

חובות הלבבות • שער הפרישות • פרק חמישי

Sentence by Sentence • Punctuated Hebrew with Translation and Notes • Navy & Gold Edition

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In this fifth Perek of Shaar HaPerishus, Rabbeinu Bachya delves into the practical application of *perishus* — abstinence — as understood within the framework of our holy Torah. He lays out a clear, structured approach, explaining that true Torah-based abstinence isn't about asceticism for its own sake, but rather a refined path in three key areas of life. We'll explore how to properly conduct ourselves in our interactions with others, how to master our physical senses and limbs, and finally, how to purify our inner world of thoughts and character traits.

Rabbeinu Bachya guides us through the nuances of each category, providing a roadmap for cultivating a life of *kedusha* and closeness to Hashem. He emphasizes that *perishus* is not merely about avoiding the forbidden, but also about elevating our use of the permitted, transforming our desires so that even things our nature craves become as undesirable as those it naturally abhors. This Perek is a foundational guide for anyone seeking to truly live a life of Torah and *yiras Shamayim*.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

אבל מה שראוי לתורתנו מהפרישות, אומר בתשובת השאלה הזאת, כי הפרישות הנוהגת בתורתנו על ג' פנים.

Regarding the type of *perishus* (abstinence) that is appropriate according to our Torah, I will answer this question by explaining that the *perishus* practiced in our Torah is on three fronts.

אחד מהם בעסקנו עם בני אדם והתחברותנו עמם, והשני במה שאנו מתעוררים בו זולתם בחושינו הגופניים ואברינו הנראים, והג' במה שאנו מתעוררים בו במצפונינו ובמדותינו ובמחשבותינו והצפון בלבבותינו מן הרעיונים הטובים והרעים.

One aspect is in our dealings and interactions with other people; the second is in matters where we are alone, concerning our physical senses and visible limbs; and the third is in matters where we are alone, concerning our inner being, our character traits, our thoughts, and what is hidden in our hearts, whether good or bad ideas.

ואני מבאר כל זה בדרך קצרה כפי יכולתי בעזרה.

And I will explain all of this concisely, to the best of my ability, with Hashem's help.

אָבֵל דֶּרֶךְ הַפְּרִישׁוֹת הָרְאוּי לָנוּ בְּהִתְחַבְּרוּתָנוּ עִם בְּנֵי אָדָם, מִהֶם הַסִּבֵּרַת פְּנִים וְהִרְאוֹת הַשְׂמֵחָה בְּפִגְעָתָם
עִם הַכְּנִיעָה וְהַשְׁפָּלוּת וְלִשׁוֹן רַכָּה וְרוּחַ נְמוּכָה לְכֻלָּם, וּמִהֶם הִרְחַמִּים וְהַחֲנִינָה וְהַחֲמִלָה עֲלֵיהֶם עִם
הַסֵּרַת הַטָּרַח מֵעֲלֵיהֶם וְזָכְרָם בְּטוֹב וַעֲשׂוֹת חֶסֶד עִמָּהֶם וְשִׁלָּא נִקְוָה לְהַנּוֹת מֵהֶם וְשִׁנְתִּיאֵשׁ מֵאֲשֶׁר בִּידֵיהֶם,
וּמִהֶם עֲזָרָתָם בְּתַקְנַת תּוֹרָתָם וְעוֹלָמָם וְהוֹרֹתָם הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר יִרְצֶהוּ הָאֱלֹהִים, וּמִהֶם שְׁנִסְבּוֹל קִשֵּׁי דְבָרֵיהֶם
וְשִׁנְשָׁפָה שִׁיחָנוּ לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וְלֹא לִפְנֵיהֶם.

However, the proper way of *perishus* for us in our interactions with other people includes: showing a cheerful countenance and expressing joy when meeting them, along with humility, lowliness, gentle speech, and a humble spirit towards all of them; showing them mercy, grace, and compassion, removing burdens from them, speaking well of them, doing kindness for them without expecting any benefit from them, and giving up all hope of receiving anything from them; helping them in matters of their Torah and their worldly affairs, and teaching them the path that Hashem desires; and bearing their harsh words patiently, and pouring out our concerns before Hashem, not before them.

