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## Rosh Chodesh Avodah - 008 MarChesvan: Breathing

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### ***Cheshvan - The "Smell" Left Behind From Yomim Noraim***

We are now in the month of *Cheshvan*, after all the festivals of Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos, heading into the winter. We are taught by our Sages that every month contains a special ability which we can use to serve Hashem. In the *sefarim hakedoshim*, our Sages tell us that the power of the month of *Cheshvan* is the sense of *reiach*, smell.

Smell is unique from the rest of the senses in that it continues to linger with us even after what we already sensed isn't in front of us anymore. The senses of sight, hearing, taste, and touch can only be sensed when whatever you are sensing is in front of you. You can't see, hear, taste or touch something if it's not in front of you, but with smell, you can continue to smell something even when it isn't in front of you. After a person smells the scent of flowers, for example, he can remember how they smelled long after the flowers aren't here anymore.

This is why the month of *Cheshvan* is connected with "smell". During *Cheshvan*, we are left with the spiritual 'smell' of the *Yomim Noraim*, long after it's gone. What is this sense of smell that we remain with from the *Yomim Noraim*, and how we can use it?

### ***Having Quiet Time Every Day to Reflect***

Firstly, before we continue, we must know that if a person wishes to serve Hashem in a true and inner way, one needs to have quiet "heart time" every day (which we spoke about last month).

During each of the continuing months, we will explain what the *avodah* of each month is. But in every month, our goal is the same: to live a more inner kind of life. This can only be done with our "heart time" that we must set aside every day. We need this "heart time" in order to internalize any *avodah* we do.

If someone doesn't set aside time every day for heart time, it is not possible to really understand any of the ways of *avodas Hashem* which we will speak about in the coming months. We **must** have times of quiet every day in order to think and reflect into our inner world. Without this "heart time", not only will we be prevented from actualizing any of *avodah*; we won't even understand any of the methods of *avodah* at all.

The purpose here is to open our *pnimiyus* (inner world) to us and reveal a more inner kind of life. This

needs specially set aside time for every day; we must seclude ourselves a little bit from the world, in order to open the internal world within us.

We have repeated this point several times, because it must be very clear: We must set aside time every day for “heart time”; there is nothing to be gained from these words unless we have this time every day.

### ***Smell Helps Us Sense Our Inner World***

Having understood that, now we can start the *avodah* of this month: using our sense of smell (the *chush ha-rei'ach*).

When used in an inner way, the sense of smell helps us feel beyond the external dimension of things. When we smell something, we are sensing something more internal than what it appears to be.

Every Jew's soul wants to know of the inner world of the soul, but we cannot enter it through any of the senses of hearing, sight, taste and touch. From all of the senses, only the sense of smell is able to sense any *pnimiyus* (inner, spiritual layer of reality) in our life. The Sages say that the only physical sense which our soul has pleasure from is the sense of smell; for smell is the most spiritual kind of sense from all the senses. It is beyond the physical senses; it can “smell” spirituality. The external, superficial layer of our sense of smell can only smell the physical, but there is an inner use of our sense of smell, which can ‘smell’ the spiritual.

Our sense of smell has two layers to it: the external, superficial layer of smell is when we smell the physical, such as smelling the scent of a flower, and the inner layer of smell, which can smell the spirituality in even the physical. Our sense of smell is able to reach deep into the physical and ‘smell’ something spiritual in it. ‘Smelling’ spirituality can show us how something which looks only physical can really be spiritual.

### ***The Power of Breath***

Our nose can do two things: it can smell, and it can breathe. The power of breath<sup>[1]</sup> in us is essentially the *nishmas chaim* (the “breath of life”) that was breathed into us from Hashem.

