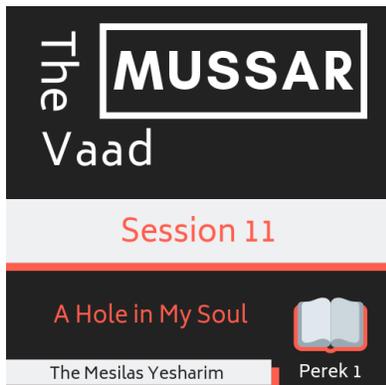


## Session 11: A Hole in my Soul



Why can't Man just be happy? Always running, always chasing, nothing is ever enough. In this mind blowing class, Rabbi Shafier teaches us how our souls were created for greatness. We are always longing for more because we know we can *be* more. How to get there? Watch to find out!

### ספר מסילת ישרים - פרק א

ותראה באמת שכבר לא יוכל שום בעל שכל להאמין שתכלית בריאת האדם הוא למצבו בעולם הזה

### Mesilas Yesharim - Perek 1

Indeed, you can see that no rational person can possibly believe that the purpose of man's creation is for his existence in this world.

כי מה הם חיי האדם בעולם הזה, או מי הוא ששמח ושליו ממש בעולם הזה.

For what is man's life in this world? Who is truly happy and content in this world?

ימי שנותינו בהם שבעים שנה ואם בגבורות שמונים שנה ורהבם עמל ואון, (תהלים צ).  
"The days of our life are 70 years, and if by strength, 80 years, yet their span is but toil and trouble" (Ps. 90:10).

בכמה מיני צער וחלאים ומכאובים וטרדות, ואחר כל זאת, המות.

How many sorts of distress and sicknesses, pain and burdens, and after all that death!

. אחד מני אלף לא ימצא שירבה העולם לו הנאות ושלוה אמיתית  
Not one in a thousand can be found to whom this world has granted plenty of  
pleasures and true contentment.

וגם הוא, אילו יגיע למאה שנה כבר עבר ובטל מן העולם.  
And even such a person, if he reaches the age of a hundred years, already [is as  
one who already] passed and disappeared from the world.

I remember as a child seeing an ad for evaporated milk and on the package was the line 'our milk is better because it's made from contented cows' contented cows. And if you think about it, a cow is content. Give a cow a field, give a cow the opposite gender cow, a barn, and the cow is happy.

And the reason why that's significant is because man is never content. It seems to be one of the strangest realities of the human condition, that no matter who a person is, no matter what stage in life, they're never just content, they're always moving, chasing, doing, they're never satisfied and it starts at a very tender, young age.

If you want to teach your son to wear *tzitzit* what you say to the young son is, ooh do you want to be like Moishy, Moishy wears *tzitzit* because the little boy wants to be like the big boy and the big boy wants to be like the bigger boy and throughout a child's growth, there's always this getting to the next stage, being the next level, and there's always this sort of interesting kind of not just being there, not just being okay where I am, there's need to grow, need to get to a new level and often-time it doesn't lead to greater satisfaction.

I remember as a kid my mother sent me to camp and one year I said to my mother I'm not going back next year unless I'm a waiter. Now the choice then was to be either the oldest camper, or to be a waiter. Now if you know much about camp, being the oldest campers in camp is about as good as it gets. You play all day, no responsibility, that's about it. It's great for a kid to be the oldest group of campers is, it doesn't get better than that. Yet I said to my mother I'm not going back unless I'm a waiter.

What's the job of a waiter? A waiter basically who wait, three hours each meal you gotta set up, you gotta clean up, you gotta serve. Twice a day, six hours of work a day and I elected, I said to my mother I'm not going back unless I'm a waiter because waiters are older, *chashuv* and as strange as it is to me now, I just would not have been happy being the oldest camper, I wanted more, the next level and this is a reality endemic in the human condition. No matter who you are, no matter what stage you are, there's never the sense of just I'm okay where I am, I always need the next level, the next thing, I gotta be moving, I gotta be going on and it's a very interesting phenomena that you'll find over and over and over.

