



# YICHD OF HISBODEDUS

*From talks and lectures given by  
Rabbi Avrohom Tzvi Kluger, shlit"o*

*(Selected Chapters)*



Selected chapters of

**Sefer Neizer Yisroel**

**Yichud of Hisbodedus**

From talks and lectures on  
*Chassidus and Pnimius Ha'Torah* given in  
Yeshivas Neizer Yisroel, Beit Shemesh, Israel

by

**Rabbi Avrohom Tzvi Kluger** *shlit"o*

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**YAAKOV MEIR SHECHTER**

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"Shaar Hashomayim"

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JERUSALEM

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**יעקב מאיר שכטער**

ר"מ ישיבת המקובלים "שער השמים"

נשיא מוסדות "קרן אור"

בעיה"ק ירושלים תובכ"א

רח' חברת ש"ס 32 י-ם טל. 02-6264619

**בעזרה"ת אדר א' תשע"א**

הנה אשרי הזוכים להאיר אור ה' ואור האמונה הקדושה בלבבות בני א-ל הוי אשר קרבת אלקים יהפצו, שבדור חשכה ואפילה כזו אין למעלה מזה לקיים תנו עוז לאלקים ולהשרות שכינתו הק' בלב כל אחד ואחד. ומצוה רבה לחוקם ולאמעם ולהעלות על נס את פעליהם הקדושים, להרבות אורה בישראל.

ועתה בואו ונחזיק טובה וברכה, נחזק ונאמץ את לב האי גברא רבה איש חי רב פעלים להרבות תורה ויראה בעולם, צנמ"ס הגה"ח בקי נפלא בנגלה ונסתר כמוהר"ר אברהם צבי קלוגער שליט"א רב ור"מ דקהל נור ישראל בית-שמש, אשר שמו הולך לפניו למרחקים, שזוכה לפרסם אלקותו ית' ואמונתו בעולם, בעי"פ ובכתב, להלחיב הלבבות ולהאחיב את בורא העולם על בראיו, ובעת המפוזרים מכנס חבורות קודש תלמידים הגונים ויקרים המתענגים בעונג עילאי מצוף אמריו הנפלאים, אשר הכרת פניהם ענתה בהם כי יראת אלקים ירשונו, ונאמנה עליי שהדו"ת דמר ידידי עוז הגה"צ ר' משה קרמר שליט"א שמכיר פעליו הק' מקרוב, להעמיד תלמידים הגונים במעלות העבודה.

והנה דבר זה לא צריך לדידי ולא לדכותי - שמלבד האור המופלא האמיתי הגנוז בתוך ספריו תורותיו ושיחותיו של רביה"ק כבר העידו גדולי הצדיקים שבדור האחרון עד כמה השכיל רביה"ק לכוון בחיבוריו הק' לדורנו זה דור עקבתא דמשיחא להחיות נפשות הצמאות לקרבת אלקים ולמלט נפשם מהסט"א וחילותיו המציבים רשתות ומכמרות להכשילנו על כל צעד ושעל ה"י, אשר ממש לא יאומן כי יסופר עד היכן קלע רביה"ק אל המטרה בכל מוצא פיו הק' לדעת מה יעשה ישראל בדורנו ממש.

אשרי חלקו וחבלו של הגה"ח הנ"ל, ואברכהו שיזכה להמשיך להפיץ יראת ה' ואמונה טהורה ולהרבות גבולו בתלמידים הגונים עובדי השי"ת כהנה וכהנה, עדי זכה שאת רוח הטומאה יעביר מן הארץ ומלאה הארץ דעה את ה' כמים לים מכסים ונגלה כבוד ה' וראו כל בשר במהרה בקרוב.

יעקב מאיר שכטער



## RAV YAAKOV MEIR SHECHTER

Adar I 5771

Fortunate are those who shine Hashem's light, the light of faith, into the hearts of Hashem's children who yearn for His closeness. In this dark and dismal generation, there is nothing greater. Therefore, it is a great mitzvah to strengthen and praise those who toil toward this objective, to increase light among Jews.

So, let us recognize and appreciate, encourage and strengthen the heart of this great man who has done so much to increase Torah and fear of Heaven in the world. A gaon and expert in both the revealed and concealed portions of the Torah, Moreinu HaRav Avrohom Tzvi Kluger, *shlit"a*, Rav and Rosh Yeshivah of the Neizer Yisroel community of Beit Shemesh. His name and fame is known all over the world. With his *droshos* and his written words, he has the merit to reveal Hashem and His faith in the world, and to ignite the sparks of Jewish soul, and to have Hashem loved by His creations. At a time when others are going astray, he is gathering holy and good students, and they bask in his wonderful and pleasant teachings. It is noticeable upon their faces that they desire and seek fear of Heaven. And I trust the testimony of my very close friend, Reb Moshe Kremer, *shlit"a*, who personally knows his holy activities, to establish students for *avodas Hashem*.

I and people like myself are not needed to confirm that in addition to the wonderful true light that is concealed within the *seforim* of the holy Rebbe [Rebbe Nachman of Breslov], great tzaddikim of the previous generation testified that the holy Rebbe so cleverly and perfectly discussed our generation—the generation before Moshiach—to quench thirsty souls, to bring them close to Hashem, and to save their souls from the *Sitra Achara* and its armies. Words fail to express how perfectly the holy Rebbe grasped our generation, and with every utterance from his holy mouth, he taught the Jewish nation what they need to do in our times.

Fortunate is the portion of this genius and chossid, HaRav Avrohom Tzvi Kluger, *shlit"a*, and I bless him that he should merit to continue disseminating Hashem's fear and pure faith, and to establish many more proper students, servants of Hashem Yisborach, until the impure spirit will be removed from the world, and the world will be filled with knowledge of Hashem, and Hashem's honor will be revealed to everyone's eyes, speedily in our days.