וְהִמָּנַע מִמוֹשְׁבוֹת הַמֵּאֲכָל וְהַמִּשְׁתֶּה וְהַשְׁחֹק עִם הַשְּׂמִירָה מִכָּל מָה שְּׂיָבִיא לְהַמְרוֹת הָאֵל בְּחִבְרָתָם וְיוֹצֵא
מִגְבוֹל הַצְּנִיעוּת וּמִסֵּרַת הַמוֹסָר וְהַדּוּמָה לָזֶה.

And one should refrain from gatherings of eating, drinking, and merriment, while being careful to avoid anything in their company that would lead to rebellion against Hashem, or going beyond the bounds of modesty, the tradition of *mussar*, and similar things.

אִךְ מָה שְּׂרְאוּי לָנוּ מִן הַפְּרִישׁוֹת בְּפָנִים הַשְּׂנִיִּים הַמִּתְיַחֲדִים בָּנוּ בְּחוּשֵׁינוּ הַנִּרְאִים יַחֲלַק לְשְׁנֵי חֻלְקִים:

Now, what is proper for us in the second type of *perishus*, which concerns us alone regarding our visible senses, is divided into two parts:

אַחַד מִהֶם אָסוּר לָנוּ וְהֶם מִצְוֹת לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה.

One part is what is forbidden to us, and these are the negative commandments.

וְהַשְּׁנִי מֵתֵּר לָנוּ, וְהוּא כָּל מָה שֶׁהִתֵּר לָנוּ מִכָּל מִינֵי הַהֲנָאוֹת הַמֵּתֵרוֹת, וְכָל חֵלֶק מִהֶם יַחֲלַק לְשְׁלֹשָׁה
חֻלְקִים, וְהוּא שְׂכָל מָה שֶׁנֶּאֱסָר לָנוּ אֵינָנוּ נִמְלֵט מֵאַחַד מִשְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים:

The second part is what is permitted to us, which includes all types of permitted enjoyments; and each of these parts is further divided into three categories, meaning that everything forbidden to us necessarily falls into one of three classes:

אוּ שְׂיִהְיָה בְּטֻבֵּעַ הַכֶּסֶף לוֹ כְּזָנוּת וְהִגָּזַל [וְהִרְבִּית] וְלִהְרַבּוֹת מִן הַמֵּאֲכָל וְהַמִּשְׁתֶּה הָאָסוּר לָנוּ.

Either it is something that nature desires, such as forbidden relations, theft, interest, or excessive eating and drinking of things forbidden to us.

אוּ שְׂיִהְיָה מִמָּה שֶׁלֹּא יִשְׁנָאָהוּ הַטֻּבֵּעַ וְלֹא יִכְסּוּף לוֹ כְּלָבֶשׁ בָּגָד שֶׁעֲטָנוּ וְהִרְכַּבְתָּ כְּלָאִים וְאָכִילַת בָּשָׂר
בְּחֵלֶב וְאָכִילַת חֵלֶב וְהִרְבָּה מִהַדּוּמָה לָזֶה,

Or it is something that nature neither abhors nor desires, such as wearing *shaatnez*, planting *kilayim*, eating meat and milk together, eating *cheilev*, and many similar things.

או שִׁיְהִיָּה מִמָּה שִׁשְׁנָאָהּוּ הַטֵּבַע וְתַתְּעִבְהוּ הַנֶּפֶשׁ כְּאֹכִילַת הַנִּבְלָה וְהַמֵּתָה וְהַדָּם וְהַרְבֵּה מִמִּינֵי הַחַיִּים
אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִיא הָאָדָם חָפֵץ בְּאֹכִילָתָם אֲפֹלוּ אִם הָיוּ מֵתָרִים בְּאֹכִילָה כְּשִׁמוּנָה שְׂרָצִים וְהַדּוּמָּה לָהֶם.

Or it is something that nature abhors and the soul detests, such as eating *neveilah* (a carcass), *meisah* (an animal that died on its own), blood, and many types of creatures that a person would not want to eat even if they were permitted, like the eight species of *sheratzim* (creeping things) and similar items.

וְרֹאיוֹ לָהּ אָחִי שְׂתִיֶּסֶר נִפְשָׁהּ בְּפִרְיָשׁוֹת מִכָּל מָה שֶׁצֹּדָה הָאֱלֹהִים לְפָרֵשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ עַד שֶׁתִּגִּיעַ מִן הַתַּעֲוִב
וְהַמְאֹס בְּמִינֵי הַתַּעֲנוּגִים הַמְּנוּעִים וְהַתְּאֻוֹת עַד תִּכְלִית שִׁיְהִיָּה שְׂוָה לָזֶה בְּטַבְּעָהּ הַמֵּתַעֵב מִן הָאֲסוּר עִם
מָה שֶׁנִּכְסָפִין לוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ.