A guy goes into business and he has one goal, I'm going to make a million dollars. Once I have a million dollars in the bank, I'm set, I'll retire, I'll chill. And he sweats, sleeps under the desk at night, doesn't do anything but focus on growing and growing and he grows his business and it does well, phenomenally well and he hits that point, one million dollars in the bank, clear, free, done.

So what does he do? Sets a new goal. Okay, now it's five million dollars. He doesn't take it easy, he doesn't just chill. Now it's five million and he sleeps under the desk at night and he's driven and he's moving and no matter what he gets to, there's going to be another level.

“*mi du'isla mana*” a person who has a hundred needs two hundred. And it's a fact in the human condition. The business man always needs to make more money. The author needs to write the next bestseller, the executive needs to climb the corporate ladder. The politician is no longer satisfied with local politics, he's now going to move up to the state level.

And no matter who you are, the human being never seems to be content and never seems to be satisfied, always needs more. And the *Orchos Tzaddikim* explains to us, in the twenty eight *perek* he explains that this is the *neshamah* of man. Don't you understand, the human being isn't satisfied, isn't content, why? Because no matter you bring to your *neshamah* it always wants more and it's never satisfied.

But the reason why it's not satisfied is because what you're bringing to it is cheap. What you're bringing to it, just doesn't fill the needs of the *neshamah*. You see as I have a body and the body has needs, so too I have a *neshamah*, I have a soul and the soul has needs.

Well the body needs to eat and drink, sleep, maybe procreate, there are various needs and if you don't satisfy those needs, well guess what? It's going to get very rough. So too you have a *neshamah* and that soul has needs. But the needs of the *neshamah* are vastly different than the needs of the *guf*, of the body.

The *neshamah* needs to grow and to accomplish, but the *neshamah* has a different currency and it has a very, very different set of values and no matter what you bring the *neshamah* from this world, it always has a sense of dissatisfaction, I need more.

And when you see the human being driven and driven and driven to a sense that really doesn't make sense to you or I, what you are looking at is the soul never being filled. And for the fun of it let's sort of see if we could illustrate this point a little bit.

So as you're probably aware, Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos are at war, war. The war right now is who is the wealthiest man in the universe? Okay, and that is the fight and for a long time they were neck and neck at ninety billion. Very recently Jeff Bezos pulled ahead when Amazon, stock grows, he's now according to Forb's Magazine, worth one hundred and five billion dollars. A hundred and five billion dollars.

Now let's understand something a billion dollars is a lot of money. A billion dollars is a thousand million. Now listen, let's say I like to live simply, right, I don't need much, maybe a private island in the Pacific, and I don't know a patchy helicopter, a leer jet, a team of butlers and maids but I got it. If that's my lifestyle I could probably get by on ten million dollars a year. But I want you to understand what one billion dollars is, a thousand million means that let's say you need to maintain your lifestyle ten thousand dollars a day.

Okay, most of us could manage to get by on ten thousand dollars a day. If you were to spend ten thousand dollars a day during the course of a year you would spend three hundred and sixty five of those ten thousands, or three point six three million dollars. You will have only spent three and a half million dollars. That means it'll take you two hundred and seventy three years to use up one billion, at ten thousand dollars a day. So you're not going to get there that quickly.

So let's up the ante. Let's make it a hundred thousand dollars a day. Now you and I can get by on a hundred thousand dollars a day. So if I'm thirty years of age and I'm spending a hundred thousand dollars a day, I'm going to use up one billion dollars in about twenty seven years, let's say I plan on living to ninety so I'm going to use up two billion dollars, spending a hundred thousand dollars a day.

Let's make it better, I want to spend that money so I'm going to find every *tzedakah* organization that I ever heard of and I give each one ten million dollars, ten million dollars. I've now used up maybe another twenty billion. But that's only twenty two billion altogether.

Okay I spent a little more, a little more but at a certain point you realize there is nothing in the world that you're going to do with the more money. When you hit a certain point, twenty billion, forty billion, certainly fifty billion, that's it. There is nothing that's going to change in your life. Nothing more that you're going to do.

