

The  
**CHASSIDUS**  
**PERSPECTIVE**  
 with Reb Yoel Kahn

Prepared by  
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## CONSOLATION AND MERCY

There is a custom to refer to the month of *Av* as "*Menachem Av*," and the *halacha* is that if the month was given simply as "*Menachem*" in a legal document, the contract remains valid because the name which was used leaves no room for doubt. "*Av*" of course has unfavorable connotations, and signifies a lessened state of happiness, while "*Menachem*" means consolation, particularly in reference to the negativity of "*Av*" itself.

### MATERNAL CONSOLATION, PATERNAL MERCY

However, there's a *Midrash* which states: A father ("*av*") is merciful ("*rachem*"), a mother ("*eim*") is comforting ("*nachem*"), and *Hashem* pledges to practice both. So instead of understanding "*Menachem Av*" literally, this suggests that it is a combination of two elements: The maternal trait of consolation, "*Menachem*," as well as paternal mercy, "*Av*." So we are dealing with three factors here: The literal negativity of "*Av*," the "*Menachem*" response, as well as the deeper meaning of "*Av*."

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"If Hashem only related to us through *chochma*, we'd live in a flawless world, but that would just be G-dliness overruling our world's properties. *Dira b'tachtonim* requires an initiative on our end, on our own terms."

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*Chassidus* explains that a father only contributes the essential core which then undergoes a process in the mother whereby it takes shape in all its detail. This ultimately means that the end product has a closer connection with the mother, which is why a child tends to love his mother to a greater extent, while he fear his father

more. And it is this dualistic model which will turn out to be correlated with the distinction between comfort and mercy, where consoling is defined as making the best of a loss which cannot be filled, whereas responding mercifully indicates the ability to take something broken and make it whole.

### ON OUR OWN TERMS

Every phenomenon we witness in this world is rooted in the spiritual reality above, and our conception of father-mother resembles the mental faculties of *chochma-bina*. *Bina* is about the meticulous focus

on details which feeds into the *midos*, while *chochma* is simply the essential point; *bina* interacts closely by its nature with the *midos*, while *chochma* is distant. These in turn correspond to the cosmic entities by the same name,

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where *bina* is connected with creation and considered its source, while *chochma* is entirely higher to the extent that in its perception nothing exists outside of Hashem.

It is for this reason that *bina*, operating within the parameters of existence, can only offer comfort in face of a loss, but is unable to change the reality of the problem. The enduring pain is implicit to the act of consolation which is the reason *nichum aveilim* is counterproductive after the time designated for mourning. Mercy transcends the trouble altogether.

But since *Hashem* doesn't face the constrictions we do, why then does He make use of both traits? What does consoling add if He offers mercy?

The *Rebbe* explains that the entire point is that the world should transform itself from within; if Hashem only related to us through *chochma*, we'd live in a flawless world, but that would just be G-dliness overruling our world's properties. *Dira b'tachtonim* requires an initiative on our end, on our own terms.

## MESIRAS NEFESH AND SECHEL

Everything stated previously about *chochma* and *bina* applies equally to our *avoda*, which is the arena where we accomplish our mission. The focus of *avoda* is the outcome, the state of our *midos* and behavior, and the straightforward way to achieve that is through *bina*, reflecting on Hashem's greatness and training our mind to choose G-dliness over materialism.

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"Precisely because *bina* is overly occupied with *sechel's* intricacies, the fact that everything has a counterpoint means that erring is likely. This is why there's also a need for *chochma*, to be able to break through earthly limitations."

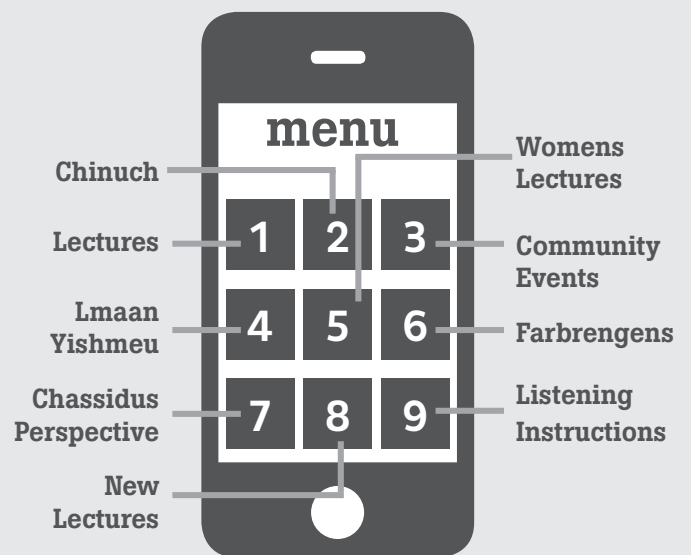
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Yet precisely because *bina* is overly occupied with *sechel's* intricacies, the fact that everything has a counterpoint means that erring is likely, and *bina* is too confined to the world's dimensions in any case to be able to fill any gaps. This is why there's also a need for *chochma*, to be able to break through earthly limitations, which in terms of *avoda* is *mesiras nefesh*, ignoring the mind and its calculations. However to use this model exclusively would be to ignore the *midos*, which is why both "*Menachem*" and "*Av*" are necessary; *hisbonenus* and *bitul* simultaneously.

For further learning see לקוטי שיחות חלק ד' ע' 1080 ואילך

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