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The Secret to Success - Be Constant

Every Jew speaks to Hashem at least three times a day, as Chazal enacted. However, the problem is that people don't have a connection with Hashem between the *Tefillos* (prayers). There is a lot of time in between *Shacharis* and *Mincha*, and this breaks up the connection. This is similar to a person who keeps interrupting his learning - "his Torah is like torn pieces to him."

The Chazon Ish teaches us that the secret to success, when it comes to any matter of holiness, is to be constant. If we want to build something, it has to be the like the "constant fire" on the Altar. Of course, even without being constant, one always receives reward from Hashem. Hashem does not take away any reward from His creations (Bava Kamma 38b). But if we keep interrupting our inner work, we never get anything built, even if we keep trying to work hard. There has to be a consistency in our Avodas Hashem, or else we will not succeed.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz zt"l would compare this to heating up a pot of water. If we want to heat up water to cook with, we have to let it heat up for a few minutes and not interrupt it. If we keep turning it off every two or three minutes to use some of it, it will never get heated.

When a person talks to Hashem three times a day, there are two problems he faces. First of all, the amount of time that elapsed since his last Tefillah was a long time ago, as we said. That is one issue that deters his Tefillah. Another problem, which is even more troubling, is that the very quality of the Tefillah isn't the same, now that such a long time has passed since the last time he davened. Any person, no matter what he does, encounters this problem. If a person learns in Kolel all day, or if he works all day to make a living - no matter what he does in his life, it is unrealistic to walk into shul when it comes time to daven and to suddenly start talking to Hashem, without some minimal preparation.

Preparing for Tefillah is a *halachah* brought in Shulchan Aruch and the Rambam. Yet, even if a person fulfills his obligatory preparations, which is about 5-10 minutes - it's still not enough to make him feel that he's talking with Hashem. In order for a person to feel that he is really talking to Hashem when he davens, he has to connect his entire day to Hashem.

How can we do this?

Reflect About the Emptiness of this World

As we explained before, the first point is to simply give up worldly interests. If this world still interests

a person, he is connected to it, and it makes him forget about the Godliness inside him. The materialism of this world - as long as a person is bound to it - doesn't let a person get inspired. This causes a disconnection in between *Shacharis* and *Mincha*, and when this happens, a person only connects with Hashem when he davens. Throughout the day, he is disconnected from Hashem. To feel connected with Hashem throughout the entire day, we first need to pull ourselves out of being tied to this world and its interests.

We do not mean that one cannot involve himself with worldly matters. We are not angels. But we should realize that we only need to be involved physically with this world, and not to be connected to it with our hearts. Our heart has to remain in the right place. Although we need "Torah and *derech erez*", our heart needs to be in a place of Torah, while only our hands should be used to carry out whatever we have to do on this physical world, which is called "*derech erez*." When the heart is connected to this physical world, this is where the downfall of a person starts.

This world fools a person and makes one forget about the simple truth. If we don't think throughout the day about it, we forget it. We must never forget that worldly pleasures are like nothing, and that after we die, we do not remain with them. "*For in his death he does not take everything, his honor will not go down with him.*" (Tehillim 49: 18).

The problem is that people **know** this in their mind, but their heart doesn't **feel** it. If a person wants to feel the truth in his heart, he must live the truth and come to recognize the emptiness of this world, and come to the simple understanding that in the end, we all leave this world, and everyone has his time to die. The action of life makes us forget this simple fact, and this makes people think that they are here forever.

People know that we will all die one day, yet astonishingly, this knowledge doesn't affect their life, and they indulge in worldly pleasures. How can it be that people should spend so much effort on enjoying this world, when everyone knows good and well that we won't take any of it with us when we die? Of course, we must eat, drink and sleep as much as we need. But we must figure out how much we really need in order to stay healthy, to be able to serve Hashem.

Think What You Are About to Do

Before a person does anything, he should think what he is about to do. This brings life to a halt and enables one to come into something with a settled mind and to be at peace, instead of being rushed.

For example, a person sits down to eat. He should think that he is not eating out of being rushed, but that he wants to eat slowly and patiently. He should ask himself, before he eats, "Why I am eating? Does hunger happen by itself? (Some will say, yes, it is human nature to get hungry. But who created this nature in us? Does nature create itself? Of course not.) It must be that I am hungry because **Hashem** made me hungry."

Hashem is always renewing the world; "*He who renews in His goodness, every day, the act of creation.*" You were hungry yesterday because Hashem renewed your hunger, and you are hungry today because Hashem renewed your hunger. When a person just lives life hastily - even in matters of Avodas Hashem, like if he eats in a rush so that he can get back to his learning or to go do a mitzvah - by acting in this way, he loses himself in the process!

When a person just eats without thinking beforehand, or if he davens or learns without any thought beforehand what he is doing - he loses a vital part of life. Thinking and preparing before doing something is a main part of what you do, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* writes.

