

Duvid Chaim's calls - By Momo

Posted by Momo - 22 Jul 2009 07:23

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An amazing thing happened to me yesterday and I wanted to share it with all of you.

Duvid Chaim has been asking those who join him in his conference group to come up with an Awe and Wonder (A+W) moment, meaning a moment where we see haShem in our lives. The purpose of this exercise is to raise our G-d consciousness. He's looking for small things that we might take for granted and overlook. Well, I have have had one A+W moment in 3 weeks, and he's looking for us to find one every day, so I've been feeling frustrated, and I think that came across in yesterday's call.

In yesterday's call, I asked the group for instructions, or ideas on HOW we are supposed to open our eyes and see/feel an A+W moment. I must say, I didn't feel like I received a satisfying response during the call.

However, part of the greatness of these calls is that it bothered me enough to think about it afterward.

Here's my A+W moment: After the call on Tuesdays, I have a weekly hashkafa shiur. I decided to not allow the Rav to continue with the text, but rather ask him how he thinks we can see HaShem everywhere during our day in order to bring us to Dvekut. I explained that we can't really talk about hashkafa until we get this yesod down. He agreed with me, and we both hashed it out, and together we came up with an answer. Here's what we came up with:

1. Look at anything around you.
2. Break it down into it's smallest parts. (Think an air conditioner, the human body...)
3. Think about how complicated it really is.
4. Think about what is the source of this amazing item. If it's nature, animal, or human, the answer is obviously G-d. If it's man-made, then the answer is that G-d gave man the intelligence to create this item. Anyway you slice it, the source is G-d. So, when 24 hours ago I couldn't think of any A+W moments, now I can't stop thinking about them! I see them all around me, for each item I see becomes an A+W moment!

I remembered this morning that this idea sounded familiar, that I thought I read it somewhere. I opened the sefer Belvavi Mishkan Evneh, and in volume 1, chapter 3 he speaks about how we have to look at everything around us, ask ourselves who is the creator, and come to the conclusion that it's G-d. He says we must do this to get us closer to HaShem, in order to get dveikut.

I thank HaShem that I had the opportunity to discuss this idea with my Rav, that we were able to "think about it ourselves" in order to internalize it, and that I was able to feel it. I've read that chapter of the sefer a couple of times before, but it didn't really do anything for me until today after I discovered the idea "on my own" (with inspiration from HaShem of course), and internalize it.

I need to add that the sefer Belvavi Mishkan Evneh writes about levels. First, he talks about Dveikut as the purpose of our existence (as does the Mesilat Yesharim). Then he writes about the need to believe in HaShem. After we internalize that, we can work on seeing HaShem everywhere by asking who created anything we see (its source). That is what I've described here. He says that only once we've internalized this step (he suggests at least one week working only on this), then we should work on the next step which is hashgaha pratit. Meaning, OK, so HaShem is in the world and surrounds us, but he also is involved in every aspect in our lives, not just in the background.

I'm a bit unclear which step Duvid chaim is referring to when he asks for an A+W moment since he brought examples of both (a singing bird is an example of seeing HaShem in the world while getting out paying for a traffic ticket is an example of hashgaha pratit). However, I'd like to suggest to anyone having trouble thinking of A+W moments that we should first work on seeing HaShem around us, and once that's internalized, work on hashgaha pratit, as the Belvavi Mishkan Evneh suggests.

I'm very open to receive your thoughts, comments, and criticisms.

I thank HaShem for giving me this moment of inspiration, and I pray that I will continue to see HaShem around me, always.

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DC2

Posted by Momo - 22 Jul 2009 12:38

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I just wanted to explain (and remind myself) that our daily goal is NOT to fight the Y"H head on. I've been fighting the Y"H for 5 months since I've joined this forum, and I got very tired of fighting. Who wouldn't? Fighting gives you wins and losses, until you get tired and eventually feel like giving it up. I know because I've been there (probably a lot of us here have).

(Battleworn, I asked Duvid Chaim what our short term goal should be, and) Duvid Chaim explained that our short term goal is to work on seeing HaShem's presence around us and in our lives (becoming G-d conscious) by finding a daily A+W moment, and doing acts of selflessness (getting "out of our heads"). These lead us to Dveikut, our ultimate goal. Once we achieve Dveikut, we'll automatically lose the desire to lust. That's beating the Y"H by-the-way, by performing positive measures, not by stressing out and fighting it head on.

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DC3

Posted by Momo - 23 Jul 2009 05:36

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Good morning everyone! Here are my thoughts regarding yesterdays phone conference with Duvid Chaim.