So here's the question, is Jeff Bezos kind of like chilled out, content, let me sit back? So basically Dave Clark who is the spokesman for Amazon says no, our goal is to sell everything to everyone. Anything you want on earth, you're going to get from us. Meaning to say we're not yet there.

And this reality where on one level is very healthy, and very much a part of the drive of the human for greatness, has to be understood. And if you'd like to understand the *mekor*, the source, it's a very simple thing. You will never be satisfied with anything in this world. Why? Because half of you will be satisfied, but the other half, your *neshamah*, your soul, will be ever hungry because money doesn't fill my soul, nor does honor, nor do pleasures, nor do anything that you're going to provide.

And while we all know it on some level, we live our lives as if it weren't true. And no matter who I am, no matter what position I'm in, I always say that line well I'm different. You don't know how to spend money the right way. If you think money doesn't buy happiness, trust me, I know how to spend it right. I'll be happy with it.

And everybody tries it and they all do it, and they're just empty. And the *Orchos Tzaddikim* explains the why. The why is because that's not the way your Creator built you and there's a full half of you that says *yuch* and it's empty, unfulfilled, not satisfied and hungers for more. But what it hungers for is much deeper, much more meaningful, much more significant growth, and the *Mesilas Yesharim* explains, don't you understand if Hashem created us for this world, and this world only, imagine again that you are like Elsie the cow, when the body hits the ground the *nefesh* just evaporates, then why would Hashem put a *neshamah* into us, why make man that way? Man isn't content, he's not happy.

And if Hashem created us for our station in this world, just like the last session we explained, Hashem would not have made pain and illness and diseases and everything else that causes a human to be physically uncomfortable. The key point that Hashem wouldn't put into man, is this *neshamah*, this soul that needs so much more, that's never satisfied with anything in this world, that no matter what you bring it, always says, nah. And explains the *Mesilas Yesharim*, don't you understand, again that is just one more proof that Hashem didn't create us for our station in this world. Because if Hashem created us for this world and for this world only, we wouldn't have that drive, we wouldn't have that need, that unmet incapable of being sated drive for more growth, more accomplishment, more greatness.

But the fact is we weren't made for our station in this world. We're put into this world for a few short years, put here to grow and accomplish and we're put for here as the opportunity to become what we're going to be for eternity and that inner drive for more is what drives a human being for greater and greater heights and in life you have a choice, either you harness that drive and you set real goals, meaningful goals, significant goals and you accomplish and you grow, or you sublimate it, you push it to other things.

That other things might be money, might be honor, it might be reputation, maybe things that sound pretty good but anything other than the *Torah's* understanding of real growth will never satisfy your soul. Why? Because that's the way Hashem made you.

Hashem gave you this inner need, this very powerful, powerful drive to accomplish, to do but to do really significant things, really meaningful things, to change the essence of you and if you use that drive properly it will drive you throughout life to greater levels, greater levels and you'll accomplish.

And if you sublimate it, if you sort of misdirect it, push it off to anything else, well it'll drive you, it'll drive you to money and reputation or honor or writing plays, or whatever it may be but you're never going to be satisfied, you're going to be always empty.

And the *Mesilas Yesharim* gives us one of the most important *meshalim*, the most important parables that so properly defines this. He says imagine you have a princess, a sole princess. She's brought up in the lap of luxury, the apple of her father's eyes. Everything, anything she could imagine is given to her and she is leading the most idyllic life. At sixteen or seventeen years of age she's riding her horse and she's riding very, very far. Horses always reliable, always trustworthy and she's riding and riding way, way beyond the palace grounds, deep, deep into the woods. Somehow the horse falls, trips, breaks its leg and she finds herself miles and miles away without a way to get back.

She begins stumbling around the woods. There is nothing to eat. She falls asleep. A few days, she's hungry, she's eating berries, she's beginning to become emaciated. Her clothing is starting to get ripped. After a month of wandering around the woods, she sees a shack. A shack, she runs

in and there's some bare chairs, a table carved of wood but there's a porridge bowl. She eats the porridge, she falls asleep.