הסכמת הגה"צ רבי יחיאל פישל אייזנבאך זצ"ל

**הרב יחיאל פישל אייזנבאך**  
**ראש ישיבת "שער השמים"**  
**ללימוד תורת הנגלה והנסתר**  
**בירושלים עיה"ק**

בעזהש"ת

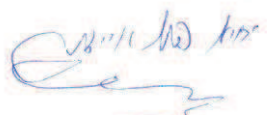
חודש קבלת התורה תשס"ז, פעה"ק ירושלים תובב"א

באתי בשורות אלו להגיד שבחו של תלמידי היקר ורב חביבי, משנתו קב ונקי, ולו עשר ידות בתורת הח"ן, בכתבי האר"י החי וגוריו הק', ובתורת החסידות המקובלת לנו ממרן הבעש"ט הק' ותלמידיו, מוכתר בנימוסין ומופלא בתורה ובחסידות, ה"ה הגאון החסיד הרב אברהם צבי קלוגר שליט"א

אשר זיכהו השי"ת לעמוד בראשות הישיבה "נזר ישראל" בעיה"ת בית שמש, ובה תלמידים הגונים היושבים לפניו לקבל לקח טהור מפיו, והוא משפיע עליהם בעין טובה ובמדה גדושה, ממשנתו הברורה לו יפה ללמד. ורבים נקבצים אליו לשמוע תורת חיים סדורה בדרך החסידות והפנימיות, כיד ה' הטובה עליו.

והנה באו בזאת תלמידיו בני הישיבה הק' להוציא לאור עולם חלק נכבד מתוך השיחות והשיעורים, ובהם מאמרים ערוכים וסדורים, חובקים זרועות עולם, להאיר לב מבקשי ה' ולעורר רוחם במחשבה והתבוננות ביסודות עמוקים וחשובים ביהדות ובחסידות - הן באופן מעמיק, ע"פ תורת החסידות והסוד, כראוי לבני בית המדרש, והן באופן השוה לכל נפש להעמיד לבבות בקרן אורה. ורובם של דברים כבר הודפסו ברבים ונפוצו באהלי שם ורבים כמהים להם.

על כן אמרתי, אף ידי תיכון עמם, להפיץ ברבים תורת רוחו של תלמידי הדגול והנעלה הגה"ח הנ"ל, והנני בברכתי שיזכה להרבות גבולי התורה והחסידות, לזכות לכל בית ישראל, ומי יתן מציון ישועת הכלל והפרט להיושע במהרה בתשועת עולמים במהרה בימנו אכ"ר.



## RAV YECHIEL FISHEL EISENBACH

Sivan 5767

In these lines, I desire to express the praise of my dear and beloved student whose hands are filled with the knowledge of kabbalah of the Arizal, and the teachings of Chassidus that we received from the Baal Shem Tov and his holy students. He is crowned by his noble behavior, a wonder in Torah and in Chassidus, the gaon and chossid, HaRav Avrohom Tzvi Kluger, *shlit"a*.

Hashem Yisborach gave him the merit to stand at the head of Yeshivahs Neizer Yisroel in the city of Torah, Beit Shemesh, where G-d-fearing students sit before him and receive the pure lessons, as he generously bestows upon them his clear knowledge. Many gather to him to hear the living Torah according to the ways of Chassidus and the secrets of the Torah that Hashem granted him.

Students from his holy yeshivah now desire to publish his classes and speeches, to brighten the hearts of those who search for Hashem and to arouse them to contemplate upon the deep and essential foundations of Judaism and Chassidus. There are simple lessons that are pertinent for every soul, and there are deeper and more profound lessons, founded upon the secrets of the Torah and Chassidus. Most of these have already been printed in pamphlet form, and now they desire to compile them in a *sefer* for the many who yearn for them.

Therefore, I encourage them in their endeavor to disseminate the teachings of my great and exalted student, the genius and chossid, HaRav Avrohom Tzvi Kluger, *shlit"a*, and I bless him that he should have the privilege to increase the boundaries of Torah and Chassidus to the benefit of the entire nation of Israel. May Hashem deliver His salvation, to each individual and to the community, so that we should very soon be saved with an eternal salvation, immediately in our days. Amen, so may it be His will.

הסכמת הגה"צ רבי מאיר בראנדסדארפער זצ"ל

**MEYER BRANDSDORFER**  
MEMBER OF THE BEIS DIN  
OF THE EIDAH HACHREIDIS  
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**מאיר בראנדסדארפער**

חבר הבד"צ דהעדה החרדית  
רבדק"ק  
תולדות אברהם יצחק  
ורב שכונת בתי אונגרין והסביבה  
בעיה"ק ירושלים תובב"א  
**מח"ס קנה בשם**

רחוב שבטי ישראל 37א' טלפון 5829692 - 02

בס"ד, בעיה"ק ירושלים ת"ה, יום שלישי לס' בהעלתך את הגרות י"ב לחודש מתן תורה סיון תשס"ז לפ"ק.

הן ראיתי עלים לתרופה ספר "נזר ישראל" שהם דרושים  
נחמדים על דרך החסידות בדרך הפרד"ס ממה שנאמרו ונשמעו על  
ידי מע"ב האי גברא רבה הו"ב טובא בתורה ויראה הגאון החסיד  
רבי אברהם צבי קלוגר שליט"א וכבר מזה שנים בהיותו משומעי  
לקחי בשיעורין תמידין כסדרן ראיתי את רב גדלו בתורה בהריפות  
נפלאה בדרך ישרה ובסברה נכונה ובפלפולא של תורה, ועתה  
עומדים תלמידיו להדפיס הדרושים ליכות את הרבים, ועל כן גם ידי  
תיכון שראוי להדפיסם ולהפיצם מעיינותיו הוצא ולהרבות תורה  
וקדושה בישראל, ויהא ה' עמו, ונזכה לגאולתן וישועתן של ישראל  
בב"א.

