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## Bilvavi Part 3 - Section 3 Prayer

### **Bilvavi 3, Section 3: Prayer (6 chapters)**

#### ***Section Three: Prayer: Chapter One; Why We Pray***

##### ***The necessity for prayer***

Before anything, a person must know that just as it is impossible without eyes or hear without ears, so is it impossible to receive any sustenance without praying for it.

This is forgotten amongst people, because our senses delude us and convince us otherwise. Our eyes see that many people do not pray yet still merit good things, and even those that pray receive benefits that they definitely did not pray for - so it seems that our prayers don't really have any effect.

There are many answers to this question, but before we answer this, it should first become clear that **our true sustenance can only come through prayer.**

##### ***Six ways to get something without prayer***

Why is it that we see that people get things even without praying for it? There are six possible reasons.

**Answer #1.** Sometimes a person can receive things from HASHEM as a gift, and sometimes it can even be like a gift given to an enemy to destroy him. This type of sustenance definitely does not need prayer to receive it, and it's really a curse! (So the person is getting something he wants, and it's really not good for him, but because he is wicked and undeserving, Hashem does not intervene and instead gives him the "gift" that will doom him).

**Answer #2.** Sometimes, Heavenly sustenance can come though the prayers of a righteous person who prayed for his generation, even for those who didn't ask him to. (Just as the *Mesillas Yescharim* says, that "the way of a pious person is to pray for the welfare of his generation").

**Answer #3.** Our Sages say that some prayers are accepted immediately, while some can be answered in twenty years from now. Also, it is possible that the person prayed for this a long time ago, and it is also possible that even in a previous *gilgul* (incarnation) he already prayed for it.

**Answer #4.** If you ever saw dry ink, you know that at first it looks like permanent ink, but then after

some time it disappears. In other words, sometimes a person gets something even though he didn't pray for it, because it's not real Heavenly sustenance – it is fleeting and will soon disappear. Such sustenance is not called Heavenly sustenance.

**Answer #5.** Evil sinners receive success, but it's all sustenance from the "Other Side" – ("*sitra achara*", the evil side of impurity that will somehow destroy him).

**Answer #6.** This answer is very fundamental: Since Hashem created the world for a person to utilize free will and choose good, Hashem makes a situation that gives a person the appearance that sustenance comes without prayer. This is in reality a test for him to see if he will pray anyhow.

In the end of the matter, it should be clear to a person that it is impossible to get anything without specifically praying for it. The Chazon Ish told one person once that a person should pray for anything that he would ask his father for, such as shoes. The same applies for all details in life.

### ***Is it embarrassing to ask HASHEM small things?***

There is a difficult point that many people deal with: a person feels ashamed to ask Hashem for trivial and small things.

However, this is a mistaken notion, and we will explain why.

The *possuk* say, "*He who lowers to see the heaven and earth*". From Hashem's viewpoint, even spiritual matters such as the heavens are easy to provide, and there is no difference to Him between the heavens and earth. Since Hashem is endless, everything is lowly in comparison to Him, and there are no levels in how lowly something is, in regards to Him.

This is a deep point. A person views everything from his viewpoint and sees things the way he sees it, but the true way is to see how Hashem sees it, and when it comes to Him, there is no difference between asking for livelihood, a marriage partner, success in learning, or even to ask for new shoes.

### ***To ask from a father***

2. There are two general approaches to prayer. Some people approach prayer with the serious feeling that they are praying to the King of all Kings, Hashem; and there are others who pray for an entirely different reason – he is asking something from "Abba", his father who loves him very much, his father who considers him like his only child.

(Really, every Jew is like an only child to Hashem. It is indeed hard to feel this; because how can Hashem have thousands who are considered an only child? But this is actually an immature outlook, because Hashem has an endless sea of love in Him, and He loves every Jew more than a father loves his only child!)

One who considers prayer as a request from a **father** is devoid of other interests; a son who feels his father's love constantly isn't ashamed to ask his father for even little things.

These words should actually not be hard to work on. It is just simply a change in how we approach prayer.