A little while later she opens her eyes and there's this gruff man, primitive man standing there. But he's kind, he's nice to her. He takes care of her and as the story progresses, after a while she falls in love and she marries this primitive, back woodsman.

Explains the *Mesilas Yesharim*, don't you understand? Nothing that he brings to her will ever bring her satisfaction. He prepares his best and carved wood spoon and knife set. She ate her meals with sterling silver. He prepares his best bean dish, she grew up with seven course meals. White gloved waiters.

No matter what he's going to bring to her from his world, his beads that he strings together, his trinkets that he gives to her, they're going to be nothing to her because she's from a totally different class, from a totally different place and nothing he brings her is going to make her happy.

Explains the *Mesilas Yesharim* that is us. Within me is a *neshamah*, the *neshamah* was under Hashem's throne of glory, leading the most illustrious, the most spiritual, almost near perfect life, being close to Hashem, enjoying pleasures that are incomparable to anything in our world. And that *neshamah* was put into this body.

If I'm going to provide my *neshamah* with lots of money, lots of honor, lots of physical pleasures, my *neshamah*'s going to say leh, leh, so what? So what? And it will remain ever dissatisfied, ever hungry, ever with a sense of *luch* what are you providing for me?

And not only is this the real drive of the human for greatness, there's another sort of interesting effect that happens that if you don't listen to it. I want you to imagine for a minute, you have a young boy who's brought up by an over bearing, demanding father and anything the boy does doesn't please his father. And his father's critical, his father's very, very, very demanding and the kid gets the message at a young age, nothing he does is good enough. Nothing he does will ever satisfy his father, he don't got what it takes.

Urchard Russel, I'll guess you call him a modern philosopher, wrote a book in the thirties, in which he laments the fact that most people, most people are unhappy. And even studies today when they ask that question, are you happy? They say fifteen percent of Americans are genuinely happy. But here's the strange reality. We have incredible opportunity, wealth, populace, in the course of history never has mankind had it this good, freedom, opportunity to shape your world, opportunity for education, for advancement, you could lead your life exactly as you want, and most people aren't happy and why not? Why not?

And if you'd like to fundamentally understand the why not, it's because from a young, tender age, there's a voice inside me that's been saying *luch* what are you doing, therefore what? That's not really significant, that's not really impressive, I'm not really happy with you.

And here's the problem. The problem is that voice is me and I can run from the voice, I can hide from the voice but it's there and it's ever there, ever bothering me, ever with that sense of what are you doing, what are you accomplishing, what are you doing?

And I have two choices. I either listen to that voice and set real *Torah* goals, real goals of growth and accomplishment, change the essence of me, make a tremendous impact. Or I do what's so much easier to do, what do you mean, let's go, I am doing great things, c'mon I'm making lots of

money, I'm a famous guy I got lots of friends. And you're going to spend your life running and hiding, running and hiding but guess what? It never stops. It never stops and there's never a sense of satisfaction.

And if you'd like to understand why the human being is never satisfied? It's because a full half of him that can't be satisfied, that just can't be happy with what you bring him. And if you'd like understand more fundamentally why is a human being never happy, why can't he just smile and enjoy the situation he's in?

The answer is you can't be happy if there's a hole in your soul. That's a line that they use in AA in the various alcoholic anonymous groups, any addiction is a hole in your soul that you're trying to fill.

You see there's an emptiness, an emptiness within me. So I try to fill it with this and with that, with that and with this and it never works. It never helps because I wake up with the same emptiness.

I remember reading a book as a child which described the nineteen twenties in America, black kid grew up in the deep south and he describes what his life was like and he describes poverty. But poverty means real, real poverty as in not owning a pair of shoes and as in always going to be hungry. As a matter of fact he describes that he didn't know what it meant not to be hungry.

He would go to school in the morning, he hadn't eaten supper the night before and it was a gnawing hunger in his stomach. And this plagued him all day until one day he found a solution. He was passing a neighbor's yard and there was a garden hose, he opened the spigot and began drinking and he filled his stomach with as much water as it could hold and for a while he was

sated. Until twenty minutes later when the water passed and he was more hungry than he was before.

