

UNEDITED INTERNET VERSION
V8

TALKING WITH HASHEM

Practice of Hisbodedus

Adapted from hebrew shiurim of
דע את התבודדתיך - מעשית
by the author of Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh

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1 | Beginning To Talk To Hashem

Hisbodedus With Ourselves, Then Hisbodedus With Hashem

With the help of Hashem, we explained the first stage of *hisbodedus*, which contains two parts - *cheshbon hanefesh* (making a soul-accounting), and the various methods that help us reach inner silence.

Practically speaking, at first a person needs a few minutes of inner calm, and then he should begin his *cheshbon hanefesh* (which we did not discuss that much)¹, and then he should try to enter deeper within himself, using the methods we gave in these classes.² All of this is yet the first part of *hisbodedus*, which is how we become “alone”.

Summary Of Hisbodedus With Hashem

Now we will discuss the second part of *hisbodedus*, which is to have *hisbodedus* with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. This generally contains two parts – **developing our personal bond with Him**, as well as to come to **recognize** Hashem.

Two Stages In Our Bond With Hashem

There is a kind of bond with Hashem in which a person realizes that we receive everything from Hashem, that He is the Giver and we are the receivers. In this kind of bond, we *daven* to Hashem to give us our needs. We think about what Hashem gives us, we thank Him for it, and then we ask Him for whatever else we still need.

But there is another kind of bond we can have with Hashem, not through give and take, but because we cherish the very connection. It's about the love itself, not about what we want to “get” from the one we love. (On its deepest level, this is to recognize *Ain Od Milvado*, in which we come to truly realize that “there is nothing besides for Him.”) But on the basic level it concerns the connection that the lover has to his beloved.

Thus, based on this second view, *hisbodedus* is not about thanking Hashem for everything in our past, present or future. It is about 1) **thinking of Hashem's greatness** as well as to 2) **to speak words of love with Him** – about how much *He* loves us, and how much *we* love Him.

¹ See class #07 - *Becoming Aware of Our Actions*

² Refer to Classes #07-#011.

There are two kinds of relationships - a relationship of give-and-take, and a relationship that is intrinsic. Parents with their children, and husband with their wife, might have any of these kinds of relationships. They can love each other either because they receive and give to each other, or because they enjoy the intrinsic connection. In the business world, it's all about what I get out of this relationship, and any giving here is for the purpose of taking.

Because we are so used to give and take relationships in our life, we must develop a new perception towards relationships, in order to develop a bond with Hashem: where the relationship is all about the love in the connection.

Hisbodedus in particular is about developing these two aspects of our bond with Hashem. First we need to at least realize what Hashem does for us and love Him for it, and then we need to arrive at the higher level, which is to enjoy our very bond with Hashem.

The First Step: Realizing How All That We Have Is From Hashem

The first step, realizing what Hashem does for us, is to realize that everything comes from Hashem. We need to realize what we have, first of all, and then realize that it's all from Hashem. So sit down and make a list of what you have and how it's all from Hashem. Then make a list of what you are missing in life, and that it can only be filled by Hashem.

Hisbodedus is not an intellectual matter - it is a heart matter. Therefore, it's not enough to be aware intellectually of what you have and don't have. We need to reflect about it more and more, so that our heart can feel it.

So take 15 minutes and reflect about the things you have in your life as well as the things that you need, and realize that they can only come from Hashem. Our *tefillos* to Hashem will then come from a deeper place in our self, from our heart, and not just from our brain.

Thus, the first stage to review simple matters of *emunah*, to review that Hashem gives us everything so we can thank Him. Then we can realize that only Hashem gives us what we need and we can ask for what we are missing from a deeper place in ourselves.

Why This Awareness Is Necessary For Hisbodedus

Let's try to understand this deeper.

Hisbodedus is to be alone with Hashem. We realize that as we do *hisbodedus*, it's just "me and Hashem" and no else. But in order to be alone with Hashem, we need to believe and internalize that everything we have is indeed from Hashem, and from no one else.

Otherwise, one is not alone with Hashem, and it's as if someone else is in the room with us; that would clearly not be called being "alone" with Hashem! Such thoughts would prevent us from having

real *hisbodedus* with Hashem. Therefore, only when we internalize that **only** Hashem gives us all that we have, and no one else, can we truly feel alone with Hashem as we do *hisbodedus*.

Emunah – The Prerequisite To Hisbodedus With Hashem

Now we can understand a major fundamental principle: *Hisbodedus* is based on ***emunah*** (faith that everything is orchestrated by Hashem)! The stronger our *emunah* is, the higher quality our *hisbodedus* will be. The weaker our *emunah* is, the more superficial our *hisbodedus* is.

To clarify, it's not that we have the *avodah* to have *emunah* as well as the *avodah* to do *hisbodedus*, as if these are two independent, separate issues that we need to work on. Rather, *emunah* and *hisbodedus* are really intertwined.

Thus, throughout the course of the day, we need to utilize our *emunah*, and if not, we will [by default] attribute everything that happens in our life due to various circumstances. “This person hurt me”, “This person insulted me”, or “This person helped me.” The true perspective is that Hashem caused everything to happen to you, whatever it was.

To give some practical examples, when we buy a car or if we buy a sofa or a table for the house, we tend to think it's from the store we bought it from, or because your parents or in-laws gave you the money to buy it. Let's say we sit down to make *hisbodedus* with Hashem and we want to thank Him for those items. It will be very hard for us to feel thankful to Hashem when we never realized in the first place where these items come from. We need to realize during the day that all these things are given to us from Hashem, and not from people, and then we can properly thank Hashem when we do *hisbodedus*.

We will give another example that brings out the point. Chazal say that one should love Hashem no matter what *middah* He measures out to you. The only way to do this is when we realize that everything is from Hashem. If someone does something bad to us and we think it's from the person and not from Hashem, then we aren't able to realize how everything that happens to us is from Hashem.

Make A List of Major Things In Your Life and Realize Who The Provider Is

Thus, throughout the day, we need *emunah*, that it is Hashem who does everything. This is the basis of *hisbodedus* with Hashem!

We can give a few examples of how to work on this. First we will start to notice the major things in our life which we have, and to realize that Hashem gave them all to us. Take a pen and paper and write down who gave you all the items in your house, such as who gave you: your life, your senses, your house, your children, your livelihood, your health. For each thing, say to Hashem, “Hashem, you gave me this, this, and this (fill in all the big things).”

Verbalizing Your Thoughts of Emunah; Saying The Words With Calmness and With Feeling

Don't do this as a lip service; say the words from your heart. "Words that come from the heart enter the heart." Do this calmly. Do so with a **calm mind**, and then say the words with feeling, **with your heart**, and with **joy**. Keep saying the words from your heart, and you will then reach deeper and deeper into your heart, where the words will then keep coming from a deeper place in yourself.

This alone can take days and weeks to work on until it penetrates [your innermost self].

After you feel that the *emunah* has become deepened in your heart, you can then proceed to the next step, which is to thank Hashem for all that you have, from a truer and deeper place in yourself. [This will be the later stage, which we have not yet discussed].

Bear in mind that each step of *hisbodedus* can take at least 2 months to work on. Think about both the big things and small things that Hashem does for you, then verbalize it with Hashem, so that your words of *emunah* can implant the *emunah* deeper and deeper into your heart each time.³

The *avodah* to work on for this month, as a result of this discussion, is to recognize what you have, as well as what you need, and to speak to Hashem about it.⁴

³ See *Bilvavi Part 5- Talking To Hashem About Emunah*.

⁴ Refer also to *Woman's World #013-Awareness of What We Lack and Have*.

Questions and Answers With the Rav

Q1: Since Hashem gives me everything, even my bad middos, how do I thank Hashem for my bad middos, when my bad middos clearly cause me to act improper?

A: Thank Hashem even for your bad *middos*. Even our bad *middos* can help us have good *middos*, because it can cause us to work on ourselves. However, you can't thank Hashem for what results from bad *middos*, because that is your free will, but as for the bad *middah* itself, you should definitely thank Hashem for it.

Q2: Aside from the avodah of today's month, I have the following question regarding next month's avodah, which will be about thanking Hashem. How do we thank Hashem for situations that are impossible to change according to Chazal, such as someone who is blind or childless, who are considered to be dead while alive?

A: Although this was not related to today's class, I will answer you; the answer contains two aspects. First of all, we know that Chazal say that "*HaKol D'Avid Rachmana L'Tav Ovid*" – "Everything that Hashem does is for the best." First we must realize that everything is good, since everything comes from Hashem, and this is how we can thank Hashem for anything. Included in this is a deeper belief we need to internalize, that even the "bad" things are also for the good, since they were all done by Hashem. We do not understand this with our intellect, yet we have an *avodah* to internalize with our heart that everything is really good, that even the "bad" things are really good, and thus we can thank Hashem for even the "bad" things.

Q3: How do all of our actions come from Hashem, such as when a person sins?

A: Hashem gave us the power of free will and He even enables us to live even if we perform an evil act, as *sefer Tomer Devorah* writes; but just because Hashem sustains us we do evil doesn't mean that are not responsible for our actions. We are still responsible for our actions, even though Hashem is in control of all our actions, as we do them.

See Rav Dessler's *Kuntres HaBechirah* (Essay on Free Will) in *sefer Michtav M'Eliyahu* where it is discussed that there are points that are above our free will and below our free will. However, it is very hard for a person to know which parts of his life are above his free will.

Q4: Let's say my son didn't call me and I'm upset. How do I realize that this is all from Hashem?

A: If your first reaction is that it's from Hashem, it's a sign that you have begun to recognize how everything is from Hashem.

2 | *Power of Gratitude*

Summary of The Previous Chapter

We will quickly review the previous chapter 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 *Eemunah* 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.

Eemunah: Recognizing The Source

Here in this chapter, we will elaborate on how *Eemunah* 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, though, 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; so there has to be a discernible difference that we can recognize between those who do *hisbodedus* every day and those who don't. That is the kind of *hisbodedus* we need – the kind of *hisbodedus* in which you can tell on the person that it's making him into a better person.

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 *parmassah*, 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, and we can only get to it if we have become more appreciative to Hashem.

After we have worked on *hisbodedus* with ourselves⁵ and after we do *cheshbon hanefesh*,⁶ 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.

⁵ which we explained at length in chapters 1-11

⁶ which you can learn about in *Sefer Cheshbon HaNefesh* and in *Chovos HaLevovos: Shaar Cheshbon HaNefesh*

Questions and Answers With the Rav

Q1: *I usually do hisbodedus in the morning, so when I review my day, what should I 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 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 need 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.

3 | *Power of Prayer*

The Next Step: Tefillah\Prayer

With the help of Hashem, we discussed in the previous lesson how to incorporate *hodaah*, the power of gratitude to Hashem, into *hisbodedus* (meditation). Now we will progress to the next step which is the step of *tefillah*, prayer. We will explain how to incorporate *tefillah* into *hisbodedus*.

Tefillah during *hisbodedus* is similar to *hodaah* during *hisbodedus*. *Hodaah* means to feel grateful only to Hashem; if a person feels grateful to people but not to Hashem, it's not *hisbodedus*. So is it with regards to *tefillah*: when we ask Hashem for things, it should be only from Hashem, and not with the hope that some person will give us what we need.

Whom Do We Depend On For Our Needs?

In *tefillah*, we can ask Hashem for anything we want – be it material matters, or spiritual matters. But it's all about asking for our needs. Our soul has a faculty of *bakashah*, requesting, and this is what we use in *tefillah*. We must therefore make sure that our *bakashah* is being turned towards Hashem, and not towards people.

If we reflect about how we use *bakashah*, we will discover that we ask things from people. We need to think about this and see that we feel reliant on other people and not on Hashem for our needs. Although we certainly *daven* to Hashem for our needs, we often feel dependent on people as well, to fulfill our needs.

In fact, we mostly feel dependent on people, and we only feel partially feel dependent on Hashem, for our needs. For example, spouses ask things from each other and from their children, and they feel dependent on each other for the most part. So even though a person can *daven* to Hashem for his needs and even feels dependent on Hashem, he mostly feels dependent on people, and only a small part of himself is feeling dependent on Hashem to take care of his needs.

So we need to develop the attitude that we can turn to and ask for things only **from** Hashem. In *hisbodedus* we can feel internally that our only “address” is Hashem. A person might do *hisbodedus* and *daven*, but it can all be superficial, because he hasn't yet realized this.

Being Dependent on Hashem, and Less Dependent on People

We will now explain how to internalize that Hashem is the only One we need to feel dependent on.

The first thing we need to do is to ask Hashem throughout the day (for at least tens of times, and if you can do even more, even better) for all the things we feel we need. We can talk to Hashem either verbally or mentally, and ask Him to give us what we want. Get used to asking Hashem for your needs throughout the day, and the more you get used to this, you will feel more and more how Hashem is the only One whom you can rely on.

The second thing to do is to lessen your requests from people.

With the more you do this, you will find that you need people less, because you will naturally turn to Hashem for help, so you will be less dependent on people. This will happen as a gradual process.

Doing one of these steps without the other is like a body without a soul. You need to do both: know that only Hashem can give you your needs, and that all people who do favors for you are merely His messengers.

This is not just an intellectual concept to “**know**” about. You must internalize in your **heart** that only Hashem gives you your needs – a deeper awareness.

In addition, when you have to ask people for things, first ask Hashem, and only after that should you make a request from someone.

Summary of the Three Steps

So we have explained that there are three steps in *tefillah* during *hisbodedus*: 1) Getting used to asking Hashem for your needs; 2) Avoiding requests from people; and 3) That when you do have to ask a person for something, you should first ask Hashem for help.

Regarding the third point we mentioned, you should keep doing it until you are asking Hashem more often than when you ask things from people.

How To View People

We do need people to help us, but we must view people as the messengers of Hashem who can help us. The only reason why we need people is due to the sin of Adam, when we fell from our pure state of relying only on Hashem for everything. We were punished with having to be reliant on people, with the curse of having to make effort thus, we became dependent on people for our needs.

In the deeper layer of our existence, though, our soul recognizes that it is totally dependent on Hashem, and not on people.

Awareness

Therefore, whenever we have to make requests of people, we must be aware of which layer in our soul the request is coming from. When we ask things from people, it's coming from the outer layers of our soul that are unrefined, which do not feel *emunah* so clearly. It should bother you that you don't feel *emunah* so clearly and that you feel dependent on people.

In this way, you purify and refine your soul, with the more you feel pained at the fact that your *emunah* in Hashem is not dominant.

Deeper Awareness

There is also a higher aspect of the *avodah*: after you have internalized these points, the next step to take is that even as you are asking people for things, you can talk to Hashem (mentally) and say to yourself, "Hashem, I know that it is really You Who is enabling me to be helped."

As an example, Chazal say that when Esther stood in front of Achashveirosh to nullify the decree of genocide upon the Jews, she was really focused in her heart on Hashem, the King of all Kings, and praying to Hashem that the decree should be nullified. She had to make a request of a person, but even as she did so, she was focused on how Hashem is in charge of anything happening.

Slowly Acquiring These Stages

In order to achieve all of these points, it takes time. This is all a gradual process. But you can slowly work on each of these points, internalizing them more and more, and progress slowly but surely.

Without working on these points, a person will end up asking for things mainly from people. When he *davens* to Hashem, he mainly feels dependent on people, and not on Hashem. Although this can still be considered *tefillah*, it is not *tefillah* of *hisbodedus*.

The Two Parts To Our Existence

Now we can come to the following fundamental understanding.

All of us are multi-layered; our soul is vast and deep. The outer layers of our soul are more connected to the world and to people, while the inner layers of our soul are less attached to this world. The deeper we enter into our soul, the more we feel less dependent on people, and in turn, the outer layers of our soul become purified along with this.

We should now understand the following.

We must certainly feel gratitude to people, so our outer layers of the soul are to be validated. But we must view that part of ourselves as the less important part of our existence. The more integral part of our existence is the deeper layer of our soul, which does not feel dependent on people, only on Hashem.

Hisbodedus vs. The Rest of the Day

This leads us to the following deep point.

Because we have these two parts to our existence, our *hisbodedus* can never be perfect, because there is always a part in us that is not inwardly connected to Hashem. If so, what is the point of *hisbodedus*?

The answer is because as we are in the time of *hisbodedus*, we enter the deeper layer of our soul which understands that only Hashem is in charge. That's the whole point of *hisbodedus* – a time of the day in which we go inward into the soul and we access its depth. During the rest of the day we can't be in touch with our deep understanding of the soul.

Thus, there are two parts to the *tefillah* stage of *hisbodedus*. Get used to talking to Hashem throughout the day, and not just when you *daven* three times a day. (And included in this is making less requests of people). This applies for the rest of the day as well, not just during the time of *hisbodedus*. But during the actual time of *hisbodedus* you set aside each day, you can access the deeper part of yourself, which turns only to Hashem.

Two Methods of Beginning Tefillah During Hisbodedus

The *tefillah* stage during *hisbodedus* has two approaches.

One way is to first silence the soul [as explained in earlier lessons] through methods of inner calm, and after that, *daven* to Hashem for your needs; when you silence the soul, you are calmer, and then you can *daven* to Hashem from a deeper place in yourself.

A second method is to first begin through the outer layers of your soul, even though you haven't yet attained inner calm, and then to keep *davening*, each time entering deeper into the soul. Here the *tefillah* itself can assist you in getting deeper and deeper into the soul, whereupon you can come to feel that only Hashem is in charge of your needs.

This is how you can realize the meaning of the possuk⁷, *"I lift my eyes to the mountains, from where will my help come? My help will come from Hashem, Who made the heaven and earth."* When a person looks at the world and he sees that no one can help him, no one but Hashem, it is then that he truly realizes how he must turn to Hashem for help.

⁷ *Tehillim: 121*

Questions and Answers With the Rav

Q1: The more we recognize the inner layer of our soul (which only feels dependent on Hashem), the less we need to ask people for things?

A: Yes, but only if this awareness is a true recognition coming from the heart, as opposed to a mere intellectual awareness. It is not enough to know about this concept; it must be internalized in the heart.

Q2: Does this apply as well to making requests of your spouse (that it's better not to ask your spouse for things, because we should rather ask Hashem for things)?

A: There is a part in our soul which feels dependent on people, therefore, spouses need to ask things from each other. But one needs to recognize that the main part of our soul feels dependent on Hashem and not on people. If a couple feels entirely dependent on each other and not on Hashem, this is the opposite of a true life.

Q3: How can we know if our hisbodedus is being internalized in our heart or if it is just intellectual?

A: This is a very fundamental kind of question. If you feel in your requests from people that you are afraid of what will be if your request isn't answered, it shows that you haven't yet internalized the awareness of *emunah*. Another question to ask yourself is how much you are relying on people.

Q4: How should we feel towards someone who does something for us after we have davened to Hashem and we are answered?

A: You should feel gratitude to the person, because the outer layer of your soul connects with people, therefore, you should feel gratitude towards someone who has done something for you, because that part of your soul recognizes that this person has done something for you. At the same time, you should know and feel [through internalizing] that only Hashem gave you what you needed.

Q5: Is there a way that our requests to Hashem during hisbodedus should be accepted by Hashem?

A: There is much advice written about this in the *sefarim*. But there is one root way: the more you *daven* from the depths of your soul - and on a more subtle note, from a more truthful place in your soul - the more your prayer is readily accepted by Hashem. The more superficial the *tefillah* is, the less it is answered.

Q6: If I don't like to ask things from people and I find it easier to ask Hashem for things, is that a bad thing or a good thing?

A: It's not healthy if you never ask things from people at all. You need to get past that difficulty by asking yourself why you have a hard time asking people for things, (and here is not the place to discuss it, because there's not enough time here). But you can practically work on this as follows. Once a week, ask for something from someone, then increase it to twice or three times a week, and ask for small things.

Q7: When people ask me for things, how should I feel?

A: Feel that you are a messenger of Hashem. Also, bear in mind another aspect: there is a deep statement of Rav Zusha of Anipoli *zt"l* that the way to use the power of *kefirah* for good is that when someone else needs help, don't rely on Hashem that he will be helped, and instead do all you can to help that person. These are each opposite concepts, but they need to become intertwined. Most people understand either the first perspective or the second perspective and they can't balance out the two ideas together, but the true perspective is to balance both of these contradicting perspectives together: have *emunah* and recognize that you are but a messenger of Hashem to help people, and detach from *emunah* by understanding that you must help people and not rely on Hashem that others will be helped.

4 | *Expressing Love To Hashem*

The Next Step: Beyond What We “Get” From Hashem

In the previous chapter, with Hashem’s help, we discussed *hisbodedus* with Hashem – first to thank Hashem, and then how to ask Hashem for things. Now we will progress to the next step of *hisbodedus*. This will be about revealing a love for the Creator.