It is proper for you, my brother, to train your soul in *perishus* from everything Hashem commanded you to abstain from, until you reach such a level of disgust and revulsion for forbidden pleasures and desires that what your nature finds detestable among the forbidden becomes equal to what it naturally craves.

וַיְהִיָּה אֲצִלָּהּ הַמִּשְׁגָּל הָאֲסוּר וְלִקְיַחַת אֲסוּר עַל פָּנִים אֲסוּרִים וְשִׁתְּתֻכָּבֵד בְּקִלּוֹן חֲבֵרָהּ וּגְנוּתוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִמְהַר
אֲלֵיהֶם חָפֵץ הָאָדָם בְּטַבְּעוֹ כְּאֹכִילַת הָעֶכְבֶּרֶת וְהַדָּם וְהַשֶּׁקֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַתְּעִבְהוּ טַבְּעָהּ וְתִשְׁנָאָהּ נִפְשָׁהּ.

Thus, forbidden relations, taking forbidden gains, and seeking honor through the disgrace and shame of your friend – things that a person's nature swiftly desires – should be to you like eating a mouse, blood, or a detestable creature, which your nature abhors and your soul hates.

וְכַשֶּׁתִּגִּיעַ אֶל הַגְּבוּל הַזֶּה מִן הַפִּרְיָשׁוֹת מִן הָאֲסוּר בְּלֹא הֶכְרַח מִטַּבְּעָהּ וְלֹא קִשִּׁי מִנִּפְשָׁהּ, תִּהְיֶה מִן הַכֹּתוּת
הַנִּצְּלוֹת מִן הַחֲטָא וְהַמִּכְשׁוֹל אֲשֶׁר נֶאֱמַר עֲלֵיהֶם (משלי יב, כא) לֹא יֵאָנֶה לְצַדִּיק כָּל אָוֶן וְגו'.

And when you reach this level of *perishus* from forbidden things, without needing to force your nature and without resistance from your soul, you will be among those saved from sin and stumbling, about whom it is said (Mishlei 12:21), "No mischief shall befall the righteous, etc."

וְכֵן הַנֶּתֶן בְּרִשְׁוִיתָנוּ מִן הַמֵּתָר הוּא עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה פָּנִים:

Similarly, what is permitted to us is also on three fronts:

אֶחָד מֵהֶם קַחַת הַמֵּאֲכָל אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָכוֹן בּוֹ בְּעָלְיוֹ אֶל תַּעֲנוּג וְלֹא יוּכַל הָאָדָם לַעֲמֹד בְּלִעְדּוֹ וְאִין לוֹ תִּקְנָה
זוּלָתוֹ.

One is taking food where the person does not intend for pleasure, and a person cannot survive without it, and there is no other remedy for him.

וְהַשֵּׁנִי קַחַת הַמְּזוֹן מִן הַמֵּתָר עַל דֶּרֶךְ הוֹתוֹר וּמִכֶּנֶן בּוֹ אֶל הַתַּעֲנוּג הַשְּׂוָה מִבְּלִי רַבּוּי וְלֹא הַפְּקֵד כְּהַשְׁלֵמַת
הַצֶּרֶךְ מִן הַלֶּחֶם הַטוֹב בְּתַבְּשִׁילִים מְתֻקָּנִים בְּמִלְאכָתָם וְשִׁתָּה הַיֵּין הַטוֹב עַל הַדֶּרֶךְ הַשְּׂוָה וְכֵן בְּמִלְבוּשׁ
וּבִדְרָה וּשְׂאָר הָעֲנִינִים.

The second is taking permitted food in a way of 'overlooking' (beyond the bare necessity), intending for a moderate pleasure, without excess or abandon, as a complement to what is minimally necessary; for example, eating good bread with well-prepared dishes, and drinking good wine in a balanced manner, and similarly with clothing, dwelling, and other matters.

והשלשי קחת הרבה מן התענוגים המתרים המפליג בהם בעליהם עד שמביאים אותו אל התענוגים האסורים עם טרדתו בהם מעשות חובות אלהיו שעליו כמו שאמר (משלי לא) פן ישתה וישכח מחקק.