It is written, “*Every soul praises Hashem*”, and the Sages explain this to mean that “for every breath a person breathes, a person must praise Hashem”. Thus, one must be aware that his every breath comes from Hashem. If one is not aware of his breathing, he is not able to thank Hashem for it, because if he does not feel it, he cannot appreciate it. If a person is unaware of his breathing, maybe he will be able to express his gratitude to Hashem after every ten times that he breathes in and out, but he will not be able to feel grateful to Hashem for every single breath. Only when one becomes aware of his breathing can he come to thank Hashem for every single breath that he breathes.

### ***Beginning To Become Aware of Your Breathing***

How does one begin to feel and become aware of his breathing? One needs to set aside time for this and **sit quietly**, and start exhaling and inhaling, with calmness. **Pay attention to the breathing**, and **listen, slowly, to the breathing**. Then you will begin to **feel** the breathing.

Quiet time is necessary for this, because if a person is harried, like if he is mentally anxious about something, and surely if he is physically bombarded, then there is no chance that he will be able to feel his breathing and become aware of it. But if a person sets aside time in his day for this, even if it's just **5 minutes a day**, or even **3 minutes a day**, and he tries to become aware of each breath that he breathes during this time – not only when will he become aware of his breathing, but he will

begin to feel a more *inward* kind of feeling as he is exhaling and inhaling.

Without having this quiet time to feel your breathing, your breathing is only being experienced superficially, as if it is one of the many various functions of the body. But when a person makes sure to have this quiet time during the day to feel his breathing and to pay attention to his breathing, he will begin to uncover the *p'nimiyus* (the inner depth) that is contained in every breath.

### ***Inhaling and Exhaling To Reach Our P'nimiyus (Inner Essence)***

Many people, especially in our times where people are borrowing secular ideas that come from the gentile world, are practicing a method of breathing where a person imagines that he is releasing any negativity from his body upon exhaling, and upon inhaling, the person imagines that his breathing in new energy that will invigorate his body. However, this is just an external use of breathing. Our Sages revealed to us the inner way to use the power of breathing, which goes far deeper than this.

When we speak here of setting aside quiet time during the day to feel your breathing, we are not intending to copy the gentile approach. Our intention here is to tread the path that our previous Sages took when it came to this power, and it was they who taught us about it.

When we become aware of our breathing, we are essentially becoming aware that there is a *nishmas chaim*, a "breath of life", that was breathed into us by Hashem; and to thereby become closer to Hashem from this depth that we reach. Our breathing, which is sustained by Hashem's breath, is thus our very life. We can find the very source of our life contained in our breathing. When we begin to become aware of our breathing, quietly and calmly, by listening to our breath, we begin to recognize and feel an entirely different and inner perspective towards what life is.

Let's explain what is meant here. In whatever action we perform, whether we use our senses of sight, hearing, speech, or anything else that we do, most of the time we are unaware of these actions. These actions are usually not connected to our awareness. Most of the time we are far from our own selves, and surely that will mean that we are far from Hashem - because most of the time, we are far from our own inner world.

Therefore, when we begin to take deep breaths and we are listening deeply to the breathing, we need to bring the breath into a deeper place in ourselves, and then we exhale that breathe and we go deeper from there, from the deeper place that we have already reached. Slowly as we keep doing this, we can keep penetrating further and further into ourselves, deeper and deeper into ourselves.

From all of the senses, the sense of smell (which our breathing is enabled by) is the deepest and most inner kind of sense. When we see something, sometimes it can have a deep effect on us, and sometimes it does not. When we hear something, sometimes we are deeply affected, but sometimes we are not. When we touch something, we are feeling the physicality of something, and we are not feeling anything deep in this. But when we inhale the scent of something, using our sense of smell, we can sense it deeply. We can keep taking in the scent of something, where we continue to smell it more deeply.

In the same way, we can also deepen our breathing. For every breath that you exhale and inhale, you can take the breath deeper and deeper into yourself. Train yourself to slowly deepen your breathing, deepening your breathe each time.