ובאע"ה למען כבוד התורה

מאיר בראנדסדארפער  
חבר הבי"ד דהעדה החרדית  
רבדק"ק  
תולדות אברהם יצחק  
כעדה"ק ירושלים תובב"א



## RAV MEYER BRANDSDORFER

Sivan 5767

I saw the healing pages, the *sefer Neizer Yisroel*, which contains precious thoughts in the path of Chassidus and *PaRDeS* which were taught by this great man, scholar and expert in Torah and fear of Heaven, the gaon and chossid, HaRav Avrohom Tzvi Kluger, *shlit"á*. Several years ago, when he used to partake in my *shiurim*, I recognized his greatness in learning, his sharp mind, and clear logic in studying the depths of Torah. And now, his students desire to print his classes for the benefit of the wider community. Therefore I also endorse and say that it is proper that these should be printed, so the wellsprings of Torah be dispersed to others, to increase Torah and holiness among Jews. May Hashem be with him, and we should merit the redemption of Israel, speedily in our day, Amen.

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BROOKLYN, N. Y. 11211  
Tel. 782-8328

אפרים פישל הערשקאוויטש

אב"ד דק"ק האליון יע"א  
כעת בברוקלין, נ. י.

ב"ח

חמותי ראיתי איש מדבר בשפה ברורה בדברים העומדים ברומו של עולם  
ה"ה הרה"ג המקובל חו"פ נודע בשערים ה"ה מוה"ר רבי אברהם צבי  
קלוגער שליט"א אשר לכו יהגה חכמה מגלה מצפונות ודבריו ניתן  
לשיעורים לפני תלמידים מקשיבים וגם נדפסו עלי ספר בקונטרסים נזר  
ישראל גליא לדרעיה ואחזיה נהורה והמשכילים ישכילו כוזהר הרקיע  
השכיל לעשות בחכמה ותבונה ללמד לבני ישראל קשת ולירד לעומקן של  
דברים על דרך העבודה וכל דורש ומבקש לבוא אל הקודש נשבע מטובו  
ויתענג בדשן נפשו יהי ה' בעזרו שיוכל להפיץ מעיינותיו הוצה ולהרבות  
גבולו בתלמידים ויכדרון שמעתתיה ביה מדרשא עד ביאת ינון בב"א.

הכו"ח א' ויקרא תשס"ז לפ"ק ברוקלין יצ"ו

אברהם פישל  
הערשקאוויטש

## RAV EFRAIM FISHEL HERSHKOVITZ

Adar 5767

**B**ehold, I see someone speaking in a simple language Heavenly concepts –this is HaRav HaGaon u’Mekubal, the renowned Rav Avrohom Tzvi Kluger, *shlit”a*. His heart thinks wisdom and reveals secrets, and his lessons are told to students who yearn to grow. With cleverness and wisdom he wisely teaches *B’nei Yisroel* the path, as he delves into the deep roads of *avodas Hashem*. All those who seek the path to holiness find their desires by him, and pleasure for their souls. With Hashem’s help, he should be able to disperse his wellsprings of Torah to others and increase his boundary with students, and his teachings should be spread and disseminated among the halls of Torah study until the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days. Amen.

SHMUEL MOSHE KREMER

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JERUSALEN

שמואל משה קרמר

מחנך מעיינים בנחלים  
נשיא תלמוד תורה ברסלב ירושלים  
דורכ אור הנעלם ברסלב  
רח' יוחנן מזרחי 8, מל: 02-5829514  
ע"ה"ק ירושלים תובבא

ערב ראש השנה תשע"א

באתי בזאת במלין יקירין כבוד וליקרא דאורייתא, להגיד בשבחו של ידידנו האי  
גברא רבה ויקרא

הגאון החסיד המופלא ומופלג בנגלה ובנסתר, חסידא ופרישא, אוצר בלום  
כש"ת מוה"ר אברהם צבי קלוגר שליט"א,

רב ור"מ דקהל נזר ישראל בבית שמש ומצודתו פרוסה להאיר לארץ ולדרים,

אשר משמיא קא זכי ליה להאיר עיני מבקשי ה' ולהרוות צמאון המשתוקקים  
אשר נפשם נכספה להדבק באור הצדיק האמת, וגברא דמריה סיייעה להעמיד  
תלמידים הגונים ומופלגים העולים במעלות העבודה על הדרך הסלולה לנו  
מדור דור, ואשרי חלקו שזכה להעמידם בקרן אורה והיה כל מבקש ה' אליו  
ידרושון למצוא נחת לנפשו להאירה באור תורת הצדיק ותלמידיו הק'.

וכבר נודע בשערי ציון גודל יקרת ספריו החשובים ומאמריו הנחמדים משוכבי  
לב ונפש, ורבים אשר טעמו מצוף דבריו תתענג בדשן נפשם להאיר עיניהם,  
וזכו לקבל נועם קדושת הצדיק האמת לטוב להם כל הימים.

ישא ברכה מאת ה' להמשיך בעבודת הקודש מעלה מעלה ויהי ה' עמו להמשיך  
ולהפיץ חוצה מעיינותיהם של צדיקי האמת אשר עליהם עיקר סמיכתנו  
ותקוותנו להמשיך עלינו אורו של משיח עדי נזכה בקרוב להתגלות מלכותו  
ית"ש ונגלה כבוד ה' במהרה בימנו.