If you'd like to understand the human being today, when you're hungry and it drink it doesn't fill and it leaves you more empty than you were before, Hashem created the human to grow, to change the essence of me, to change the world I live in, to change myself, but real accomplishments, real growth. Changing my character traits changing who I am. Changing and becoming a much greater person and if I listen to that voice and I set real goals, then there's a sense of yeah, wow, within me.

Look at me, this year, way, way different than I was last year. Five years ago I wasn't a fraction of what I am today. But if you set your goals as anything else, anything else under the sun, oh yes sometimes there's temporarily a sense of fulfillment, I just won the gold medal, wow, and there's a sense of satisfaction, but it quickly passes because you're hungry for something different. You're not hungry for honor, you're not hungry for money. You're not hungry for approval, you're hungry for real accomplishments, real growth, spiritual accomplishments for which you were put on the planet.

And anything other than that, just won't fill your soul. You'll be empty, you'll be without and you'll spend your life this way.

And I believe one of the interesting revelations to modern man, is this concept. There's a book that's well worth reading that's called Man in Search of Meaning, written by a, originally a Viennese Psychiatrist, Victor Frankel. Victor Frankel discovered that he was Jewish when the Nazis put him on a train bound for Auschwitz and he survived. And after landing in the DP camps, eventually landing on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, he wrote a book and the book

describes his life, both in the camps and after and both parts are very, very well worth reading.

But in the part that describes what it was like for him after the holocaust, he describes that he put out a shingle and very quickly his practice was filled.

See he had been a world famous psychiatrist in Vienna, now he was in the Upper East Side of Manhattan, he opened his practice and very quickly his practice was filled. But he describes that people would come in and during the intake interview, he would ask the same types of questions that he had asked for decades in Europe, but he didn't recognize the answers.

A man would come in and Dr. Frankel would say to him what could I do for you? Well Doc, I'm depressed. I'm sorry to hear that, is it your job? No, is it your family? No. Your wife? No. Kids? No. Why are you depressed? I don't know Doc, that's why I'm here.

A woman in her forties would come in, what could I do for you? Well Doc I'm depressed. I'm sorry is it your marriage? No. Is it your children? No. Your job? No. Why are you depressed?

Patient after patient would come in without an attributable cause. An attributable cause is a reason why we would say it makes sense for this person to be depressed. If a woman was married for thirty five years and she just lost her husband, that's a very real life blow. And that takes a while to get over and we'd understand why a woman in that circumstance would need to really adjust and it might just take her a while to regain that sense of life.

An attributable cause might be a genetic predisposition, a gift from your parents. Science shares with us an interesting statistic. There are tens of millions of reported cases of depression in this country every year. Of those tens of millions of cases, only sixteen percent have an attributable cause.

A small fraction of those tens of millions of cases have a reason, a trauma, a predisposition, a genetic component but the vast majority of them have no reason. But why Doc, I don't get it. I'm making money. I'm married, I got kids. I got a great career, I don't get it Doc, why am I depressed?

And that question is its answer. You will be depressed, you should be depressed, because there's a full half of you that you're not meeting, you're not satisfying and if you spend your life trying to run from that voice, you will run but with a hole in your soul. You're going to spend it that way.

And if you'd like to see the greatest indication of G-D's plan for creation, study this phenomena. Why is modern man so unhappy? What's lacking? There's nothing missing from your life, everything is there except one thing, inner satisfaction, happiness, a sense of purpose, a sense of meaning. But why can't I just put it away? What do I need it for? I didn't ask for it, I don't want it, I just want to be happy.

The problem is it's not what your Creator made you for and when you use a fine surgical instrument to pry open a window it does a lousy job and it dulls the blade. The *neshamah* of man was given to man to drive you for greatness, to propel you to change, to grow, to set real concrete goals in your spiritual perfection and if you do that, there's an inner sense of yeah, an inner sense of harmony, of peace, and if you don't do that, anything else is going to leave you empty, is going to leave you without and it is the only way for a person to be happy.