The essence of *hisbodedus* is not just about thanking Him and praying to Him; that is just the beginning. When we recognize that Hashem gives us things and we want to give back to Him, this can only come from love to Hashem.

Hashem gives us our needs and therefore we thank Him, but the essence of *hisbodedus* is that we reveal a love for Him; He loves us, and that is *why* we must thank Him and why we need to receive from Him. The giving and taking is the external aspect of our relationship with Hashem, but the inner aspect of the relationship with Hashem, which is the essence of the relationship, is to love Hashem.

We will now discuss this inner layer of how we can reveal love for Hashem.

Examining The Source of Our Self-Love

It’s impossible for anyone to live without love in his life. There are different kinds of love that exist. People get love from others, and if a person sees that others don’t love him, he might get his love from his own self-esteem. In any case, there is no person who can survive without love. Either he knows that there are others who love him, or he knows how to draw self-love from within himself; but we all need some source of love in our life.

Hashem created all of us with a nature to love ourselves. Just like we love ourselves, so do we want others to love us. This is not another kind of love that we seek. Rather, we want others to love us as a part of our own self-love. We won’t be able to love ourselves if we feel that others are not loving us.

The love that a person has for himself – such as the fact that one thinks and worries for himself – is entirely *shelo lishmah* (ulterior motives). Just as a person wants his physical needs to be nourished, so does a person love himself for his own purposes. It has some *lishmah* (pure motives) in it also, but it is mostly *shelo lishmah*. A person wants others to love him as an extension of that *shelo lishmah* aspect in his self-love.

The self-love is the root of all our loves that we experience. If we use it for love of the Creator, then just as we love ourselves and wish for others to love us, so will we want Hashem to love us. In

this way, we can form a bond with Hashem out of love – that just as others should love me, so do I want Hashem to love me. But this is all a love that comes from the *shelo lishmah* in the soul. It is the kind of love in which just as we want others to love us, so do we want Hashem to love us.

So first we need to realize that we love ourselves, and then we can expand that love to include Hashem in it. If one doesn't first come to terms with the concept of self-love, he won't be able to get to the next stage, which is to expand that self-love.

Defining The Very Essence of Love

Most people feel that they love themselves – after all, all day we are taking care of our needs, both physical and spiritual. However, this doesn't show that there is real self-love. Taking care of our needs is only some result of self-love; it is not the essence of the self-love. Self-love itself is an inner power which results in taking care of our needs and is a power unto itself, and it is not the same thing as the act of taking care of our needs.

To illustrate, we worry for our small children all day, and we show love towards them as well by caressing them, hugging them and kissing them. We worry for their needs, and we express love to them. When they get older, we still take care of their needs, but we put less focus on expressing love to them. It becomes hidden. It's not that we stop loving them, but, it becomes very hidden. The results of our love still remain, so we still take care of their needs, but the essence of the love itself sort of goes into hiding. [So it is clear that self-love and taking care of needs are two separate matters.]

If we reflect a little, we can see that the parent-child relationship is similar to how we relate to our own self. We have a certain love for ourselves, and we also want to take care of our needs. Most people only know of the second factor: we take care of our needs, but our actual self-love often remains hidden. We often treat ourselves like how we treat our older children: we are concerned for our needs, but we don't access the love itself.

We express love to our small children, and when they get older, we stop expressing love to them. What happens as a result? We treat others not out of love, but from worry for their needs. When people try to take care of others' needs but they don't see this as an expression of their love for others, the love is missing from all of these acts of giving. It is missing the root of the love, and it is only the external shell of love. So we need to learn how to reveal an actual love for others along with looking to fulfilling their needs.

There is actually very little real love in the world. Most acts of giving for others are not coming from an extension of one's own self-love to others, but from worrying for others. So, what happens? Although the act of giving for others and worrying for them looks like an expression of love, it is still coming mainly from worry for others, not from love to them. The acts of giving and care for others is often there, but the love behind it isn't. For this reason, the quality of love that is found on this world is very minimal.

Expanding Our Love Towards Hashem

This is all an introductory point to what we are discussing in this current stage of *hisbodedus*: to reveal a bond of love for Hashem. If one doesn't access his self-love and only knows of taking care of his needs, the most he will be able to accomplish in his bond with Hashem is to thank Him and to daven to Him, because he is concerned with getting his needs. He will thank Hashem so he can get things from Him and then *daven* to Him for his needs; that part he will identify with, because he is already involved with taking care of his needs. But he won't be able to develop a love for Hashem.

This is in fact why most people do not develop a love for Hashem since they haven't even learned yet to love their own self properly. If one does not have proper self-love yet, he surely will not be able to expand his self-love to include Hashem in it. One might understand the concept of love unto itself as something that we express to children, but as for love towards one's own self, a person has a harder time relating to this idea.

To give a more subtle definition, self-love consists of two parts. The love itself is the inner layer of the self-love, and the concern for our needs is the external layer of the love, which is the result of the love. Our actual self-love is the *lishmah* (non-ego) aspect, while the concern for our needs is our *shelo lishmah* (self-serving) aspect.

If one is able to produce a love for himself that has nothing to do with self-concern, this is a love that is *lishmah*. If one takes care of his needs because he loves himself, there is both *lishmah* and *shelo lishmah* involved. There is also a third possibility: one who doesn't know how to love himself, and he also takes care of his needs – but not because he loves himself. Rather, this kind of person takes care of his needs simply because he is worried for his needs, and not as a result of his self-love. This is a case of total *shelo lishmah*.

The essence of one's self-love itself is *lishmah*, while love to fulfill our needs is coming from the *shelo lishmah* in the soul. One who loves himself purely *because he loves himself* - is one who loves himself *lishmah*. When one loves himself in the sense that he is concerned for his needs, this is a love that is *shelo lishmah*.

The deep perspective to have is that when one loves himself purely for the sake of loving himself, this is a pure kind of love, and it is *lishmah*. If one loves himself solely because he takes care of his needs, this is the ego. The ego in us really takes the power of our pure self-love and makes a person become self-absorbed, when he could have extended his self-love to others.

The popular way of thinking by most people when they hear the word “love” is to equate it as “to take care of needs [whether it is my needs, or another's needs]”, but this is really a misconception. Love is really an inner power that has a use unto itself; it is a separate factor than taking care of my needs or another's needs. Just like zeal, sadness, and happiness are all powers in our soul, so is a love a power in our soul, and it has a use unto itself, unrelated to taking care of one's needs.

When one realizes this deep understanding about love, he becomes opened to a pure kind of love which will be the key to developing a bond of love to Hashem through *hisbodedus*.

Identifying This In Yourself

Based upon this, in order to proceed with *hisbodedus*, one must identify these two parts of himself: the essence of love for ourselves, and what results from that self-love. There is a part in us which has a love for ourselves, simply because we have a love for ourselves; and there is a part in us which worries for our needs. The worry for our needs is the result of our self-love, and it is the external layer of our love, but it is not the love itself, as we explained.

When we thank Hashem for what He gave us in the past and we daven to Hashem for our future needs, we are really using the external layer of our love, which is to be concerned for our needs. But in order to develop a love for Hashem, we need to use the inner layer of love, the essence of our love – the very *love itself* that one has for himself.

It is that place in ourselves which we need to use in order to turn to express our love for Him. It is a deep place in our soul, and it is clean from self-interests.

Examine yourself deeply and identify the two parts in yourself. First identify the part of yourself which is concerned for your needs, and use that part in yourself to thank Hashem and daven to Him for your needs; and identify in yourself a deeper part of yourself, a part which loves yourself simply because you love for yourself, and now use that power in yourself to turn to Hashem with that love.

We can see that most people who do *hisbodedus* are mainly busy with self-accounting⁸, thanking Hashem⁹, and *davening* to Hashem¹⁰. This is all because most people have not developed the proper self-love for themselves which was described here, and therefore, they only know how to worry for themselves and take care of their needs.

Their level of *hisbodedus* cannot go further than self-accounting and thanking Hashem for the past and davening to Hashem for what they still need.

But if one develops a proper self-love for himself, by revealing actual love for himself, he will open a new treasure in his *hisbodedus*. He will be able to reveal a true and pure love himself that is non-ego oriented, and from that deep place in himself, he can turn to Hashem amidst that pure love.

Reaching Your Pure Self-Love: Acquiring The Power of “Someiach B’chelko” (Inner Happiness)

Now that we have explained the concept, we will progress and explain how one can indeed reveal his true self-love, and how to take that pure self-love and use it to turn to Hashem in *hisbodedus*. We will now explain the first part of this: how one can develop a simple and pure love for himself that is solely about love, unrelated to any ego-oriented concerns.

⁸ Described in Chapter #07

⁹ Described in Chapter #013

¹⁰ Described in Chapter #014

Usually, when one feels a love for himself, he will also find that he worries for his needs, for the things he wants.

Chazal say that one should be “*someach b’chelko*”, “happy with our lot”. This describes an inner ability we have to simply be happy with ourselves, and not let our happiness be dependent on things that we seek and wish for.

As long as one hasn’t yet reached his *someach b’chelko*, as soon as he thinks about his situation and his needs, he will immediately seek to fulfill those needs, but he skips over the love for himself. But if one has reached his *someach b’chelko*, since he is happy with whatever he has until now, he will find that the immediate impulse to seek the things he wants is really an impulse that can be calmed and stilled. Although he will still want things, he won’t feel an immediate need to quickly get what he wants, because his self-love will be awakened, and the love he has for himself will give him a deep feeling of satisfaction.

In fact, the pure kind of self-love is an even deeper kind of power than *someach b’chelko*. He loves himself *not because* he is *someach b’chelko*; [rather, his *someach b’chelko* that he has reached will awaken his self-love, and his self-love will calm him and help him let go of pursuing whatever he wants.]

Without *someach b’chelko*, the things he wants will awaken concern to get what he wants. His self-love remains out of access, and instead his self-love gets used solely to take care of his needs. When one has reached *someach b’chelko*, he is happy with what he has, and his soul is calmed because it doesn’t want more things. When one has that inner calm, he is able to awaken his pure self-love, and that will satisfy his needs; he will discover that he can let go of what he wants, because he has an inner satisfaction with himself.

The Way To Reach “Someiach B’chelko” Is Through Emunah

Someiach b’chelko is developed when we acquire *emunah* (faith in Hashem). The clearer our *emunah* is, the greater will be our quality of *someach b’chelko*.

Emunah tells us that whatever we *have* now is what we are supposed to have, and what we don’t yet have is what we don’t *need* to have. We can absorb *emunah* by reflecting on how Hashem is in charge of everything and runs every last detail in Creation. This can give us *someach b’chelko* in what we have. In addition, it can even give us happiness even in what we don’t have, because we realize that we don’t need the things we don’t have.

Absorbing this, more and more, gives our soul the ability to reflect on our situations and realize that we do not have to get the things we think we are lacking since we are happy with ourselves since we are content with whatever we have until now. We can get used to the concept that just because we want things, that doesn’t mean we are missing anything. The more we implant *emunah* in

ourselves, the more we can silence our will for wanting things, and in its place, we acquire deep *simcha*, happiness. It is the deep power of *simchah* in the soul that is called *someach b'chelko*.

When *emunah* is internalized in you, it gives you the power to be *someach b'chelko*. As a result, whenever you think of your situation, you will immediately feel content towards yourself. Your soul will get used to the idea of accepting yourself for who you are, and that you don't need to use your will for the things you want in order to give yourself something. This will calm your soul, and when the soul is calmed, you will begin to feel your true self-love.

Without developing *emunah*, a person cannot be *someach b'chelko*, and then the more a person wants things, the more he experiences worry for his needs, which has nothing to do with real self-love. But when one internalizes *emunah* – that whatever you have is what you need, and whatever you don't yet have is what you don't need – this gives you *someach b'chelko*. Slowly but surely you will gain the ability to accept yourself for who you are, and you will find inner happiness at this.

The obstacle which prevents us from accessing our true self-love is when we want things, and therefore we are uneasy and anxious until we get those things we want. When our will to get what we want is calmed, it opens up new inner wellsprings inside ourselves: the feeling of what it *really* means to love yourself. It is a pure kind of love for yourself that is clean from any ego-oriented concerns; it will be an experience of just a love for yourself in its pure state.

Unconditional Love Towards Hashem: Just Like You Love Yourself For No Reason

When one hasn't yet uncovered his true self-love, he won't be able to get further in his *hisbodedus* than thanking Hashem and davening to Hashem for his needs, as we already explained. In addition, even if he tries to awaken a love for Hashem, it won't work, because he only relates to Hashem as the One who worries for him and gives him his needs, and he doesn't know how to relate to Hashem beyond that level. His entire relationship with Hashem is self-concerned.

But if one has uncovered his real self-love, he can face Hashem from that part in himself, since he relates to Hashem not out of anything he will get, but simply because he loves Hashem. This is called the unconditional love that one can have in his relationship with Hashem. **Just as you can love yourself for no reason, you love Hashem for no reason; you can love Hashem not because he gives you your needs and takes care of you, but simply because you can just love Hashem.**

Expressing Your Love To Hashem

When you reach that state in *hisbodedus*, now you can go further with this: Think loving thoughts towards Hashem and express your love to Him. You can use *pesukim* or statements of Chazal which express love for Hashem, or you can use your own language.

Here are some examples of some *pesukim* you can use which describe love of Hashem, which are contained in *Tehillim*:

1) נפשי בלילה אויתיך “My soul desires You at night”.

2) נכספה וגם כלתה נפשי “My soul yearns”.

There are many other verses in *Tehillim* as well which you can use that express love for Hashem, and there are many other statements of Chazal, as well your own expressions, which you can say to Hashem and express love to Him. You can do it mentally or verbally, and it’s better if you do both.

From your own true self-love, you can turn to Hashem from that place in yourself and think thoughts of pure love to Hashem, and then verbalize them. Your enthusiasm will increase as you say the words, but it will not just be superficial. It will be a reflection of the deep love you have reached towards your own self which you are using to love Hashem with.

This is the true and inner essence of *hisbodedus*, and it is the very essence of man: to bond with Hashem.

Summary Of The Avodah Until This Point

Thus, we have seen thus far that *hisbodedus* is firstly to gain inner peace with yourself, and after that, to turn to Hashem (and *only* to Hashem) from that calm state of inner peace you have gained.

Finally, one has to then concentrate solely on his bond with Hashem.

To summarize:

1. The first part of *hisbodedus* is inner peace with yourself,
2. The second part of *hisbodedus* is to bond with Hashem from your inner peace,
3. The final part of is to simply bond with Hashem.

One who hasn’t yet acquired unconditional love for Hashem is missing a major part of *hisbodedus*. He is only found externally with Hashem, but he is missing the inner bond with Hashem in his soul – he won’t get to the desired goal of *hisbodedus*. Only from unconditional love – first towards the self, and then to expand it towards Hashem – can one reach the goal of *hisbodedus*.

May Hashem help us that all of us reach a *gmar chasima tova* (to be sealed for a good year) – and the true “good” is to reach the total bond with Hashem, which we can reach in the innermost depths of our soul.

Questions and Answers With the Rav

Q1: *Rav Dessler (in Michtav M'Eliyahu: Kuntres HaChessed) writes that self-love is evil, because it is the power of taking, while the Rav seems to be disagreeing with Rav Dessler's approach, because the Rav is saying that even self-love is pure.*

A: Rav Dessler is talking about the result of self-love; when the result is evil, it is the power of taking, and when it is positive, it is the power of giving. But they are both the results of self-love. Here in this class we were addressing the essence of self-love [which is not evil]. That is why we emphasized here in this class that there is the essence of self-love, and there is the result of self-love. The result of our self-love can either be good (giving) or evil (taking), but that is a separate factor than self-love itself. Here in this class we explained the essence of self-love, and we did not discuss its results of either giving or taking.

To illustrate the difference, when two friends meet, if they hug or kiss, we can say that this describes the essence of their love. If they give each other presents afterwards, this is the results of their love, but it is not the love itself.

Q2: *When one is trying to uncover his pure kind of self-love, how can he avoid worrying about his needs?*

A: It was addressed in this class that we need to develop the power of *someach b'chelko*, and this requires us to greatly internalize *emunah*. When one hasn't reached *someach b'chelko*, it will usually be very difficult for him to feel a real self-love for himself.

There are some people who are born with a natural self-love and a love for Hashem, but most people are not gifted with this, and for this reason, most people need to work on their *emunah* in order to reach *someach b'chelko*, and from that, one can get to real self-love.

However, as soon as one starts thinking about himself, his will gets awakened, and he wants things. His heart feels anxious, and even if he tries to tell himself verbally that he is happy with himself and that he is letting go of what he wants, his heart is not at peace with his mouth is saying. Of course, verbalization can affect the heart, but it will be mostly useless if one's heart is full of many desires that it wants (which is the case with most people).

Therefore, the more advised approach is to change our heart's perspective [which is the method being used here], and then what we tell our heart with our mouth will be more effective on our heart to help it let go of the things we want that are making us anxious.

Q3: *Does the concept of someach b'chelko (being happy with our lot) apply as well to our ruchniyus\spirituality, such as being happy with our middos, or is it only with our physical areas?*

A: That's a classical question which is discussed. When it comes to our physical areas, we need to be totally *someach b'chelko*, and when it comes to our ruchniyus, we have a two-sided *avodah*. We need to be happy with even our current level of ruchniyus that we have, as the Vilna Gaon says; at the same time, we also need to aspire to reach more and more levels in our ruchniyus. We need a certain amount of inner happiness towards ourselves so that we can "feel good about ourselves" somewhat, and at the same time, concerning our future, we need to aspire for more growth.

So yes, there is a degree of *someach b'chelko* in our ruchniyus, and it is a very subtle *avodah*.

Q4: How can one access his self-love? It seems like there are too many steps to take in order to get there – internalizing emunah, then someach b'chelko...it takes a lot of time! How is it possible then to reach our self-love?

A: Every word you said is true. [It is indeed a long road to get there!].

Q5: Rav Dessler writes that giving to others awakens love for others, so it sounds like giving is not just a result of love, but that it is an actual cause of love.

A: Giving to others certainly causes love towards people, but it is only the external aspect of love, not the essence of love. If love is based on giving to others, then the love that results from it is love that is happenstance, for it happened to come from an act of giving. We discussed here about the essence of love itself, which is above happenstance love. Love that results from giving is happenstance love, because giving is act that might happen or might not happen. But the love that comes from our own essence is the kind of love in which we love ourselves for no reason, and when it comes to extending that love to others, we can be unconditionally bound with others, for we have a soul connection with others that is intrinsic, and it is not dependent on the act of giving to others. It is this kind of love that we spoke about here.

Q6: Is proper self-love an automatic result from someach b'chelko?

A: When you feel your *someach b'chelko* as you have inner calmness, you will feel the pure self-love. There are people who reach inner calm through the methods that were described earlier to reach self-recognition (Chapters 1-10), and this is a long path. When one reaches the end of that path, he will also feel pure self-love as a result from the inner calm he acquires. But even if one doesn't do all those things to reach inner calm, and he only uses his power of *emunah* and he becomes *someach b'chelko*, as was described here in this class, he can reach self-love as well.

If one tries the second path (*emunah**someach b'chelko*) to reach inner calm, which was addressed in this class, he will get to pure self-love, without having to do all of the methods of inner calm that was described earlier. If someone tries the first path, he will arrive at self-love even without acquiring deep *emunah*. However, he will be missing the quality of *emunah*. But in either method, one attains a deep inner calm which leads him to a pure self-love.

Q7: If I know that I'm not yet holding at the level of someach b'chelko, can I talk it into myself "as if" I really am someach b'chelko?

A: You can't convince yourself that it's "as if" you're on that level if you are really not. But what I can tell you is that it can work temporarily than one can calm himself a bit, just like we find that a pain in the body can be relieved temporarily; it doesn't take away the pain, but it relieves it temporarily. So if you are temporarily calm, you can feel *someach b'chelko* and from there you can find your self-love. But you will only feel it temporarily, until the next time you feel a desire for something you want, and then once again you are taken out of your calmness. But you will at least experience some times that you feel calm with yourself and happy with yourself, so that you can at least have a temporary experience of true self-love.

Q8: Is there some feeling in the body that can one can feel (throughout the day, and not specifically during time of hisbodedus) in order to identify if he has truly reached "someach b'chelko"?

A: I'm not sure if I have understood this entire question, but if I understood the question, the answer is that there are two separate factors: there is *someach b'chelko* itself, and there are other factors that come along with it. Sometimes during the day you can feel the pleasant feelings of *someach b'chelko* that you previously reached during *hisbodedus*, even though you are not consciously aware that you are *someach b'chelko*; and those pleasant feelings that come to you throughout the day can certainly awaken you to being more *someach b'chelko*.

If I understood the question correctly, the answer here is only true if it is done with conscious awareness to awaken the *someach b'chelko* when you experience the pleasant offshoots of it throughout the day. If you don't consciously awaken your *someach b'chelko* when you experience these feelings, you will become too caught up in the pleasant feeling of it, and the *someach b'chelko* part of it will end up being ignored, because you won't be consciously aware of it.