נאם מוקירו ומכבדו כערכו

שמואל משה קרמר  
נשיא תלמוד תורה "ברסלב"

**RAV SHMUEL MOSHE KREMER**

Erev Rosh Hashanah 5771

With these special words, I give honor to the Torah and I pronounce the praise of our friend, the gaon and chossid, wondrously great in Torah and Chassidus, the master in Torah, Moreinu HaRav Avrohom Tzvi Kluger, *shlit"á*, Rav and Rosh Yeshivah of *Neizer Yisroel*, Beit Shemesh, whose teachings are spread throughout the land and to all its inhabitants.

Heaven has given him the privilege to brighten the eyes of those who search for Hashem, and to quench the thirst of those who yearn to connect to the light of the true tzaddik. He is “a person whom Hashem helps” to establish proper students who tread in the paths of Divine service, upon the paved path of generations. His portion is blessed, for he grants for his students a bright corner, and whoever desires Hashem can go to him and find satisfaction for his soul, and enlightenment in the light of the true tzaddik and his holy students.

It is already known among the scholars the great preciousness of his *seforim* that delight the heart and soul. Many have already tasted the sweetness of his words, and they found pleasure, and they merited to receive the pleasantness of the holy true tzaddik, and this is their goodness forever.

May Hashem bless him so he can continue in this holy service, to grow higher and higher. Hashem should be with him and enable him to continue disseminating the Torah and wellsprings of the true tzaddikim—because this is our only hope and support—and to shed upon us the light of Moshiach; until we will merit, very soon, the revelation of Hashem Yisborach’s kingdom, when Hashem’s honor will be revealed, speedily in our days.

## ניסן דוד קיוואק

ישיבת מאירת עיניים

ע"ש מוהר"ן מברסלב זי"ע

רח' הרב סורוצקין 33

עיה"ק ירושלים תוכב"א

בעה"ת, חודש שמרבים בו בשמחה תשע"א

ברוך אלוקנו שבראנו לכבודו והאיר לנו את אור האורות, דרך ההתבודדות הקדושה אשר העניק לנו רבינו הקדוש זיע"א, וקראה בקדשו (ליקו"ת כה) "מעלה גדולה עליונה מן הכל", והעיד שצדיקים וחסידים אמיתיים באו לדרגתם רק ע"י ההתבודדות, וכאשר רואים הכל עין בעין דור אחר דור - ואף גם בדורנו - את עובדי השי"ת המוסרים נפשם יום אחר יום לעסוק בעבודת הקודש של ההתבודדות, דיבור להשי"ת מעומק הלב "כדבר איש אל רעהו" ובוזה באו לידי חיים טובים באמת חיים נצחיים בנועם זיו עליון.

על כן, מה מאד שמח לבי לנוכח האי ספרא דמרא טב, אשר העלו תלמידים הגונים, חברים מקשיבים מלמד דעת מבינים, משיעוריו הנחמדים מפנינים ומתוקים מדבש ונופת צופים, של ידידי רב חביבי דיתב בתווא דליבאי, חכימא עמיקא דמיטמרן גליין ליה, ה"ה הגאון החסיד המושלם כש"ת

רבי אברהם צבי קלוגר שליט"א

רב ור"מ דקהלה נאה וחסודה 'נזר ישראל' בבית שמש יצ"ו

ואור תורתו שואף זורח למרחקים להפיץ אור האמת והאמונה לכל מקום אשר דבר מלך מלכי המלכים מגיע. ועתה הפציע אור חדש בהיר בשחקים, בדרך עבודת ההתבודדות ביחוד גמור להשי"ת ולייחדו באהבה.

ידעתי מקרוב מאז ומקדם מימי נעוריו, כאשר החל רוח ה' לפעמו, עת השליך נפשו מנגד לזכות להתקרב לבורא ית' והשליך מעליו עול חשבונות הרבים אשר בקשו בני אדם ושם פניו להידבק בבוראו ולעבדו באהבה וביראה עילאה ליחדא קוב"ה ושכינתיה. ומאז שם כל מעייניו להיכלל באור קדושת צדיק אמת בביטול גמור ואמיתי וקיום עצותיו בפשיטות ותמימות, וקידש וטיהר עצמו ביגיעה ובעבודת עבודה עד אשר זכה ועלתה בידו ללמדה לאחרים ולהשימה בפיהם ובוזה להמשיך מסורת התורה והעבודה האמיתית המסורה לנו מדור דור. וזוכה ומזכה להקהיל קהילות רבים להשקות צמאים לדבר ה' מן הנחל הנובע מקור חכמה, שפתותיו שושנים נוטפות מור להבעיר לבבות בשלהבת י"ה - עד אשר מים רבים לא יוכלו לכבות את האהבה ונהרות לא ישטפוה. ומשמיא זכי ליה להאיר בלב תלמידים הגונים יראי ה' וחושבי שמו את אור האמונה בדרכים נפלאים עד למאד עד אשר כל רואיהם יעידון כי זכו לנחול חיים טובים חיים נצחיים באורו של משיח. <

## RAV NISSAN DOVID KIVAK

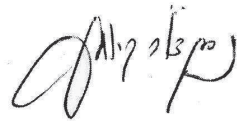
Adar 5771

**B**oruch Elokeinu, Who created us to honor Him, and Who shined to us the light of all lights, the path of *hisbodedus* that the holy Rebbe, Reb Nachman of Breslov – may his merit protect us, Amen – presented to us. He called *hisbodedus* “the most exalted and paramount spiritual practice of all,” and he testified that all the true and great tzaddikim and chossidim reached their great level only because of their *hisbodedus*. This was seen generation after generation. Even in our generation, there are servants of Hashem who have self-sacrifice and practice the holy devotion of *hisbodedus* every single day, and they speak to Hashem Yisborach from the depths of their hearts “like someone who is speaking to his friend.” In this manner, they attained the good, true, and eternal life, an experience of the Divine spirit.