The third is taking many permitted pleasures, where one indulges excessively, to the point that they lead him to forbidden pleasures, besides distracting him from fulfilling his duties to Hashem, as it says (Mishlei 31:5), "Lest he drink and forget that which is decreed."

וראוי לה אחי שתתנהג בפרישות מן התענוגים המתרים ביכולתך עד שיהיו בעיניך בתכונת התענוגים האסורים עליך פן תעזב תורתך ותניח חובתך.

And it is proper for you, my brother, to conduct yourself with *perishus* from permitted pleasures, to the best of your ability, until they are in your eyes like forbidden pleasures, lest you abandon your Torah and neglect your duties.

ובכבר עמדת על מה שצוה הבורא ית' את המלך באמרו (דברים יז) ולא ירבה לו נשים ואמר (שם) רק לא ירבה לו סוסים, ואמר (נחמיה יג) הלא על אלה חטא שלמה וגו', עם חזק שכלו ורב תבונתו וגדלותו וכפי בינתך השמר לה ושמר נפשך ופרש מכל אשר יפרישך ממצות האלהים.

You already know what the Creator, may He be blessed, commanded the king, saying (Devarim 17:17), "Neither shall he have many wives for himself," and it says (ibid. 17:16), "He shall not have many horses"; and it says (Nechemiah 13:26), "Did not Shlomo sin by these things, etc.?" even with his powerful intellect, vast understanding, and greatness, the women caused him to sin. Therefore, according to your understanding, be careful and guard your soul, and abstain from anything that will distance you from Hashem's mitzvos.

בלבך ובמצפונך אם לא תוכל להפנות לעניני אחריתך מפני טרדתך בצורך מזונה ומחיתך בעולמך ועסקך בו כמו שזכרו רבותינו ז"ל על הרבה מהם שהיו טורחים בענין עולמם עם הפרישות ממנו כמו אבא חלקיה שהיה משתכר לחפר באדמה ושמאי במלאכת הבנין והלל שהיה חוטב ומתפרנס מן העצים.

Do this in your heart and inner being, if you cannot free yourself for matters of your ultimate destiny due to your preoccupation with providing for your food and livelihood in this world and your involvement in it, just as our Rabbis, of blessed memory, mentioned about many great men who toiled in worldly matters while being detached from it (in heart and mind), such as Abba Chilkiya who earned his living by digging in the ground, Shammai in construction work, and Hillel who chopped wood and supported himself from it.

ואל תמנעך פרישותך בלבך מהתעסק בזה מפני שאתה מכוון בו לעבודת האלהים כאשר הקדמנו.

And do not let your inner *perishus* prevent you from engaging in such work, because your intention in it is for the service of Hashem, as we mentioned previously.

וכאשר תוכל להניח עסק העולם תניחהו בעבור עבודת הבורא.

But when you are able to give up worldly occupation, leave it for the sake of serving the Creator.

ואל יספיק לה מה שאמרנו בעת שלא תוכל בעבור צורך ההזמנה למזון כי המשקיה על מצפונך יעזור לקיים מחשבתך בעבודתו כמו שאמרו רז"ל כל המקיים את התורה מעני סופו לקיימה מעשר וכל המבטל את התורה מעשר סופו לבטלה מעני.

And do not be satisfied with what we said when you cannot (devote yourself fully to Hashem's service) due to the need to provide for food, because the One who observes your inner thoughts will help you fulfill your intention in His service, as our Sages, of blessed memory, said: "Whoever fulfills the Torah from poverty will eventually fulfill it from wealth, and whoever neglects the Torah from wealth will eventually neglect it from poverty."

וְרָאוּי לָהּ שֶׁתִּשְׁתַּדֵּל לְאַסֵּר חוּשֶׁיךָ וּתְנוּעוֹת אַבְרָיֶיךָ הַנִּרְאִים כְּמוֹ שֶׁאַסְפֵּר לָךְ.

And it is proper for you to strive to restrain your senses and the movements of your visible limbs, as I will explain to you.