Q9: Do we need to first love Hashem in order to be someach b'chelko?

A: We must first believe in Hashem, before we work on trying to love Hashem. A person can believe that all that Hashem does is good, and from that, a person is *someach b'chelko*.

There are people who are naturally happy with themselves, because they have a very pleasant nature that is drawn towards calmness and pleasantness; these are people who were born with a dominant element of water in their souls (which is the root of pleasure). There are only a few people who are like this, but they do exist. As for those of us who do not possess this nature, we need either the paths described in the earlier chapters, or we need to use our power of *emunah* in order to reach our *someach b'chelko*.

1. Altogether, there are three ways to get to *someach b'chelko*: People who are born with a pleasant nature, who are automatically *someach b'chelko* [and therefore they do not have an *avodah* in reaching *someach b'chelko*];
2. Using methods of inner calm [as described earlier in Chapters 1-10];
3. Developing the power of *emunah*, as was described in this class.

5 | *The Way of External Simplicity*

Getting Closer To The Inner Point of Hisbodedus

With the help of Heaven, in the previous chapters, we were able to explain the stages of *hisbodedus* with the Creator: *hodaah* (thanking Hashem), *tefillah* (praying to Hashem for our requests), and more recently, we explained how to reveal the depth of our *ahavah* (love) for the Creator.

All of these stages are essentially the preface of how we can bring ourselves, with Hashem's help, to the **inner point** of *hisbodedus*. The inner point of *hisbodedus* is not about thanking Hashem or *davening* to Him, nor is it mainly about revealing our love for Him. The essence of *hisbodedus* which we are coming towards is to **feel the very existence of Hashem**.

This is not a superficial kind of emotion, inspiration, or enthusiasm. It is to experience a **recognition** of the true reality of Hashem (*bakaras hametzius*).

This is the outline of the goal, and we will hopefully expand upon these words and explain how we can get there.

Internalizing The Purpose of Life

Firstly, every Jew needs to know, that our entire purpose in life – whether you are Jewish or not, but it is especially applicable to a Jew is to come to recognize the Creator. We must come to recognize Him, and **that is the purpose of our entire life**. We must know, and internalize in our hearts, that there is nothing besides Hashem, as it is written, “*And you shall know today and you shall return the matter upon your hearts, that Hashem is G-d, and that there is nothing besides Him.*”

Even if a person knows this intellectually, it is not enough, because life takes us in all kinds of directions that hold back this recognition from us. Therefore, each of us must deeply ingrain in ourselves what the purpose of life is (to come to recognize how Hashem is the true reality and that there is no other point to life other than this). We must be very clear that this is the goal of all our life. It should be clear to both your intellect and your heart of why you live, what the purpose of life is: to recognize the reality of Hashem.

This is the purpose of life, and it is also the depth of the goal of *hisbodedus*. The goal of *hisbodedus* is to become separated internally from everything, and to be **concentrated fully** on the knowledge of this goal: that the goal is to recognize how Hashem is the reality. Everything else that we explained so far with regards to *hisbodedus* were just the rungs in the ladder we climb to get to the top of the ladder. The top of the ladder is the goal.

The stages of *cheshbon hanefesh*, *tefillah*, and *ahavas Hashem*, etc. were all **tools** we need to get to the goal, and they are necessary, but they are all there to bring us to the inner point of our soul, where the true *hisbodedus* is reached. It is in the innermost point of the soul in which one can become totally secluded from everything around him and be fully **immersed in recognizing Hashem, with his entire mind and heart.**

Purity of Heart and Inner Calm

There are two fundamental inner abilities in our soul which can bring us to that innermost point of recognizing the reality of Hashem.

One inner ability to get there is through ***taharas halev***, “purity of heart.” Every day (in the blessings before *Kerias Shema*) we daven, “*And purify our hearts to serve You in truth.*” The more a person purifies his heart, the more he experiences a recognition of Hashem.

The second ability which can us help us get there is the ability of **inner calm** (*hashkatah*, or *sheket pnimi*). The more inner calm that a person reaches in his soul, the more he can palpably feel Hashem.¹¹

1) Purity of Heart: Keeping The Mitzvos

Purity of heart can be attained not only during *hisbodedus*; it can be attained throughout the rest of the day as well. All of the *mitzvos* are able to bring us to purify our hearts more and more. The 365 negative commandments that we have are meant to keep us away from contaminating our soul, and the 248 positive commandments we have are given to us to shine a pure spiritual light upon our soul.

Thus, purity of heart can be attained throughout the course of the entire day, and it is not attained exclusively through *hisbodedus*.

2) Purity Of Heart: Fixing Our Worst Middah

In addition, ***tikkun hamiddos*** (improving our character) also provides us with purity of heart. When a person has bad *middos*, they remain entrenched in the heart and cover it, preventing purity of heart from entering the person.

Therefore, a person has to find out what his good *middos* are and what his bad *middos* are, and he should discover the **worst *middah*** he has and then sensibly go about trying to uproot it from within himself.

¹¹ [*The ways to inner calm were explained in Reaching Your Inner Silence: Preparation for Hisbodedys.*](#)

The more a person works to uproot his worst *middah*, the more purity of heart that will enter him.

Thus, purity of heart entails doing the *mitzvos*, avoiding sin, and improving our *middos*, in particular, to uproot one's personal worst *middah*.

3) Purity of Heart: Temimus (Point of Simple Belief in Hashem)

There is also a third power which enables a person to receive purity of heart: the power of *temimus* (wholesomeness, simplicity, earnestness, simple belief, innocence). It is written, “*You shall be tamim (wholesome) to Hashem.*” It is also written, “*Like an infant on its mother's lap.*”

The first two parts to purity of heart – doing the *mitzvos* and improving our *middos* – are not exclusive to *hisbodedus*. But the third part of attaining purity of heart – uncovering our *temimus* – is a very inner kind of experience, in which a person enters deep into his soul and feels the *temimus* there. When a person feels his deep point of *temimus* [during *hisbodedus*], he will feel purity of heart with it.

Hisbodedus and Temimus Are Mutually Exclusive

We need to know that *hisbodedus* is required in order to reach the deep place in your soul of *temimus*.

If someone practices *hisbodedus* and he isn't interested in reaching his *temimus*, he is missing the main point of *hisbodedus*.

He is trying to bypass the main gate he needs to enter in order to discover Hashem. “*You shall be tamim to Hashem*” – the more a person is a *tamim*, the more he is with Hashem, for he has penetrated the main obstacles. Although this is not such a well-known concept to those who are involved in *hisbodedus*, that doesn't take away from the importance of it. **It must become a very well-known concept to you.** The inner essence of *hisbodedus*, [if one ever hopes to reach it], requires one to reach his point of *temimus* in the soul.

We will soon try to explain, with the help of Heaven, how exactly we can get to that point.

Getting Back Your Long Lost “Temimus”

The point of *temimus* in the soul is not some ability found outside of you which you need to acquire. All of the abilities you need to acquire are actually found inside of you, in their potential state, and it is merely upon you to **bring them out** from the soul into their **active** state.

***Temimus* is already in you**, and even more so, it is already **active** in you. It has merely become covered over by many layers! You already had *temimus* when you were a child. When you were a child, you were “*an infant on its mother’s lap*” – you were earnest and believing. As you got older and you went through life, your *temimus* became buried under many layers, and now it is covered.

If the situation would be that your *temimus* was never activated yet in your life, it would be much more difficult to try to activate it. But it was already activated in you before in your life, and it has merely become covered, so it is much easier for you to remove the coverings and reveal it again.

Just like every other ability we have, *temimus* can be used for either good or evil. It is used for evil when a person believes everything he hears, which is foolish naiveté. It is holy when a person is a *tamim* in his relationship with Hashem – when he believes in Him simply with no questions.

If a person thinks that *temimus* means to be naïve and foolish, then he does not recognize the benefits of having *temimus*, so he will not be able to uncover it from within himself. He won’t be interested in acquiring it.

Therefore, the first thing a person needs to think about here is to realize that *temimus* is a power that can be used for either good or evil. Realize that you can use *temimus* for holiness, and then you can awaken in yourself a yearning to reveal it.

With the help of Hashem, we will now explain a few ways of how we can awaken our *temimus*.

1) Revealing Your Temimus: Identifying Temimus In Your Life

The first thing to think is as follows. Examine your daily life and try to identify where you have *temimus*. Where do you see your *temimus* manifesting itself in your life? Most of us can remember a time in life in which we trusted someone only to be deceived by the person, resulting in a loss of money or in some kind of betrayal.

If you can remember such an experience in your life, you can begin to conceptualize that you had *temimus* at one point of your life, but it was used in the wrong place. The fact that you were betrayed doesn’t mean that being pure and trusting is a bad thing. It is merely a sign that you didn’t know how to use your *temimus*, and that is why someone else took advantage of your *temimus* and harmed you. It is merely upon you to know how to use your *temimus* properly.

After you discover a time in your life in which you didn’t know how to use your *temimus* properly, now is the time to regret having used it improperly.

If you identify in yourself how you use your *temimus* constructively (such as the fact that you trust your spouse or friends, and you see that trusting them enables you to gain from them), try to **concentrate on that part in yourself and try to bring it out of yourself**, by seeing opportunities which can utilize your *temimus*.

Don't just imagine yourself bringing out your *temimus*. Instead, **become self-aware** of your already existent *temimus* in the parts of life in which you see it, and try to expand it further from how much it already is present in your life.

2) Revealing Your Temimus: Returning To Your Inner Child

Another way how you can bring out your *temimus* is as follows.

When we were all children, we were all pure and trusting, but as we got older and we got a taste of life, we encountered betrayal from others; we realized that not everyone on this world is so nice to us. People tricked us or took advantage over us or spoke about us behind our backs.

It is a long time already that we have lost our *temimus*. How do we return to our *temimus*? How can we get it back?

The way you can do it is by **returning to the inner child** that is in your soul. There is a place in your soul which contains your childhood, in which you were pure and trusting. There are many aspects to this inner child that you have in your soul, but we are currently discussing one of the aspects of the inner child, which is the point of *temimus* in your soul. When you were a child, you had *temimus*, and you can return to it **when you concentrate on it**.

For example, look a picture or a family video of yourself when you were a child (most of us have such pictures), and think about how pure and trusting you were then, by examining your facial expressions and the like. Don't just think about what you were doing in the picture - that's not the point. Just **concentrate on the fact that you were so innocent and trusting** when you were a child, and now **try to attach your current self to the way you were then**: pure and trusting. (It is difficult to describe this in words - not everything can be described in the word.)¹²

3) Returning To Your Temimus: Reading A Story of A Gadol

Another way of revealing your *temimus* is by reading a story about a *Gadol* and see how much *temimus* they had.

You can do this by reading the *Chumash* and you learn about the lives of our *Avos*. Or, you can think about people even in this generation, such as people in your surroundings, who clearly possess *temimus*.

¹² For more on the concept of "Temimus" see 1) *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh (Building A Sanctuary In The Heart) Part 2 Chapter 28*; 2) *Bilvavi Part 5-Fundamentals In Avodah*.

For more on the concept of "inner child" according to the Torah approach, see the following attached links: 1) *Women's World #020- Revealing Your Inner Child*, and 2) *Tefillah #086-The Purity Within and Tefillah #0132- The Essence of Hearing Shofar* and 3) *Tefillah #0133-Sanctuary* and 4) *Derashos #056-Returning To Our Simplicity* and 5) *Melaveh Malka #02-A New Meal*.

This will cause your soul to become awakened to *temimus*, a wish to become close to Hashem.

4) The Deeper Method of Revealing Your Temimus

We have so far brought three ways of how to awaken *temimus*. However, there is a fourth method as well, and it is the deepest and most fundamental of all of them: **to reflect on how Hashem is above our understanding, and believe fully in this.**

This is a way to **directly** penetrate into your *temimus*. It is the most inner method to awaken your *temimus*.

The deeper your belief is, the more you will feel the *temimus* of it.

The higher of a spiritual level that a person reaches, the more internal a person becomes, the more he is in touch with his *temimus*. Of course, all of our *Gedolim* possessed great intellect and comprehension, but at the same time, their *temimus* developed along with their minds.

Yaakov *Avinu* is called the *ish tam* (man of wholesomeness), and he is also called by our Sages as “the choicest of the *Avos*”. The depth of this is that because he reached the most *temimus*, that is why he is considered the most prominent of the *Avos*, because *temimus* is the barometer that measures a person’s true greatness.

The more that a person has simple belief in Hashem and that He is in charge of everything, the less he will have worries and fears with regards to people in the world. By contrast, the less *temimus* a person has, the more he will have fears and worries of people of this world.

Enjoying Temimus In Yourself and In Observing Others

The more a person reaches his *temimus*, the more he should strive to enjoy it. We all love to see the pure look on a baby’s face, and the inner reason behind this is because our soul loves to experience *temimus*, innocence and purity. So too, when we reach on our own *temimus*, within ourselves, it should be to us a deeply enjoyable experience.

Talking To Hashem From Your Point of Temimus

If a person comes to actually enjoy his point of *temimus* – not just that he recognizes what *temimus* is, but that he actually enjoys seeing *temimus* in others and in himself – he now has the power to penetrate into his point of *temimus* in his soul when he does *hisbodedus*, and from there, he can talk to Hashem **from an entirely deeper place in himself** than before.

The Chofetz Chaim, as is well-known, would practice *hisbodedus* for 2 hours a day. He would talk to Hashem during that time, and someone overheard him once talking to Hashem like a child asking something from a father, with such earnestness. In the recent video that was released of the Chofetz Chaim, you can see the pure and innocent look on his face. Although the Chofetz Chaim possessed intellectual brilliance, at the same time, he was utterly a *tamim* in his relationship with Hashem.

The Pure Place Within Yourself

Entering the point of *temimus* in your soul is essentially how you can free yourself from this entire world; it will feel so relieving! The world, ever since the sin of Adam and Chava, has become a world mixed with good and evil. Once *daas* of the *Eitz HaDaas* entered mankind, the world really became a deceitful place, a world that tends to deviate from the truth and from purity and innocence. When a person connects to the point of *temimus* in his soul, he essentially disconnects from this devious world. It is a deep and inner kind of enjoyment that one can experience, for two reasons: the fact that he has disconnected from this big bad world of trickery and evil, and because he has entered a place in himself which is true, pure and pleasant, the place of *temimus*.

Temimus – The Essence of Hisbodedus

As we explained in the past, the external part of *hisbodedus* is to be physically secluded from the surroundings and be alone in the physical sense. But the inner part of *hisbodedus* is to enter deeper and deeper into the soul, deeper and deeper.

Just like we see in the physical world that there are places such as a *shul*, a *beis midrash*, a house, etc. so are there places in our soul, and there is a place of *hisbodedus* in our soul. Where is the place of *hisbodedus* in our soul? It is found in the place of *temimus*. When you reach your point of *temimus* - **that** is the place of true *hisbodedus*! Yaakov was called the *ish tam*, and we also fought the angel “alone” – this hints to us that the “alone” in the soul is reached through the place of *temimus*.

What Hisbodedus Looks Like Without Temimus

Many people are doing *hisbodedus* but they aren't successful, and there are many reasons for this, but the main reason for this is because they aren't reaching their *temimus*. They are trying to do *hisbodedus* in a place in their soul where they can't really do *hisbodedus*! This can be compared to someone who is trying to do *hisbodedus* in middle of the marketplace...

Some people are on a very high spiritual level and they can be very deeply concentrated in their internal world, even as they are amidst a lot of noise; the *Chovos HaLevovos* describes such a level.

But most people are not able to concentrate so deeply when there is a lot of noise. So too, one who does not reach his *temimus* does not really know how to do true *hisbodedus*, because without entering the place of *temimus* in the soul, he's really amidst a lot of inner noise.

In Conclusion

When a person enters deep within [through **concentrating on his point of *temimus***], and he has also **purified his heart** through **keeping the *mitzvos*** and through attaining the **deepest possible inner silence** (as was explained in the earlier chapters), he will be able to completely feel and sense the reality of Hashem.

May all of us merit - the entire Jewish people, as well as all of Creation – to completely recognize the Creator.

Questions and Answers With the Rav

Q1: I want to reach my temimus, but how do I nullify my yetzer hora which is telling me that I must understand things?

A: We cannot fight completely our connection to this world, therefore, practically speaking, we should find parts of *temimus* in our life and identify with them, as opposed to trying to fight our connection with the world head-on. It is more practical to focus on the positive than to try to get rid of all the negativity; the current *shiur* was based on this approach.

Q2: But how do I nullify my will to understand things?

A: That is a very fundamental question. Do you think you understand everything? (Of course not). How much percentage do you think you can understand, and how much percentage do you think you can't understand?

Q3: I know in my intellect that I can't understand everything, but how do I nullify my will to understand things?

A: The will to understand things can either come from curiosity or from haughtiness. If it is coming from curiosity, you can train yourself to pull away from the questions, slowly but surely. If it comes from haughtiness, the way to fix this, generally, is to become more humble.

Q4: Is temimus my essence, or is it one of the middos?

A: It is a *middah*, but it is not just one of the *middos*; it is the root of all the *middos*. The Torah is called "*Toras Hashem Temimah*" – it is perfect because it contains everything. So too, *temimus* is the root power of all the powers in our soul, because it can lead us to everything else.

Q5: If I read a book about a Gadol and I am trying to relate to temimus within my own self, how can I identify if I am identifying my good temimus or my evil temimus?

A: It depends. If you are reading about a good story which brings out the point of *temimus*, then you have identified your good *temimus*, and if you read a bad story which makes you believe and accept things that are not good, you are identifying your evil kind of *temimus*.

Q6: When I think about my childhood I am reminded of negative experiences that took place when I had my temimus, so is this negative temimus?

A: The point of looking at a picture of your child self is so that you should focus on the positive side of your *temimus*, and do not think about the negative experiences. If you had experiences when you were a child and you get reminded of it when you look at the pictures of your child self, then you can get rid of the scars through increasing your *emunah* in Hashem and that He was behind it all.

After the shiur, the Rav was asked to speak about the current situation in Eretz Yisroel (the recent wave of terror attacks since the start of Tishrei 5775):

Q: *Can The Ra please speak about what's going on in Eretz Yisrael?*

A: I am assuming that most of you listening are not from *Eretz Yisrael* – so why do you want to know what's going on in *Eretz Yisrael*...?

(It is because we feel that we are all found there).

Baruch Hashem.

There is a spiritual dimension of reality, and a physical dimension of reality. The spiritual reality is currently mixed up and confused and lacking clarity because it is so mixed up. There is almost no beacon of light visible, except for a few rays of light here and there. When this almost total confusion carries over into our physical dimension, it manifests in our physical world as the confusion and chaos that we see. As long as everything looks fine in this physical world, the spiritual world cannot be revealed. But, when the physical world becomes overwhelmingly chaotic, mirroring the chaos in the spiritual dimension, then the confusion increases until the physical dimension finally explodes.

When the physical dimension in front of us finally explodes, *Moshiach* will be revealed.

An additional reason for [the chaos now] involves the concept of *hisbodedus*. Throughout the generations, most of the wars fought were between nation and nation. But in the last few years, we can see in Israel, as well as outside of Israel, that there all kinds of wars. The people fighting in Syria are a gathering of many people; they are not the nation of Syria alone, rather, they are a combination of many different nations who are fighting each other. The depth of this is that we are living in a generation of “the individual” in which each person fights alone.

Yaakov *Avinu* fought alone with the angel, and this reflects the holy kind of being alone, which is *hisbodedus*. This is the generation of *hisbodedus* and, therefore, we have a unique ability to tap into this innate power of *hisbodedus*. But the evil kind of “alone” is the evil kind of individualism which we see rampant in today's time, in which each person acts individually, for evil purposes [doing their “own thing”].

A person in this generation must separate from their surroundings and live internally, alone with Hashem. The light that is created by the individual can of course shine onto the rest of the world and raise his surroundings in holiness. Practically speaking, a person needs to live internally, alone, just him and Hashem.

So, when should a person do *hisbodedus*? Will he wait until the grave to be alone...? *Chazal* explain that *Gog* and *Magog* will merit burial. In order to survive the war of *Gog* and *Magog* (the final war), one must be “alone” (to live internally with Hashem), in order to merit the meaning of “*And Yaakov fought alone, until the dawn of the morning.*” Before the final redemption will be the war of

“*Yaakov fought alone ...*” [Each individual needs to persevere *until the dawn of the morning.*] One can be involved with his environment, of course, and help people, but he must build his internal world, so that he will be able to survive the war of *Gog* and *Magog*. The war which we are in today, in the world and especially in Israel, is a war reflecting our struggle of the *hisbodedus* we do.