Therefore, I am so happy to see this *sefer* that the students collected from the precious classes – more valuable than diamonds, sweeter than honey – of my very close friend who is inscribed within my heart, a wise man, the gaon and chossid, master of Torah, Rabbi Avrohom Tzvi Kluger, *shlit”a*, Rav and Rosh Yeshivah of the beautiful Chassidic community, *Neizer Yisroel*, Beit Shemesh. The lights of his teachings shine to distant lands, dispersing the light of truth and faith to any place that the words of the King of kings can reach. And now, a new bright light has risen: the path of *hisbodedus*, and how thereby one can unite with Hashem Yisborach with love.

I presently know Rav Kluger, and I knew him before, in his youth, when the spirit of Hashem had only first begun to ring in his heart. He put aside all other considerations, and devoted himself to become close to his Maker, may He be blessed. He put aside the many issues that people are occupied with in order to focus on uniting with his Creator and serving Him with love and fear, and to unite the Holy One with His *Shechinah*. From then, and always, he placed all his efforts to become totally subsumed into the light and holiness of the true tzaddik, with complete and genuine self-abnegation, and he kept the tzaddik’s counsel with simplicity and devotion, and he purified and sanctified himself with great toil with the *avodah* that has been given to us over the generations, and he has the merit to gather communities and to give those who are thirsty for Hashem’s word to drink from the flowing wellsprings of wisdom. His words bring forth enthusiasm and vigor into the listener’s heart, until all the water of the world cannot put

ועל כן נודה ונהלל לשמו הגדול ית' על שלא השבית גואל מבית יהודה ובתוך חשכת הגלות מאיר עינינו בניצוצי אור הגאולה, ונשואות עינינו שיגלה רחמנותו ית"ש עלינו, יהי ה' עמו ויעל להפיץ חוצה מעיינות הצדיק האמת, אור פניך עלינו אדון נשא ועזרנו על דבר כבוד שמך לקדש שמו ית' - וה' יגמור בעדנו לגלות מלכותו ית' בעולמו ולהאיר הארת הדעת בשלימות עדי נזכה לייחוד השלם, ונשגב ה' לבדו ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו אחד במהרה בימנו אכי"ר.





out the great fire of the love which is ignited, and rivers can never flood it. Heaven granted him the ability to shine into the hearts of the G-d-fearing students the light of faith in wondrous ways, until everyone can testify that they merited inheriting the good life, eternal life, the light of Moshiach, from his teachings.

Therefore we praise and thank His Great Name that He has not abandoned us, and in the midst of the dark exile, He shines to our eyes sparks of the Future Redemption. Our eyes are turned to Heaven that He should bestow upon us His mercy. May Hashem be with him, and he should succeed to disperse the wellsprings of the Torah of the true tzaddik to others. “Shine the light of Your face upon us, O Master, and help us, for the honor of Your Name, to bring honor to Your Name. And Hashem will stand alone on that day, and Hashem will be One and his Name One”—speedily in our days. Amen.

*Note to the Reader*

Wherever we use the word *yichud* in this work, we do *not* mean it in the Kabbalistic sense as taught by the Arizal. Rather, we use it as a shorthand term to refer to a point in life relevant to every individual, namely *a genuine bond and intrinsic connection, which is a meeting of the hearts and minds.*

This usage is based on a fundamental Chassidic teaching, that every well-meaning, sincere “motion” a Jew makes—whether in thought, speech or action—is a *yichud* because it reveals the One and Only.

- ☞ “*Hisbodedus* is the most exalted and paramount spiritual practice of all. It involves setting a time for oneself of at least one hour to be alone in some room or in the field, and to express oneself before one’s Maker with well-presented arguments in a graceful and appeasing way, begging Hashem to bring one truly closer to His service. ...The importance of this practice is exceedingly great, and is an excellent method of coming closer to Hashem, because it is an all-encompassing practice that embodies everything. ...It is a universal practice for all – from the least to the greatest – for everyone is able to follow this practice. One can reach great levels thereby. Fortunate is he who keeps it” (*Likutei Moharan II*, 25).
- ☞ “[Rebbe Nachman] said: “When Hashem Yisborach helps in *hisbodedus*, it is like having a conversation with a friend” (*Likutei Moharan II*, 99).
- ☞ “Rebbe Nachman was speaking with his student Reb Noson. He placed his holy hands over his shoulders, and he said the following words, ‘It is very good to speak out your heart to Hashem Yisborach as you would speak to a true, good friend’” (*Kochvei Or*).
- ☞ “Hashem has already called us His children, as it is written, ‘You are children to Hashem, Your G-d.’ Therefore it is very good to express one’s speech and sorrow before Him as a child who complains before his father, and to express words that will arouse His mercy. Even if it appears to a person that, because of his deeds, he really isn’t a son, nonetheless, Hashem Yisborach has called us His children. As Chazal teach, ‘Regardless of what one does, he is still called [Hashem’s] child’” (*Sichos HaRan #7*).
- ☞ “My prayers shall be before You like one who speaks [to another person] face to face, as one who is speaking with his friend. I should speak directly with You—face to face—everything that is in my heart, and I shall pour forth my soul before You like water, and I shall tell You everything that I am going through, with words of appeasement and with a broken heart, like a child who is trying to appease his father” (*Likutei Tefillos 98*).