This is an amazing ability which Hashem has given to His creations. It is a physical act of exhaling and inhaling, yet it is a use of the sense of smell, which is the only physical sense that our *neshamah* enjoys, as our Sages taught. It is the sense which we can use to penetrate deeply into ourselves. When a person gets used to this, sitting quietly and calmly, taking in deep breaths and listening to

them, it can open up before him a great opening that will help him get to deeper places in his soul.

### ***Entering Our Inner World***

The *avodah* of a person, as we have mentioned and as is known, is to enter into his inner world, and live an internal life, a life of the heart, a life of living the depth of the *neshamah*. The power of breathing which Hashem has given to man is one of the amazing powers which one can use to enter into his\her inner world.

Of course, the main *avodah\mitzvah* of a man is to learn Torah (in addition to keeping all of the *mitzvos*), and the main *avodah* of a woman (in addition to keeping all of the *mitzvos*) is *tzniyus* (modesty). And the common denominator between men and women is that all have an *avodah* to work on our *middos* (character improvement), so that our hearts can become more purified, and, in turn, so that the barriers between us and Hashem will be removed. Then we can enter into the inner depth contained in our heart.

But there is also another way for us to enter into our inner world, which works in tandem with keeping the *mitzvos* (and it is not independent of learning Torah and keeping mitzvos, *chas v'shalom*): through accessing the power of breathing in a deep way, we are enabled to enter more inward into ourselves and to get in touch with our *pnimiyus* (inner world).<sup>[2]</sup>

At first, getting used to it will feel like a mere breathing exercise, and you will only feel it in the physical sense. But if you get used to deeply listening to your breathing as you take the deep breaths, concentrating deeply into this, you will suddenly feel that you have entered deeper places which you never knew about until now that were inside of you.

This is but one of the powers that help us serve Hashem, but it is not necessarily meant to be the path that every person must take. Some people are more inclined to this *avodah*, and some people are less inclined to take this path. But for those who do feel inclined towards this path, this *avodah* can be a great key for them to enter their inner world.

It begins from a mere physical act of exhaling and inhaling, and at first it will not feel very inward or spiritual at all, but as you get used to deeply listening to the breathing, the breathing will first enter deeper into the physical heart, and eventually as you keep doing it, it will enter into the deeper and more spiritual parts. (This is the "*ruach chaim*", the "spirit of life", which penetrates into the "*Ruach*" that is found in the heart).

### ***A Word of Caution Before Beginning The Breathing Exercise***

We must emphasize that this *avodah* must be done calmly, slowly, and patiently. If a person will try to accelerate the process by taking in many deep breaths in quick succession of each other and he's anxiously trying to get inward with each breath, this is *physically endangering*, and it is spiritually harmful as well. It must be done quietly and calmly, pleasantly, and not with pressure to get anywhere.

You need to strongly want to get there, of course, but it must not be forced and anxious. You need to want to get there calmly, with serenity. The desire should be calm. You are calmly trying to get to get deeper into yourself. We have had to give special caution about this, because it is very possible for one to harm himself if he is ignorant of these rules.

Now we can begin, with Hashem's help, of how to make this more practical. Although these are very subtle matters, we will try to explain it as much as Hashem allows us to, and to explain as precisely as we can.

### **Step 1: Becoming Aware of Your Normal Breathing**

The first step is to begin with your normal breathing. Become aware of your breathing, and don't try to manipulate your breathing in any way that you are not used to. Simply become aware of your normal breathing. This is the first step: sit with yourself each day for a few minutes, breathe normally, and just pay attention to the breaths.

### **Step 2: Deep Breaths**

After you feel that you have become more aware of your normal breathing and that this awareness has become more natural to you and that you're not straining yourself for this, now comes the next step. Try to deepen your breathing a bit more. Sit and take slightly deeper breaths than your normal breathing. The first time you do this, take a deep breath, and keep repeating this for a few times, with the very same kind of deep breath.