First, I see that 2 days ago I definitely had an epiphany from HaShem understanding one method of how to "see" HaShem all around us in our daily life (and I posted it yesterday). I know that this was a gift from HaShem because He understood that I really needed it. I was depressed and on the brink of giving up. However getting an epiphany is not the "norm" for people working the program. We learned yesterday in the call that the "spiritual experience" that we are all seeking (dveikut), happens slowly, as we work the 12 steps, and not all at once. That's why we have to be patient, and not say, as I said last week, "How come I'm in the program for 3 weeks and I don't feel any differently?" It takes a lot of time. As Duvid Chaim and Reb Guard said, it took us time to get addicted, and it will take us time to get free.

With this in mind, I already feel the intensity of my epiphany waning. But that's alright, because I understand that it is unusual at this early stage of the program to get an epiphany, and HaShem simply gave me a gift to give me a glimpse of how my life can feel like at the end of the program.

I will describe how I felt yesterday to remind me in case I lose that feeling completely for a while. I also think it's important for everyone who hasn't experienced it to see what the "light at the end of the tunnel" feels like. **Everyone on this forum has the potential to reach this state of mind!** I think we'll get there with HaShem's help, with working the steps, and with prayers. I pray daily that HaShem will let me hold on to this amazing feeling just for one more day, even if not at the same intensity as the first day I felt it. Please understand that I'm not trying to boast, I'm just trying to try to describe what our goal is to everyone working so hard to reach it, who might have never experienced it.

I felt as if I was living in a different dimension (as Duvid Chaim speaks about). I felt really good all day, simply content. I didn't feel any lustful feelings. Nothing to fight. They weren't even in my mind. It's so funny since no parameters in my life changed, I had the same job, the same stress, but my attitude was totally different. I felt different. I saw the world differently. My usual feelings of lust and battling the lust were replaced with a feeling of closeness to HaShem. I felt a spiritual power (inner strength) that enabled me (gave me the confidence) to do things (mitzvot) that I would have normally been too shy to do. I felt as if I finally lived one of my days to its fullest potential.

I think the key is that we have to open our eyes and see HaShem in every object that surrounds us, and then we'll feel HaShem. For example: For me, the shape of a tree reminds me of a human, whose branches are like arms and the trunk is like legs ("ke ha'adam eitz ha-sadeh"). If you can look at a tree and see it as a creation of HaShem, then when driving down a road lined with trees on both sides can make you feel like your being hugged by HaShem.

Now back to the call: The call ended with the fact that the program will work only if we are honest with ourselves, are open-minded to new ideas, and are willing to change and work the steps. We cannot be intolerant of others, of making amends, and of new concepts, and we cannot be in a state of denial about how we act and how we currently live our lives.

I would like to end with an important point. My notes in no way replace the calls, but perhaps add to them.

Thank you for listening.

HaShem, please grant us on the forum the ability to open our eyes and see you all around us, therefore feeling your presence with us.

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DC4

Posted by Momo - 28 Jul 2009 05:22

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Yesterday Duvid Chaim with the Big Book helped us understand step 1 of the 12 steps: We admitted we were powerless over lust and that our lives had become unmanageable.

I love this expression we've been using in the calls "I was once a cucumber, now I'm a pickle, and I'll never be a cucumber again." When I was very young I could lust normally, but now I'm an addict, and I'll never be able to lust normally again. Us addicts are different than other "regular" people. We will never be able to lust like them. We can't even lust a little but, since once we get started, we don't know how to stop. We can't control our feelings of lust.

We tried methods but they didn't work long term. Vows, dipping in the mikveh, saying the tikkun clalli, filters, etc. But, in the end, we always fell again.

Dangerously, after having some "clean" days, we often felt as if we were in control over the addiction that we were becoming immune to it and could beat this thing ourselves, but that's not true. We would act out eventually. We have to face the facts, we can't control our addiction to lust!

We can't use our willpower to beat the addiction. Our minds got us into this addiction, so how can we expect our minds to get us out of it?

We shouldn't get depressed over the fact that we are powerless on our own. This is just the lead in to steps 2 and 3, that we believe in HaShem and His ability to help us. We have to turn to HaShem for help. [Momo's note: A lot of people understand this last sentence as meaning we must "surrender" ourselves to HaShem. I'm not sure what that means, but at this stage I understand this as our need to start really building a relationship with HaShem (think "feel dveikut") by talking to Him, opening up our eyes and seeing Him around us, feeling His

hashgaha pratis.]

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DC5

Posted by Momo - 29 Jul 2009 05:30

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Good morning everyone!