If a person goes about everything with thought beforehand, like if he thinks before he eats in the

manner we have described, then even though he's enjoying his food, his mind is in the right place. His mind will not be in his food. Even the reasons for why he eats will become more *lishmah*; he definitely will not just be eating out of desire for food.

That is one point: *hisbonenus* - thinking into what we do, before we do something.

Daven Before You Daven

There is another fundamental point which we must know, and it is very important. Through it, a person can be connected to Hashem throughout the course of the entire day, and then his three daily prayers will all become connected with each other.

Before a person does something, besides for thinking into it, he should also talk to Hashem and ask Him for help that he be successful.

For example, all of us can relate to having a hard time with *kavanah* (concentration) in davening. Only a few rare individuals have total *kavanah* when they daven. If someone really wants to daven to Hashem, he should first think: "From where do I have the energy to daven with *kavanah*?"

Maybe a person will counter to this, "If I get strange thoughts in my head as I daven, I'll just ignore them." But this is impossible, and it's even heresy, because then a person thinks that it's all up to himself, not Hashem. A person only has energy to do anything because of Hashem. The strength you had a minute ago isn't here anymore, and your current strength can only come from Hashem, because Hashem is always renewing creation.

How much more so does this apply to davening, where it is hard to have *kavanah* - that a person cannot rely on himself for the energy to retain it, and he needs Hashem to help him concentrate.

Therefore, when a person is about to daven, he must be aware that it is only because of Hashem that he is able to have *kavanah*.

How can we be guaranteed, though, that we will for sure have *kavanah* just because we are aware of this? A person therefore has to think also, "*Ribono shel olam*, I know that I do not have the strength on my own even to move my lips. It is You who opens my lips - "*Hashem, open my lips.*" *Ribono shel olam*, I want to daven to You, but please, help me, and give me the strength to talk to You without any distracting thoughts."

In other words, the idea is that a person has to get used to talking to Hashem about every detail in his life, and attach Hashem to all the points in his life. By realizing that we cannot do anything on our own and we need Hashem for literally everything, one will feel how much he needs Hashem to help him get through to the next stage; and he can say, "Father, You are my Father, You love me - and I am Your beloved son. I want to daven to You and speak with You. Help me actualize my will."

Daven About Your Learning

This does not only apply to davening before you daven. It applies to all other areas in your life as well!

A person is sitting down to learn. Does he think he can understand the Gemara on his own? There is no person who doesn't encounter difficulty in his learning. There are questions and things we don't understand. Even more so, just because someone is smart doesn't mean he will know the Gemara he is learning today, because since Hashem is always renewing creation, being smart a minute ago doesn't automatically make you smart a minute later! There are also many people who open a Gemara and cannot understand even one word. If so, why do people convince themselves that they

can understand Gemara on their own, without the help of Hashem? It must be that people are used to the fact that they do understand it. If yesterday someone understood the Gemara, he thinks that today also he will understand it.

But if a person thinks this way, he doesn't believe that Hashem is always renewing creation! Every day we daven for understanding. In fact, not only are we davening that we understand more things, but we are even davening that we should continue to understand even simple facts.

Even very great *tzaddikim* became sick and couldn't learn Torah anymore, even on a simple level. The Baal Shem Tov, when he came to Eretz Yisrael, suffered a mental stroke and couldn't learn anymore, and all he could do was daven like the simplest Jew. He comforted himself during this time that he realized how Hashem renews creation, and that the way you are a minute ago doesn't mean you will stay that way; he knew that just as he had fallen from his level, so can he return again to his level, if Hashem wills it so.

If a person lives with this simple feeling, he feels every second how much he needs Hashem. When a person sits down to learn, there is no guarantee that he will understand. He should stop and think, and daven to Hashem: "*Ribono shel olam*, I am a Jew, Your beloved son. You commanded me to learn Torah, and I want to do Your will. I ask of You to please merit me that I understand Your words of Torah which I will learn today." This is the simple approach that should accompany a person as he begins to learn.

That is how one should begin to learn, but then after a few minutes pass, a person also runs into difficulties. He thinks into it and he tries to understand it, but for some reason he can't. Now is the time to pull himself together and talk to Hashem about it (either mentally or verbally): "*Ribono shel olam*, the Torah is Your Torah, and I want to understand it so I can give You satisfaction. Please, merit me that I understand the words of Your Torah."

One has to simply feel that it was Hashem who made him not understand the Gemara, and that the answer to his question will come to him if he is aware that only Hashem allows him to understand it. This should not just be something one knows about in his head - it should be a simple feeling that accompanies you.

Davening For Every Last Detail In Your Life

Not only that, but a person should daven for every last detail in his life!