May we merit the coming of the dawn, in which the recognition of Hashem will shine completely, may it come speedily in our days, Amen.

6 | *The Way of Inner Simplicity*

Summary of Chapters 12-16

In the previous chapters, with Hashem's help, we dealt with *hisbodedus* between man and Creator, which included *emunah*, *hodayah*, *tefillah*, and *ahavas Hashem*. In the last class we explained the concept of *temimus* (wholesome simplicity) in our life in general, and how it applies specifically to *hisbodedus*.

Temimus and Inner Child: The Longing to Be With Another

As we mentioned, the purpose of our entire *avodah* on this world is *bakaras metzius haBorei* – to recognize the Creator as a reality. When a person develops the power of *temimus*, he will naturally want to be “with” another, because part of *temimus* is to yearn to be with another.

As an example from our physical world, a child also wants to be with his parents, and he does not like to be alone. Just as a child wants to always be with his parents, so also there is a power in our soul for holiness to yearn to always be “with” Hashem, very much like a child.

If we reflect, we can see that part of our life is spent alone, and part of our life is spent with others; and even when we are with others, it can either be because we happen to be with others, or simply because we fear being alone and therefore we prefer to spend time around others. But although we spend a lot of time around people, much of the time spent around people does not emanate from a yearning for connection. Most people, most of the time are not experiencing connection with others on an ongoing basis.

A child doesn't only seek to be with his parents; he needs a lot of attention. He wants connection; he wants to feel that his parents are with him, and it is not enough for the child to know that he is with his parents. Of course, a child cannot express this, but the nature of a child is that he always seeks connection with another. A child does not like to be alone; he always wants to be around another. Not only does he want to physically be with others, but he demands emotional connection with others all the time. This is a yearning that comes from the soul, and it is very dominant in a child.

All of us have this yearning, but it is often covered over, now that we have gotten older. We have learned how to be on our own, more or less, and we can survive being alone; we don't feel a need to always be with others. When a child is in his younger years, he needs a constant friend, but as he gets older, he feels less and less of a need to be with others so much. He learns how to be by himself, and

even when he is with others, his connection to others is superficial and purely external, because he doesn't feel that much of a need to connect. This is the natural course a person takes. But deep inside us, there is still an inner child in us that seeks connection all the time with another, and it has merely become covered during the course of time.

A person grows up knowing that the purpose of life is to recognize Hashem, but he is used to being alone as well as not being connected with others. What happens? Even if he does *hisbodedus* and he uncovers his inner “alone”, his connection to Hashem is only revealed when he does *hisbodedus*, but during the rest of the day, a person does not feel a need to be connected with Hashem, just like a couple feels connection to each other only when they are around each other and not throughout the day.

Hisbodedus is not the same kind of connection you have with people. It is no less than how a child needs to connect with his parents. Just as a child wants to always be with his parents, so does true *hisbodedus* cause you to feel a constant longing for Hashem, when you do *hisbodedus* from an inner place in yourself. Therefore, *hisbodedus* is not just the time in which you connect with Hashem; it can cause you to feel connected to Hashem all the time, and not just during “*hisbodedus* time.”

So when you do *hisbodedus*, it is imperative that you access your inner child again. That is the inner and true way to do *hisbodedus*. Reach a place in yourself in which you feel that you want to connect Hashem all the time and not just during *hisbodedus* time.

Four Methods of Reaching Your Temimus

[There are four methods to reach one's *temimus*. The first two methods are an external way, and the last two methods are an inner way.

1) Reaching *Temimus* by the External Method of Returning To Your Inner Child

The external method is a commonly used approach which has several applications [which was mentioned in the previous chapter]: You return to your childhood, through your memory, or through looking at pictures or videos of yourself; you use your imagination/memory to return to your childhood experiences. But don't just remember it superficially; it should be a **soul** experience. You can return to your childhood in your soul. When you imagine yourself being a child, your *temimus* is awakened.

However, this method contains pros and cons. The benefit is that it's easier for you to identify with your childhood experiences so it can affect you even in the here and now. But the negative side of this method is that when you go back to your childhood, you might become a little kid again, with all your childish mischief. Also, when you remember your childhood, you naturally think about how you got along with your parents and how you trusted them, and this takes away your

concentration from thinking about Hashem. Therefore, when such thoughts are awakened, you need to know how to redirect this towards your relationship with Hashem.

There is also a stronger point to consider. If a person didn't get along with his parents when he was a child, or if he suffered negative experiences from them, his *temimus* was damaged. This isn't the case in every Jewish home, *Baruch Hashem*; but there are definitely children who had negative childhood experiences with their parents, and therefore, the *temimus* of such a child has taken a hit while he was still developing.

For example, if a child woke up in middle of the night with a nightmare, and he woke up his parents to soothe him, and the parents didn't have the patience to deal with him, this is a negative childhood experience which has been absorbed deeply into the child's subconscious. A child's mind is not fully mature to understand what he is experiencing, but deep in his subconscious, there is a trauma from the experience, and it tells him that his parents had no patience for him.

Therefore, returning to your childhood experiences is not always a preferred method to access your *temimus*, because there are some bad memories that can come with it.

2) Reaching *Temimus* by the Inner Awakening of your *Temimus* in The Present

The second method to access your *temimus* is the more inner and **preferred** approach, but it is harder to use. One can awaken his *temimus* which he has in the present point in his life. A person can directly use the power of *temimus* in the soul, even without getting involved with the "inner child".

When you were a child, you used your *temimus* towards your parents. You don't need to use your imagination or your memory of your childhood to reach your actual power of *temimus*; you just need to access it as it is right now. Maybe you are already using your *temimus* right now towards others in your life. You need to use that very power of *temimus* in yourself which you recognize from the current stage in your life, and instead channel it towards how you relate to Hashem.

This power of *temimus* is the root power in a Jew's soul. Yaakov *Avinu* was called "*ish tam*". This is the inner and pure kind of *temimus*.

The first kind of *temimus* we mentioned, which is the power of the "inner child", is a power that gentiles as well can access, and indeed, there are gentiles who know how to tap into their inner child. There are Jews too who are using this external approach and are being helped - and they are using it in the exact way that a gentile uses it...

But the inner kind of *temimus*, which is to access it directly (without getting involved with the "inner child"), is a power that only a Jew has in his soul. Of this *temimus* it is written, "*Be tamim (wholesome) with Hashem your G-d.*"

We can make use of external *temimus* too (inner child), but we need to mainly use the **inner** kind of *temimus* [which we will soon explain how to access]. We have explained with Heaven's help how

to bring out the potential of our power of *temimus*. It is the strongest power we need to make use of in order to reach true *hisbodedus* between ourselves and the Creator. It is not only a power we use during *hisbodedus* – it is an ability which we can use all the time and all day. Now we will discuss how we can bring out the inner kind of *temimus*, unique only to a Jew's soul.

We mentioned that a child doesn't like to be alone, therefore, he seeks connection with others. This is because a child doesn't have *seichel*, a developed intellect, so he is missing the power to guide himself when he is alone. With a developed intellect, we can take care of ourselves and tolerate being alone, more or less. But without the power of the *seichel*/intellect, a person does not have the inner strength to guide himself, and that is why he feels dependent on others for guidance. Thus, a child is very dependent on others, because he has no developed intellect yet and thus he fears being alone.

A child has no *seichel* or *daas*, so he can't guide himself, and that is why his *temimus* is dominant; he is thus dependent on others for guidance. So *temimus* is a power to feel dependent on another for guidance. When a person gets older and he matures, he is often self-confident and feels that he can guide himself using his intellect. If so, how can a mature adult connect to the concept of *temimus*? This point leads us to the secret and depth about our entire life.

Although it seems that we have our *daas* (thinking, intellectual mind) and that we're dictating all our movements, the truth is that all of our movements are only being allowed by Hashem, and He is above all our understanding. Therefore, even if I think I understand my movements, I can tell myself that I really don't comprehend this at all, because I am being entirely guided by Hashem. True, we have free will to choose what we will do, but we are still not in control of moving ourselves – it is Hashem who lets anything happen. Since Hashem is above my comprehension I can't even understand my simple movements.

This process of reflecting enables a person to leave his *daas* and enter his *temimus*.

When a person lives with a superficial perspective, when he views how others are moving, he thinks they are controlling how they move, and that he is controlling his movements as well. For example, he sees everyone getting on the bus and crossing the street, and he does the same, so doesn't it seem that we are in control of our movement? A person thinks, "Sure, Hashem runs the world, but in the end of the day, it seems like we're in charge of our actual movements."

But a person who lives with an inner perspective towards life knows that all movements are but a garment of Hashem's movements. And since that is the truth, we can tell ourselves that since we have no comprehension of Hashem, we have no comprehension either of the simple movements we see. This is a very deep kind of recognition. "*Hashem is the Creator and Conductor of all creations, and only He does, did, and will do, every action.*"

This kind of awareness changes one's perspective towards life entirely; it's a new world that one uncovers. It is a kind of life in which you surrender yourself to Hashem and you let Him guide you. This is the depth of using the power of *temimus*.

We explained two ways how to reach *temimus*.

The first way is to return to your childhood experiences, but as we mentioned, it is a superficial method which hamper your own *temimus* in the process. This method is a power in every soul, both Jew and gentile alike.

The second method is the inner method, the power of *temimus* in a Jew's soul, in which one can use his *temimus* towards Hashem, realizing that he is totally reliant on Hashem.

3) Reaching *Temimus* by Reviewing *Pesukim* About *Temimus*

There is also a third way to use *temimus*, and in a way it will come easier to someone who possess both strong intellect and feeling: take *pesukim* (verses) of *Tehillim* (Psalms) which describe *temimus* and review them, with enthusiasm. Keep reviewing them, with enthusiasm and with depth, and you can do it for 100 and even 1000 times, until your *temimus* begins to come out of your heart. Be very concentrated and focused with your entire being as you do it.

4) Reaching *Temimus* by Reading Stories of *Gedolim*

A fourth method which can reveal your *temimus* is by reading stories of our *Gedolim* which exemplify *temimus*.

In Conclusion

We have explained here four methods how to reach *temimus*. If a person merits reaching his *temimus*, he will naturally relate to Hashem as very real, and his *hisbodedus* will feel much more truthful. He can then build then upon that, with the stages that we will later describe (with the help of Hashem). But this current step we are describing, *temimus*, is a major step in the *hisbodedus* process.

Questions and Answers With the Rav

Can the Rav give a few examples of how we can feel like a “tamim”¹³ towards Hashem and realize that He’s in control of everything?

A: We are in a world being dominated by attacks from all kinds of forces, such as Islamic extremists, wicked people who are constantly contemplating ways of how to kill. If one tries to think logically of what causes terrorism, either he’ll conclude that it’s Arabs from Syria or from Iran, or from some other place in the world. But you can realize that they are all messengers of Hashem, and Hashem is using them to carry out His will – it is really not possible to handle them using our puny human logic. Hashem is leading them, and this is above the understanding of our human intellect.

The wisest people in the world perhaps can wonder of how to deal with them, but do they know what’s enabling them to act? No, because it is Hashem Himself who is letting them act. The wise people in the world can try to think and think of what to do about them, but Hashem lets them act as He wills, and all of their rationalizations are for naught.

A person can see that all that he does understand is but a drop of understanding in the incomprehensible. We don’t even understand the tiniest detail of Hashem’s ways. Reb Noach of Kobrin *zt”l* said that without *emunah*, it’s not possible to leave the house, and with *emunah*, one can conquer everything. Most people though are leaving their homes each day without *emunah*, out of immaturity towards life. But when a person has true understanding, and he thinks, he can see how the entire world is being led by Hashem, and that we have no comprehension of anything, and we can’t predict even the next moment. So how do we survive in this world? Only through using the depth of the power *temimus*¹⁴!

If a person has emunah, can he understand terrorism today?

A: There is some small amount of comprehension we can have in Hashem’s ways, but to know all of His ways is above our understanding.

If a person has emunah, will he be protected from the terrorism of today?

A: The Rambam¹⁵ says in *Moreh Nevuchim* that a person will receive individual protection by Hashem the more *emunah* he has. The more a person has *emunah*, the more he can prevent the forces of evil from breaking loose upon this world. We can’t stop it totally, because Hashem has His ways that we don’t understand, but yes, to a certain extent, we can definitely lessen the terrorism in this world by strengthening our *emunah*.

¹³ For a definition of *temimus* see [Bilvavi Part 4 - Chapter 09 Temimus = Simplicity and Melave Malka- A New Meal](#)

¹⁴ **Editor’s Note:** *Temimus* is the subject of many talks of the Rav *shlit”a*. An entire sefer, *Bilvavi Part 9*, was written devoted to this deep concept and bring it closer to our hearts. It is also discussed in *Bilvavi Part 2 Chapter 28*, *Bilvavi Part 4 Chapters 9-11* and *Bilvavi Part 5 – Author’s Introduction*.

¹⁵ see *Moreh Nevuchim*¹⁵: Chapters 51-53

Are there things today we are doing which prevent us from having temimus?

A: All that we see with our physical eyes can take away our *temimus*. For example, you see your house, and you naturally think that some contractor built it. You get used to thinking that people do everything in this world. When a person reads and hears the news all the time and he keeps hearing/reading the opinions of other people, how each person understands things, and this makes us think that people are in charge of this world. It is the opposite of *emunah* which is to believe that Hashem runs the world, and the only thing which we can do is to use our power of free will. All of the news outlets – secular media, Jewish newspapers, and even the most *Chareidi* newspapers contain outright heresy. They all are indicating that people run the world. The more a person lives a life of *temimus*, the more he views the world through different lenses. He is aware that whenever a person does something, he is merely a messenger of Hashem. But when we get used to reading [or hearing] the news on a set basis, we get used to thinking that people run this world which is the opposite of a *temimus* kind of life. If someone can hear the news all the time and tell himself that Hashem is running the world even after all that he hears, then it would be a point open for discussion. But if a person regularly listens to the news, he probably isn't reacting that way, and it gets a person used to heresy on a regular basis!

How can a person feel how Hashem is doing everything when we feel all the time that we live in the real world and that it is we who do everything?

A: This is a very good question. I have to do what I need to do, but after I do what I do, I must tell myself that it's not up to me, and that only Hashem does everything and let everything happen. On a more subtle note, this deep awareness can also bring one to *bittul* (self-nullification) and humility towards Hashem.

How can we feel calm and that Hashem is doing everything when there are so many troubles surrounding us?

A: This question goes against all our *emunah*. The Kotzker Rebbe *zt"l* said, "If I could understand Hashem, I would not want Him to be my God." We do not understand Hashem or His ways. We do not understand His good ways and surely when He has to inflict pain upon us we don't understand.¹⁶ There is a little we do comprehend but for the most part, we don't comprehend His ways, so we must not question Him.

What can I do to actually calm myself down, in the meantime?

A: When you truly believe that Hashem is doing it all, then you will be calmed. On the contrary, if you believe that "this bad person" did this and "that bad person" did this, then indeed, everything seems bad. But tell yourself that no one is running this world but Hashem Who is endlessly merciful – all that He does is good. If you truly come to feel that Hashem is really doing everything in this world, not people, you will be calmed which is the depth of using your *temimus*. Perhaps one can try to "explain" the troubles we face today as an "atonement for our sins" or because "*Moshiach* is coming", etc.. However, the way of our *emunah* is to simply believe that Hashem is behind it all, therefore all is good.

¹⁶ See *Tefillah 075* for an in-depth analysis of suffering.

7 | *Speaking Continuously with Hashem*

Getting Back The Long Lost Art of Speaking With Hashem

With the help of Hashem, we will continue to explain *hisbodedus* (Jewish meditation). Recently, we explained *hodaah* (thanking G-d), *tefillah* (prayer), and how to speak to Hashem from a place of *temimus* (pure simplicity) in yourself. Now we will progress to explain another fundamental point which is acquired through *hisbodedus*.

When thanking Hashem, we explained that a person needs to do so from the depths of his heart. During *hisbodedus*, one must understand that it's not just a time to speak with Hashem from the depths of the heart. It is rather to acquire the nature of the soul which is hidden in every Jew. It is really enjoyable to speak to Hashem! This is because talking to Hashem is an inherent nature of our souls. Thus, *hisbodedus* is to be understood as a time to access our deep nature to speak with Hashem. True *hisbodedus* is not just to talk to Hashem during *hisbodedus* per se. It is rather that during *hisbodedus*, a person acquires the nature to talk to Hashem, and from that, it can extend beyond the actual time you set for *hisbodedus*, enabling a person to speak with Hashem naturally throughout the rest of the day.

A true Jew not only speaks to Hashem for three times a day during *davening* and during *hisbodedus*; he talks to Hashem much more than that. Of course, we can't talk to Hashem every second. But the point is that talking to Hashem is not just limited to our set times of *tefillah* and *hisbodedus*. Talking to Hashem is a practice meant for the entire day!

To illustrate, a husband and wife don't only to speak with each other during limited times; they speak all the time with each other, on an ongoing basis. The home would be unlivable if they wouldn't speak to each other all the time. People are with others all the time and socialize with others; we understand that we can naturally speak to other people all the time. So, too, we have a nature to speak with Hashem – and not because it's an “*avodah*”, but because it's our soul's nature!

The Way A Jew Is Supposed To Look

Before we explain (with Hashem's help) how to speak with Hashem throughout the day, firstly, we must internalize that the way a Jewish life is supposed to look like is to speak with Hashem all the time.

We aren't used to this perspective at first, because we see that our almost everyone in our environment are not into it. We usually only see people who talk to Hashem during *davening* for three times a day, and maybe perhaps a little more than that. The inner way for a Jew to live, which we are usually not used to seeing in the society we live in, is to speak with Hashem all the time throughout the course of the day. It is a change of perspective to us that we are not initially used to, but it is the true and inner lifestyle of a Jew. Therefore, we must get used to this new perspective of thinking and accustom ourselves to reflecting on how a true Jew is supposed to live like.

Avraham *Avinu* enacted the prayer of *Shacharis*, but did he only talk to Hashem during *Shacharis*? Yitzchok *Avinu* enacted the prayer of *Mincha* - did he only talk to Hashem during *Mincha*? And did Yaakov *Avinu* only speak to Hashem during *Maariv*? Obviously, not. They spoke with Hashem in between their prayers as well.

The Spiritual Reason of Why Women Have More Speech

Hashem gave us a power of speech. The Sages explained that ten measurements of speech were created, and nine were taken by women. Today in particular, there is a lot of speech, especially in the recent years with the advent of cell-phones. Nowadays, people talk wherever they are, on the go, wherever, and whenever. For what reason did Hashem intend us to use our power of speech for?

The power of speech was given to men to use to learn Torah with. *Chazal* expound on the words of “*And you shall speak in it* [the words of Torah]” that a man must speak the words of Torah, and the Sages exhorted men as well not to speak idle words of empty chatter, which wastes time from Torah study. This is true for men, who have a *mitzvah* to learn Torah; but what about women, who are not commanded to learn Torah? For what reason do women possess the power of speech, if they do not use it to learn Torah with? Must they only learn how to be silent from empty talk...? Or is there more meaning to the nine measurements of speech that women have?

Surely a woman needs to use her speech to speak with her husband, children, and friends and those whom she needs to speak with, and we are not implying otherwise. But that cannot be the main reason that a woman possesses much of the power of speech.

A woman was given more speech because she can use it for the most part to speak with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu!*

If we would think about how many words we say each day and how much of it we use to speak with Hashem, we would discover that most of our speech is used towards people, and not with Hashem. Of course, we need to speak with people, but Hashem gave us the power of speech to mainly use it to speak with Hashem. That is the way a Jew lives, man and woman alike! A man must mainly use his speech to speak words of Torah and to speak to Hashem, and a little bit to speak with people.

And women, who do not learn Torah, must therefore use their speech to mainly speak with Hashem, and only a little bit with people.

This is the way our holy Matriarchs acted. Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, and Leah did not sit on the park benches and yap away on cellphones for hours on end. They did not speak on phones wherever they went and in their houses. Most of their speech was with Hashem, and this is the way a Jewish mother looks like. This is the way it always has been throughout the generations!

The True Jewish Woman

A woman who lives an inner Jewish life is one who is modest, and performs acts of kindness modestly, and more importantly, she speaks with Hashem throughout the day. Let's try to imagine vividly how a Jewish woman is supposed to look like.

We hope to merit soon the redemption, in which the dead will be resurrected, when we will then see our holy Matriarchs, and then we will see how a Jewish woman looks like. In the meantime, let's try to conceptualize: What did our holy Matriarchs look like? After that we need to think how we can put that into practice. But first, we need to at least conceptualize it.

Step One: Asking Hashem For Help

Besides for the times of the day when we daven and do *hisbodedus*, we need to make sure that we are talking to Hashem throughout the day-to-day stuff. When you do something, *daven* to Hashem for help before you do it. When you're sitting in your house, ask Hashem for help in something. Get used to asking Hashem for success in general and in specific areas you need help in.