After you feel that you have reached a certain depth, and that it is natural to you and you are not straining yourself to feel it, try to deepen the breathing a bit more. Concentrate a bit more deeply on the breathing, and breathe in more deeply than before, and keep repeating.

You need to keep doing this until you can do it easily without concentrating too deeply on it. Do not try to accelerate the process of trying to reaching a deeper place in yourself each time. Just go slowly in this process. Breathe in a bit deeper after a number of breaths, keep deepening the breathing this way, and slowly, you will see that you have reached a deeper place in yourself, but without concentrating so hard to get there.

### **Step 3: Sudden Inner Recognition**

When you have reached a deeper place in yourself, at some point, you will suddenly recognize that you have reached a deeper place in yourself. This might not happen to you right away as soon as you reach the deeper place in yourself. You might feel it sometime after you have slowly gotten there, where it will suddenly dawn upon your awareness.

This does not mean that you have simply learned how to take deeper breaths. If you have done it correctly and you have gotten further into yourself with the breathing, it is like entering into a new room in yourself, where you see what is inside of it. When you deepen your breathing and you have truly reached a deeper place into yourself, you will know that you are there. You will begin to recognize a deeper place in yourself that you were not aware of until now. If you do not feel that you've reached a deeper place in yourself, it is a sign that all of the deep breathing must have been done only superficially, with not enough genuine intent to go deeper into yourself.

When you have reached a deeper place in yourself, of this *Chazal* refer to when they said, "For every breath, praise Hashem." The meaning of this statement does not mean that each breath is like the breath before it and that you must praise Hashem for the same kind of each of these breaths - rather, it means that each new breath that we breathe can help us enter deeper into ourselves, which gives us greater inner recognition of ourselves, and thus there is new reason to praise Hashem for each of these breaths.

The power of deep breathing can provide a person with a great opening, a key, to a greater depth of feeling and inner recognition, because it takes you to a deeper place in yourself. Therefore, we must emphasize that it needs to be done slowly, and to keep repeating the process described until you are calm, which enables you to act from a deeper place in yourself.

Hashem says, "My son, give your heart to me." Hashem wants our hearts, and the kind of heart that

Hashem wants us to give to Him is that we give Him the very depth that we reach in ourselves. Reaching a deeper place in our heart, which we can reach through the power of deep breathing, enables us to daven to Hashem from a deeper and more genuine place in ourselves. It enables us to be kind to others from a deeper place in ourselves. It enables us to really use our hearts for Hashem; "Hashem wants the heart" (*Rachmana liba ba'ee*).

There are many ways of how we can reach the depth of the heart: through exertion in Torah learning [for men], through *tefillah* (prayer), through fixing our *middos* (character), and other ways as well. But an additional way to get to our heart, as we explained here, is to use the power of breathing: to get used to breathing deeply and to reach a deeper place in oneself, from the breathing.

When we reach deeper into ourselves, we are able to act from a more genuine place in ourselves, from our heart. When one gets used to this power and he is regularly reaching a deep place in himself via the act of deep breathing, he will see a transformation in his life, where his actions will be emanating from his heart.

#### **Step 4: Reaching the Self**

Let's try to continue explaining this *avodah*, although it's a matter that is very deep, subtle, and hidden.

After a person feels that he has reached a deeper place in himself and he feels that he has reached the deepest possible place in himself that he's aware of, now comes the next stage, where a person can slowly penetrate even further than this [as he continues the deep breathing]. He will eventually feel that he has reached the very essence of his "I" - the deepest possible place in oneself. One can reach it by continuing to breathe deeply, feeling that he is getting deeper and deeper into himself, until he eventually reaches his "I".

At that point, his breathing is helping him touch upon his very "I". His breathing has brought him into the deepest possible place in oneself. In order to reach such a place in oneself and to be able to breathe deeply to get there, it takes a lot of hard work before this. It will take a lot of time and effort to get there, lots of hard work, but again, it needs to be done calmly and peacefully. It will mainly require a lot of purity and holiness in one's life, which opens the heart more and makes it easier to get there.