Here's my summary of yesterday's Duvid Chaim phone conference:

1. First, we reinforced the idea that we are not in control of our lives. We are the passengers, and HaShem is the pilot. This should give us the freedom to stop worrying about everything and enjoy our lives. Instead of focusing on the "end goal", we should learn to enjoy the "now", meaning, every single current moment of our days. [I'd like to add an example. When our kids, or wife, want to speak to us, we shouldn't be listening with a half an ear and at the same time thinking about our work project due next week. Instead we should be giving our kids, or wife, our undivided attention, enjoying their presence 100% at that moment.] Once we understand that HaShem is the pilot leading our lives, we can hand over our worries to HaShem and lead calmer lives with less stress.

2. This next point differentiates between those of us on the forum working the 12 steps and those of us only using the 90 day chart. I know there are guys using the 90 day chart alone and haven't acted out in years. On the other hand, according to the view of the 12-step program, we are powerless over our addiction. We can't stop lusting no matter how much we want to. What's crazy about the addiction is that for us, no matter how much we try to stop and want to stop and know how destructive it is for us and for our families, we eventually keep coming back for more. The addiction is an illness, and we have to realize that all of our attempts to fight it ourselves have not produced a long term solution. Sure, we can string together a bunch of clean days (or even years), but as long as we are still fighting the urges, we could act out at any opportune moment. Using the program, with HaShem's help, will learn how to give up the battle to HaShem and replace our lust urges with dveikus BaHaShem. I know that people working the 90 day chart and not the 12 steps might disagree with this last point, and feel that it is simply a matter of personal motivation and will power. I think that it depends on the level of the addiction. I'd love to hear comments from people about this.

3. We ended with the realization that we usually come up with some lame excuse explaining

why we should take our first "lust hit". We rationalize why we should act out. I have more to write about this, but I'll post in in my thought of the day.

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Duvid Chaim's calls - By Momo  
Posted by Momo - 06 Aug 2009 05:54

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Here are some nice thoughts from Duvid Chaim's call:

1. The lust feeds off our feelings of restlessness, irritability, and discontent (RID). Those feelings feed off our egos.
2. I should serve the universe, don't think the universe should serve me.
3. If I'm wronged, I should right the wrong by seeking the truth, but don't get irritated and don't feel the whole world is out to get me.
4. Instead of being angry and screaming, show compassion to the person who wrong you. Not only will you feel better, you'll probably get a better result from that person anyway.
5. Emuna is about trusting HaShem, and surrendering to Him.
6. We should strive to gain "childish faith", emuna peshuta, believing in HaShem like a child does.
7. If HaShem keeps giving us the same test, and we don't like it, we just have to pass that test and then we'll graduate and we'll move on to the next test!

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DC6

Posted by Momo - 06 Aug 2009 07:29

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Duvid Chaim often speaks about our need to be spiritual and not just act religious.

Here's an excerpt of an article written by a contemporary religious writer that appears in today's jpost.com. I think he's spot on with this:

Orthodox Judaism has reached a moment of truth. Many people no longer believe that Jewish learning and observance make you a better person. They no longer believe there is any correlation between keeping Shabbat and keeping honest, between wearing tzitzit and avoiding adultery, or between lighting Shabbat candles and seeing the light of God's grace in every human being.

And we Orthodox have no one but ourselves to blame. We are often "religious" without being spiritual, prayerful without being humble and ritually precise without displaying the same punctiliousness in business.

I am a passionately Orthodox Jew; not even the threat of death will come between me and the God of Israel. But Orthodoxy without morality and basic humanity is a religion without God. It is cold, harsh, an abomination.

The notion that Orthodox Jews are no more moral than anyone else could prove to be the single most catastrophic event to ever befall religious observance. Simply put, if learning and honoring God's will doesn't make us better people, then most will choose to discard Judaism as an empty relic of a superstitious past.

...

We the Orthodox have it in our power to restore the true light and love of Judaism by demonstrating the power of our faith to shape outstanding ethics and inspire righteous action.



Indeed, most Orthodox Jews live lives of exemplary honesty, hospitality and communal devotion. But now is the time for that truth to shine. Now is the time to demonstrate that resting on the Sabbath and studying Torah actually do make people less greedy and more noble.

Our children must be taught not only the rituals that will make them good Jews, but the underlying values that will make them good people. Children in yeshiva should learn not only the correct blessing before eating an apple, but that the purpose of all such blessings is to instill gratitude. That when a boy with tzitzit and a yarmulke passes a soldier in uniform, he should thank him for protecting him and allowing them both to live openly with their faith. When our sons don yarmulkes, let us remind them that it's not only a symbol of identity but a reminder of constant supervision. God is watching us at all times, even when the FBI is not - especially when the FBI is not. When our daughters light Shabbat candles let us teach them that the purpose is not only to continue the tradition of Sarah but to illuminate the dark places of the spirit.

