



CHOVOS HALEVOVOS

CHESHBON HANEFESH

*With additional insights from
HoRav Chaim Zev Malinowitz, ZT"l*

*This Cheshbon HaNefesh pamphlet has been
published l'ilui nishmas our beloved Rov,
Chaim Zev ben Avrohom Aharon HaLevi, ZT"l,
on the occasion of the Sh'loshim, Kislev 5780*

The thirty reflections contained in this pamphlet summarize the thirty cheshbonos in the Chovos HaLevovos' Shaar Cheshbon HaNefesh, as elucidated in shiurim that were given by HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"l.

1

Reflect on the chesed HaShem in my own existence. I am more distinguished than an animal, plant, or inanimate object. HaShem has given me shelter and all my needs since birth.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

Let's reflect on the fact that certainly no one can claim to be entitled to have been brought into existence! Thank you HaShem! How can I ever thank you enough for just that?!

Then consider that you could have been brought into existence as an inanimate rock – no prior entitlement to have been brought into existence even as a living blade of grass! Or as a cat!

So how can we ever thank HaShem for being a human, a proud Jew who knows about HaShem!

There was no prior entitlement that your very existence, your life, and the story of your life should have had that result!

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

2

Reflect on the chesed HaShem in my body. I have graciously been gifted with eyes, hands, legs, and so much more. I have a whole and complete body that works in harmony.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

I was blind – how thankful am I towards the doctor who cured me?

Poke'ach Ivrim!

I couldn't walk – how thankful am I towards the doctor who fixed it all up?

Hamaychin mitz'adei gaver!

I was basically inert, helpless – hanosain laya'eif ko'ach!

I was paralyzed! How thankful am I towards the doctor who cured me?

Mattir assurim, zokeif kefufim...

We actually need to go through every single limb and every single organ and every single biological function.

HOW THANKFUL SHALL WE BE?

3

Reflect that I have intelligence and insight. I was given good middos and noble qualities and characteristics.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

How often do we think about, appreciate, our abilities as human beings to be sane, thoughtful, intelligent, creative creatures – to be problem-solvers, to be discerning?

*Interesting how the rational process primarily focused on in our birkos hashachar – **hanosain lasechvi vinah** – is the ability to discern differences (see Mishnah Berurah 46:4).*

When was the last time you thanked HaShem for being sane? Would you care to visit facilities where they take care of people who aren't?

When was the last time you contemplated and appreciated our human qualities of midos tovos, and character development?

*And so we should use our faculties of intelligence to understand and to say – **Thank you HaShem for my intelligence!***

4

Reflect upon the chesed of getting the Torah to draw us close to HaShem's will, thus attaining this World and the Next. Think about the favor of being given the capacity to understand Torah. Think about neglecting Torah study.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

*How thankful should we be that we have HaShem's revealed will of how we should live; thus attaining true pleasure in this world – **AND ETERNITY!***

Imagine that you are lost in a jungle – and you have no idea how to survive, how to get food or drink, how to avoid the wild animals and the native cannibals... a lad shows up, and hands you a jungle-survival book... and thanks to this book, you indeed survive – and emerge from the jungle in 6 months, to live in regular, sophisticated civilization.

THE GRATITUDE YOU would feel towards that lad – do we feel that way every morning as we say *birkas haTorah*?

5

Reflect that Torah came from HaShem and not a human king. Reflect on my attitude about the importance of understanding the Torah, which is the source of life.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

Think and reflect – do I have clarity in the knowledge of my Torah, or HaShem-commanded obligations? Am I lax in knowing exactly what it is that I am required to do, or not do?

And if I don't know – do I have a Rav or Rebbe to guide me?

*Remember: These are **HaShem's** rules, not laws or rules of a secular or temporal nature!*

6

Reflect that the entire physical world exists by HaShem's will and that nature does not rebel against HaShem's instructions. My body's organs work in harmony. Can I do any less?

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"l:

Yes, I have free will.

But shouldn't my choice be to blend in with the entire universe in fulfilling the will of G-D?