The more a person has purified himself internally, the more he has softened his heart, and his heart goes from being a "heart of stone" into a "heart of flesh". It will then become much easier for his breathing to get further into himself, where he can penetrate into the deepest part of himself.

#### **Step 5: Sensing Hashem's Existence in the Self**

Finally, there is one more step to reach. Let us explain it, with *siyata d'shmaya*, although it is a very, very deep and subtle matter.

The final step is for one to deepen the breathing to the point that he senses the reality of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

It is written, "*I will dwell amongst them*", and the Sages explain this to mean, "It does not say "in him," but "in them" - in the hearts of each person." Thus, we are taught that Hashem dwells in the heart of each Jew. This point is the deepest place to reach through breathing, and it is the true meaning of the *nishmas chaim* that was breathed into us by Hashem. When Hashem breathed into us

a spirit of life, He breathed into us “a breath from Himself”, so to speak. That means that we are breathing due to Hashem’s own breath that was placed in us.

When one accesses this kind of deep breathing, he is touching upon the revelation of G-dliness that is found deep in the heart. This is the deepest possible kind of breathing that a Jew can ever breathe.

### ***In Conclusion***

Part of the reason why we have had to explain this exercise very specifically is because there are many “breathing exercises” which have been gleaned from modern, gentile sources. We have tried to present here one of the paths explained by our Sages that describes how to use the power of breathing in a way that helps us reach a purer place in ourselves. The power of breathing is a way for us to reach the “I” in us, the pure soul which Hashem creates us with, and even more so, breathing can help us feel Hashem’s breath as the source of our own breathing.

The words here were not ideas. They are about a way to reach an inner kind of life, of how to reach the depth of the *neshamah*, and of how to reach the Creator. But these are matters which require a lot of effort and training and getting used to, as well as holiness and purity and Heavenly assistance, in order for us to be successful with it.

May we merit from Hashem to have a desire to enter into our inner world, and to at least choose one of the paths that help us get there, even if is not necessarily through the power of breathing.

Let us emphasize one last point. The power of breathing is just **one of the ways** of how to serve *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. There are many other ways to serve Hashem as well which are proper and valid, and each person needs to choose one of the paths that are mentioned by our Sages. One should choose the path that speaks the most to his heart. The words here do not mean to imply that everyone must take this path [of using the power of breathing]; *chas v’shalom*. A person should only use this path of serving Hashem if it is close to his heart.

The common denominator with all people is that all of us need to enter our inner world, in order to live a more inner kind of life, so that we can reach our essence and reach a more complete recognition of our Creator.

### ***Questions &Answers with the Rav***

***Q1: What’s the connection between breathing and the sense of smell? Is it simply because both of these come from the nose?***

**ANSWER:** A very good question. The sense of smell utilizes our nose, and then we are better able to deepen our breathing, which comes in through the nose. Before you begin the breathing exercises, it is indeed recommended to first inhale the scent of something holy, such as an *esrog* that was used on Sukkos, or *besamim* that was used for *havdalah*. This opens the nose in the first place, and then we can deepen the sense of smell, and from deepening the sense of smell we can develop a deepened breathing. Through a physical smell which is found on this world, one can tread its path to open the nose, and then enter the depth contained in breathing. It is therefore very recommended to start with inhaling a scent [of something holy] and use it as a way to enter into our breathing.

***Q2: When a person supposedly “feels something” when he breathes in and out, how does he know if it’s a real feeling and not it in his imagination?***

**ANSWER:** Usually, nothing is ever a total fantasy, nor is anything a totally real feeling. There is always some degree of fantasy in everything we feel, and there is always some truth to what we are feeling in every feeling that comes to us. This is because everything we come across in our feelings is always a mixture of fantasy and feeling, and the only issue is in the percentages: How much of the feeling is real, and how much of the feeling is just being imagined. We always need to sort out what we are feeling and try to discern which parts of the feeling are real, and which parts of it are in the imagination. In order to do this, we need to try to name precisely what we are feeling and refine our perception.