Step Two: Including Hashem In All Aspects of Your Life

After we have gotten used to this first step – talking to Hashem throughout the day and asking Him for help – we proceed to the next step. Don't just ask Hashem for help – speak to Hashem about what you're doing. Here the focus is not on the request, but simply to include Him in what you are doing. We will soon explain how to do this.

Here is an example. You get up in the morning and wash your hands, etc. A woman sends her children to school, etc. If one just goes about this without any thoughts about Hashem, he gets up by himself and thinks he's in charge of his life. One can turn this into a spiritual experience by instead including Hashem in it. He can talk to Hashem throughout all of it and thereby include Hashem in the picture.

Here are more examples: When you're washing the dishes, or sweeping the floor, or cleaning up the house, you can talk to Hashem at the same time. You can say, "Hashem is with me and sustaining me, and from Him alone do I receive the strength to do all these things."

This should not just be done mentally in your thoughts; you should **verbalize** it with your mouth. When you get up in the morning, say: "Do I get up alone? No. Hashem woke me up. Am I alive because of my own energy? No. Hashem is keeping me alive. How can I get the kids ready and get them to school? Because I have the energy to do so? No. It's because Hashem helps me do it."

Becoming A "Partner With Hashem"

There are many statements of our Sages in which we are taught that man is a partner with Hashem, so to speak. *Chazal* state that if one says *Vayechulu* on Friday night, he becomes a partner with Hashem. *Chazal* also said that a judge who gives a truthful judgment is a partner with Hashem. There are other such statements of *Chazal* that describe this concept of being "a partner with Hashem".

What does it mean to be "a partner with Hashem"? Does it mean to just ask Hashem for things, or does it mean to include Him in our matters? Husband and wife are terms "partners"^[1]. Does that limit them to asking them for things, or do they also include each other in their lives? If the entire relationship between spouses is the fact that they ask each other for things, and they don't include each other in each of their lives, such a marriage is unlivable.

Of course, spouses need to ask each other for things, but an essential ingredient in marriage is to simply include each other in their lives. They must share their lives with each other. Most of the conversations in a healthy marriage are not about requests; they are about including each other in their lives. If most of the conversations are requests from each other, this is an example of a dysfunctional marriage. So too, we must share our life with Hashem.

Most of the time that speak with Hashem is about things we want from Him. Others are more mature and they also thank Hashem for things. But we must acquire a new kind of connection with Hashem, which is not only about the give-and-take relationship we have with Him.

Our Relationship With Hashem: Like A Marriage

The inner dimension of our relationship with Hashem is as it is written [in *Shir HaShirim*]: "Open up to me, my sister, my dove, my friend." The Jewish people's relationship with Hashem is compared to that of husband and wife.

In a marriage, the main aspect of their relationship is not about requests; it is about including each other in their lives. So too, Hashem is our Beloved to us, and we must relate to Him only minimally with requests; the main aspect of our relationship with Him should be about including Him in all aspects of our life.

Summary

Let this be clear: first, we must absorb this perspective, that the way a Jew looks (man or woman) is to speak to Hashem all the time, on a natural and regular basis. Secondly, most of our speech with Hashem should not be about requests or thanking Him, rather, most of our speech with Hashem should be for the sake of including Him in our life. After a person has gotten used to acquiring the art of talking to Hashem in tefillah and *hisbodedus* [as it was explained in the previous chapters], one needs to open a new dimension in the soul: to include Hashem in what we are doing, throughout the day.

Getting Started

One should first start to include Hashem in the “small stuff” and then he should slowly increase this, both in quantity and in quantity.

Sometimes a person ends up asking Hashem for things as a result of including Him in his life, and this is fine. But most of the talking with Hashem should be for the sake of including Him in your life and not for the purpose of asking Him for things. The majority of your speech with Hashem should be for the purpose of including Him in your life, and a minority of your speech with Hashem should be about requests from Hashem.

Two Forms of Talking To Hashem: Verbal and Mental

We will now proceed to the next step, with Heavenly assistance. Including Hashem in our life is expressed in two ways: verbally, and mentally.

Either one can talk to Hashem verbally, or he can speak to Hashem mentally. One can speak with Hashem as well in his thoughts. Just like you can speak to Hashem with your mouth, so can you speak in your thoughts to Hashem. This is called *hirhur* (thought). Each way has its pros and cons.

Verbally talking to Hashem has the advantage of making an impact on your soul, because when you speak from the depths of your heart, the speech moves you and can connect you closer to Hashem.

Mental communication with Hashem is a more internal kind of power. It changes your thinking process, because until now you were used to thinking only with yourself, and now you realize that you can think with Hashem present. It removes feelings of loneliness and shows you how you are never alone, because you are always with Hashem.

There are people who must always be around people and they don't like to be alone. An internal kind of person is also never alone, not because he is with people, but because he is with Hashem in his words and thoughts. Such words and thoughts are alive. This is actually the depth behind *hisbodedus*.

Hisbodedus: All Day Long

True *hisbodedus* is not for an hour a day. As we explained in the past, *hisbodedus* is a way of life. The *Chovos HaLevovos* describes an inner kind of life as one who is alone with Hashem and never feels alone, because he knows he is with Hashem. Reb Nachman of Breslov wrote that although he told people to do *hisbodedus* for a set amount of time a day, such as an hour, he himself would do *hisbodedus* the entire day.

How can one do *hisbodedus* the entire day? It means that he was verbally and mentally connected to Hashem the entire day. His being was wrapped up with Hashem the entire day, in his words and thoughts. *Hisbodedus* for an hour a day is wonderful, of course, but it's still only the partial level.

The words here are far from the lifestyle of most people, but they are not too hard to keep either. It's a matter of habit and as well as a change of perspective. One merely needs to get used to a change of perspective: life is about including Hashem in all aspects of your life, every day and throughout the day.

A Third Method: Writing Letters To Hashem

If one feels that it's too hard, there is another method which can work for some people: to **write to Hashem**. When you write your words to Hashem, write from the depths of your heart. Dovid HaMelech wrote *Sefer Tehillim*, and so can each person write his words to Hashem, to a certain extent and on his respective level. Of course, none of us are like Dovid HaMelech. But all of us have inherited gifts from our forefathers, and therefore, we can each write our words to Hashem, on our own level.

So we can write letters to Hashem. Don't just write a small note. Write Him a long letter, just as a friend writes a long letters to his friend who lives on the other end of the world.

In Conclusion

It is my hope that you have opened your ears and heart to listen to these words and thereby absorb the concept of this inner kind of life we are describing here. It seems far away from you at first, but “the matter is very close to you, it is in your mouth and in your heart to do it.” Absorb this kind of life, this true kind of life, which is how a Jew lives: to converse with Hashem, regularly, to include Him in your life. Include Him in the external aspects of your life as well as in your feelings and experiences. Include Him in all aspects of your life!

May we merit to live the inner kind of life, a life of connection with Hashem, to be truly, truly connected with Him.

Questions and Answers With the Rav

Q1: *What is the balance between how much one should talk to Hashem verbally and mentally?*

A: There is no exact answer to this. Try to feel from within yourself and discern which method is more for you. To illustrate, how much should we eat and how much should we drink? There's no exact answer. Sometimes we need to eat more and sometimes we need to drink more. So too, there are different ways to connect to Hashem (verbal and mental), and it depends on each person. Sometimes a person is talking to Hashem verbally and he feels that he needs a quieter kind of a connection, so he should use the mental method. Another kind of person isn't satisfied with the mental method because although he has quiet, he feels that it's lacking excitement, so he needs to make use of the verbal method. So each method depends on each person's taste as well as on the particular time in his life.

Q2: *How much time should we spend on tefillah and how much on hisbodedus?*

A: *Tefillah* is our collective relationship with Hashem, whereas *hisbodedus* is one's personal connection with Hashem. We need both aspects of our life. Therefore, the three *tefillas* we daven each day are not enough, and neither is *hisbodedus* enough. Through *tefillah* we can integrate with the collective unit of the Jewish people and through that we connect to Hashem; through *hisbodedus*, one brings his soul to have a personal connection with Hashem.

Q3: *I am enjoying hisbodedus a lot, and because I have reached the understanding that I am always with Hashem, I never feel alone, and as a result, I am finding that my hisbodedus causing me to become anti-social. I don't talk to my friends as much as I used to now that I am so immersed in hisbodedus. Is this a bad sign about my hisbodedus?*

A: If a person is too isolated from his surroundings, yes, it is problematic. If *hisbodedus* is causing a person to separate from actions he doesn't need to do anyway, this is actually the ideal state, and it is not bad at all. But the more inner understanding is as follows. Most conversations with others are self-serving. Once we eliminate our need for people and we are speaking with people a lot less, now we need to learn how to speak to others for the betterment of others. We need to speak to others as a form of giving to them and not because we need things of them.

Q4: *How can I talk to Hashem as I am in middle of going through a negative emotion, such as if I am in middle of anger?*

A: As you feel yourself getting angry, say to Hashem, "Hashem, You gave me the power of free will to choose if I will overcome my anger or not. I don't want to get angry, because I know that it is your will that I should not be angry. Please help me choose correctly and overcome my anger." In

this way, you don't just ask Hashem to help you overcome your anger; you include Hashem in all aspects of it, because you ask Him to help you choose.

Q5: *Should I also add in the words "I am doing this because it is the will of Hashem?" How important is this?*

A: It is very important, but one must be honest with himself and know if he's really doing something for the will of Hashem or for himself. Although our soul deep down wants to do Hashem's Will, our lower soul (*nefesh habehaimis*) doesn't want to, so if one recognizes this, he must be aware that there is a contradiction between his body and soul, and then he should daven to Hashem for help and to be able to reach that level in which he is doing Hashem's will for the sake of doing Hashem's will. On a deeper note, we need to become aware of the two parts in ourselves, a part that doesn't want to do the will of Hashem and a part that wants to do the will of Hashem, and then daven to Hashem that we should listen to our higher part of our soul and not to the lower part of our soul.

Q6: *I have given up my pastime of art in favor of studying spirituality. It helped me on a psychological level, but is there a way for me to use my art in my relationship with Hashem?*

A: Surely. You can connect everything with Hashem. You should just try to uncover your motivations: Why do you like to draw? There is no one reason. We can't say it's good or bad to be into art. For one kind of person it is good and for another it is not good. So one should try to discern why he likes art, and then when he discovers that reason, he should try to learn how to connect it to his relationship with Hashem.

Q7: *When I have conversations with myself in my thoughts and I know that Hashem is listening to my thoughts, is there a difference between that and a focused conversation on Hashem?*

A: When you think directly about Hashem, that is a much stronger connection with Hashem.

Q8: *When a person has verbal or mental connection with Hashem, does it give a nachas ruach (satisfaction) to Hashem, and if yes, how?*

A: Everything Hashem created is all so that we can connect with Him. There are three parts to how we connect with Hashem in *d'veykus*: through action, word, and thought. In action, we connect with Hashem by not sinning and by doing the mitzvos. We connect to Hashem through word and thought by having verbal and mental connection with Hashem. This is the meaning of true *d'veykus* with Hashem. The purpose of Creation is to come to have true *d'veykus*, and this is how we give Him a *nachas ruach*. Life is not just about connecting to Hashem through actions, for a gentile can also connect to Hashem through proper actions. Life is not about action alone. We must connect to Hashem as well through our words and through our thoughts.

Q9: Can these recordings of these shiurim be given out to those who aren't part of these phone conferences?

A: If truth was said here, then I do not own it, because it belongs to Hashem. If what I said here was not true, then no one should hear it. If the words here are true, though, then the words here are not mine, for they are all a gift from Hashem to Klal Yisrael [and therefore I am not the owner of these words].

[1] Niddah 31a

8 | *You're Never Alone*

Nochach P'nei Hashem: To Feel That Hashem Is In Front of You

When we discussed *hisbodedus* previously we explained about talking with Hashem all the time. Now we will progress to a more complete level of *hisbodedus*, which is to feel: *nochach p'nei Hashem*, to feel that we are literally “opposite” Hashem, face-to-face with Him when we speak with Him.

The concept of *nochach p'nei Hashem* is more than just a mere knowledge or feeling of Hashem's existence. It is to feel that He is literally in front of you when you speak to Him, as the *Mesillas Yeshtarim* describes: “As a man talking to his friend.”

Nochach is personified by the word “*Attah*” in the words “*Baruch Attah Hashem*”, Blessed Are You, Hashem – that when we talk to Hashem, we are talking to Him face-to-face, in first person, “You.”

The inner way that a Jew is supposed to live life is to feel that he is literally facing Hashem. When a person has an external relationship towards Hashem, he thinks that Hashem resides in Heaven, while he resides on Planet Earth, far away from Hashem, (*chas v'shalom*). A person, when he *davens*, might have the mentality that he lives in America, while Hashem is far away in *Eretz Yisrael*, somewhere in the *Beis HaMikdash*....

But *nochach* is to acquire the perspective that Hashem is literally in front of you. It is to feel how Hashem is “*Attah*”, “You” in first person. So when we say the word “*Attah*” in *Shemoneh Esrei*, we must feel the meaning of what “*Attah*” implies. When a person does *hisbodedus* with Hashem only periodically, then sometimes he will feel how Hashem is with him, and sometimes he won't. Sometimes he will feel how Hashem is in front of him, and sometimes he won't feel it. He'll feel far from Hashem.

But when a person gets used to speaking with Hashem regularly throughout the day, he will find that he can always converse with Hashem, and that will give him a constant bond with Hashem. It is though continuously talking to Hashem throughout the day that a person can slowly work on acquiring the level of *nochach/attah*. One must clearly feel that the purpose of life which we need to direct ourselves towards is: to reach this step of *nochach p'nei Hashem*, which we will further describe in this chapter.

Alone, Not Lonely

Nochach means to live a life in which the reality of Hashem's existence is constantly revealed to you. It means that in any given time or place or situation, you can feel that you are never really alone

as it appears. We can always feel Hashem as reality in front of us. We can feel this no matter what ups or downs we are going through; whether we are going through a joyous time or a difficult time. No matter what level we are up to in serving Hashem, we can always live the reality and experience of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

Until now we have explained the concept of *nochach*. Now we will explain how exactly we can practice it. However, it can only be reached if we've already worked to acquire all steps that were explained in the previous chapters. The more we have worked to acquire those levels – both intellectually and emotionally – the closer we can come to the level of *nochach*.

Step One: When You Find Yourself Alone

The first step is to keep reflecting on the fact that we are never alone, for Hashem is always near us. Every day we always have times in which we are alone, by default. We need to use those times to our advantage and use them as times of quiet solitude, when we can reflect on the fact that you are not alone - for Hashem is next to you.

So when you find yourself alone, take the opportunity to have the following conversation with yourself either verbally or mentally: “Am I really alone? No, I am not. Hashem is always with me.”

When you get used to this each day, you train yourself each day, week after week, month and month (and year after year!) to use your times of being alone for reflecting about how you're really not alone; that Hashem is with you.

The point of having this conversation with yourself is to do so in a question-and-answer format with yourself, because that helps it internalize better in your heart.

Remember: Yaakov *Avinu* fought “alone” with the angel, but even when he was “alone”, Hashem was really with him and helping him.

Step Two: Have Fixed Times of Being Alone

Besides for the times of the day in which you find yourself alone, though, you also need to set aside specific time in your daily schedule in which you can be alone and have this reflection.

When you choose a place to be alone in, try not to be in a place which will disturb you; don't be in a place in which your evil inclination can get aroused, and it's also better to be in a place that's far from people. When you're secluded from people, it's much easier to feel “alone”; that is to say, your *nefesh habehaimis* (lower, animalistic part of the soul) can sense that you are in a secluded place.

When you feel that aloneness, now you can start to go in the other direction: tell yourself that you're really *not* alone! With the more you do this, you can eventually reveal the depth of your *neshamah* – the light of your Divine soul.

Step Three: Utilizing Our Times of Loneliness

So far, it was explained the two steps to feel *nochach p'nei Hashem*. The first step was to utilize the times that we are alone to “reflect” and have a conversation with ourselves that we are really not alone, for we are with Hashem. The second step is that we also need to set aside specific times of the day in which we are alone in order to “reflect”. But there is also the following third step we need to do, which is very important.

Every person has periods in his life in which he feels intensely alone. This can go on for an amount of days, or it can be felt at certain times of the day in which loneliness just hits you. This happens even to people who have family, parents, and friends that they are close with. There can be all sorts of reasons why we get lonely – external reasons, or more spiritual reasons. Either way, we all have times in which feel lonely.

How does a person react to it? It appears to be something difficult we must “deal with”. We might try to comfort ourselves by saying “*Gam Zu L'Tovah*” (“This too is for the best”), or we tell ourselves that we are supposed to accept suffering with love, as *Chazal* tell us.

That is true, but there is a more inner way to react to the loneliness. The deeper reason of why loneliness happens to us is because that’s the way Hashem made us – we get lonely because we are supposed to transform that initial feeling of loneliness into an opportunity of feeling “alone” with Hashem! Which means that we are **never alone** at all. Loneliness is therefore a great opportunity in which a person can acquire the level of *nochach p'nei Hashem*.

The Loneliness of Being In Shidduchim

There are many different periods of loneliness a person can experience in his life.

Here is a very common example: being in *shidduchim*. A boy or a girl in *shidduchim*, as time goes on, can begin to feel very lonely, like when many of his/her classmates are all getting married one by one, leaving him/her all alone.

Sure, coming home to be with your parents can ease some of the loneliness, but as time goes on, a boy or girl realizes that being at home with the parents does not take away the gnawing loneliness that he/she feels. And it begins to get intensely lonely.

What will happen? Either it will breed on some form of sadness or depression, or, a person will simply take his mind off the loneliness, by getting involved with other pastimes.

But the truth is: it’s an opportunity for a person to transform this loneliness, into feeling Hashem next to him in his life. You are supposed to feel that pain of loneliness, and you can feel it intensely. When you feel it, tell yourself that you’re really not alone, because you can really choose, if you want, to find *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* in this “lonely” situation.

Upon a deeper understanding, one can even look at it as a Heaven-sent opportunity to acquire the perspective of feeling *nochach p'nei Hashem*. There couldn't be a better time to work on it!

Loneliness In Marriage

Here is another example. Often, between husband and wife, it will happen that there are times of marital discord. Sometimes a couple is having a harmonious relationship, and sometimes, the marriage is stormy. Every couple has their good periods and their bad periods in their marriage. When the *shalom bayis* (marital harmony) is not good, it feels intensely lonely for the spouse who feels abandoned and isolated by his/her spouse. He/she is hurting and it will feel very bewildering and lonely. But it is a great opportunity for one to feel that he is not really alone - for Hashem is still with him.

Of course, every couple must work hard for their *shalom bayis* and try to make it work between them, each doing his/her part. But, inevitably, there will be very rough times, inasmuch as they try to work on it; so there will always be times in which one of the spouses feels estranged from the other. It is during those times that a person can concentrate on this fact, that although it appears that he's alone, he is really not, for Hashem is always with a person, no matter how bad the situation looks.

More Examples of Loneliness

Another example is that often, one of the spouses has to leave the home for a number of days due to a business trip, or because he/she goes to *Eretz Yisrael*, or when a mother has just given birth. These are situations in which one of the spouses will find him/herself alone, and it can feel very lonely. Another example is when the children are all in yeshiva, leaving the parents all alone, when they miss their children very much.

In all of these situations, a person can realize during his loneliness that he is really not alone: Hashem is with him. The more a person gets used to working on the steps described here, the better he will be able to use these situations to uncover from his loneliness a relationship with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, feeling Hashem in the loneliness and thereby banishing the loneliness he initially felt. Eventually, if a person keeps persevering with this *avodah*, he can uncover the depth of the light of his *neshamah* (Divine soul), and feeling closer and closer to Hashem.

Loneliness In Your Social Life

Now we will explain how to apply the concept of *nochach* within our family and social life. A person, by nature, wants to connect with people. Indeed, *Chazal* say that one should get along with

people. Some people have a reserved nature while others are more outgoing in their relationships with others, but all people wish to connect to other people and need it.

However, even when a person is social and outgoing, he will often find that there are times in which his friends are all reciprocating, and that there are other times in which he feels that others are isolating him. Sometimes we get smiles and compliments from our friends, but sometimes, we feel ignored by them, as if they're not interested in us; and this happens even with our closest friends.

There are also situations in which a close friend dumps you; this feels terribly lonely when it happens. Either it happens because your friend moves away or because he doesn't even have time for you anymore, or it happens simply because he has lost interest in the friendship, due to personality factors or another unknown reason. It doesn't really make a difference what causes it – either way, you feel horribly lonely when a good friend of yours is suddenly not your friend anymore. You then feel uneasy even as you're among your own friends.