To summarize: a person should pray for every detail in his life, and not leave out anything. He should do this with the thought that he is a son asking from a father, and that he feels a love to Him. A person should contemplate this a lot for a few weeks, and perhaps a few months, until he acquires it as a feeling in his heart.

## **Chapter Two - Unanswered Prayer**

### **The big question**

Another big question that many have when it comes to prayer is from the results of prayer. A person prayed and prayed, and he did not get answered; he feels dejected from praying more. This creates questions in people: Why weren't my prayers answered?

But our Sages say a deep answer for this. Some prayers are answered right away, and some prayers are answered only after a certain amount of time, maybe even after twenty years.

Anyone who doesn't understand the depth of these words cannot appreciate this matter. He might hear this answer and accept it - but this answer will not make him pray with more fervor than before. We will explain these words in a way that will hopefully help them settle in one's heart.

### **A deep parable to explain the matter**

We will open with a parable. Let's say a person wants to get a package from Australia to Israel, and there is no direct flight available. First the package will make a stop at a nearby country and it will be there for seven hours. Finally, the package arrives in Israel and is being stored in a building somewhere. He has to send someone to get the package from the storage building to his house.

### **The lesson**

The lesson is not much different than the parable. The Talmud says (Chagigah 13a), "From the land until the heavens is a distance of five hundred years, and from there until the edge of the heavens is five hundred years, and the same distance is between each heaven. Above that is the feet of the angels...above that is the thigh of the angels... until the Throne of Glory."

So when a person prays to Hashem and he wants to receive from Him sustenance, this bundle has to travel through all the heavens to get to him! A person obviously needs a lot of prayers from the time when the sustenance leaves its place from the Throne of Glory, to pray that it can leave the Throne and come down to the angels and then finally make it to him....

Thus, a person can't know exactly how far away his sustenance is away from him in the heavens, so he should always pray that Hashem bring it close to him.

Just like with the package in Australia we saw that a person needs patience, and he has to pay all his messengers each to bring the package from place to place until it gets to him, so must a person pray more and more and bring the answer to his prayers closer and closer, until it finally reaches him. And this takes time.

### **No prayer is unanswered**

This is a deep point. A person must contemplate it very well until he internalizes it. When he does so, he will be able to feel that no prayer goes unanswered or ever went to waste. Every prayer has some effect. A person needs strong faith for this, because with our physical eyes a person we cannot see anything spiritual. But a person must believe that just like in the physical world things take time until they get to him, so too in spiritual matters, things take time to get to their destination.

### **Why the prayer of the righteous is accepted immediately**

Now we will say yet a deeper point. We explained that a person must increase his prayers to bring the sustenance closer to him, because there is a big distance between Hashem and a person.

Therefore, the closer a person is to Hashem, the faster his prayers are answered, and if so, the distance can be cut in half. A righteous person, who is attached to Hashem, has his prayers answered immediately, for as soon as the sustenance leaves Hashem and travels toward him, he immediately receives it. So if a person is more attached and connected with Hashem, the faster his prayers will be answered.

### ***Why does it take so long for our prayers to be answered?***

So the closer one is to Hashem, the faster his prayers are received, and if he is truly attached to Him, then his prayers are received right away.

Why does it take so long for many people to have their prayers answered? It is because since they are so far from Hashem, it takes a lot of time to get delivered. But the closer we become to Hashem, the more results our prayers will have

## ***Chapter Three - Concentration In Prayer***

### ***Concentration***

Another difficult point which many go through in prayer is the area of concentration. A person is tested with concentration in prayer many times; every time, a strange thought comes and then vanishes. What is the root of this problem, and what is the solution?

### ***The words of Rabbeinu Yonah on Tefillah***

Rabbeinu Yonah writes, "Someone who prays must concentrate with his heart... the main focus of our concentration is not on the concentration of the words, but on the purity of heart."

We will try to explain his deep words. Prayer is made up of two elements: Pure thoughts, and a pure heart. In order to have pure thoughts, one needs a pure heart. (Unless it is a time of suffering, in which a person's thoughts are very clear, because the danger is imminent.)