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DC7

Posted by Momo - 10 Aug 2009 05:11

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Here are a few nice ideas from Duvid Chaim's phone conference call:

- Everything is from Hashem.
- Life is a test.
- Everything HaShem does is good.
- What we see as "bad" is really good that is concealed to us.

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DC8

Posted by Momo - 10 Aug 2009 05:13

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When we act out either:

- We believe in HaShem up to a point. We say to Him "Don't look." which means "I am not as

afraid of you as I am of people (about being found out)." We put HaShem in our pockets, pulling Him out when we need Him and putting Him back when we don't want to follow Him.

or

-We use HaShem if we pray to Him to help us just successfully while we're acting out. In this way we act as masters of the universe, trying to out-master HaShem!

One should never pray for ourselves, that's selfish. Instead, we should pray for others. If we need something, we should see how that item will help others, and then ask HaShem to give it to us so that we can help someone else.

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DC9

Posted by Momo - 11 Aug 2009 05:37

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Here's my summary of some of the points I took with me from yesterday's Duvid Chaim's Call:

- We should look for small opportunities to see (and connect to) HaShem. Don't look or wait for a huge revelation, like at Har Sinai. A mashal DC said: If you find hiding in the sidewalk, and pick up, quarter carats of diamonds every few steps, you'll end up with a lot more than not picking them up and looking for some 10 carat diamond somewhere.

- In order for the program to work, we have to be honest, give ourselves to the program, fearless and thorough.

- We read the 12 steps, and noticed that they can be read as one big step. This is because we are always working through the steps; we don't "graduate" from one step to the next.

- There is no "I" in the 12 steps because we work them in a group, for support.

- The first step prayer is "We ask for HaShem's protection and care with complete abandon (of ourselves)."

- We shouldn't pray for ourselves, but for knowledge of HaShem's will for us and to give us the power to carry out His will. Duvid Chaim explained that each of us plays a part in a huge orchestra. Each person must know what his part is (what our role is in the world, what HaShem wants from us), and we should pray that we can play our part well.

- We should not expect perfection when doing the 12 steps. We are not angels! The goal is spiritual progression, not spiritual perfection.

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Help!!!

Posted by Momo - 11 Aug 2009 11:20

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I can't attend today's Duvid Chaim call. Can someone else who will be calling in please summarize today's call and guest post it on this thread? TIA.

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CD

Posted by Momo - 13 Aug 2009 06:11

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Here's my summary of yesterday's call:

- We need to fire ourselves as being our own bosses and make HaShem our boss. We work for Him now.

- Do exercises to put yourself NOT first but rather other people first, like letting people ahead of you in line, not cutting in line, etc.

- Ask yourself: Are you serving your wants (physical) or your needs (spiritual)?

- We read the 3rd step prayer, and are about to start step 4.

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No more summaries for a while from Momo

Posted by Momo - 13 Aug 2009 06:27

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I'm going on vacation next week, and I won't be able to attend Duvid Chaim's calls. Therefore, no summaries from Momo next week.

I'm also very behind in my work. I've been missing hours to attend DC's calls, and I can't afford to do this anymore, at least until I catch up. Being on a preplanned vacation next week really doesn't help the matter. I'll probably have to stay at work late the week after that to catch up with my work.

We are at a very critical point in the calls. We are about to start the le'maaseh of step 4. After missing an entire week (or perhaps two weeks) I may try to join again afterward, but I don't know if I would have missed too much to rejoin.

If anyone wants to take over the torch and summarize the calls that would be a tremendous merit for the masses. However, I've twice asked someone to take over for individual calls I've missed, and nobody responded. So it looks like this thread might very well end at step 3. That's really a shame.

Regarding my ability to continue this thread in a week or two, I'll see how I feel and what's happening with my work.

All the best,

Momo

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Re: Duvid Chaim's calls - By Momo  
Posted by moti - 13 Aug 2009 07:11

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Momo - I am a newbie on the call. For the days that I am on the call next week I will bli neder fill in for you & do the summary. My summaries will be of a lower quality - hopefully that will give extra incentive to return!

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Re: Duvid Chaim's calls - By Momo  
Posted by Momo - 13 Aug 2009 07:15

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Moti, you are amazing. Be'makom sh'ain Ish, you are an Ish!

I won't be on today's call, and all of next week (except maybe Monday) due to family vacation. The week after (Aug 24-27) is up for grabs (back from vacation but it depends on how far behind I am in my work).

Please just jot down one liner points during the call and copy them to this thread afterward.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!!

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