**Q3: For those who haven't yet begun to recognize their inner world, how can they recognize if they are feeling something real about themselves, or if it is just being imagined?**

**ANSWER:** If a person begins to feel something deep, that is a sign that he is becoming connected to the real inner world. If a person is not used to it yet, he can get some idea of this at least when he goes through an event that awakens his deepest feelings, such as when he feels pain or when he feels joyous. The very fact that he is beginning to sense deeper things is already an opening to the inner world.

**Q4: How is the sense of smell the most spiritual of all the senses?**

**ANSWER:** It is because we can turn something physical into the spiritual. The physical sense of smell can be turned into a spiritual sense. A clear example of this was when they would smell the *korbonos* in the *Beis HaMikdash*, which gave off a "pleasant scent" (*rei'ach nicho'ach*) to Hashem. When you smell the spirituality in something, smell becomes spiritual. This can be experienced when you smell something before it has been turned into physical uses (and on a deeper level, even if it has already been used for physical uses and it has been returned to its root).

**Q5: How much time is needed for this breathing exercise? Also, after we have already gotten past the first step and we are at the second step, should we still begin each day from the first step, or can we begin immediately each day from the step?**

**ANSWER:** At first when you begin to get used to this it should not be more than 3 minutes a day. After that, the amount of time you will need to spend on it depends on how far you have advanced in the *avodah*, and if you are doing it correctly. However, **no one should be spending more than 30 minutes a day on this.** If you can try this *avodah* in the beginning of the morning, this is even better, as long as your schedule allows it.

**Q6: After we succeed in the first step, can we go quicker with the second step?**

**ANSWER:** Yes. But we must make sure that we have truly gotten past the first step and not try to move on quickly to the next step. First, we must feel that we have become connected to our breathing.

**Q7: What should a person think during the first step, as he is beginning to take breaths?**

**ANSWER:** In the first step, do not think about anything, other than the focus on your breathing.

**Q8: Should a person try to rid anything from his thoughts that hamper his focus on the breathing?**

**ANSWER:** Quiet the thoughts. Try to become aware of the breathing, and then after that, try to think more deeply into the breathing.



**Q9: Should we sit or stand during this time? Should we close our eyes?**

**ANSWER:** However you are more relaxed.

**Q10: The Rav mentioned that there are gentile methods of breathing exercises - what exactly is the Rav referring to? Which parts of the non-Jewish breathing exercises are inappropriate for a Jew to use?**

**ANSWER:** The Torah's approach to the power of using breathing is not so that we should expel negative energy contained in the body and bring in positive energy. A Torah-approved method that is being somewhat mirrored in the gentile practices of breathing is that a person can bring positive energy into his system; however, this is not being accomplished through the gentile methods. A Torah-approved method would be to imagine a thought about something holy and to imagine that it is entering him, or that it is his enveloping his body, or something similar to this. The gentile approach of breathing exercises, however, involves imagining a "light" that enters the body which purges it from all evil or negativity found in the body. This approach is heretical to our Torah.

The purpose of the Torah's approach towards breathing is that breathing enables us to reach *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* found in the depths of the soul. Unlike the gentile methods, which are entirely self-focused, the Torah way of breathing exercises is to come to live with Hashem in our life, through the breathing exercises. However, practically speaking, that is only reached at a much higher stage of the breathing, as we explained. But we must be able to bear it in mind even as we begin to work with our breathing. We must know that the goal of deepening our breathing is because it enables us to live with Hashem in our life.

We may penetrate deeper and deeper into ourselves by choosing to imagine a holy thought that is entering us, and we can also think that it is purifying us; these two aspects are acceptable according to the Torah. But the part where they imagine that a "light" is entering the body and cleansing out all of the negativity - this is against the Torah, and it is basically a form of idol worship.