We will expand on these words. There is a rule that a person doesn't think what he doesn't want to think. If a person doesn't have some sort of liking or interest for something, he doesn't think about it. For example, a person isn't thinking about what's going on in a country that he has no interest in. The fact that a person is thinking about something shows that he has interest for it.

### ***Two ways to master your thoughts***

What should a person do if he wants to make sure that his thoughts stay focused on a certain thing? There are two possibilities.

1) He can strengthen his thoughts to not think about the thought he doesn't want. (This is a very, very hard thing to do, though).

2) The true way is to nullify his liking toward it. He can't *not* think about it; but what he should do is tell himself that he doesn't want to think about it.

But, you will ask right away: How can I do this? The answer is as follows.

## ***How to break our materialistic desires***

In *mussar* (self-discipline), one of the most important fundamentals is how to work on breaking desires and nullifying them. We won't elaborate on this now, and we have already written on this before (in *Section One: Ladder of Growth (Chapter 5)*).

We will be brief. A person has to know that all of the body's desires are not his real desires, but just "garments" upon him. It is a person's duty every day to work on this by doing things against his will, until he feels that the desires have calmed down. A person needs to constantly work on breaking his desires until they leave him totally, and he must do this all his life.

Using this method is the best way to arrive at concentration in prayer. If a person has strong materialistic desires in him, it is impossible to pray even one prayer properly. Only when a person stops having these desires can he prevent unwanted thoughts from entering his thoughts, and only then can his prayers be proper.

These are the words of Rabbeinu Yonah, who writes, "A person should nullify all worldly desires, for upon purifying the heart from worldly vanities, one can concentrate on the exaltedness of Hashem, and his prayers will be desirable and accepted by Hashem."

If a person still has worldly desires in his heart it is hard to think about the exaltedness of Hashem, but if he purifies his heart then it will be easy for him.

## ***Being weighed down with problems***

Everything we have said until now referred to undesirable thoughts – desires such as pursuing pleasure, hearing the news, wanting honor or money, etc. We have said the antidote for this. But there is another type of bothersome thought that exists – and it is very common in our times: worries.

Worries are more common among men above the age of forty, who have begun to marry off children, and they have run into financial difficulty in preparations for *simchos* (joyous celebrations). These worries can accompany a person every day, hour by hour, and they are not worries about pleasure, but worries about necessities: how will the debts be paid off?? These thoughts don't leave the person, and it casts a dark shadow on life.

Another common problematic situation is that there are many young men who have just gotten married, and they suddenly find themselves without livelihood; their thoughts are, understandably, preoccupied with how they will get by the month. These nagging worries affect them all day, but it affects them especially as soon as they start to pray. Prayers need a relaxed mind, and many cannot concentrate even for half a minute because of these continuously nagging thoughts. These people are really suffering inside. We will now devote a special chapter on how to escape this situation

## ***Chapter Four - Dealing With Our Stressful Issues***

### ***Two views on how to understand our problems***

In this chapter we will learn how a person can free himself from worrisome thoughts, such as worrying about livelihood, paying up debts, etc. There are always two outlooks on this.

1. A person has an issue bothering him, so he wonders how he can get out of it.
2. A person reflects on why Hashem put him in this situation. Since it is clear to the person that every situation is a test, if he will serve Hashem properly in this situation, he must therefore reflect on what is the point of the test.

A test is a "*nisayon*", which comes from the word "*nes*" – a miracle; because a test is here to uplift a person, just like a miracle. Therefore, in every situation, a person must reflect on what is the point of a test, and it is upon him to understand that Hashem brought him into this situation in order to uplift him in this specific area.

### ***The reason for the difficulty of making a living: to strengthen our faith***

Now we should reflect upon why we are uplifted from the test of "*With the sweat of your brow*" (making a livelihood). The answer is *emunah* - faith! We will explain this.

The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes, "The only thing that can save a person from all of these deficiencies is trust, and this is to throw one's lot totally on Hashem. A person should surely know that it is impossible to lack anything that was designated for him. But it is not his efforts which help him. His efforts are necessary, and if he has made efforts he has fulfilled his obligation, but the blessings of heaven have already been bestowed on him, and he does not have to spend all his days with effort."