But why? Because that's the way your Creator made you. You see when you live your life with real purpose, when you're really accomplishing and growing, when you're following the *Torah*, keeping the *mitzvahs*, and growing level after level, your *neshamah* says *Baruch Hashem* I'm

here. You see there's nothing in this world that satisfies the *neshamah*. Nothing in this world that makes my *neshamah* happy, not pleasure, not sensations not all of the trinkets of this world and there's a sense within me, my *neshamah* that says, what am I doing here, this thick coarse, sluggish world, who needs to be here?

But if you're racking up wealth, real wealth, spiritual wealth, if you're changing, you're growing, your *neshamah* says yes, that's it, I am so happy to be here. I am so satisfied to be here, it's remarkable. Because more than anything, your *neshamah* understands why you here, and your *neshamah* understands the growth, and your *neshamah* understands what you can be.

I think this single reality that the human being is never content, is exactly as the *Mesilas Yesharim* said, the greatest indication of the nature of man. A cow is content, a horse is content, Bovine, they sit there in the field and they're very, very good. Man isn't and man needs more. And when you see the human being always aspiring for the next level, the little boy needing to be the big boy, the big boy being the next. When you see the politician who's got to go from state level to national level, when you see the king who must conquer another nation, what's your problem you're the king, you own all the land. Everyone is your servant, no I need another nation, another, but what is your problem? Your problem is that you're trying to fill your soul with things that just don't help.

Jeff Bezos has a hundred and five billion dollars, probably enough to live on but it's never enough. It's never enough, why because there is a need for more. But as the *Orchos Tzaddikim* explains to us, the need for more is because I'm trying to fill my soul with things that are trinkets, that are passing. And my *neshamah* knows I'm not taking that money with me, and my *neshamah*

knows that it's empty and foolish and the *Mesilas Yesharim* of the princess and the peasant defines us.

Within me is this lofty princess, born in the heights of greatness, brought up in the palace of the king. Put into this course, cold, dark existence and anything I bring it won't make it happy until I focus on its needs, I focus on what it wants. And if I do that, there's an inner sense of deep satisfaction, an inner sense of wow and if I do anything else, well guess what? It doesn't take very long for that water to pass, it doesn't take long till that new level that I accomplished just isn't enough and I have that same gnawing emptiness within me.

And I want to close with one last observation. By far, the most popular *Shmuz* I ever say is the heroes *Shmuz*. You can listen online, *Shmuz* number sixty one, that's the one Mohammad Ali, the one with the elephants and no matter what audience I say that to, not matter what the environment, it's extraordinarily well received and for a long time I used to wonder why. Why is it so popular, why is it by far the one *Shmuz* that everyone just like, yeah, you're right?

And I realized the answer. The answer is because everyone, you, I and every other human being you've ever met has this inner need for greatness. An inner need to be way, way, way bigger than I am. Why? Because my *neshamah* isn't limited by this small body that I currently occupy, my *neshamah* comes from much higher, higher levels, from a totally different magnitude, a different totally different order of events, from a world of pure spirituality and that voice within me that says I should be doing much, much bigger things, is my *neshamah*.

And so we sublimate it, I should be an Olympic athlete, I should be the richest man in the world. I should write, I should do, I should. But all of those things are my *neshamah*, my *neshamah* is saying I could do much more and it is true. I wasn't created for this mundane, small existence

that I currently live. I was created to accomplish, to do. But it's not the headlines of the New York Times, not for wealth, fame and honor, to accomplish real greatness, changing the essence of me, spiritual growth as outlined by the *Torah* and anything you do other than that will never fill your soul, leave you ever empty, and only when you do that is there an inner sense of joy, of happiness, and when there's a sense within you shouldn't I be doing way, way more, the answer is yes. But it's now time to focus on exactly what that more is, set my goals in that area, by satisfied with those types of accomplishments because that's what Hashem created me for, that's what ultimately brings true happiness in this world and the world to come.