*As R' Yerucham Levovitz states many times throughout his sefarim – our choices should reflect that, in reality, we **don't** have a choice!*

7

Reflect how a servant has obligations to his Master. The Master takes care of the servant's needs. When the servant reflects on his Master's kindness, he will use his body and soul to find favor in his Master's eyes. My service should be with a whole and sincere heart.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

*The essence of my avodas HaShem, my raison d'être, is to use the gifts HaShem has given me – from very existence to life itself to everything I have, including food, shelter, **everything** – to say thank you, thank you, thank you to Him – by doing His will!*

*(And the ultimate irony – for doing that logical natural service – **I actually get rewarded! For all eternity!**)*

8

Reflect how obligated I am to recognize HaShem's unity, that He is one with no beginning nor end to His existence. There is no other. Second, I am only serving HaShem for the sake of His Great Name. I don't serve HaShem for praise, reward, or fear of people.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"l:

Wholeheartedness... complete sincerity and acceptance... purity of thought...

*This applies to our acceptance of HaShem as the only power in the Universe, the only source of everything... nowhere else to turn... AND it applies to our own motivations in our avodas HaShem – wholeheartedly serving Him for no other reason than – **to serve Him!***

No other motivations in our avodas HaShem... no other powers in our acceptance of His Oneness.

9 Reflect on the different ways of serving HaShem by using all of my energies and talents. This includes duties of the heart alone, duties of the heart together with the limbs (davening, learning Torah), and duties of the limbs alone (sukkah, lulav, tzitzis, mezuzah, Shabbos, Yom Tov and Tzedakah). Reflect before doing a mitzvah and while doing a mitzvah that I care to devote my heart to HaShem only. Focus on trying to do a mitzvah perfectly out of awe of HaShem. Think about the meaning and words of tefillah.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"l:

Am I as devoted and thoughtful about my avodas HaShem as I am, say, in something having to do with what I want to be or accomplish regarding temporal, this-worldly matters?

*Do I work on doing my avodas HaShem better?
Do I give thought on how to improve it?*

And there are different types of mitzvahs! – and I have to figure out how to do each one to the utmost of my abilities!

Would I travel to a class twice a week on “How to daven better?” Would I pay money to learn how to improve my character? How to avoid loshon hara?

*Aren't these matters **at least** as important as, say, success in your work or improvement in your personal relationships?*

10

Reflect that HaShem sees and remembers all my deeds – good and bad. HaShem knows my thoughts.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

*Do you think about how there is a video-recorder **everywhere** recording **everything** you are doing... every word, every grimace, every cough, every remark, every conversation, every backtalk, every statement?*

Oh, it gets better – every thought, every reflection, every speculation...

Even better – every motivation, every desire, every impulse, every incentive...

THE name of this futuristic other-worldly camera?

HASHEM!

11

Reflect and make an accounting on if I use my days to serve HaShem or my yetzer.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

This cheshbon is the classic meaning of the phrase cheshbon hanefesh – an accounting!

How did I spend my day, my time in this world? Did I use or misuse the gifts HaShem has given me? Did I pursue with them spirituality – or narishkeiten? What have I done with these gifts?

Make this accounting – every day? Can't – OK, every week? No – OK, every month? Make the accounting BEFORE the tax man cometh!

This cheshbon hanefesh, number 11, contains the CH's classic words:

*"A person's life is a blank megillah. When you live, when you act, you are writing in that Megillah your biography – now, **how would you like your biography to read?**"*

12

Reflect on how much effort I put into worldly matters. Do I put such effort into the service of HaShem? Think about the superiority and eternity of the neshamah over the lowly and transient body.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

How much time, effort, and energy do I spend on transient, ultimately passing matters – and how much blood, sweat, and tears are used up in my avodas HaShem?

We would laugh at a land where the children play with diamonds like marbles, and great attention is paid to the state of the pebbles – isn't that too often the story of our lives?

13

Reflect on the difference between my knowledge and my deeds. Imagine a servant who used the king's field partly for his private purposes and had to give an accounting for his action. Think that I will be held responsible and that I have a debt to pay to the King. Use my time to serve the Creator each day.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

Do my deeds match up with the knowledge I have?