## Preface

For someone who reads this book thoughtfully, with a genuine desire to learn from it, his eyes will light up and his soul rejoice as the words of basic, pristine, fundamental faith settle into his heart. With God's help, these words will effect in him a change for the better, drawing him closer to Hashem. This change is not external or mechanical, but a result of a true joy in life and an inner glow that illuminates every state of the soul. These words are drawn from the depths of the Torah's secrets and of Chassidus, the light of our Rebbe, Reb Yisroel, Baal Shem Tov, via the "flowing brook, the fount of wisdom," our holy master, Rebbe Nachman, may their merit protect us.

We have done our best to present these topics in a clear, straightforward manner that will be accessible to all. We have kept the discussion of Kabbalistic concepts to a minimum so these words can serve as a personal light to one and all, and even young readers will benefit from this light.

### *The Theme of This Book*

The single most important point of this book is this: to know and comprehend and to take to heart the full depth of what it means "to speak as one friend to another." This refers to the depth of the bond in the hearts of the giver and the receiver.<sup>1</sup> This is the path connecting the Jewish people to the blessed Creator, Who, as a beloved, has called us "My sister, My beloved, My dove, My perfect one" (Shir HaShirim 5:2).

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<sup>1</sup> As alluded to by the verse "Face to face (*panim el panim*) as a person speaks to his friend" (Shemos 33:11). The word *panim* also refers to what is *lifnim* (inside) the friends.

The time of *hisbodedus*, the time of closeness and intimacy that a Jew has with his Maker, is the time that illuminates every other time of life—including his essence after Moshiach arrives, and in the World to Come. This time is the entrance to loving and revering God, to walking in His ways and keeping His mitzvahs.

For any of this to happen, one has to understand what intimacy is, and what it means to have a connection with another. In particular, it needs to be understood how to live this in practice, in daily *hisbodedus*. After all, a Jew’s daily life is filled with ups and downs, with all that Hashem asks of him. The soul is not always ready for intimacy.

This work comes to explain the idea of *hisbodedus*-intimacy that Rebbe Nachman revealed and taught, that shines brightly across the spectrum of life. It speaks of the two very broad states in which one can have *hisbodedus*: feeling great and, quite often, feeling crummy. The latter has its own special language of intimacy.

So these essays do not speak only of the lofty, exalted times. Rather, they speak of all the states and situations that life and the soul encounter in *hisbodedus*:

- ☞ waiting and faith
- ☞ screaming and anguish
- ☞ moaning and regret
- ☞ a guilty conscience and estrangement
- ☞ pain and tears
- ☞ begging for rescue and taking stock of one’s actions
- ☞ returning to God and needing condolence
- ☞ making a plan and accepting what may happen

Each of these is a type of *yichud*, akin to “And if I should make my bed in Hell—You are here!” (Tehillim 139:8). We will speak about the challenges to living a *hisbodedus* life. We will shine the light of *yichud* on all of these, from a perspective of *geulah*.

### ☞ *Chosson v’Kallah*

The prophet long ago described the connection between the blessed Creator and Yisroel as one of giver and receiver, when he said, “As a

groom rejoices over his bride, God will rejoice over you” (Yeshaya 62:5). This is what we say every Shabbos night in *Eishes Chayil*; Hashem testifies clearly, for every Jewish *neshomah* to hear, how precious she is to Him, how much He trusts her: “Many women have done well, but you surpass them all” (Mishlei 31:27).

Before the wedding, a *chosson* and *kallah* hear nothing but praises about the other, and are greatly impressed. But after the wedding, none of that matters. From that point on, it’s real life. As the years roll by, the pre-wedding hype is totally forgotten, loses all its value and makes no impression. What’s important later are totally different qualities, qualities that relate to what goes on between them, not to what is external.

In a nutshell, the difference is this: Before the wedding, they were talking *about* each other; after the wedding, they are talking *to* each other. At this point, they want the connection itself. That is the main thing. Everything else flows from that, as a loved one will do for a lover.

Similarly, many sacred works that provide the backdrop to *yichud* with Hashem speak *about* Him—about His greatness, kindness and transcendence; about how His light is transmitted from world to world; about how He operates and His qualities. But it is the light of *geulah* that directs the Jew toward intimacy with his Maker. Around this revolves the concept of “*to Him*,” of searching for the point of contact and the essence of uniting, instead of topics that beat around the bush.<sup>2</sup>

This brings us to a genuine acceptance of the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven. Accepting the yoke of responsibility also exists in regard to a slave and to a wife. But the difference between these two “acceptances” is light-years apart. For a slave, the definition of selflessness means to serve his master loyally and completely. Having his master’s love is not part of the equation at all; it is not the goal of the interaction.

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<sup>2</sup> An example of this is *Shemoneh Esrei*, where the focus is not glorifying or praising Hashem, as it was in *Pesukei d’Zimra*, when we spoke *about* God. In *Shemoneh Esrei*, we are speaking *to* Him.

With a wife, it's a totally different story. Although she, too, is in a state of selflessness and acceptance of responsibility toward her husband, the essence of their relationship, and her primary goal and desire, is for her husband to want her. The same is true for every Jew in his relationship with Hashem. In everything that he does for Hashem, he focuses on the special bond between him and his Maker.

Walking this path of *yichud* and *deveikus*, a Jew comes to awe of God and regret, a serious self-accounting, and deep, calm reflection that results in genuine *teshuvah*. All of these will be addressed. This is Moshiach's light—to live knowing that self-sacrifice and accepting the yoke of a life dedicated to serving Hashem result from the glow of *yichud* and God's desire for His “mate,” the Jewish soul.