What appears from his words is that increasing one's effort does not help one reach his livelihood, and lessening his effort does not subtract from his livelihood. If a person mistakenly puts in less effort than he should, he will not make any less of a living. He is like someone who made a mistake and forgot to sanctify the new moon; it won't make him lose any livelihood.

It must therefore be that the reason why people overwork at their jobs is because they feel that if they won't put in effort they won't make money, and if they make more effort they'll get more money. But this is total heresy, because this is saying that Hashem Himself is not in charge. HASHEM has already informed him though that He is in charge, though the Sages, who said that increasing efforts cannot bring him more than what was decreed on him.

How could a person think that he has what to gain by going against the Creator...?

### ***Lack of faith: from where does it stem?***

So this problem can exist by someone for two reasons.

1) Because he never really contemplated it. If this is the case, he should spend many hours of contemplation and clarify it well for himself.

2) It is a fact known to his intellect, like it is written in the *possuk*, "*And you will know today.*" But he is missing the other part of the *possuk*, "*And you shall place it on your heart.*" He knows the truth in his **head**, but he doesn't feel it in his **heart**. In such a situation, a person has to contemplate for many hours about the truth, and pour himself out to the Creator that he should merit to feel the truth.

In addition, he should also work to purify his heart (Just as we explained in *Section One, Chapter Five*). The more a person purifies his heart, the more he can feel the truth.

We will add an additional piece of advice that is tried and tested to work. A person can go to a faraway place where no one is (maybe to the graves of the righteous) and pour out his heart to Hashem, and speak to Him like someone talking to his friend - that He should help him understand

the truth.

### ***The true way to make a living***

Most people during a difficult financial situation will look for various *segulos* (charms) to make a living. They say various prayers after Shabbos, or give a fifth of their earnings to charity. These are all nice things, but it is not the true way to do it.

The true way to act is for a person to clarify matters of faith for himself – that only Hashem is in charge of everything. In addition, a person needs to pray for livelihood. But prayer is not the main thing over here; the basis is to have a strong faith.

Many times, people make efforts to make a living, and put in effort as well to pray for livelihood, and this is definitely a part of the effort. But this is the mistake people are making: prayer is *not* the effort. The inner depth of prayer is the recognition that Hashem is in charge what will happen to me, and how much I will have; and therefore I should ask only Him for livelihood, because only He is in charge. A person shouldn't place any hope in anything except for Hashem, and honestly feel that all other efforts cannot help.

### ***How to get rid of depression***

Another point to be made is that there is another problem with those who worry about livelihood (besides for worrying about how to make ends meet): depression. People can be very depressed that this is their bitter lot in life.

It is well known that when a person is depressed, he cannot think clearly. What is the way to get rid of this malady?

There is a clear answer. Depression comes from a lack of feeling or recognition that “Everything Hashem does is for good.” A person should contemplate very well that Hashem is full of love and goodness, and His whole reason in creating the world is only to bestow good. It follows then that everything that happens, whether small or big, can only be good. A person doesn't know how it is good; but Hashem knows how it is good.

A person has to understand and feel that Hashem wants to only bestow good on him; every moment He is being good to him, and he should therefore be happy with any situation in life, because somehow his situation is very good for him.

In order to internalize this point, a person should think about it for a long time, until Hashem merits him that his heart will be calm and at peace; upon attaining this, a person can pray proper

## ***Chapter Five - Praying Calmly***

### ***Praying slowly***

Another important point in how to meriting proper prayer are the words of the Rambam (*Laws of Tefillah 4:16*), “Therefore, a person should sit a little bit before prayer, in order that his heart concentrate, and then he should pray slowly and with beseeching.”

### ***Waiting before prayer***

We will elaborate on these words. First of all, a person should come a few minutes early before the start of the prayers and not do anything except sit in his seat, and contemplate.

First he should think: "Before Whom am I going to pray? With Who am I talking to?"

Of course a person knows to whom – but it's only in his intellect. In order to feel it in his heart, he has to contemplate it before every time he prays (and the highest level of this is reached by the righteous, who have this feeling at all times even without contemplating it). He should think that he is going to talk with Hashem - with his true Father.