*In fact, do my deeds match up with **any** of the "raw materials" (the abilities, the capabilities) that HaShem has given me? Am I using them fully to further my avodas HaShem?*

Or am I frittering away His gifts to me in other pursuits?

And how often do people say "if I only had X's intelligence, Y's charisma, Z's enthusiasm..."?

*HaShem gave each one of us unique and special kochos – are we using **them** fully?*

14

Reflect on how much HaShem loves us and helps us in every generation. HaShem has a bris with the Avos. We should feel gratitude for His kindness to us and our forefathers.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

How loving do you feel towards a dear, dear friend?

Towards someone who is a dear friend, and put you through school, and found you a job?

Let's say this same person saved your father and his family from the Holocaust?!

And that is why you are here today, with a life and a family... How indebted would you feel, and how suffused with love for that person?

How often do we also think of what HaShem has done for all the generations preceding us? To get us to where we are now?

He mamesh loves us! And so we should love Him back!

15

Reflect on the preparations needed for my neshamah's longest trip. Be ready to leave at any time. Consider if I have enough provisions to last.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

When you go on a long trip – do you figure out what you will need and how you will get it?

What you will eat, what will you drink, where will you sleep? How will you get to your destination? Do you prepare?

*And let's suppose that your trip is to the destination which is **your ultimate goal** – not just a day trip, but **where you'll spend the rest of your life!***

There's a long long trip that none of us can avoid – to a destination where we'll be forever and ever! Shouldn't we be spending our time preparing for that trip? For that destination?

16

Reflect on the suddenness of death. No escaping. Think that it can happen without warning at any hour, day, month, season or age – young or old. Think about what is needed for the Day of Reckoning.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

Rav Avigdor Miller zt"l has an interesting take on this cheshbon:

Reflecting on the fact that people die at any time, any age, without warning, would (one would think) make a person supremely sad, or even depressed.

No! says Rav Miller. For ***WE are ALIVE!***

AND FOR THAT WE ARE supremely grateful, as it is not a "select" group of people who are chosen to die – rather, anyone, anywhere, at any time.

And I AM ALIVE!

Thank you HaShem!

And we also should derive from this cheshbon the VALUE of time, the value of every moment of life – and thus we must certainly make the best use of it!

17

Reflect on the benefits of solitude for the soul. Think about the ill effects of gossip, slander, and scoffing and falsehood. Stay away from the arrogant who ridicule. Separation saves one from sins. But befriend the righteous.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

Solitude – hisbodedus. You don't have to be Breslov to love hisbodedus!

*Although the CH here speaks of "being alone" – rather than in the company of people which all-too-often lead us into wrong, inappropriate behavior (especially speech-related) – and he therefore **encourages** being **together with** people who would be **role-models**, we see in Mesilas Yesharim perek 15 that it is praiseworthy for a person to practice hisbodedus for a certain amount of time every day regardless – just to commune with, and talk to, HaShem!*

The sefarim write that that is why our forefathers chose to be shepherds – to have the time and ability to just talk to HaShem!

PS – It is not "being alone" to be surrounded by e-mail, computer, cellphone...

18

Reflect on man's insignificant position in the entire b'ri'ah (Creation) and feel humbled by HaShem's favors and the dignity given to man.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

On one hand, a person is a speck in the universe, seemingly puny and very, very limited in any which way you care to think about.

But on the other hand, we can think about how HaShem has actually made man master of it all, with man being the source and basis for it all – conceptually, morally, and practically.

And certainly when you consider mankind to be the foundation of all spirituality in the universe as well, over all the spiritual forces which exist...

What an awesome, awesome responsibility, and what a guard against arrogance...!

19

Reflect on how HaShem saves me from all sort of tragedies – hunger, thirst, cold, heat, poisoning, wild animals, illness and imprisonment. Despite my sins, HaShem overlooks, and I escape these punishments.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"l:

If you've ever stood in the lobby of a major hospital, and looked up at the alphabetical listings of all types of conditions, diseases, disorders, and illnesses, realize that there is no objective reason why you wouldn't be susceptible to them.

Or to any number of damaging life-events which occur so often to people... I have aveiros, undoubtedly – did I try to stave off punishment through improving, though a teshuvah process?

Am I properly grateful that these illnesses and events have not overtaken me?