The Solution

When you're experiencing a period like this of anxiety from your relationships with others, first of all, it may be worth it for you to examine your social skills. Maybe you didn't realize that something in your behavior caused your friends to slowly want to pull away from you. Or, maybe you only had superficial kinds of friends, and you need to form truer and deeper friendships with others. So first look into yourself and get in touch with how you're using your soul abilities of connection with others, and try to understand how true connections with others can be achieved.¹⁷

But, in addition to this, you also need to realize that times of isolation from others happen to you as an opportunity from Hashem for you: to uncover Hashem in your loneliness. In fact, it's even possible that Hashem brought this upon you just so that you will realize that only He is your true Friend! Chazal say that Hashem is called the "Friend" of a person – He is our one and only true Friend.^{18 19} So when you get badly hurt by a close friend, you have a two-fold introspection to make: you need to examine yourself deeply and learn how to use your soul's abilities to form healthy and lasting friendships (or maybe you need to seek a true kind of friend). But along with this, you also need to realize that the loneliness and isolation you are feeling was sent to you from Hashem so that you will feel that you are really not alone; Hashem is with you, and He is your real Friend.

Alone From Others, Alone With Hashem

Now we will mention an additional point which is more subtle.

¹⁷ See *Getting To Know Your Soul, Part II, Chapter 12 – Hiskashrus: Connection*

¹⁸ See *Rashi to Shabbos 31a*

¹⁹ For further understanding see *Bilvavi on Mesillas Yesharim: Hashem – Your True Companion*

Every person's soul is multi-layered – there are external layers and more inner layers of the soul. The outer parts of our soul are the parts of our life in which others are included. When you find that your friends are involved in your life and they understand you, what do they understand? Your friends understand the outer parts of your existence and are included in your life on that external level.

But the more you merit to enter inward into your soul and you live an internal and soul kind of life, you will also discover that for some reason, there are certain areas of your life which you just can't include others in. With the more innerness you uncover in your life, getting further and further into your soul, the less you feel a need for companionship with others, because it is "alone" from others, and it is there that you experience the deepest part of your relationship with Hashem – and it's totally private, between you and Hashem.

No one else knows of it – no one but you. Your friends won't understand that part of your soul because it's a private part of your soul that no one can understand.

The more inner you become, you'll discover that it's harder to include your friends in your life, because your life has become so much deeper and so much more inward. It's almost impossible to bring others into your soul kind of life. You realize more and more that there are fewer people who understand what's going on deep inside you. And the more you enter inward into your soul, it seems that less and less people are really involved in your real life.

When you truly reach the very depth of your soul, you will see that it is so private from others that you have no friend at all who can understand what you've reached in yourself. This can make you feel lonely if you don't know how to view this properly.

Indeed, the innermost point in your soul cannot be revealed to anyone at all except yourself. It is best described by the statement, "My heart cannot be revealed by the mouth" (*Liba l'pumei lo galisi*). There, in that most private place of your existence as a soul, you are utterly and truly alone from others, and thus it is there, and only there, that you can really feel alone with Hashem. It is hinted to in the words of Chazal that "Man was created individual."

There's a deep place in your soul which feels totally individual from others, because no one else can be there but you. There's no way for you to describe it to others because by its very essence, it is a place in yourself that is entirely designated to be used in your private relationship with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

This concept will not be understood or felt by most people. The individuals who have merited to get very far into their innermost depths of their souls can relate to this. There is a place in the soul which others are not able to be included in; it's simply indescribable to another person, and you're the only who knows what it is.

We have described here how a person needs to channel his loneliness towards developing his relationship with Hashem, and how he needs to feel *nochach p'nei Hashem*, that Hashem is literally in front of a person, and thus we can talk face-to-face with Him. The second step, *nochach*, has been

explained here in concept. Now we will say a practical point in how one can develop this concept of feeling a constant relationship with Hashem in which he also feels *nochach p'nei Hashem*.

Talking To Hashem In First-Person

The way to talk to Hashem is to talk to Him in first-person context: “*Attah*”, “You.” You can talk to Hashem and say to Hashem, “You created me. You sustain me.” You can ask Hashem for things and thank Him for things, addressing Him in first-person.

Alone With Your True Friend

So there are really two parts that are including in talking to Hashem. The first part is to tell yourself that you’re not alone and that you’re with Hashem. This part emphasizes how you are receiving from Hashem; that it’s for your own good when you’re alone, because even when you’re alone, Hashem is always with you, keeping you alive and sustaining you.

The second part of talking to Hashem is, that as you talk to Him more and more throughout the day, you can feel more and more that he’s in front of You, no less than how you’re talking to a friend. At first, this will feel unnatural to you, because you don’t feel that He is literally in front of you. But the more you get used to it (even when you don’t feel it), slowly but surely the depth of your soul will become more and more revealed out in the open, and then you’ll feel the awareness of *nochach p'nei Hashem*.

A person can try this as he says the word “*Attah*” [in the blessings of *Shemoneh Esrei*]. When you say the word “*Attah*”, don’t just say it in a superficial manner; try to say it from an inner place in yourself. Don’t pressurize yourself to do this; instead, say the word “*Attah*” slowly and patiently, with concentration on the fact that Hashem is in front of you. The more you get used to this, your sensitivity to it will slowly increase; you will feel it not just as an emotion, but as a holy feeling that comes from your *neshamah*.

In Conclusion

To summarize briefly, we explained with the help of Hashem, that a person needs to utilize the three types of times of being alone, and in addition, one needs to slowly increase his awareness of the concept of feeling *nochach p'nei Hashem*.

Getting used to this will increase your sensitivity to these concepts, and it bring you to resemble the level of what it’s like to standing at *Har Sinai* - when we all stood *nochach p'nei Hashem*, when Hashem spoke with us; as it is written, “*Face-to-face I spoke with them.*”

Questions and Answers With the Rav

Q1: When I concentrate on this awareness as I say the word “Attah” that I am with Hashem face-to-face in a very real way, won’t that compromise on my feeling of yirah/awe for Hashem?

A: We need both *ahavah* (love) and *yirah* (awe) of Hashem. From our love for Hashem we can come to have awe of Hashem. While it is definitely true that a person can be lacking awe of Hashem and thus overdo the love towards Hashem and get too comfortable with Him, we still need both *ahavah* and *yirah* in our relationship with Hashem, and with the more of a real sense of *ahavah* that we develop towards Him the more we can have *yirah*.

Q2: Isn’t it a contradiction to have both ahavah and yirah towards Hashem?

A: Our entire existence is a contradiction, for we are made up of body and soul, the greatest contradiction possible. Hashem is called *yoshev b’saiser elyon*, “He resides in the hidden upper chambers” - in a “*seiser*”, from the word *stirah*/contradiction, to show us that we are supposed to serve Him amidst all the contradictions in our *Avodah* towards Him. Although *ahavah* and *yirah* towards Hashem are two contradictory concepts, we need both of them and each of them needs other one in order to properly thrive.

Q3: Doesn’t feeling “nochach p’nei Hashem” imply that I am apart from Hashem? If so, how can I feel that He is near me when I am still far apart from Him?

A: When you’re talking to your friend, is he near you or far from you? He is near you. So too, when you talk to Hashem and you know He is in front of you, you can feel that He is near you.

Q4: When I say “Attah” and I am supposed to feel “nochach pnei Hashem”, is that the same concept as feeling like I am part of Hashem?

A: What you are describing is a very deep concept, called *hiskalelus* (integrating with Hashem) and it is a very high level, which needs many introductions to explain it and reach it. So far, none of the classes have been describing how we reach *hiskalelus*. The classes here are not addressing such high levels and the focus here is on the simpler levels. Here in this class it was described a far simpler level than *hiskalelus*: to just feel that Hashem is in front of you.

Q5: In Shemoneh Esrei, why do we refer to Hashem as “Hu” (Him) and why do we sometimes refer to Him as “Attah”, You?

A: The Men of Great Assembly established *Shemoneh Esrei*, having in mind that there are different layers in our soul; there are external layers in our soul which relate to Hashem only in third-person, as “*Hu*”, and the more inner layers of our soul can relate to Hashem in first-person, *Attah*.

There are actually two perceptions of how to understand “*Hu*.” The lower level of *Hu* is to simply relate to Hashem in third-person, *Hu*, (Him), where a person feels that Hashem exists but he doesn’t

yet feel a part of Hashem. The higher level is to integrate your own existence with Him, which is a much higher perception of relating to Him as *Hu*.

Q6: *If I relate to Hashem as the Being whom I must draw forth His great rachamim (compassion) on me, is that also called living a life of nochach pnei Hashem?*

A: *Rachamim* is a *middah* of Hashem, but it is not the same thing as *nochach*. *Nochach* is to feel Hashem as a reality in front of you.

Q7: *What is the purpose of hisbodedus with Hashem – is it to feel alone with Hashem and thus become isolated from people, or is the purpose of hisbodedus to be able to relate to others in a better way after I do hisbodedus?*

A: Of course *hisbodedus* improves your interpersonal relationships, but it is not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal of *hisbodedus* is to feel how you're alone with Hashem, and this of course improves your relationships, but that's not the point. In a sense, though, the purpose of *hisbodedus* is really meant to be carried over into your relationships, because when you do proper *hisbodedus*, you reach greater connection with Hashem, and then you are able to shine that light of *emunah* onto the rest of the world. Avraham *Avinu* excelled in the *middah* of *chessed* towards others, but what did he mainly do? He taught people about *emunah* in Hashem.

9 | *Disconnecting From Materialism*

Hisbodedus In The 21st Century

We have explained previously, with the help of Hashem, the depth of *hisbodedus*: to bond with the Creator. That is one side of the coin - the other side of the coin, which we will now explain, is to learn how to separate from the materialism of This World.

As long as a person is feeling very connected with This World, it's not possible to have a true bond with Hashem. Chazal compare This World and the Next World to fire and water, which cannot co-exist²⁰; either you have one or the other, but you can't have both. So too, it's not possible to bond with Hashem if one is very attached to this world; the two are a total contradiction to each other. Thus, in order to have true *hisbodedus*, one must lessen his connection to materialism.

Avraham Avinu said, *"I am a stranger and a settler to the land."* He said he is a settler, but he also said he is a stranger. He knew that he inhabited the physical world, but he also placed himself above it and apart from it.

Chazal say that one should be *daato m'ureves im ha'beriyos*, to get along with people; so we need to be involved with this world to some extent. But we must feel that our stay on this world is only temporary, as if we are a "stranger" here to this "land" – to separate ourselves from being overly attached to This World. We are here, we must be connected with people here, but we also need to be able to disconnect from it.

We have our family; we have a spouse and children; we have friends. We have a home, we have a car, the things we own, our clothing, our health, etc. If we are too connected to it all, we are too connected to the physical dimension.

Of course, Hashem does not want us to totally disconnect from the world. He does not want us to leave our spouse or family. If so, what does Hashem want from us? Especially in our generation, where there is so much more physicality that we need to disconnect from – how do we disconnect from it in a healthy way that will not damage us?

The Materialistic Lifestyle We Live With

The *Avos* (our forefathers) were all shepherds who spend their time in the quiet, tending to the sheep and away from all the noise of people. They were thus able to concentrate better and feel solitude with the Creator. *Sefer HaMaspik L'Ovdei Hashem* (written by *Rabbi Avraham ben HaRambam*) writes that because our forefathers spent their lives this way, amidst silence, that was

²⁰ *Chovos HaLevovos*

how they were able to become so close to Hashem. The forefathers were very close to feeling like a ‘stranger’ to this earth, and that was how they bonded with Hashem.

But we, who live in in the year 5774, are very, very far from the olden days, and we are certainly very far from the lifestyle of old. So in the time we live in today, how do we have any way of returning to it?

We find that the *Avos* were partially connected with people, and they were partially connected with isolation. They had little materialism on this world, so it was easy for them to be spiritual.

The world we live in today, though, is very different. The world today, since we are born, is totally materialistic. Any child born into today’s generation is born into a “*mabul*”, a flood, of materialism. He is born into a flood of abundant clothing, interesting games, all kinds of sweets and tasty nosh, and lots of books to read. It’s all a giant flood that connects him immensely to This World. As a child grows up, he\she makes more friends who are also materialistic like them, and then they become even more engrossed in materialistic pursuits.

A child today who becomes *bar mitzvah* or *bas mitzvah* is becoming an adult, obligated in the *mitzvos*, and a lavish affair is made for him\her that includes lots of food, music, and other things, which have nothing to do with *mitzvos*, and are instead a contradiction to the *mitzvos* that ey are now taking on!

A boy or girl today entering the teenage years then absorbs tons of information about all kinds of topics, through reading, hearing, and seeing all of it. The connection to This World grows stronger with this. They become deeply connected with This World – totally and absolutely connected with physicality.

This way of life is considered the “average” kind of life that kids are experiencing today. With such a way of living, we attempt to make them spiritual, teaching them about Torah, mitzvos, and the will of Hashem. But when they grow up so materialistic, will the concept of *hisbodedus* with Hashem be a concept that talks to them? The entire way of life that we see today, in the year 5774 (or 2016) is totally opposed to a life of *ruchniyus* (spirituality). It is totally far from a life of *hisbodedus* with Hashem.

Why Many People Are Not Succeeding In Hisbodedus

Many people today are trying to *hisbodedus*, but they are spending more time trying to do *hisbodedus* than actually seeing success in it. There are many reasons why people aren’t succeeding in *hisbodedus*. But one of the reasons, which is the main reason, is because the person is still living a very materialistic life and he doesn’t realize that he has to change. He is remaining with the way of life he always lived with since he was a kid, and he is trying to put *hisbodedus* into it, and of course, it doesn’t work. People are not understanding that they are living a contradiction. *Hisbodedus* simply cannot go together with a materialistic life.

Let's understand deeply that success in *hisbodedus* is not achieved through merely spending time on any one path of *hisbodedus*, whether it's a path we described until now or whether it's any of the other paths that there are in *hisbodedus*. It only happens when a person uses his power of free will to choose a new lifestyle, in which he disconnects from materialism.

Caution: Avoid Extreme Changes

Now we will try to make this more practical, now that we have seen how materialistic life is a contradiction to *hisbodedus*. How, indeed, does Hashem want us to act? What is the right balance?

The first reaction that people tend to have when they hear about “disconnecting from This World” is that they get nervous. “You mean I have to change my whole life around?! Give me a break! I have to sell my nice house, my fancy clothes, and my CD collection, and everything I own?! Must I live very frugally? And then I'm really living a lifestyle of *hisbodedus*?” This is what comes to mind when people hear about the idea of disconnecting from This World.

There are actually people who are capable of living that way. But it only works for certain rare individuals who can do so, because they have a strong nature. It does not work for the general whole of *Klal Yisrael*, and it doesn't work either for those who really want to come close to Hashem. A person does not have the capability to disconnect from everything on This World. Most people will not handle it if they try. It will only cause marital discord and problems with the children as well.

So our only choice we are left with is to somehow find a way that's within our own lifestyle we are living on this world, which can incorporate some degree of disconnection from it.

Separating from materialism of This World has two parts to it: an external part and an internal part.

Learning To Let Go

The external part is for a person to be able to give up one thing of This World. We cannot detach from everything on This World, but what we can do is to try letting go of something and to keep this up for a long time.

What should you give up? That will depend on each person's situation. Each person can find something materialistic that is dear to him – and be prepared to give it up. Then, go ahead and give it up. Let go of it.

Of course, it should be something which will not cause any marital discord or any problems with your children when you give it up. It should be done calmly and from a sincere will to elevate your lifestyle. All of us can do it. We can all give up just one thing. We can't give up everything, but we can give up one thing. That is something we can all do.

This needs to be thought about sensibly. Don't overdo it, or else it will backfire. And *daven* to Hashem for help about it: that it should be something that you are capable of doing, and that it shouldn't bother anyone in your surroundings. Then, slowly train yourself to detach from something on This World that is dear to you.

Realizing That This World Is Temporary

That was the external part of the job. Now we will explain the internal process of how we detach from materialism. It is a deep acceptance in which one attains a new perspective towards This World. We should realize that our stay on This World is only temporary. All of us will one day leave it. The question is not *if* we can disconnect from it or not; the only question is *when* it will happen.

The average lifespan of man is for 70 years, and those who are stronger get to live for 80 years. Ever since the sin of Adam, death is the curse placed upon mankind. We do not live forever. Except for Eliyahu and Chanoch, no man has ever avoided death (And those *tzaddikim*, too, left This World, just not in the form of death!). So we will all take leave of This World one day. We can think about this, and this will help us realize that our stay on This World is only temporary, and then we can feel detached from it.

There are people who think about this and they get morbid and depressed, but that is because they aren't trying to come closer to Hashem, and they are still very attached to This World. For such people, thinking of death is, of course, very scary. But if one seeks to become close to Hashem, thinking about death is a thought that escorts us throughout life. It's a deep awareness about life that we all need to have. The thought of death is a very powerful tool we can use to help ourselves detach from the materialism of This World.

In today's times especially, people are very afraid of thinking about the day of death, which is really a very simple fact of life. People don't think about it and don't talk about it, and any thoughts about it are considered to be depressing, and that it's "best recommended" to avoid any talk about death, for the sake of emotional health and happiness. But our Chazal tell us to think about death, and to think about it all the time. The *Orchos Chaim L'Rosh* wrote, "Place the day of death in front of your eyes."²¹

A Note of Caution

We will soon explain how one can come to accept this. But if someone feels at this point that the thought of disconnecting from This World is a scary or sad kind of thought, the following words are not for them. They will only be able to work on the ideas mentioned until now, not the ideas we are

²¹ Additionally, see *Tefillah #0152 – Death, Revival, and Destruction*; if you are morbid about death it may be helpful to see *Tefillah #0140 – The Fear of Death and Its Purpose*

about to say. Perhaps reviewing the previous chapters will be helpful to the reader and enable the reader to develop the inner strength of being able to disconnect from materialism. So if the reader at this point feels that this *avodah* we are describing is scary in any way, it should not be attempted any of the following exercises, and it will only be detrimental to try it.

Detaching: Experiment #1

Let us now continue, with Heavenly assistance.

We all have a home, money, CDs, clothing, jewelry, and all other worldly possessions. Let's think: "Is it forever? Is my house forever? Is my furniture forever?"

The room I am sitting in – will I always be here for as long as I want?" Even if one would never move from his house, eventually, we will all "move" from our "house" – when we die. So our entire stay here on This World is temporary. It is not forever.

Try the following: go through all of the things in your life and think into how temporary it is. Try it also with your clothing, your car, your jewelry, etc. First recognize that you feel connected to it.

Then, tell yourself that it's only a temporary connection, and that you are never forever connected to it. You can go through all of your items in this way and tell yourself that it is not forever with you. This will slowly help you accept that

This World is temporary and help you slowly detach from it more and more, weakening your connection with materialism.

Detaching: Experiment #2

Furthermore, if you go to a hotel for a few days, try the following. Look around the hotel room. You see nice furniture, a nice bed, a nice table, and nice flowers. Do you feel connected to it? If "yes", now ask yourself:

Do you feel permanently connected to it? No.

Because you know that you're only in a hotel, which you are staying in for a day or two, and then you know that you leave it. So, too, look at your home you live in right now, and realize that everything in it is temporary, comparing it to a hotel you're temporarily staying in.

Keep doing this thinking exercise and you will slowly be able to lessen the connection you feel to all your things. You will be able to realize that your home is not really your home, but more like a 'hotel' that you're only staying in temporarily. Think about this, and verbalize it to yourself too.

Detaching: Experiment #3

Another exercise to think about is the following.

We all know people who are not here anymore on This World. They had a home, furniture, clothing, jewelry, cars, and other things. Now they no longer have anything; they were connected to these things while they lived, and now they are not. We can learn from this that we, too, will one day leave all the things we own. Thinking about this will weaken our connection to materialism.

Detaching: Experiment #4

Additionally, you can think about the following: We all know people who had their houses foreclosed by the bank because they couldn't pay their bills. We can see from this clearly that all that we have is temporary. It will happen to all of us at some point, and the only question is, when. Think about it.

Detaching: Experiment #5

Another thing to think about: We all know people who had a good job, a job in which they felt successful, respected and well-paid – and in one day, suddenly, they lost their job, for whatever reason. They were very connected with their job that they liked, and then they lost it all overnight. So too, all of us will one day lose our job – when we eventually take leave of This World.

In Conclusion

So even if we feel connected to This World, we can weaken our connection to it when we think about these things, about how temporary everything is on This World. Through that, we leave our connection to materialism and then connect with spirituality, and then we can have true *hisbodedus* with Hashem.

We must emphasize that the mentality here can only help those who accept these facts happily, as opposed to someone who is afraid or sad when he begins to think about these things. A person who gets sad when he thinks about these things should not attempt these exercises.

