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## Getting To Know Your Hisbodedus Practice - 013 Power of Gratitude

### **Summary of The Previous Chapter**

We will quickly review the last shiur and then continue.

There is *hisbodedus* between man and oneself, and we explained this at length. The second stage of *hisbodedus* [which we are up to] is between man and Hashem. The first aspect is to realize that we receive from Hashem's goodness; the next aspect of this is to realize our intrinsic bond with Hashem.

It is fundamental requirement to first acquire Emunah that Hashem is the One who provides us with everything - only after we attribute everything to Hashem can we thank Him and ask Him for things.

### **Emunah: Recognizing The Source**

Here in this shiur, we will elaborate on how *Emunah* is the basis for our *hisbodedus* with Hashem.

In everything in Creation, there is *havayah* (essence) and *tenuah* (movement) in something. The essence of something is its *havayah*, its actual essence, and it also moves. With regards to our *emunah*, we believe that Hashem is behind everything, and this is the *havayah* aspect. The *tenuah* of this is to believe that Hashem does everything, because He is behind everything.

First we will deal with the lower aspect of this, which is to recognize the *tenuah* of our *emunah*, and hopefully we will get to progress to the higher aspect, which is *havayah* of our *emunah*.

Let us begin the avodah of *hisbodedus* with regards to *tenuah* of our *emunah*. We have a power to move; it seems that it is who do things. But behind all that we do, Hashem is making anything happen. He allows us to have free will to choose, but in everything else, Hashem is doing every action.

Most people are self-absorbed throughout the day, and at best, a person has *hisbodedus* for 15 minutes and maybe for an hour. Can it be that those who don't do any *hisbodedus* should lead a more spiritual lifestyle than those who are doing it? *Hisbodedus* is really supposed to lead into the rest of the day as well. There has to be a difference that we can recognize between those who do *hisbodedus* every day and those who don't.

*Hisbodedus* is not supposed to be viewed as a separate part of the day; rather, your whole day needs

to revolve around it and be affected by it. It is not a side thing. It is supposed to illuminate your whole day. We shouldn't look at our *hisbodedus* time as just another thing in our day; when done properly, our *hisbodedus* affects us for the entire day.

Now we will explain how your time of *hisbodedus* can indeed carry over into the rest of the day.

During *hisbodedus*, you must feel totally alone with Hashem, and separate yourself completely from the world [both outwardly and inwardly]. Whatever you went through during the day – whether it's something you are grateful for or something you need from Hashem – you are meant to bring all that into your time of *hisbodedus*, and talk about it with Hashem.

This can create a problem, though. If we don't feel connected to Hashem throughout the day, then when it comes time for *hisbodedus*, it is very hard to connect yourself to Hashem, because we are not used to talking to Hashem about all that we have went through.

Therefore, whatever understandings we reach during *hisbodedus* needs to affect us throughout the day. If we reach the understanding that Hashem is behind everything, then this understanding needs to be carried over into the rest of the day as well. When you are around people during the rest of the day, you need to realize that Hashem is behind everything.

In this way, your *hisbodedus* is not just for *hisbodedus* time, but it is rather an understanding that you carry over into the rest of the day. So *hisbodedus* is not just a time to do *hisbodedus* and to daven to Hashem and make a self-accounting. It is to reach a certain recognition, that Hashem is behind every action and this recognition needs to continue into the rest of your day as well.

Thanking Hashem for the past, and asking Him for future things, is really about recognizing that only Hashem is our Giver, and that no one else can give us these things. This recognition is not just for *hisbodedus*. It is meant to be taken with you for the rest of the day as well, even when you're not in the midst of the actual *hisbodedus*.

*Hisbodedus* is really all day long! If we think of *hisbodedus* as mere physical seclusion from society, then we think it means to be secluded all day from people, which is really only a level for *tzaddikim*. Only our *Avos* were able to sit all day in the mountains and be secluded all day. The essence of *hisbodedus* is not about seclusion – it is really about to live it all day long, to let it affect us all day long.

We can see people who have been doing *hisbodedus* for years, yet they haven't really changed. They engage in *cheshbon hanefesh* and *tefillah*, which is wonderful, and it is better than nothing, but they miss the point, because they don't realize that the lesson of *hisbodedus* is supposed to carry over into the rest of the day as well.

### ***Continuing Hisbodedus: Beginning With Gratitude***

Now we will see how to work on this practically.

When you do *hisbodedus*, think about what you have and what you don't have. First, reflect about the big things and the small things you have. Then, reflect about Who gave you all those things. Realize that anyone who gave you these things were just Hashem's messengers.

Think about each of your five senses, about all that what you have, about your spouse and children, about your *parnassah*, and realize that Hashem sent you all these. Keep repeating to think about these things and remember that Hashem gave you all those things. Do this passionately and with joy.

That's what you do during *hisbodedus*. Now we will discuss how you can let these understandings carry over into the rest of your day.

Let's say you have a house and children that you thanked Hashem for during your *hisbodedus*. Now when you come back to your house at the end of the day and when you come home to your children, feel thankful to Hashem again. During *hisbodedus* you thank Hashem for one thing, then increase it to ten things, then increase it to a hundred things. This trains you to become appreciative towards Hashem throughout the rest of the day as well.