20

Reflect on how I spend the money which HaShem has entrusted me at this time. Do I spend money in the service of HaShem?

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

Money, money, money, money, money...

Surely it seems as if most of our lives and most of our focus is about acquiring and using money.

*Are we able to say that it is honestly acquired? That we treat it as a guardianship from HaShem, spending it as He would want, that we are managing this wealth **for Him?***

That we should never feel as if it is truly ours?

21

Reflect on increasing capacity and yearning for service of HaShem. Desire to increase in spiritual service and understanding. HaShem helps me achieve this beyond my natural abilities.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

So how does one grow (the CH speaks of growth in one's avodas HaShem)?

In cheshbon no. 21, the CH amazingly gives us the formula for growth – for how, indeed, would one develop capabilities and proficiencies one doesn't presently possess?

- 1. Do your utmost – whatever you are capable of right now.*
- 2. Develop the desire, the ratzon, to do more... **and really want it!** Ask HaShem to help you increase your present capacity.*

The CH virtually promises success!

22

Reflect on helping other people. Strive for the common good. Find good friends who will help you in your religious and secular pursuits.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"l:

*As you inevitably mix with other people (but see cheshbon no. 17), remember to keep as a primary value the idea of ואהבת לרעך כמוך... help people... be a contributor to society, a contributor to the common good... Imagine if everyone would live like that – how much more pleasant and **functional** the world would be!*

23

Reflect on HaShem's intricate creation. Wonder and be inspired by observing creatures and events you have seen since childhood. Solar or lunar eclipse, thunder, lightning, storms, sunrise and sunset, rain, wind, ocean, waves, rivers have all been created by HaShem.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

To sum up cheshbon no. 23—Shaar HaBechinah!

There are quite literally millions upon millions of natural phenomena in the universe, each one alone reflecting great wisdom, kindness, and hashgachah peratis.

*One can spend a lifetime studying a leaf, an eye, a ladybug, the digestive system, a star... just google anything, sit back, and read through the millions of pages... Don't let the **routine** of it all harden you from seeing nifla'os haborei EVERYWHERE.*

There are many, many books today on such subjects – the CH wants us to study them, and get to know HaShem!

24

Reflect that the Torah and tefillah knowledge of your youth is insufficient. Study the language and interpretations with renewed and higher understanding, remember, and review.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

We are pretty satisfied if we've learned something in the past, review it regularly, and remember it. Wonderful, no?

***No!** says the CH. You've matured, your intelligence has grown more sophisticated, you've acquired more depth, a wider perspective, sharper analytical skills.*

*Do NOT be satisfied with chumash as you learned it in fifth grade... with davening as you davened as a 14 year old, with Gemara or hashkafa which you learned decades ago, **as you learned them decades ago.** Always review **and increase the quality of your learning... or your davening... or your avodas HaShem...***

25

Reflect on removing love of this world and replacing it with love of the next world. Focus on my eternal neshamah's interest and not the body's interests. However, provide the body with its needs.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

It is no surprise that our affection, and fondness, and LOVE for the pleasures of this world – olom hazeh – outweigh our desire for olom haba.

Olom hazeh is “real”, here, now, we feel it, we experience it. Olom haba – not so much.

Yet, in stark contrast to olom hazeh, olom haba is ETERNAL and chock-full of the most sublime of pleasures possible!

And so we MUST find a way to understand and internalize the awaiting pleasures of olom haba, and to realize that it is nolo contendere – no contest! And thus act accordingly...

[The CH does stress that it is certainly forbidden to ignore, or not take care of, the needs of the body – for the body is indeed the k'li which enables our entrance and determines our pleasure-level in Olom haba – through the performance of mitzvohs in olom hazeh...]

*(Rabbi Miller's talmidim just published a book, called “Rav Avigdor Miller on Olom Haba”= 340 pages! So I guess you don't know **everything** about it!)*

26

Reflect on fearing the punishment of a human king when not following a royal command. Do I feel that way before HaShem?

