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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* stageduring *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 possuk^[1], "*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.

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.

[1] Tehillim: 121

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