וְהוּא שֶׁתִּתְחִיל בְּרֹאשׁוֹנָה לְאַסֵּר לְשׁוֹנְךָ וּלְכָלֶם שֶׁפִּתִּיךָ וְתַפְרֹשׁ מִן הַדְּבָרִים הַבְּטָלִים עַד שֶׁתִּהְיֶה בְּעֵינֶיךָ הַנֶּעֱת הָאֶבֶר הַכָּבֵד שֶׁבְּאַבְרָיֶיךָ יוֹתֵר קָלָה מִהֲנִיעַת לְשׁוֹנְךָ כִּי הַלְשׁוֹן מְהִיר בְּתִנוּעָתוֹ לַחֲטֹא וְחֲטָאֵיו רַבִּים מִכָּלֶם בְּעֵבוֹר קְלוּתוֹ וּמְהִירוֹת תְּנוּעָתוֹ וְשֶׁהִשְׁלֵמַת מַעֲשָׂהּ נִקְלָה וְיִכָּלְתוּ עַל הַטּוֹב וְהָרַע בְּלִי מְצוּעַ.

This means that you should first begin by restraining your tongue and bridling your lips, and abstain from idle talk, until the movement of the heaviest limb in your body seems easier to you than the movement of your tongue; for the tongue is swift in its movement to sin, and its sins are more numerous than all others due to its lightness, the speed of its movement, the ease of completing its actions, and its ability to do both good and evil without any intermediary.

וְכַפִּי זֶה אָחִי יֵשׁ מִן הַדִּין עָלֶיךָ לְהִשְׁתַּדֵּל לְכַלְמוֹ וּלְמַשֵּׁל בּוֹ וְאֵל תִּתִּיר לוֹ מִן הַדְּבוּר אֲלֵא מָה שֶׁלֹּא תוּכַל לַעֲמֹד בְּלִעְדּוֹ לְצַרְךָ הַתּוֹרָה אוֹ לְצַרְךָ הָעוֹלָם וְקֹצֵר מוֹתֵרִי לְשׁוֹנְךָ בְּכָל יְכָלְתֶּךָ אוֹלֵי תִנְצֵל מִנְזָקוֹ כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר הַחֶכֶם (מְשִׁלִּי יט) מָוֶת וְחַיִּים בְּיַד לְשׁוֹן.

Accordingly, my brother, it is your duty to strive to bridle it and control it, and do not permit it to speak anything except what you cannot do without, for the needs of Torah or for worldly needs; and shorten the excesses of your tongue with all your might, perhaps you will be saved from its harm, as the wise man said (Mishlei 18:21), "Death and life are in the power of the tongue."

וְהַקְדִּימָהּ עַל שָׁאֵר הַחוּשִׁים וְהָאֲבָרִים לְקִשֵּׁי הַדְּבָר בּוֹ יוֹתֵר מִשְׁאָרֵיהֶם כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר דָּוִד עִ"ה (תְּהִלִּים ל"ד) מִי הָאִישׁ הַחֹפֵץ חַיִּים וְגו' נֹצֵר לְשׁוֹנְךָ מִרָע וְגו' וּבִסְפָּרֵינוּ מִן הַהִזְהָרָה עַל הַמַּעֲשֵׂת הַדְּבָרִים מָה שֶׁאֵינָנו נִעְלָם מִרְבּוֹ וּפְרָסוֹמוֹ.

And we prioritize it (the tongue) over the other senses and limbs because the matter of controlling it is more difficult than the rest, as Dovid HaMelech, peace be upon him, said (Tehillim 34:13-14), "Who is the man who desires life, etc.? Guard your tongue from evil, etc." And in our holy books, the warning about minimizing speech is not hidden from its abundance and widespread knowledge.

וְכַאֲשֶׁר תִּרְצֶה לַעֲמֹד עַל בְּרוּר מָה שֶׁזָּכַרְתִּי מִרַב חֲטָאֵי הַלְשׁוֹן, קִבֵּל עַל עֲצֻמָּה לְזָכֹר מָה שֶׁיֵּצֵא מִלְשׁוֹנְךָ בְּיוֹמָהּ בְּהִתְחַבְּרָךְ עִם בְּנֵי אָדָם וְהִתְעַרְבָךְ בָּם וְאִם תוּכַל לְכַתְּבוֹ עֲשֵׂה וְאַחֵר כִּי הַעֲבִירָהּ עַל לִבְךָ וְהַעֲלָהּ בְּמַחְשַׁבְתֶּךָ בַּעֲת שֶׁאַתָּה פָּנוּי מִן הָעֲסָקִים בְּלִילָה וְתִרְאֶה מָה שֶׁיֵּשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ לְצַרְךָ וּמָה שֶׁיֵּשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹתֵר לֹא יוֹעִיל לָךְ וּמָה שֶׁמִּמֶּנּוּ מֵבִיא הַהֲזָק עָלֶיךָ כְּמוֹ הַכֶּזֶב וְהִרְכִּילוֹת וְהַשְּׁבוּעוֹת וְלְשׁוֹן הָרַע וְאִזּוֹ יִתְבָּרַר לָךְ חֲסִרוֹנָה וְתִרְאֶה בּוֹ מַעֲוָתֶךָ.