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

*Cheshbon no. 26 will NOT be the all-time favorite nowadays. **Don't scare with the idea of onesh (punishment), we are told!***

Didn't seem to bother Aharon HaKohen, as Rashi explains in the beginning of Acharei Mos – HaShem says: don't enter the kodoshei hakadoshim willy-nilly, so that you not die like your children Nadav and Avihu. Aharon HaKohen needs that? Well, maybe he doesn't need it, but it surely helps!

Chazal tell us in Pirkei Avos that if not for fear of punishment from a governing body, civilization as we know it would collapse into chaos. (Remember reading Lord of the Flies?)

And once you appreciate THAT – compare how you feel erev Rosh HaShana with how you feel when preparing a secular, temporal court case where you stand to, say, lose your driver's license!

27

Reflect that when a *tzara* happens to my body or property, it is from HaShem. Happily accept, and do not be angry with the decree. Suffering can be because of deserved punishment – as a *kapara*, or as a test to increase reward. Bear suffering patiently and graciously. Place trust in HaShem and you will be rewarded.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"l:

Perhaps **the** most fundamental principle in the *sefer Chovos HaLevovos* – indeed, the name itself reflects this – is **attitude**.

HaShem wants our deeds, yes – but more fundamentally he wants our **lev** – our attitudes, our mindsets, our **perspective**. (For example, the CH wants our overarching perspective on *avodas HaShem* to be one of **gratitude**.)

Thus, *cheshbon* no. 27 teaches to have the correct attitude towards the hardships in life, the difficulties in life, the frustrations in life, the many **crises** in life, the failures and misfortunes – to make sure to accept them all as the will of HaShem, to accept them **at least** with equanimity and, even more so, hopefully with contentment and good cheer, knowing that what is occurring is either a form of punishment for *aveiros* (staving off even more severe forms), or opportunities for growth, in passing the test of accepting what is happening as the will of HaShem and as something that is good.

28

Reflect on trusting HaShem. Since He has given us all that we have, we must be confident that His guidance and judgment on me, under all circumstances, are perfect.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"l:

*A one-line summation of **bitachon** would go something like this (based on CH's first perek in Shaar HaBitachon): **The serenity and tranquility I feel as I rely on HaShem to do whatever is best for me.***

In a sense, then, I have "transferred" to HaShem all that I have – they are "His" to do as He decides – I am perfectly calm and serene as I know it will be what is best for me.

Thus, when things happen that are not to my liking, I reflect upon the fact that everything is under HaShem's jurisdiction, not mine, and I can rely on Him to do what is best for me.

29

Reflect on the superiority of my neshamah over my body. Prioritize attention paid to my neshamah over my body.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"l:

Who AM I? Who are you?

What is the essence of a person? Surely not what I see in the mirror!

*It is my neshamah, that's **me!***

And if I take care of my body – eating, drinking, cleaning it, exercising, fixing it when it needs repair – how much more so should I be doing the equivalent of these things for my neshamah!

If my neshamah gets dirty – clean it! If it's weak – exercise, build it up!

This is YOU – your body is just a vehicle, taking the neshamah where it needs to go.

Your value as a person is not determined by your guf! It's determined by the essential you – your neshamah!

30

Reflect that I am a stranger in this world. I have to keep the laws of this land. I have to help other strangers. I have to serve the Ruler and be content with the fulfillment of my basic needs, I have to prepare for my departure and the provisions needed for the journey. I should express gratitude to the Ruler and graciously bear any difficulties I may have.

Additional insights from HoRav Malinowitz, ZT"L:

After you understand cheshbon no. 29, you will realize the stark truth of cheshbon no. 30: Your neshamah doesn't belong here, in this world!

You are essentially a stranger here, with a visa allowing you to be here for a certain amount of years... you are here at the behest of the King, who will give you a set of instructions allowing you to stay, and He will provide for you.

*Your feeling of "not really" **belonging** here (because YOU are your neshamah) will hopefully engender the following qualities – humility, preparing for your return journey to where you **do** belong, keeping to the terms of the visa, satisfaction with what you are given, gratitude towards the King and to whoever helps you on this trip, and other high-quality character middos.*

Beis Tefillah Yonah Avraham

*34a Nachal Refaim
Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel*

*Office Phone: 077-228-5175
Office Email: office@btya.org*

Website: www.btya.org