There are several stages to *hisbodedus*, as we have mentioned. Rather than trying to progress from one step to the next step, let's instead take one step at a time. First thank Hashem and let it extend into the rest of the day; let it internalize, before you begin to work on the next step.

Chazal say to praise Hashem for every breath. This is a very high level. We can only get to it if we have become more appreciative to Hashem.

After we have worked on *hisbodedus* with ourselves<sup>[1]</sup> and after we do *cheshbon hanefesh*,<sup>[2]</sup> we need to progress to thanking Hashem, and then let that extend into the rest of the day.

The more we do this, the more we will see that even though we are around people most of the day, we can still feel like we are with Hashem as we are around people. *Hisbodedus* is to live with Hashem, and it is not just a time of *hisbodedus* - it is to ingrain in ourselves a life of *hisbodedus*, a life spent with Hashem, and this brings us to the true kind of life which our Avos lived with. *Hisbodedus* is the key to live a true life.

The words here might appear strange and foreign at first, but the more you practice them, you will transform. There will be massive internal changes. You will go from loneliness - or attachment with people - and instead attach yourself with Hashem.

### ***In Conclusion***

We have explained, with Hashem's help the first part of *hisbodedus* with Hashem, which is about thanking Hashem. The next part of *hisbodedus* will be about asking Hashem for what we need in *tefillah*.

May we merit the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash* in its glory, Amen.

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### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH THE RAV**

***Q1: I usually do hisbodedus in the morning, so when do I review my day about what to thank Hashem for?***

**A:** Thank Hashem the fact that you woke up today, as well as for the previous day.

***Q2: Does this aspect of hisbodedus (thanking Hashem for all that He gives us) also apply to thanking Hashem for my bad middos, and can doing this change my bad middos?***

**A:** To thank Hashem for our bad *middos* we must be aware that we still have *bechirah* so we must certainly work on our *middos*. Along with this we also need to thank Hashem for even our bad *middos*. However, although we thank Hashem for our bad *middos* too, we still need to work on ourselves and *daven* to Hashem for help to change ourselves, and we will deal with this aspect next month. So

thanking Hashem alone will not fix our *middos*. We need three things to change our bad *middos*: to thank Hashem for even our negative *middos*; to practically use our *bechirah* and try to work on ourselves to change; and to *daven* to Hashem for help to fix them.

**Q3: Should a person always start with thanking Hashem? Are there are ever times where a person can ask Hashem for something, like if he is going through a time of pain?**

**A:** Very good question – for every rule, there are always exceptions. Your need to really know if this is a situation where you can skip the order and go straight to *tefillah*. There are definitely times where you can go straight to *tefillah*, but this is hard to know; you a lot of self-understanding to know if you should do this or not. If a person goes straight to *tefillah* he might become sad and then he can't thank Hashem. So it needs to be considered very well.

**Q4: A while ago [in class #011] the Rav mentioned the method of reviewing “Shivisi L’Negdi Tamid” again and again. How can a person practically work on this? And can a person think of this even in an unclean place?**

**A:** On the minimal level of this, it is to think of it once in the morning and again before you go to sleep. The higher level of this is to think about Hashem all day. As for thinking about it in unclean places, there are opinions in our *Poskim* who say that you are allowed to think about Hashem.

**Q5: Can a person speak to Hashem in an unclean place?**

**A:** This is not so simple to answer. Thinking about Hashem, in a very simple way, is permitted, but deep thinking about Hashem is questionable, and so is speaking to Hashem questionable in an unclean place.

**Q6: Can I thank Hashem for difficult situations and at the same time ask Him to remove them?**

**A:** At this stage just thank Hashem for everything, even your problems, and next month we will progress to the next stage, which is *tefillah*. Just thank Hashem this month for simple things in your life, big and small.

**Q7: Is this current discussion on *hisbodedus* connected with inner silence?**

**A:** This stage of *hisbodedus* we are discussing, *hisbodedus* with Hashem, is based on the first stage of *hisbodedus* we discussed in the first 11 classes, which was about inner silence.

**Q8: So if I am beginning inner silence now can the Rav give a practical suggestion on how I can work on this along with *hisbodedus* with Hashem?**

**A:** If you are beginning now, at first you should start with *hisbodedus* with Hashem. The more you get used to *hisbodedus* with Hashem you should do both stages of *hisbodedus*. There are no rules to this and each person should do what he feels he should work on.

**Q9: So are we supposed to do the two stages of *hisbodedus* simultaneously (inner silence, and *hisbodedus* with Hashem)?**

**A:** If you feel you can work on both simultaneously, it is fine, but if you feel that it is too much for you, then don't try to work on both stages at once. Either way, whenever you begin *hisbodedus*, you need to be a little calm, because you can't immediately start talking to Hashem if you aren't calm beforehand.

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[1] which we explained at length in chapters 1-11

[2] which you can learn about in Sefer Cheshbon HaNefesh and in Chovos HaLevovos: Shaar Cheshbon HaNefesh

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