After thinking this, one should reflect even more: "What do I want from my Father? For what reason am I coming to speak with Him?"

Maybe I want to thank Him, or maybe I want to ask Him for something; or maybe I am just longing simply for my Father!

One should know exactly why he is praying, and make an inner assessment.

After a person knows clearly why he is praying, his prayer will definitely be different.

### ***Two aspects of praying slowly***

Another important point that the Rambam says is that afterwards one should "pray slowly". There are two aspects to praying slowly – externally, and internally.

We will explain. What needs to be done, externally, is that a person should say the words carefully, as if he's counting his money, and that he's not in a rush. To rush while praying opposes everything prayer stands for. A person should say the words slowly, in keeping with the words of the *Shulchan Aruch* (98:1), "One who prays should concentrate with his heart on the words that come out of his mouth."

One who contemplates on the above words will see that specific emphasis is placed on the "heart" – the heart, as opposed to the mere intellect.

What is the "heart" that is needed here? It is totally different than the intellect. Our intellect just understands the meaning of the words he is saying. But our heart is able to live and feels what one is saying. If one is praising the Creator, he should feel like one who is praising his own father. If he is asking for something, he should feel like a pauper knocking on the door; (like the words of the Rambam, that one must beseech Hashem like a beggar). A person's feelings must be in line with the words coming out of his mouth.

### ***To acquire concentration, one needs inner calm***

It is not enough to merely say the words slowly just on an external level, in order to have concentration. A person needs an inner calm and tranquility as well. If a person begins his prayers already hassled with any sort of pressure, big or small – for example, that he is in a rush to get somewhere, or to get something done as soon as the prayers are over – it can ruin his entire prayers. When a person begins to pray, he needs to feel that he has unlimited time to pray. He shouldn't feel any sort of pressure to rush through it.

### ***The problem with this hasty generation***

But there is a very big problem, maybe one of the biggest there is. Our lives are fast-paced and hasty.

This generation is very hasty, no matter what lifestyle people are living - whether people learn in *Kolel* or whether they work. Even a young *avreich* who learns in *Kolel* has to return to his house as soon as he finishes praying in the morning, and be on time to send his children to playgroup or school. Afterwards he has to get to his yeshiva on time at the start of learning sessions. And in the afternoon prayers, he is responsible to pick them up from school. The whole structure of life lacks calmness, and makes it impossible for one to grow in any way.

We have to make a great change in the way we run our lives. We have to free ourselves from this hasty way of living, and strive to have an inner calm and peace. A person should set for himself enough time to spend when he prays in the morning (even if he doesn't spend a long time praying, he should be able to at least have the time available for it). It is impossible to give practical advice to every person on how to do this, but a person still must arrange his daily schedule and try.

For example, if one prays in the morning for about an hour, he should add an extra half hour to his schedule. Other suggestions can be made as well by anyone who thinks into it.

### ***To feel HASHEM and to talk to Him like a friend***

Another point needed here are the words of the *Shulchan Aruch* (ibid): "And he should think as if the Holy Presence is before him." Similar to these words are stated in *Mesillas Yesharim*: "A person should reflect well, that he is actually standing in front of the Creator and dealing with Him, even though his eyes cannot see Him. He will see that it is very hard to conjure up this image in his heart, for his senses are not helping him in this. However one has proper intellect with a little reflection can attain this in his heart the truth of this matter, how he is coming to deal with the Blessed One, and how before Him he is beseeching, and from Him he is requesting, and that He is listening and being attentive to his words just as a person speaks to his friend as his friend is listening and being attentive to him."

One who practices these words of the *Mesillas Yesharim* for a long time and reflects on its truth will merit to feel Hashem beside him, "just as a friend talks to his friend." His prayers will see growth, and he will be transformed to a totally new level.

## ***Chapter Six - Praying for Others***

### ***All actions are either giving or taking***

In everything a person does or says, he is thinking one of two things.

- 1) He is doing it for himself - he is taking.
- 2) He is doing it for another - either for Hashem, or for another person.

The same is when it comes to prayer; it is possible that a person is praying only for himself!