And when you want to clarify what I mentioned about the many sins of the tongue, take upon yourself to remember what comes out of your mouth during your day when you interact and mingle with people; and if you can write it down, do so. Afterwards, review it in your heart and bring it to your mind when you are free from your affairs at night, and you will see what among it is necessary, what is superfluous and will not benefit you, and what among it brings harm upon you, such as falsehood, tale-bearing, oaths, and *lashon hara*. Then your deficiencies will become clear to you, and you will see your crookedness in it.

וּפְקֹד זֶה מִמֶּךָ תָּמִיד כְּפִקְדֶּךָ מַעֲוֹת אוֹיְבֶךָ וְלֹא תִתְמַיד בָּזֶה זְמַן מוּעָט שֶׁתִּתְקַן לְשׁוֹנְךָ וְיִמְעָטוּ דְּבָרֶיךָ.

And always remember this about yourself, just as you would remember the crookedness of your enemy, and you will not persist in this for long until your tongue is corrected and your words become few.

וְשִׁים תְּמוּנֵת רַב דְּבָרֶיהָ אֶרֶךְ מַחֲשַׁבְתָּהּ וְהַתְמַדָּת בְּחִינָתָהּ וְהַחֲשָׁבוֹן עִם נַפְשָׁהּ, כִּי הַמַּחֲשָׁבָה גֵּר שֶׁתִּכְנִסְהוּ אֶל לִבָּהּ וְהַחֲשָׁבוֹן שָׁמַשׁ תְּאִיר בְּאוּרוֹ מִצְּפוֹנָהּ לְגִלּוֹת לָהּ מָה שֶׁהוּא צָפוֹן בּוֹ מִן הַטּוֹב וְהָרַע וְהַלְשׁוֹן שֶׁעַר הַמִּצְּפוֹן, וְאִם הַלְשׁוֹן יִהְיֶה מְפָקֵר וְלֹא יִיטִיב לְשֹׁמֵר מָה שֶׁיֵּשׁ בַּמִּצְּפוֹנִים יִהְיֶה שֶׁעַר הָאוֹצָר פֶּתוּחַ וַיֵּצֵא מָה שֶׁאֵינָהּ חֹפֵץ בְּצֵאתוֹ וַיֵּרָאָה מָה שֶׁאֵין הָרְאוּתוֹ טוֹב בְּעֵינֶיהָ, וְכִשְׁתִּשְׁמֹר הַשֶּׁעַר אֶתְּהָ שׁוֹמֵר הָאוֹצָר וּמָה שֶׁיֵּשׁ בּוֹ כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר הַחֶכֶם (מְשִׁלֵּי יז) גַּם אִוִּיל מַחֲרִישׁ חֶכֶם יִחָשֵׁב וְאָמַר (קֹהֶלֶת ה) אֵל תִּבְהַל עַל פִּיהּ וְגוֹי וְאָמַר (שם) אֵל תִּתֵּן אֶת פִּיהּ וְגוֹי.

And in place of much talk, put length of thought, continuous examination, and accounting with your soul; for thought is a lamp that you bring into your heart, and accounting is a sun whose light illuminates your inner being to reveal to you what is hidden within it, whether good or bad. The tongue is the gate of the inner being, and if the tongue is unrestrained and does not properly guard what is in the inner chambers, then the gate of the treasure will be open, and what you do not wish to come out will emerge, and what you do not want to be seen will be seen. But when you guard the gate, you guard the treasure and what is within it, as the wise man said (Mishlei 17:28), "Even a fool, when he holds his peace, is counted wise," and it says (Koheles 5:1), "Be not rash with your mouth, etc.," and it says (ibid. 5:5), "Do not allow your mouth, etc."