We will see for ourselves that *hisbodedus* gifts to a person's heart the clarity that God is in His/his world, and that there is none other. This is alluded to by “Hashem alone (*badad*) guides [the Jewish people]”—the path of “alone” uplifts and purifies the Jewish *neshomah* for the Blessed King. In the words of our Rebbe: “Know! The primary way to diminish one's greed and selfishness, to become selfless and merge with Hashem, is through *hisbodedus*” (*Likutei Moharan* I, 52).

Your *hisbodedus*-talk creates a real and natural connection with Hashem, in the same way that saying *Shema* twice a day creates within you a constant awareness of your responsibility to serve Hashem. “Anyone who sets aside time each day, at least an hour, to converse with Hashem, *will surely be worthy of genuinely drawing closer to Him*” (*Sichos HaRan* #68).

### Giving and Receiving

These chapters on *hisbodedus* also speak of *nekudas ha-chaver v'nekudas ha-tzaddik*, relating to a close friend and to the tzaddik. This is because the secret of *yichud* is exactly the same in all relationships in which two become one. When the Arizal described *yichud* with the Divine, he was describing the root of every *yichud* in existence.<sup>3</sup>

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3 Although the Arizal was describing the Kabbalistic stages and process of *yichud* as it develops in prayer, we will discuss it on a simpler plane, as taught by the Baal Shem Tov and his disciples.



Every relationship that exists on a spiritual plane, to wit:

- ☞ friend—friend
- ☞ husband—wife
- ☞ chossid—rebbe
- ☞ soul—body

is rooted in those basic premises. Being engaged in each of these four relationships is critical for having a relationship with Hashem. It is so crucial that if one of the four is lacking, the relationship with Hashem is lacking, as Rebbe Nachman writes about *nekudas ha-chaver v'nekudas ha-tzaddik* and *nekudas atzmo* (*Likutei Moharan* I, 34). The possibility of fully living each of these relationships, in a way that brings a person closer to the goal—living in Hashem's light—depends on binding to Hashem the heart that has properly prepared itself with the principles of *yichud*.<sup>4</sup>

Since all these relationships are interconnected, all the topics discussed in this book can help build and improve any connection, interaction and relationship in life, making it a vessel to bring the *Shechinah* into the world. Many people who want so very much to have a true relationship with a tzaddik or with friends, or to build a home on a sacred bond, will, with Hashem's help, benefit greatly from this book.

We know that only after a Jew has established a peaceful home, thoroughly united with his dependents, can he establish an authentic inner-connection with Hashem. The giver is Hashem's chariot and His throne room. When he provides for his home—the "*Shechinah*," i.e., his wife—he is actually uniting the Jewish people with their Creator and Maker, their intimate and beloved.

A separation in this relationship, God forbid, causes a separation at the root. The Mizbei'ach sheds tears.<sup>5</sup> This is the deeper meaning of the Temple's destruction, the antithesis of *sholom* in the home and a standing Beis HaMikdash, where the *keruvim* melded into one another with a complete *yichud*. One's own home is perfected by the

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4 See p. 75.

5 *Gittin* 90a-b.

presence of the *Shechinah* and the blessing of peace, when husband and wife appease each other for Hashem's sake.

If you are one of the many who desperately crave inner tranquility, to have “peace at home” between *neshomah* and body, this book will illuminate your life. For as long as the *neshomah* does not willingly consent to unite with the body, despite her loss of light, the body, too, will not be moved to receive her light, which is the Divine light from Above.

This separation prevents both of them from fulfilling their mission in life. But if the giver, the *neshomah*, will come to the body with a shining face to find favor and accord, the body will be motivated to cheerfully uplift itself to be a dwelling for Hashem's light, the *neshomah's* light. The two can then join in a pact to receive from the Great Giver, may He be blessed.<sup>6</sup>

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6 See p. 74.

## *Yisroel, In You I Take Pride<sup>1</sup>*

**H***isbodedus* is meant to produce a complete integration of Giver and receiver, a total and absolute connection with Hashem.

From the outset, we need to understand that this does not happen immediately, but is a step-by-step process. Similar to what Chazal teach about prayer, that one stage follows another—“First one praises God and only afterwards makes his requests” (*Brochos* 32a)—there is also an order to readying one’s heart for *hisbodedus*.<sup>2</sup>

In any sort of bond or close relationship, like a conversation between family members, there isn’t an instant feeling of that strong closeness. A rational person patiently allows for prior stages that lack the richness of the deep feelings to come, because he knows “that’s how these things work.”

An inner spiritual life, the lot of the *misboded*, follows these same rules. The *misboded* needs to know—and believe—that slowly but surely he is advancing toward the desired goal. This chapter provides a synopsis of the ideas expanded upon in the rest of this book.

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1 Cf. Yeshaya 49:3

2 Queen Esther, a model of the Jewish soul, provides a practical example. When she wanted the king to grant her request, she didn’t just blurt it out. She asked only to dine with him, even after she knew that he wanted to help her. Calmly and patiently, she followed her plan until the time was ripe and she cried out, “Give me my life! Save my people!”

### 🕊️ *The First Step*

The first thing to know is this: the giver grants the receiver entry in a way that builds him, and that gives him a sense of his worth and contentment to be a receiver. For example, a beggar comes to a person's home. The donor won't settle for merely giving a contribution. He is glad to have the opportunity to give, smiles sincerely, and says so: "It's good you came." The lucky beggar feels ten feet tall and recognizes how important he is. From this point on, his receiving will be totally different.

This is evidence of a willingness to connect, even before the virtues and hidden charm of the receiver's soul are revealed. We have a clear indication to associate and provide for the receiver.

When a Jew hears that he is valued and appreciated, as if Hashem is telling him, "I'm glad you came," he wakes up. He feels ten feet tall when he hears that Hashem desires him and wants him to speak with Him. These wonderful words flow from the Blessed Giver onto the Jew like life-giving dew.