If a person works at it, though, he can learn how to pray entirely to give honor to Hashem, or for someone else. A person can either pray as a form of giving to another - or as a form of taking for himself...

### ***The life of a pious person***

The *Mesillas Yesharim* writes (Chap. 19): "The pious one, besides for all his service in his actions of

performing mitzvos for this reason (to give pleasure to his Creator, “for the sake of His honor”), must also surely feel the pain of the exile and the Destruction, for it has caused a great damage to the honor of Hashem, so to speak. He should desire the Redemption, for in it will come the raising of Hashem’s honor. He should pray constantly for the redemption of Israel, and for the honor of Heaven to return to its greatness.”

He writes additionally, “And he should think this while he is serving Him and actually praying to Him: that he should pray for his generation, that all those who need atonement should be atoned, and that all who need to repent should repent.”

We will elaborate on these words (We already spoke of this in the first section, *Ladder of Growth, Chapter Seven*). In order to serve Hashem purely for His sake (*lishmah*), a person has to stop being a “taker” and become a “giver.” This applies to prayer as well. When a person leaves his ego, and begins to care a little about Hashem, and about his other brother Jews, in such a state a person’s prayers are accepted readily by Hashem.

### ***Practical examples how to pray for HASHEM and not for oneself***

As an example: we pray, “*We beseech of You, knowledge, understanding, and intellect*” – each according to his own way. Why do we pray for wisdom? Why do we need knowledge?

Naturally a person will respond that he wants knowledge in order to know the Torah. However, there is a deeper answer: because he wants to be close to Hashem, and the only way to become close to Him is through Torah.

When a person removes from himself all egotistical kinds of thoughts, his prayers will be much different. His only intention will be that he wants to know the Torah simply because that is Hashem’s will!

An even higher motivation to have is that by asking of Hashem to know the Torah, there will be an increase in the honor of Hashem in the world. The person who prays this way is thus not thinking about himself, but rather on how he can give more pleasure to the Creator.

Another example: we pray, “*Forgive us, our Father.*” Why do we need Hashem to forgive us? The simple answer would be because we are afraid of punishment in Gehinnom.

A deeper answer, though, is that a person should understand that a sin causes a distance between man and his Creator. We want to be close to Him, and therefore we ask to be forgiven, for that will enable us to be close to Him. One who has divested himself of all self-absorbed thoughts and only wants to give satisfaction to his Creator thinks very differently. His thoughts are based on the fact that sin conceals the honor of Hashem, and therefore he asks for forgiveness, for by being forgiven the honor of Hashem is increased.

We have given only two examples, but someone who truly seeks to give satisfaction to his Creator will understand on his own to always pray in this way.

### ***Praying for the Jewish People***

Until now we only spoke of praying for the sake of giving satisfaction to Hashem alone. But there is another matter to pray for which the *Mesillas Yesharim* said. It is to pray for the nation of Israel, our brother Jews. We will explain how to do this.

Upon reflection, once can see that the entire order of the silent prayer is written concerning the

public. *"We beseech You, Return us, Forgive us."* The Sages did not institute prayer that a person should only pray for himself. The right way is to include everyone in one's personal prayers. For example, we pray, *"We beseech of You."* By nature, a person is thinking, "Give me wisdom." But the proper way is to think that Hashem should give wisdom to all of us, and it just that he one is included among them. He should not be focused on himself; he is asking that he at least be equal to everyone else.

The same goes for the rest of the blessings when we pray. The intention should be on everyone in the Jewish people. One should contemplate this very well during every blessing.

There is another important point to be made. A person should train himself upon hearing any misfortune to immediately pray for a salvation. A person should also pray right away for another if he sees that his friend lacks something.

### ***Prayer for HASHEM's honor and others***

All the words in this chapter can be applied in two levels.

1) Some people care about the honor of Hashem, as well as for the good of others. Such a person prays for the honor of the Creator and for the good of others, and he prays from the inner recesses of his heart.

2) On the other hand, there are others who don't feel this way. Such people have a job to keep on their own level. They should contemplate these matters, and eventually after some time the heart will be opened, and they can begin to feel a love for the Creator and a love for the nation of Israel.