וְהַשְׁתַּדֵּל אַחֵר כֶּךָ לַעֲצֹם עֵינֶיךָ וְחוּשׁ רְאוּתָהּ מִהִבֵּיט אֶל מָה שֶׁאֵינָנו צְרִיךְ לָהּ אוֹ מָה שֶׁיִּטְרִיד לִבָּהּ מִחֲשָׁב בְּמָה שֶׁיִּעִלָּה וּפְרַשׁ מִמוּתָר הָרְאוּת כָּפִי יִכְלָתָהּ וְאָמְרוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ ז"ל לֵבָא וְעֵינָא תִּרִי סְרוּרִי דְחֻטָּאָה.

Afterwards, strive to close your eyes and your sense of sight from looking at what is not necessary for you, or what will distract your heart from thinking about what will benefit you; and abstain from excessive looking to the best of your ability. Our Rabbis, of blessed memory, said: "The heart and the eye are two matchmakers for sin."

אֲבָל הַשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בְּרְאוּתָהּ וְהִבְטָתָהּ לְהִבֵּיט אֶל יְצִירוֹת הַבּוֹרָא יִתְעַלָּה לְבַחֵן מֶהוּ וְלַחֲשֹׁב בְּהֵן וְלִהְבִּין יִכְלָת הַבּוֹרָא וְטוֹבוֹ מֶהוּ כַּמִּשְׁדָּד ע"ה (תְּהִלִּים ח) כִּי אֶרְאֶה שְׁמִירָה מַעַ

However, use your sight and gaze to look at the creations of the exalted Creator, to examine them, to ponder them, and to understand the Creator's power and goodness from them, as Dovid HaMelech, peace be upon him, said (Tehillim 8:4), "When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers..."

WHAT TO TAKE FROM IT

Rabbeinu Bachya begins by outlining three categories of Torah-sanctioned abstinence: social interactions, physical senses and limbs, and inner thoughts and traits. He first details social abstinence, emphasizing humility, kindness, mercy, and patience towards others, while avoiding gatherings that lead to sin or immodesty. Next, he addresses abstinence concerning physical senses and limbs, dividing it into two types: abstaining from the forbidden and abstaining from the permitted. Regarding the forbidden, he categorizes them into those naturally desired, neutral, or abhorred, teaching us to train ourselves to equally detest all forbidden things, regardless of natural inclination. For permitted things, he likewise divides them into three: necessities, moderate enjoyment, and excessive indulgence. He strongly advises abstaining from excessive permitted pleasures, warning that they can lead to sin and distract from *avodas Hashem*, citing examples from Tanach to underscore the danger of overindulgence, even in permitted matters.

The Chovos HaLevavos is teaching us a profound chiddush about *perishus*, about abstinence. We might think perishus means just staying away from *assur* things, from what's forbidden. But the Chovos HaLevavos goes much deeper. He tells us that true perishus, the kind that really protects us and elevates us, means training ourselves to feel the same revulsion for things that are forbidden, even those our nature desires, as we do for things that are naturally disgusting, like eating a mouse or blood. This isn't just about *doing* the right thing; it's about *feeling* the right way, transforming our inner nature.

This is a tremendous avodah. It means working on our middos, on our inner desires, until the very thought of a forbidden act becomes as repulsive to us as something physically vile. It's not enough to just say "I won't do it." We need to reach a point where our neshama recoils from it, where our inner being is disgusted by it. This is the ultimate protection, as the pasuk says, "No mischief shall befall the righteous." When we reach this level, the yetzer hara loses its grip because the desire itself is gone.

And it doesn't stop there. The Chovos HaLevavos extends this idea to *mutar* things, to permitted pleasures. He warns us that even permitted enjoyments, when taken to excess, can lead us astray, distracting us from Hashem's mitzvos. Just like Shlomo HaMelech, with all his wisdom, stumbled because he indulged too much in permitted things, we too must be careful. We need to cultivate a sense of detachment even from the permitted, so that they don't become a stumbling block.

So, the practical takeaway for us today is this: Choose one area where you feel a strong natural pull towards something forbidden, or where you tend to overindulge in something permitted. Work on cultivating a genuine inner revulsion for the forbidden, and a healthy detachment from the excessive permitted, through davening, learning, and conscious effort, until your heart truly aligns with Hashem's will.