**Q11: Does the Rav mean that one may imagine a certain holy thought entering his body as he is doing the breathing exercise?**

**ANSWER:** It may be done, by imagining that it is found outside of oneself and that one wishes to bring it inside of himself. The way we have described using the power of breathing here is a way of how we can get inside of ourselves, as opposed to using external factors.

However, it is certainly an acceptable method for one to imagine a *possuk* (verse) or a certain holy thought about *emunah*, and to imagine that this is entering him and purifying him. But when doing so, the person must be aware that it is the holiness which is entering him, and not that some other outer force or power is entering him and cleansing him. To think that "A power is entering me" is a method that has originated in the gentile nations, and it borderlines on idol worship.

I have had to speak about length about this topic, because I am aware that many people are unfortunately using these improper methods in their breathing exercises.

**Q12: Is the avodah of focusing on our breathing a separate matter from the power of "levad" (alone) which the Rav has spoken about in sefer Da Es Atzmecha, "Getting To Know Your Self"? Does it get in the way of "levad" or it is a part of "levad"?**

**ANSWER:** It is within the *avodah* of "levad" \aloneness. There is a general *avodah* of acquiring the power of *levad* \aloneness, but what do you do once you're in the space of *levad* \aloneness? Part of the *avodah* of being in the "levad" \aloneness is to focus on your breaths.

**Q13: In the first step, when we just focus on our simple act of breathing, should we think that Hashem is providing us with our breathing and enabling me to breathe? Or should I just focus on the mere fact that I am breathing, without thinking of Hashem is in the picture?**

**ANSWER:** In the very first step, the point is to become simply aware of your breathing, because the first step is to simply become aware of ourselves, way before we connect our self to Hashem. This is because in order to connect ourselves to Hashem, we need to first become aware of ourselves in the first place, and awareness of our breathing is one of the ways to accomplish this.

**Q14: Is this avodah of breathing the same avodah as “hisbodedus” (meditation) and of talking to Hashem when we are alone? Is it an alternative to hisbodedus, or is it something we need to practice besides for hisbodedus?**

**ANSWER:** It is an *avodah* that is separate from *hisbodedus*, not a replacement of *hisbodedus*. It needs to be practiced outside of *hisbodedus*.

**Q15: Should a person try the avodah of breathing before doing hisbodedus, or after hisbodedus?**

**ANSWER:** It doesn't make a difference if you do it before *hisbodedus* or after *hisbodedus*. Just like a person has to eat and he also has to sleep, so is there an *avodah* of breathing that is besides for the *avodah* of *hisbodedus*.

**Q16: What does it mean to reach a ‘more inner place’ in oneself? Does it mean that you feel calmer? Does it mean that you feel more connected to yourself?**

**ANSWER:** Just like when you wade through a pool you feel yourself getting deeper and deeper into it, so do you experience yourself going deeper and deeper the more you try to enter your *pnimiyus*. The more you feel yourself, the more you can discern where you are. When a person becomes connected to *pnimiyus*, it is an experience, and you can feel it, and then there is no room for this question.

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**[1]** In Hebrew, “breath” is “neshimah”. It is also known under the terms of neshimah (inhale) and neshifah (exhale).

**[2]** The sources in our sefarim hakedoshim that discuss the avodah of “breathing” are: in the sefarim of Rav Abulefia, and sefer Yesod Yosef (of Reb Shlomo of Zhevil). For more on the avodah of breathing, derashos of Tefillah\_034\_ Revival of The Living and in Fixing.Your.Water\_006\_The Desire For Movement, and more extensively in the Hebrew shiurim of the series דע את נשמתך

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**Source:** <https://bilvavi.net/english/rosh-chodesh-avodah-008-marchesvan-breathing>

#### **Links**

[1] <https://bilvavi.net/files/Bilvavi.On.Breathing.pdf>