## ***Chapter Seven***

### ***Prayer and Praise***

#### ***Praise***

Prayer is divided into two categories:

- 1) Requests.
- 2) Praise.

Until now we dealt only with requests, and now we will speak about praise.

Praises also are divided into two parts.

1) Praises that a person gives to his Creator for all His greatness and exaltedness, etc; praise on His actions, such as that He made the sky and the earth, the oceans and everything in it, and the like.

2) Praises on what HASHEM has given us, such as when we say, *"On Your miracles that You do with us every day."*

We will first elaborate on the second type of praise, which is easier to reach than the first. Prayers are full of praises and thanks to Hashem; yet we see from experience that it is difficult for a person to feel what he is saying. How can a person internalize the words from his mouth to his heart? There are two suggestions for this.

The sefer *Kav HaYashar* writes (Chap. 18): "It is the conduct of the Early Sages that upon any event

that happened them, they gave praise and thanks, and immediately recognized the Divine Providence of the Creator, and it was formed in their hearts that they should not forget the Divine Providence of Hashem." These words are also found in *Chovos HaLevovos* (The Gate of Serving G-d, Chap. 7): "One should always mention the goodness of G-d constantly on his tongue, and he should increase his gratitude and praise to Him."

### ***To reflect on HASHEM's goodness to us***

We will elaborate on these words. The truth is that Hashem is good to us every second, and everyone believes this. The only question that remains is, how much is a person living by this? How much does he feel it at all times? This is a person's job: to turn this mere knowledge into a feeling in the heart.

How do we do this? There are many ways how.

- 1) A person should sit and reflect well on all the good that Hashem does for him. Firstly, Hashem created him, and He keeps him alive.
- 2) In addition, He gave him many wonderful senses (it is helpful for this to study see *Emunah U'Bitachon (Faith and Trust)* [written by the Chazon Ish zt"l] and sefer *Chayei Olam* [written by the Steipler zt"l]).
- 3) In addition, one should reflect on how HASHEM watches over him every second with Divine Providence, as if he is an only child. One should give importance to this and want to write them down, in order that they should be arranged in his mind properly.

### ***How to feel His goodness***

After a person clarifies in his mind well all the good that the Creator bestows on him, now his job is how to internalize these words on his heart. How can this be done?

Anytime a person wants to internalize something from his mind into his heart, the best advice is **to speak it out verbally**. A person should tell himself the simple facts that his mind already knows. He should talk and talk, many times, many times to himself, as if he is trying to explain something to a child. (The Alter of Kelm said one time that we are adults only in our minds, but in our hearts we are all little children!).

One should speak it a fact to himself many times until it enters his heart. The same is with our topic: prayer. A person should speak with his mouth many times of all the good that Hashem does with him.

### ***Talk "with" HASHEM -- and not "to" HASHEM***

There is a basic point which is also important to mention. If a person says to himself, "Hashem gave me this, and this, and this", then he is really just talking to himself, not to Hashem.

But there is a totally different approach how to talk to oneself, and it can change the whole person. A person should really talk **to** Hashem. He should not say, "Hashem gave this to me." Rather, he should talk **to** Hashem, and say, "You, the Blessed One, gave this to me." Everything should be in first-person to Hashem, "You."

At first this will feel strange, because you won't feel like you're talking with Hashem. But if a person practices this for a while and doesn't give up, he is guaranteed to eventually feel that he is actually talking with Hashem, "like a man speaks to his friend."

It is recommended that one do this in a quiet place, with no one around. The Chofetz Chaim did this, and so did many other of our great leaders.

### ***How this can change a person***

After a person practices all we have said for a while, he will begin to feel Hashem in his life. He will also feel a change in his whole life.

It is hard to describe what it will be like in the written word; there will be a big change in the whole person. In such a state, a person will find it easy to praise the Creator in all things, even praises which have nothing to do with anyone; and he will have great pleasure to thank Hashem, as well as to sing to and praise His Father.

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**Source:** <https://bilvavi.net/english/bilvavi-part-3-section-3-prayer>