Upon internalizing this new perspective on life, we can realize that although we live on This World and feel connected to it, we can use it to perform *mitzvos* and serve Hashem better, rather than to use it just for physical purposes.

In this way, we achieve the balance between getting along with people and with being detached from this world; that we can use this world for holy purposes, for *mitzvos* and for doing kindness - yet still feel like a “stranger” to this world.

Questions and Answers With the Rav

Q1: *In Sefer Koheles it says that having yiras shomayim (fear of Heaven), and doing mitzvos is like living in the Next World already on This World, if so, why should we need to disconnect from This World, when we can just live a Next-World kind of existence already on This World (via having yiras shomayim and doing mitzvos)?*

A: Yes, Sefer Koheles was written by Shlomo HaMelech to show us how to detach from This World. But we can only experience what Koheles says when we fulfill the entire sefer! We cannot experience a Next World kind of existence if we have never finished the entire Sefer Koheles yet and if we are not yet doing every last thing it says there.

Q2: *Being that there is an argument in the Rishonim about what the Next World will be, if it will be spiritual or if it will be a soul within a purified body, we see that The Next World can already be on this world, when we live a spiritual life, if so why can't we just live a spiritual life within this physical world and that will be enough of a disconnection from materialism?*

A: As you mentioned, there is an argument of what the future will look like. Everyone agrees that there will be Moshiach, then resurrection of the dead (in which the soul will return to the body on This World). What will happen after that? This is a dispute. The Rambam says that after resurrection we will die again and then we will have a soul with no body. The Ramban says – and most held like him – is that after resurrection we will remain with our bodies, but our body will be purified. So according to the Rambam, the purpose of Creation is to exist only with our soul, while the Ramban is of the opinion that the purpose is to have a purified body.

Q3: *The Chofetz Chaim writes in Ahavas Chessed that doing chessed is what sanctifies us on This World. If so, why can't that be enough to disconnect us from materialism? Why doesn't doing chessed accomplish this too?*

A: *The goal is to use the physical world for the spiritual, but before we do that, we need to already develop the ability to disconnect from This World, and then we are able to sanctify physicality, such as through doing chessed. If a person doesn't disconnect from materialism, he will end up becoming attached to This World even as he's doing mitzvos. For example, there is a mitzvah of oneg Shabbos, but if a person is too attached to This World, he will end up becoming a glutton through oneg Shabbos. Therefore, we need to already develop beforehand the idea of disconnecting from materialism, so that we won't become too attached to This World when we have to be involved in it for the sake of mitzvos.*

Q4: *Giving up something from This World – must it be done permanently or temporarily?*

A: Do what you are capable of doing. It is better if you give it up permanently, but it is also effective if you give it up temporarily. Know what level you are capable of.

Q5: *Are mentally ill\delusional people considered to be more spiritual, since they are disconnected to a large extent from This World?*

A: If they already became connected to This World before they became insane. If they already were, then yes. If not, then they are not connected to anything – not to physicality and not to spirituality. They are nowhere – not here, not there; like “*Kaf HaKela*.”

Q6: *People who become sick and are deathly ill – are those people more spiritual and disconnected from this physical world?*

A: Sometimes you can see how connected deathly ill people are to the Next World. There are all kinds of ways to communicate with deathly ill people when they are unconscious and you can see what’s going on inside them. If the illness is making them totally unconscious, it’s very possible that they are very much connected with the spiritual, being that they are disconnected from physicality.

Q7: *The shiur here is similar to the words of the Mesillas Yesharim, that a person first needs perishus (abstinence) from this world, and then after one does that, he can know how to sanctify This World and use it correctly.*

A: Correct- exactly.

Q8: *People who are mentally ill or partially delusional – are they more spiritual?*

A: I don’t know if you are describing an actual illness or a bad habit of imagining. I would have to know more details to be able to answer this question. I also don’t understand what it has to do with being spiritual.

Q9: *If a person feels very connected to the materialism This World, he must change his perspective towards it, or he must change his actions that he’s currently doing?*

A: Most people can’t handle action and they can handle a change of perspective. Only a few individuals are capable of taking major actions in order to implement these changes, just as we find that there are Baalei teshuvah who changed around their whole lives. Only a few are strong enough to make such changes. Most of us can only handle a change of perspective towards This World without drastically separating from it, and we can give up one small thing from This World that’s dear to us, but not more than that.

Q10: *Is this just an internal change of mindset, or is it supposed to manifest in something tangible in our life?*

A: Yes, it should be a change that affects something actually going on in your life.

10 | *Hisbodedus & Ahavas Yisrael*

Does Hisbodedus Compromise On Ahavas Yisrael?

With the help of Hashem, previously, we explained the concept of disconnecting from society; to lessen one's feeling of connection to This World, to feel towards it that it is only temporary.

This all described one side of the coin, however. The three parts to *hisbodedus* which we have explained thus far - *hisbodedus* with oneself, *hisbodedus* between man and his Creator, and disconnection from This World – cannot be everything. If it were, then a person would live entirely with himself and with Hashem, and then what will be with his *Ahavas Yisrael* (love for others Jews), being that he is so detached from the world...?

True *hisbodedus* does not cause a person to become self-absorbed and to compromise on his *Ahavas Yisrael*. Our Rabbis who guided us in matters of *hisbodedus* taught that *hisbodedus* is actually meant to increase our *Ahavas Yisrael*. The question, of course, is *how*, but in concept, *hisbodedus* is not meant at all to weaken one's feeling of *Ahavas Yisrael*; it is meant to increase the quality of our *Ahavas Yisrael*.

In the materialistic side to life, when a person is absorbed in his various material pursuits, his feelings for others begin to get less and less, and surely he doesn't feel a love for others, being that he is very immersed in himself and in his materialistic pursuits. At the opposite end of the spectrum are those who are spiritual, who are mainly involved with becoming closer to G-d. Is a spiritual life of closeness to G-d supposed to weaken our relationships with others and feel detached from them? It seems to be that it should compromise on our love for others, being that *hisbodedus* is to be disconnected from This World.

The truth is that in the beginning stage of *hisbodedus*, a person has to get used to entering inward, speaking to himself and thinking to himself, alone, and he becomes more and more inward. Sometimes this leads to increasing his ego, *chas v'shalom*. In any case, the beginning stage of *hisbodedus*, which is the more "private" stage, is definitely a disconnect from other people, and the risk with it is that it can distance a person from *Ahavas Yisrael*. Let us see what we can do about this: how can we begin to become "alone" when we do *hisbodedus*, in a way that will not diminish our *Ahavas Yisrael*? We will explain how *hisbodedus* is not meant to increase the ego, rather, it is meant to increase our *Ahavas Yisrael*.

The Depth of Hisbodedus: Reaching The Root of The Soul

The depth of *hisbodedus* is for a person to enter deeper into himself, as we explained in previous chapters. The deeper a person enters inward, the more he experiences his private self. But the truth is

that when he reaches the inner point of himself, he reaches his root, and there at the root, he is one with *Klal Yisrael*. This is because all of *Klal Yisrael* are one at their root.

If a person never gets to that inner point in himself, then it will be difficult for him to avoid becoming self-absorbed. But once he does reach the root of his soul, he will feel connected to the entire Jewish people. One who does *hisbodedus* in a true way will surely reach this place in himself of deep *Ahavas Yisrael*.

Thus, the point of *hisbodedus* is not to reach one's own inner self and to remain there. It is a long journey to get to the self, and upon reaching that depth, a person reveals the root of his own soul, which is called "*Kneses Yisrael*" - the collective unit of the Jewish people. Once reaching this place, a person is not only connected to his own soul, but to the *root* of his soul – and the deep root of his soul is *Klal Yisrael*. There, not only does he retain his *Ahavas Yisrael*, but he reaches the root of all *ahavah* (love), and there a person can come to love every single Jew – without exception.

However, even after reaching that deep *Ahavas Yisrael* towards others, it's still possible that there are unrefined parts of his soul which are preventing his *Ahavas Yisrael* from being revealed totally. But even so, it is a tremendous gain if a person reaches his deep place of *Ahavas Yisrael* inside himself. It sharpens his perception of *Ahavas Yisrael* and makes him feel a very great love for the Jewish people, even if it's not perfect yet.

Countering The Ego

If a person is doing *hisbodedus* on a regular basis and he finds that his love for other Jews is not increasing, the question is, how can he improve his *hisbodedus* in a way that will not cause him to become self-absorbed and to be able to love others?

At the beginning stage of *hisbodedus*, when a person is beginning to go deeper into himself, he needs to make sure he is not becoming self-absorbed. Therefore, he should try some acts of giving each day, so that he is involved with benefitting other people. In this way, he balances himself out, using the opposite nature of *hisbodedus*.

The second part to this is that along with this – giving to others and awakening the love for others – is that a person needs to begin lessening his self-worry, and to try increasing his feeling of care for others instead. This has to be worked on slowly and step-by-step, in order to slowly pull out of the ego and to instead channel the feeling of care of concern, for others.

We will explain this part more. There is a part in ourselves in which we worry for ourselves. Some of us are more self-absorbed than others, but all of us worry for ourselves. We are all aware of this. Now, if starting to do *hisbodedus* is causing us to become more self-absorbed, it is detrimental. It merely increases our ego, because the more we enter inward, the more it increases our care and concern for our own self. So it is definitely possible that starting to do *hisbodedus* can cause an egotistical person to become even more egotistical.

Therefore, at the beginning stage of *hisbodedus*, a person needs to also work on lessening his ego, along with acts of giving for others. Those are the two parts which we will need in order to be balanced, when we begin *hisbodedus*.

Summary

To summarize thus far: at the beginning of *hisbodedus*, a person needs to disconnect from the world, but at the same time he needs to be involved with acts of giving to others and in increasing his love for others, in addition to lessening his self-worry by channeling his worry towards others.

The end goal of *hisbodedus* is to come to feel a deep love for all other Jews.

Now we will explain the middle stage of *hisbodedus*, which we did not explain yet; it can only be worked on once the first steps have been reached.

The Middle Stage of Hisbodedus: Increased Awareness Towards Self and Others

With the more a person works his way through the first stages of *hisbodedus*, he will discover that his feelings have become more opened. His feelings have become heightened and more sensitive. In addition, he becomes more aware of himself in general.

If a person has not worked to lessen his ego – which was part of the first stage – what will happen, as he continues *hisbodedus*? He becomes more sensitive, but only towards himself. He becomes more aware of himself, but not others. But if a person did it right – if he worked to lessen his ego already in the first stage of *hisbodedus* – then when his feelings heighten as he continues *hisbodedus*, he will become more sensitive towards others, and he will become aware of others.

Compare this to a water pipe. The water will come out of the pipe depending on which direction we turn the pipe towards. With most people, the “pipe” is weak – there is a lack of awareness of one’s feelings and self-awareness in general.

But once the “pipe” is opened – through *hisbodedus*, which increases one’s feelings – all of feelings will come pouring out, like water from a pipe.

If the ego hasn’t been removed yet, the feelings that will come out will only be about himself. All of the love that comes out will be a self-love, not a love for others.

But if the ego has been worked on in the first stage, then the feelings and the love which results from *hisbodedus* will be towards others – one will have deeper sensitivity towards others, deeper love towards others, and more awareness of others.

Summary of the Three Steps

Thus, there were three steps which we need in order to increase our *Ahavas Yisrael* as we begin *hisbodedus*; let us summarize them, so that it should be clear.

- 1) In the beginning stage of *hisbodedus*, a person has to make sure that he is involved with acts of giving toward others, with conscious intention to increase his love for others;
- 2) One needs to lessen his self-worry by channeling his worry towards worrying for others.
- 3) (This comes in the middle of steps 1-2): The opening of the feelings and awareness towards others. This step will be reached only if the first two steps were reached.

Evil Hisbodedus

When all of these three steps are reached, a person is able to reach the root of his soul, which is *Klal Yisrael*, and he loves every single Jew, without exception.

Without going through this kind of preparation for *hisbodedus*, a person is ignorant of the concept of working on the ego, and when he gets involved with *hisbodedus*, although he will see an increase in his spiritual feelings and awareness, at the same time it increases his ego, which is detrimental. Unfortunately, *hisbodedus* only serves to increase the ego and causes a person to become even more self-absorbed, when he hasn't yet worked on lessening his ego before he began *hisbodedus*.

Love and Beyond Love

Another point to be aware of is that our love and feelings for others can only be reached if we ourselves have attained a proper and healthy self-love. Rav Shimon Shkop wrote that love for others means to extend our own love for ourselves, towards others. So we need to make sure that we love ourselves in the first place – in a healthy way – in order to be able to give that love others.

However, being that our love for others is based on how much we love ourselves, our love for others will be limited, when it is merely an extension of our ego. So in order to love other Jews with true *Ahavas Yisrael*, we need to reach a love that goes beyond our own ego.

When people are not aware of this, they will remain their entire life at the second stage of *hisbodedus*, and they will never reach the third step of *hisbodedus*. Their love for others will be limited to how much they love themselves. This doesn't mean they will be self-absorbed and only worry for themselves. They will still be concerned for others, but it does not go beyond how much they love their own selves. It means that their love for others first has to pass through their "I", which limits the love for others.

Thus, we must be aware of the third stage. The third stage is to turn our “*Ani*” (I) into “*Ayin*” (“nothing”)self-nullification). It is to go beyond our own “I” and reach the root of the “I”. The root of the “I” is called “*Kneses Yisrael*” - the point of integrating with *Klal Yisrael*, where the “I” is part of a greater whole. There, the love for other Jews is not coming from my own self-love, but from a higher source of love: to integrate myself with *Klal Yisrael*, and to love them from there.

Without being aware of this third stage, a person is still involved with his “I”, so all of his love for others is limited, for it is stemming from his own self-love. But in the third stage, a person loves others not because he has extended his ego to them, but because he is integrated with *Klal Yisrael* on the collective level. Of course, in order to get to this higher kind of love, one has to first reach the previous level, of being able to extend his ego towards others.

At the third stage, an entirely new kind of awareness towards life is reached. It is the total kind of *Ahavas Yisrael*, which is beyond the “I” and thus it is not limited to the “I”. It is to join the collective unit of *Klal Yisrael*, and to love *Klal Yisrael* on a personal level.

Another Difference Between The Second and Third Levels of Ahavas Yisrael

There is also another deep difference between the second and third levels of *Ahavas Yisrael* that we are describing, which we will mention.

In the second level, the love for others passes through one’s “I”, so the person still sees himself as first place; as Chazal say, “*Chayecha Kodmin*” (“Your life comes first”).

But in the third level, where a person’s *Ahavas Yisrael* transcends his own private self, although there is still a concept of ‘*Chayecha Kodmin*’ even on this level, it is to a much lesser degree. The ‘*Chayecha Kodmin*’ is still there because he is connected to the second and third stages at once, thus there is still a place for ‘*Chayecha Kodmin*,’ due to the second stage that attaches him to the third stage. But his actual love for other Jews is above that place of ‘*Chayecha Kodmin*’. In this kind of love, a person is able to reveal a tremendous mesirus nefesh for another, and to greatly lessen his feeling of “*Chayecha Kodmin*”.

The Fourth and Highest Stage of Ahavas Yisrael

Finally, above these three levels we have described, comes a fourth stage, which is the innermost level of *hisbodedus*.

The beginning of *hisbodedus* is to enter deep into the “I”, and the end of *hisbodedus* is to join with the Creator and become attached with Him. When one is **truly** connected to the Creator, he loves other Jews as an automatic result, for Chazal say that “If one loves his friend, he loves his children”, because the children are a part of their father.

To summarize: One has to first reach the depth of his soul. From there, he can love others as a result, being that his own self-love will increase. This is all within the stage of the ego. After that stage, it is upon him to reach the root of his soul, which is above his “I.” This is the place of feeling *Ahavas Yisrael* on the collective level, and it is a love that goes beyond the ego. After that, one can then reach true attachment with the Creator; if he truly loves the Creator, that means that he will love His children as a result of this.

Thus, we have seen how the complete level of *hisbodedus* does not lessen *Ahavas Yisrael* (or love for others in general); to the contrary, it is meant to foster an endless kind of *Ahavas Yisrael* and love for all creations – for they are all the children of Hashem.

Questions and Answers With the Rav

Q1: *How can a person actually move from one stage to the next?*

A: Moving From Stage One to Stage Two is the actual journey of *hisbodedus*. Doing *hisbodedus* on a regular basis increases your spiritual feelings, as a natural process, with the more you are doing *hisbodedus* and getting more in touch with yourself. Step One is clear. Anyone who works on *hisbodedus* correctly will be able to reach Stage Two. Stage Three, which is to reach the root of the soul, is reached with the more a person enters inward, such as through the methods of breathing and the other methods we explained in previous classes²²; along with prayer and intense perseverance to get there. But what we pointed out here in this class is that a person has to be aware that there is a third stage. If a person isn't aware of the third stage, he will always remain in the second stage and think that the goal of *hisbodedus* has been reached, thinking that he has reached the deepest place in himself.

What is the truth? There is really no end. The goal is to reach the *Ein Sof* of Hashem, which is endless. Thus, the more a person is aware of the third stage, he can penetrate deeper and deeper into himself to get there, along with prayer to get there. In this way he can reach Stages Two and Three as a natural process, and then he can reach not only his own soul, but the root of his soul, which is *Kneses Yisrael*.

Q2: *I do not feel this coming as a natural process, and it is very hard.*

A: Stage One is to decrease the ego as you begin *hisbodedus*, and at the same time you also need to feeling that you are entering deeper into yourself (along with davening to Hashem for this).

Q3: *How do we reconcile the third and fourth stages of Ahavas Yisrael with the concept of 'Chayecha Kodmin'?*

A: We spoke about this during the class. '*Chayecha Kodmin*' only exists in the second stage of *hisbodedus*, but if one reaches the third level and fourth levels, there is much less of a degree of '*Chayecha Kodmin*' (though it will certainly exist according to Halacha).

Q4: *Doesn't it say that the mitzvah to love other Jews is only 'like' yourself, and that it is impossible to love others just as much as you love yourself (and certainly then you can't love others more than you love yourself)?*

A: There is an argument between the Ramban and the Ramchal if it is impossible to love others like yourself or not. The Ramban's view is that you must love others as much as you can, but that you cannot actually love others as much as yourself. The Ramchal's view is that you can love others as much as you love yourself. In actuality, it is not a disagreement. The Ramban is addressing a lower level of love, in which a person loves others through his own self-love, and that is really the second

²² See class #03 and #04

stage we described in this class. The Ramchal is talking about a higher kind of love, which is the third level we described.

Q5: *I am reviewing what I learned in the past classes on hisbodedus and I am up to the stage of self-accounting and examining my actions, to view myself from outside of myself. I am having a hard time with this.*

A: In that shiur²³ there were several methods presented, such as looking at pictures or videos of oneself and other methods. Have you tried that?

Q6: *I am having a hard time, though, with visualizing what I did when I did it, as I watch myself perform.*

A: Using those methods we gave should be able to help you visualize, but if you are finding it too hard you may skip it.

Q7: *When I do hisbodedus I feel more loving towards others, but when it comes down to my actual day-to-day life, I find that I have lost those feelings and then wonder where it has gone.*

A: How do you love others – do you love others only based on the qualities you see in them...? (I find that I cannot love others when I see negative behaviors in them). The general way to overcome your disgust you feel towards others is that during your time of *hisbodedus*, concentrate on how much you would want to love that person. First imagine a person whom you find it easier to love and concentrate on how much you love for him, so that you can increase your love for him. After you do *hisbodedus* like that, you will find that you love that person even more in your actual day-to-life. When you realize that, you can now do this with all other people you know. It is better to try this one-by-one as opposed to concentrating on how much you love the general whole of *Klal Yisrael*, because you cannot grab too many high levels at once. Instead, it is better to focus on increasing love towards one person at a time.

Q8: *In order to review all that I've been through in these classes, what can the Rov suggest – should I start from the beginning of the classes, or is there perhaps a shortcut to get to the goal?*

A: Shortcuts are only through computers.

Q9: *How much time needs to elapse between each of the stages in order to progress to the next stage? Week by week, or month by month?*

A: Even a month between each level is not enough time to acquire a level. For this reason, Hashem gave us many years to live!

Q10: *Is it possible to keep listening to these classes even I haven't yet worked on the previous levels?*

²³ See classes #07 and #08

A: Listening is fine, but make sure you are not working on two different stages at once. It is good to know the map beforehand of where you need to get to – “*sof maaseh, b’machshavah techilah*” (the end of actions, is first with thought). Therefore, it is good to listen to the shiurim, so you can see where you need to get to, even if you are not there yet. You can listen to a shiur even though you know that you can’t work on its ideas yet, rather than attempting to work on the ideas after hearing each shiur. In fact, it is even better to listen to the shiurim even though you’re not holding yet at working on them, just to see the general picture, and after that one can begin to work on the concepts he heard.