Before a person sits down to eat, he should say to Hashem, "*Ribono shel olam*, I want to eat so I will have energy to serve You (this is already stated in Shulchan Aruch). I am asking of You: if this food is improper for me to eat, I do not want to eat of it, and if it is befitting to eat, then please let this food give me energy to serve You."

There are many instances in which people eat yet the food doesn't supply them with energy, and it even harms them physically. The digestion process is amazing, but just because one digested his food properly yesterday doesn't mean that it will work today. So we must also daven to Hashem that the food we eat should keep us healthy and not harm us.

By getting used to davening in the examples we gave (before davening, before learning, in middle of learning, before eating), a person connects Hashem with everything in his life, and then he has a constant bond with Him throughout the day.

Another example: a person is getting ready to go to sleep. A person definitely says *Kerias Shema al hamittah*, but what is he thinking as he's getting into bed? That he's tired? That he doesn't have any

energy left in him?

He has to stop and think for a moment, before he says *Shema*, and talk to Hashem: *Ribono shel olam*, You created man with a body and a soul. The body which You gave me needs to rest. I am thus going to sleep because it is Your will that I sleep to maintain my body; I am asking of You that I merit to sleep in the proper way, and that I get up tomorrow refreshed, with new energy to serve You.”

We all know that it's possible for a person to sleep for eighteen hours straight and still feel tired when he gets up. When a person wakes up in the morning and he still feels tired, he thinks, “What's so terrible?” He just continues with his life and doesn't think about this. But this is not the proper attitude.

If one isn't sleeping well at night and he isn't refreshed when he gets up in the morning, this is also from Hashem, and a person should accept this discomfort lovingly. However, in addition to this, before a person is about to go to sleep he should talk to Hashem: “*Ribono shel olam*, please let me have a refreshing sleep, not so that I should have enjoyment out of it, but so that I can properly serve You tomorrow.”

Connecting All Of Our Life With Hashem

We have already given several examples, but the point is that we need to get used to attaching every part in our life with Hashem and to talk to Him about it.

Let's say a person is going to a wedding. He should daven to Hashem that he be protected from any dangers along the way.

Another example is when a person goes to a Rov to ask a *shaaloh* (query). One should know that it's not so simple to always receive a proper answer! A Rov needs *siyata d'shmaya* (heavenly assistance) to give over the right words to those who come to him. Therefore, before going to the Rov, one should daven, “*Ribono shel olam*, I want to know what Your will is. You commanded me to make for myself a Rov to ask my questions to, and now I am going to the Rov to hear what You want from me. I am asking of You that You give me over the truth.”

One of the Sages, Rav Nechunia ben Hakanah, would daven to Hashem before he learned that he shouldn't stumble in *Halachah*. A person should daven to Hashem before everything, not only in big matter, but even in small matters. When a person is davening about *shidduchim* (finding a spouse), he will go to the Kosel to daven for this, but it is only for *shidduchim* that we must daven about. We need to daven every day no less than how we daven for a *shidduch*!

We need to take our life, with all its details, and connect it all with Hashem. We don't have to talk to Him on a very intellectual level, and we don't have to talk to Him by quoting Chazal. We don't have to offer Him complicating explanations of what we want to convey to Him. We instead need to talk to Him very simply, from our heart – in the way which a son talks to his father. When a son talks to his father, he doesn't have to give him a whole lecture about what he needs. He just talks to him out of a simple love for his father.

By getting used to talking to Hashem, a person acquires a great wealth. First of all, he gains in that all his three daily *tefillos* are connected, and there is no separation between them, because he has spent his whole day with Hashem. Dovid Hamelech said, “*I am prayer*”, in other words, my whole existence is to pray before I do something. This is the key to entering a world of holiness. It makes a person develop a very strong bond with Hashem.

The kind of bond with Hashem that we are trying to achieve here is not a relationship of fear, like to

view Him as a master or a kind over us. It is rather a relationship with our “Creator” – since we are His creations, we turn to our Creator. On a higher level, we can view Him as “Our Father”, and this is when a person talks to Him on the simplest, basic level.

The three *tefillos* which we daven every day –*Shacharis*, *Mincha*, and *Maariv* – were instituted by Chazal, our holy Sages; but we are used to them, and through the three *tefillos* alone will not build a connection with Hashem. What a person needs to do is to speak to Hashem throughout the day, simply, and from his heart. By doing this, he reveals a very simple ability of the soul.

At first, it is very hard to do. To strengthen yourself, remember well that our whole life has to include Hashem in it, whatever the situation. To disconnect from Hashem in any way is to disconnect from life itself.

May Hashem help all of us come to realize the simple truth of how *“We have only one heart, toward our Father in heaven”*, and that we divorce any other matters from our heart. We should not have to beat ourselves up inside to do this. Rather, we should simply realize that this world is fleeting, and we will have nothing left of it except for Hashem. Hashem is the essence of life, for it is written, *“For with You is the source of life, in Your light there appears all light.”*

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