, often dark expansiveness. It’s the space beyond our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations. It is the background of these experiences. However, even though as human beings we experience them, it doesn’t mean we are actually them.

In fact the Kabbalists, the Chasidim and the Mussar giants expressed that in actuality, we are consciousness/we are Da’at. We are told that Da’at is the *ikkar* of *adam*, and the *adam betoch adam* (*man within man*). That is why it is paramount we learn to develop this state of consciousness; this is the authentic person of who we really are. It allows us to function with more clarity, balance and peace of mind.

Bechirah: This is the place of choosing. Bechira is our communication with the gap between the stimulus or trigger and subsequent response. The

stimulus lives in Nefesh. The response could also live in Nefesh in the form of an unconsciousness reaction.

This is the world of Bechira. We need to contemplate how we relate and respond to our triggers and stimuli. We move from the world of Nefesh to the world of Ruach (where Bechira dwells) and then back to Nefesh in order to react in a more conscious and appropriate way in any given situation.

THE PROCESS OF CHOICE

So, the human experience enfolds like this:

We become aware of something - 'Da'at'. From there we (hopefully) ask a question about our experience - 'Sechel.' Following this, we can choose how to respond - 'Bechirah',

In actuality, the process is dynamic. We can become aware and then ask questions or we can ask questions to obtain cognizance of the experience.

As we develop our ability to slow down by becoming Ba'alei Da'at, we stop, notice, and choose.

Kavana: This is when we specify our direction. That is, once we have opened up Bechira, it is time to figure out where we are going (and what we wish to achieve). This is a result of Da'at and Sechel.

Emet: This is the holistic reality we are dealing with. Allow me to clarify further:

In creation there are always three elements at play: 'you', the 'other' and the 'space' in between. This is consistently true in all of our four worlds: one's relationship with oneself, with Hashem, with other people, and everything else in the world (such as inanimate objects)

To provide an example of the above, when you are eating, there is 'you', the 'food', but there is always a 'space between' 'you' and the 'food.' We can say that 'you' are the 'Aleph', the 'food' is the 'Tav', and the 'space' is the letter 'Mem.' The space is the Makom, the 'Mem', that we want to be upgrading. And these three letters 'Aleph', 'Mem' and 'Tav' form the '*Emet*' or 'truth' we are striving for.

This can be said another way: we want to upgrade our perceptions to better and more productive ones. In the former example, our goal is to develop a

healthier relationship with food. In our practice of growth, these new perceptions are game changers.

Once I understand the proper relationship between myself and all four worlds, I can fill the space with not only better, but with more accurate and holistic perceptions. This is the Emet we are speaking about creating. We upgrade the *Yichud* of the 'Aleph' and the 'Tav' by way of an ever-developing space of 'Mem' .

May we all be successful on our journey to being a Baal Da'at and Ba'al Sechel, all the while developing our Bechira, making good healthy choices in our lives and always heading in a good direction of Emet.

Lovingly & respectfully

Yehoshua Gerzi