11 | Hisbodedus As a Way of Life

The Complete Picture of Hisbodedus.

In the last 11 chapters we explained the *avodah* of *hisbodedus*, step after step. Each time we added on another step, but we were missing the full picture. Now that we have seen all the pieces, we need to see how all of the details come together, and then we can see the ‘*sof maaseh*’ (the end of actions) which began with our “*machshavah, techilah*” (first with thought). In this chapter, we hope to conclude and summarize all that we have discussed.

Until now, the picture has been incomplete. Now we need to see the complete picture - to see which of the stages we explained must come in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end.

The essence of our entire *avodah* is not about working on another detail and then on another detail. It is about seeing how the details come together and become a structure. So we need to see how all the details we have learned can come together to form a certain picture.

Until now, we were missing pieces of the puzzle. So the final step is to review all of the steps what we have been through, not just for the sake of seeing the details, but so that we can put them all together and see how the details connect, to form the complete picture. We will then receive a whole new understanding towards these details.

Each of the Stages Takes Time

It’s possible that until now we’ve only been working on various ‘steps’ of this process, working on each stage of *hisbodedus* month by month, without seeing the bigger picture of it all. The truth is that it takes much more than just a month to work on any of these forms of *avodah*. Whether one has worked on the *avodah* of all of these months, or only part of them, in either case, we now have to see how all the details connect, from beginning until end (and forever).

It is impossible to give a specific amount of time that must span in between each of the steps that were laid out in the previous chapters; this is because the growth in between each of the stages depends on each personal soul. Some people can gain levels quickly, while others take longer time, depending on the nature of the stage and how each person relates to it. It can take even years to acquire one of the steps in the process.

So, we need to review all of the steps we’ve learned until now, and see how all of the steps connect. It will take a long time to actually work on each of the steps, but we need to at least see the general picture of it all, from beginning until end.

The Confusion Caused By Hearing Shiurim On Other Topics of Self-Improvement

Each person is used to listening to *shiurim* on various topics. In addition to hearing these *shiurim*/reading these chapters, one is also used to hearing other *shiurim*, on many various topics. What happens from all of this? A person becomes a mix.

He has heard various details he needs to work on, and it all comes together in his head, forming a certain mixture in his head of what he needs to work on. If he's working on a current *avodah*, he loses focus on the current *avodah* and begins to work on another point. He begins to work on one kind *avodah*, and then he's onto another *avodah*, before he has even spent enough time trying to acquire the first point.

In fact, with most people, there is no *mehalech* (path) to work on any one point in *avodah*. People are mostly jumping around to other topics before they've even completed the other topics. Although we certainly need to learn about other things and to amass much knowledge, at the same, we have to make sure not to lose focus on our *avodah* at hand, which is *hisbodedus*.

Hisbodedus: Our Main Avodah

As we have explained, we must realize that *hisbodedus* is not just time every day for meditation, but **a way of life**. Therefore, *hisbodedus* must always be our main *avodah* in life, and everything else we encounter in our *avodah* should be seen as secondary to *hisbodedus*.

Of course, there are other ways of *avodah* that exist. But once you are going with this *derech* (way) here that we have been presenting throughout all of the previous chapters – the fact that *hisbodedus* is a way to live life- make sure to stick with it. It should be the basis of your life! Within it can come other levels as well that you wish to acquire, but you need to view *hisbodedus* as being the main *avodah* of your life; it is a *derech* (way) with which to live life with.

Think about this, and decide if *hisbodedus* is a *derech* for you, or if it is not. If you come to the conclusion that the *derech* presented here is not for you, then you will need something else. But once you are choosing this *derech*, understand that this is the basis of your *derech* in life - and not just another aspect of *avodah* in life. It takes the work of a lifetime to acquire, so it is not just another level or detail that you learn about. It needs to become the basis of how you grow in serving Hashem.

If you recognize that, let it become your foundation - and not just as another random detail in your life that you have heard about.

In this series, we have been explaining *hisbodedus* according to the Rambam, specifically through his son, Rabbi Avraham *ben* HaRambam, in the *sefer* which is called “*Sefer HaMaspik L'Ovdei Hashem*”²⁴, in which there is a section there about *hisbodedus*. Much of his work has been lost, so we

²⁴ Editor's Note: English translation of this *sefer* is available as “*Sefer HaMaspik*” (Feldheim publishers).

don't have all the details about *hisbodedus*. But what we do remain with from that work is to be aware of the general attitude towards *hisbodedus*, and it is that perspective which we have been presenting in these chapters that ***hisbodedus is a way of living life***. It is a certain kind of lifestyle. It is not limited to 'doing *hisbodedus*' for an hour a day – it is a mindset with which to live life with.²⁵

That being the case, all other ways of *avodah* which we strive to acquire, need to be incorporated into a lifestyle of *hisbodedus*, as opposed to viewing all other point of *avodah* as being separate from that of *hisbodedus*. Rather than striving for many different aspects of *avodah* to work on - with *hisbodedus* being included – instead, we need to see all other forms of *avodah* as being incorporated into *hisbodedus*!

Examples of Remaining Focused On Hisbodedus.

We will give some examples which illustrate what we mean.

(1) For example, a person hears a *shiur* about *chessed* (kindness) – which is called one of the 'pillars of the world', and that it is the trait of Avraham *Avinu*. At the same time in his life, he is also working on *hisbodedus*. He encounters a contradiction: should I mainly do *hisbodedus*, or should I mainly be involved with *chessed*...?

He hears about how important it is to do *chessed*, so he works on it, but then he loses his *avodah* of *hisbodedus* in the process. He is taken out of his state of *hisbodedus* as he grows in his acts of *chesed*. He gains the *middah* of *chessed*... but he loses his state of *hisbodedus*.

In our times, there was a great Jew who lived, Rav Shimshon Pincus *zt"l*. You can be awed by his *chessed* when you read about his life. On the other hand, he also practiced *hisbodedus*. He didn't see it as a contradiction. He was very extending towards others and involved with others, even to the point of *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice toward others), but in a way that didn't make him lose his state of *hisbodedus*. How? All of his *chessed* was considered by him to be part and parcel with *hisbodedus*, rather than apart from it.

(2) Another example we can use is the concept of *zikuy harabim* (benefitting the public). *Zikuy harabim* is a great *mitzvah*, and the *Chovos HaLevovos* even says that it is called the main task of man on this world. However, although it is great to be involved with *zikuy harabim*, a person might give up everything in his life for the sake of *zikuy harabim*. He might lose his own personal world in the process of always striving to help others. There are many people, in fact, who lose their entire inner world from all their *zikkuy harabim*! They lose their state of *hisbodedus*.

So although *zikuy harabim* is wonderful, a person needs to see it as part of his *avodah* of *hisbodedus*, and not as something that is apart from it. Otherwise, a person does *hisbodedus* and he

²⁵ See *Preparing For Hisbodedus*, chapter #05 (*Lifestyle of Hisbodedus*) and chapter #06 (*Essence of Hisbodedus*).

also does *zikuy harabim*, and then he loses all his gains of *hisbodedus* as he's immersed in *zikuy harabim*.

(3) Here is another example, from a different angle, of how other points of *avodah* can hamper *hisbodedus*. Until now, we have been explaining a lifestyle of *hisbodedus*, which is based on a life of quiet and calmness. Sometimes, we encounter a kind of person who considers 'saving time' to be number one priority in his life; a person who is very careful with his time, never wasting a moment, using every spare moment to do something purposeful, with absolutely no time to relax. According to this person, 'saving time' is the most important *avodah* of life, and it must come at any cost.

Although it is wonderful to save time and always be maximizing every moment, if this becomes the main *avodah* in life to a person, he might always feel proud that he's using every moment of his life to "cram it all in", but at what price? It contradicts a life of calmness. By always doing something every moment, a person never has any calm and quiet, which will mean that he will lose any *hisbodedus* that he has acquired.

(4) Here is another example of the concept, from the materialistic side of life. There are homes in which the financial strain has caused *parnassah* (livelihood) has become the main thing, and because the couple wants to live a more comfortable kind of life, they (or one of them) takes an extra job on the side, to be able to bring in some more money.

What happens? Although it brings in more money, it often comes at the expense of the calmness in the home. It brings in physical comfort, but at the expense of a tranquil life; when juggling between so many jobs, it is not possible for a person to feel calm and tranquil.

(5) Another example: Many times a person is drawn after the crowd to think a certain way and to desire certain things, or he is drawn after reading certain kinds of books, which makes him focus on external things, and this take him out of his calmness.

There might be nothing wrong with those people he is involved with and nothing wrong with the material of the books he is reading, but even so, becoming too involved with these external factors can draw a person out of his inner world and hamper him from inner progress.

Often, it is the very attitude of his friends which are focused on trivialities and superficialities, which are not leading toward a life of inner calmness. It causes a person to lose his own inner quiet.

If a person is always around friends who are not necessarily an evil influence, and they are merely into various hobbies, or trips, or other things, although they are not directly causing him any negative influences, a person loses his inner calmness when he is around such friends, because they pursue external things.

Reading books also brings a person into a different world that isn't his. He will lose his own inner world in the process, as he pursues the various external stimuli found on this world.

Even Spiritual Work Can Get In The Way of Hisbodedus.

We have given several examples of the concept, and you can add in your own. The point is that we must understand, that our life contains *gashmiyus* (materialism) and *ruchniyus* (spirituality), and each of these factors can hamper us and takes us out of our inner world of *pnimiyus*.

I will say it very clearly: even our *ruchniyus* can take away from our *pnimiyus*! It is clear that materialism makes us lose focus from *pnimiyus*, but even *ruchniyus* can take us away, by making us lose focus on our main *avodah* at hand.

If someone chooses this *derech* of *hisbodedus* that we have presented here – to see *hisbodedus* as a way to live life, rather than as just another *avodah* on our list - then he must see all aspects of his life as being part of *hisbodedus*.

Therefore, whenever one comes across any aspect of *ruchniyus* that he would like to work on, it must be analyzed and weighed with thought, to see if it will hamper one's *hisbodedus* or not. There are no exact definitions of how to apply this concept, because each situation has to be weighed on a personal level, and each person is different. For example, some people will do *chessed* and it doesn't take them out of their *hisbodedus*, while others do *chessed* and lose focus of *hisbodedus*.

So it's hard to say exactly what takes a person away from his state of *hisbodedus*. But the general idea is, that in whatever you come across, even if it's *ruchniyus*, you need to see if doing it will hamper your *hisbodedus* or not.

Of course, this does not apply to any of the obligations of *Halacha*, such as doing any of the *mitzvos* and fulfilling *halachos*, which you must do no matter what. But if it's something that's not an obligation and it is rather a level of personal growth, you need to question it and see if it will hamper your *hisbodedus* or not. It is only those areas which we are discussing here that we need to question.

Knowing Your Specific Path of Hisbodedus

'*Hisbodedus*' is a general term that describes many different paths of *hisbodedus*; it includes many details. To illustrate, there are many kinds of bread. There is whole wheat, rye, barely, etc. You can't just walk into a bakery and ask for 'bread'; you need to specify which type of bread you want. So too, there are many kinds of *hisbodedus*, and you need to identify which kind of *hisbodedus* you are doing.

The path that we have taken here is only one of the paths of *hisbodedus* which our Rabbis describe. The approach here is based on the words of the Rambam, and of his son Rabbi Avraham ben HaRambam [1186–1237]; and we also mentioned some of the methods of Rav Avraham Abulafia [1240-1291].

But there are other approaches that exist. Since there are other approaches to *hisbodedus*, many of the writings of our Rabbis that we come across are in fact not geared towards the path elucidated here. Therefore, a person can get very confused when he hears *shiurim* about other topics of *avodah*,

because he is hearing words that come from a different root of *avodah*. So there is much confusion that can enter a person when he's doing *hisbodedus* with our path here, if he is also hearing *shiurim* that are based on other paths.

The gain in hearing these *shiurim* is that we will hopefully have trained our soul to get used to the approach here and to stick with it, so that even if we come across other approaches, our soul will be inclined to fall back onto the approach here.

But there is an additional problem, though [which the above will not solve]. If a person is hearing other approaches about *hisbodedus*, and he is aware that others are practicing *hisbodedus* in a way that is very different from how it was presented here, he will find himself being pulled after how other people are doing it. He will end up mixing around the information from all the many different paths he comes across, with the approach here and with the other approaches, and this can lead to much damage to one's *avodah*.

Who Can Gain From This Series, and Who Can't

In fact, the way of *hisbodedus* that was described in these chapters is **only** meant for people who are deeper in **intellect** and **emotion**, as well capability of understanding subtleties ('*dakut*'). So it is a path that is clearly not for everyone. The path of *hisbodedus* that we have described here is only for those individuals who possess depth of intellect and emotion [who require this deep path we have taken]. Most people, who prefer a simpler approach, need a different path of *hisbodedus*.

Therefore, whoever wants to practice the path here, first needs to review all of these chapters, seeing the total picture of it all; and then, he/she needs to decide if it is for him/her or not. If you conclude that it is not for you, you must look for a different path of *hisbodedus* - explained by Torah sources, that is. If you see that you are succeeding with the path here, then continue with it and keep trying to implement the steps. ***And if you have any questions, you must find a Rav who knows about these matters, whom you can discuss it with; especially if you are encountering confusion.***

Additionally, if you see that you are succeeding with *hisbodedus*, that doesn't mean that you should tell others about it and teach them about your approach. This is because since there are different paths of *hisbodedus*, what worked for you might not work for another.

And certainly, even if you are seeing success in *hisbodedus*, praying to Hashem for success is always needed along the way.

In Conclusion.

I thank you all for sticking it out for many months as you listened and participated in this series. In addition, as I went along, your many questions have refined my own understanding about these matters.

I hope that all of you find the path that is meant for you; may all of us here merit to reach the perfection of our souls, and may we all have *siyata d'shmaya* in doing so. And, through all of this, may we merit to properly go through the coming festival of Pesach that will soon be upon us.

Questions and Answers With the Rav

Q1: *In the beginning of the series on hisbodedus, the Rav explained that we need to shut out the whole world from our thoughts when we begin hisbodedus. However, in the end of this series, the Rav has said that hisbodedus must begin with loving acts towards others [as explained the previous shiur].*

A: There are two steps. The first step is to disconnect from the world, both in regards to giving and receiving from others. In that first step, the point was to disconnect from thoughts of people. The later stage, which we have addressed in recent chapters, is that after a person has reached deep *hisbodedus*, the *avodah* is to increase love towards others, both in thought and in deed. We explained that after a person has disconnected from the need to receive from others as well as the need to give to others, the next step of our *avodah* is to awaken love for others, using the depth of the *hisbodedus* we have hopefully acquired by then.

Q2: *How do we practically implement the path of hisbodedus presented here? How can I wake up early in the morning to do hisbodedus, if I went to a wedding or a Sheva Berachos last night? What is the Ratzon Hashem – that I go to simchos and thereby lose out on hisbodedus, or is the Ratzon Hashem that I do hisbodedus and ignore going to simchos? How do I reconcile the contradiction between hisbodedus and the various mitzvos of chessed I have to do in my life? What exactly does Hashem want from me?*

A: It is never possible to know exactly what Hashem wants from you. We can know the direction we need to take and to slowly align ourselves with what we know we need to do.

If you are faced with something that you must take care of, then you have no choice, and you have to do it, even if it will take you away from *hisbodedus*. But if it is question of doing an act of *chessed* vs. not being able to do *hisbodedus* properly, then it depends. If any act of *chessed* you are doing is taking out of *hisbodedus*, then it is a sign that the act of *chessed* you are doing is above your level²⁶. If it is an event which will cause you to lose focus on *hisbodedus* for a day or so, then it is fine for you to do such acts of *chessed*, because you will be able to return to your concentration the next day. But if it's an act of *chessed* that's disturbing your *hisbodedus* for a long amount of time [such as more than a day], such *chessed* is above your level and you should not engage in it, because it is not worth losing your state of *hisbodedus*.

I want to add that the point is not for you to remain forever in a state of *hisbodedus* and never engage in *chessed*. Rather, there are times in which you must temporarily avoid certain acts of *chessed*, so that you can be able to hold onto your *hisbodedus*. The eventual goal should be to be able to do *chessed* in a way that doesn't take you out of *hisbodedus*. As we explained²⁷, if you have reached the depth of *hisbodedus*, doing *chessed* and having *ahavas Yisrael* doesn't ruin your concentration on

²⁶ This idea is further elaborated upon in *Search For Serenity* (דע את מנוחהך)

²⁷ See previous chapter (GTYK Hisbodedus Practice_021)

hisbodedus. It is just that in the beginning stage of *hisbodedus*, when you haven't yet acquired a deep level of *chessed* and *ahavas Yisrael*, the *avodah* is instead to keep the focus on *hisbodedus* and to avoid doing acts of *chessed* that will make you lose your concentration.

Q3: *In previous generations, did women do hisbodedus?*

A: You ask a proper question. All of our prophets did *hisbodedus*²⁸; Chazal say there were seven women prophetesses²⁹, and there were others who came after them too. So there were definitely women who did *hisbodedus*. Is it for all women to practice? The answer, clearly, is no. It was not for all women; it was only a way for the women who were prophetesses. This was the case in previous generations.

In recent times, however, women are much more involved with the materialistic side to life, in addition to being bombarded by running the home and raising the children; therefore, in our times, if a woman wants to truly serve Hashem, it is necessary for her to know how to disconnect from the world and connect to an inner place in herself.

Again, to emphasize, the way of *hisbodedus* that was presented here is not for all women. I have only given these *shiurim* because it has been requested of me to give *shiurim* on this topic. But this does not imply at all that *hisbodedus* is meant for all women to practice. I have said many times in the past that there is never any one way to serve *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*; there are many ways to serve Him.

The main purpose in giving this series was because there are many people who are in any case doing *hisbodedus*, so there is a need for those people to hear what the inner way of *hisbodedus* is. And I will say this again: is *not* the only way that exists to serve Hashem.

Q4: *What factor determines this? If I feel in my heart that this avodah is for me to do, does that mean it is for me?*

A: It is only a true feeling from the heart if it comes from the actual heart, but not if it comes from the 'foreskin of the heart' (*orlas halev*).

Q5: *How can I know this?*

A: By cleansing the heart from bad *middos*, slowly but surely a person can begin to feel the truth coming from his heart - a "heart that desires holiness".³⁰

Q6: *In the material of these classes, are there any sources in Chassidus, and it seems that the material here is a synthesis and combination of many different paths. If so, what is the danger in learning about other paths of hisbodedus that the Rav has mentioned about, being that all of the material here is anyways a synthesis of many paths?*

²⁸ The source for this is *Sefer HaMaspik L'Ovdei Hashem*

²⁹ *Megillah 14a*

³⁰ This concept is further elaborated upon in *Getting To Know Your Thoughts, Chapter 8*

A: There are different kinds of mixes. A mix (*taaruvos*) can become either *bilbul* (confusion) or *balul* (filtered). One has to know how to avoid confusion, and therefore we have stressed that learning about *Avodas Hashem* from other paths can mix a person up and cause confusion.

Q7: *But it is definitely possible to learn other paths and to gain from it...?*

A: Yes, but a person has to know each of the paths very well and to know which details to connect to and which details he should not connect to. Most people do not recognize the differences between the many paths of *Avodas Hashem*, therefore they get confused when they become a mix of different points they have heard about.

Q8: *I have read other sefarim on hisbodedus, in addition to hearing the approach here on hisbodedus. Now that I've read all this information anyway, how do I avoid becoming mixed up between all the different paths of hisbodedus that I have read about?*

A: If a person reads many *sefarim* and attempts to practice everything he's read in it, like if he's gone through the *sefarim* of Chabad and Breslev, and the *sefarim* of Reb Yisrael Salanter, and another 7 *sefarim* after that – although each of the above *sefarim* are all the true words of our Sages, the problem with reading so many *sefarim* is that it creates tremendous confusion. Compare this to mixing together a bunch of ingredients that should not be mixed. Although each ingredient is fine, mixing them together creates a horribly tasting food.

Let me emphasize the following so that this point should be very clear. Generally speaking, the deeper that a person becomes and the better he understands deep matters, he will be able to read many *sefarim* and hear many paths of *Avodas Hashem* without becoming confused, knowing how to properly combine the information that he has learned, without damaging himself. If a person does not possess deep understanding, though, the more he reads and hears [about serving Hashem], the more he will become mixed up, confused, and he damages himself.

I cannot determine for each person how well he/she understands things. All I can say is this general idea, that if a person does *not* have deep understanding, it is detrimental for a person to read/hear about many different paths in *Avodas Hashem*. It is this point which I emphasized here, so that you should be made aware of it. (And of course, if someone *does* possess deep understanding and he goes through all the information found in the many *sefarim* and *shiurim* that are out there without getting confused, and he knows how to properly combine the many details he has heard about - this is wonderful and praiseworthy.)