The idea is this: If *yichud* in a state of broad-minded awareness is your goal, you can't reach it with a tiny attitude. A Jew must buy in to the fact that God holds him dear. That, in turn, has to cast light on his current situation. No matter how difficult it is, he cannot think that it is a singular experience.

This is a crucial rule that our teachers shared: Don't use smallness to escape smallness! Instead, illuminate your mind with thoughts of how great the Jewish *neshomah* is. Imagine your heart shouting out a *bas kol* announcing the greatness of your *neshomah*. This light will push away the darkness. Even if some difficulties still require attention and resolution, the right time will yet come.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Roundabout methods are the best way to deal with smallness. "Bigness pushes away smallness," the Arizal says. Reb Noson related the following story: Reb Gershon of Terhovitza once complained to Rebbe Nachman that he was finding it hard to pray and study the way he should. The Rebbe told him, "You just do good and work honestly at your devotions. If you keep at it and consistently do what you can, the good will remain and the bad will automatically disappear" (*Chayei Moharan* #447).

Feeling good about yourself is the ticket for doing *hisbodedus*. When a Jew reminds himself how important he is to Hashem, by believing that God is lifting him, he reignites his heart with his God-given worth.

As we wrote earlier, we still haven't come to the fullest expression of the bond. We are just on the first step of being built and of hearing our praises. That's why we don't yet have a strong feeling. But we still believe and recognize the taste and value of the current first step, and let ourselves get close enough to hear Hashem say how important we are.

### *Turning the Feeling into Words*

From the strength of this, one is able to elevate his heart's intangible understanding into words of reconciliation, grace and harmony, words that praise Hashem with sensitivity and subtlety (see *Likutei Moharan* II, 25). This happens in two directions:

- ☞ It happens in what the receiver chooses for the Giver to hear, because God is “the Holy One, enthroned on the praises of Yisroel” (Tehillim 22:4). As it were, He longs to hear His beloved Jews praise Him.
- ☞ It happens in the praise the Giver delivers to the receiver, “to what the heart says to him, which are Hashem's actual words” (*Likutei Moharan* I, 138). The heart speaks the very grace the Jew brings to Hashem, simply by existing as he is, a child of the Chosen People. A Jew who gives ear to the praise that his heart murmurs—God's words—is alerted in a very delicate but deep way to his importance, and to the good that he has done.

As the tenuous understanding rises from the depths of the heart, the innermost elements of desire come closer to taking form in the mind and in the mouth. They bubble up to the surface and “what now matters most to one's heart” gets expressed, attaching one's situation to Hashem.

Before the formal prayers were established by the *Anshei Knesses HaGedolah*, every individual would pray the words of his heart—that prayer was his *ruach ha-kodesh*, his Divine inspiration. Now that the

formal prayers are in place, *hisbodedus* is the Jew's *ruach ha-kodesh*. As Rebbe Nachman puts it, "What one speaks privately with his Maker is akin to *ruach ha-kodesh*" (*Likutei Moharan* I, 156).

From here, one advances to the closest connection and the ultimate, complete *yichud*, in which the heart feels at its core that Hashem is uniting and binding with it. This is a shadow of "God spoke to you face to face" (*Devarim* 5:4). Few are those who come to this secret during this hour, the most concealed union of the *neshomah* and her Beloved.

The taste one has during the time of *yichud* is expressed by the verse "You have been shown, so you can know that Hashem is God. Nothing exists but He" (*ibid.* 4:35). A Jew who walks the earth can actually feel that "Hashem is our God; Hashem is One" (*ibid.* 6:4). This is the secret of *yichud*.

### *The Wedding Ring*

Throughout life, a Jew feels terrific any time he recalls the time that he is alone with Hashem, with no one else there, when he is the one and only person in the world. How could he not? He has a time and place to be with Someone Who values him as the greatest and the best, Who makes him into a prince and takes great pride in him.

He feels this way because when he is alone with the Holy Blessed One, he senses in his heart that Hashem is raising him, elevating him and regarding him as the purpose of Creation. Even if he has nothing special on his mind or anything special to say, he's coming only for the privilege of "being together." Just to have Hashem's company brings infinite delight. There is nothing in life like it!

This silent sweetness is so huge, a Jew is comforted every time he thinks about it. He knows he is not alone in the world and, more importantly, that a moment of closeness with the One Who truly understands his heart awaits him.

This is like a wedding ring. A wife wears it every day of her life to remind her that she is still a bride. The *chuppah* may have happened long ago, but the marriage remains.

### ☁ *The Occasional Exception*

Yes, there are times when the soul is in bitter pain and the person runs to Hashem to cry bitterly or to complain about all his troubles, without any by-your-leave, order or design. This we understand clearly. After all, to whom should a Jew turn at a time of pain and confusion, if not to his Father in Heaven? Yet, when we think about such situations, we realize that the introductory process happens automatically. His heart's explosion places him immediately in front of Hashem.

When something happens and a child suddenly starts crying and carrying on, it's no time to have an ordinary conversation. The father listens carefully and does what he can to relieve his child's distress. Later, when the child has calmed down, his stature can be built in an orderly way and the child will regain his composure.

There are times when *hisbodedus* is like this. A person needs to vent and unload all his pain and frustration in a jumbled, mixed-up manner. It's "my voice shouts out to God" time. And Hashem agrees. "You're hurt. Cry, My child, cry." But later, the heart returns to connecting with Hashem in the normal way.

The above is good for hard times, but Rebbe Nachman said that *hisbodedus* is a daily practice. A person doesn't burst from pain *every* day. One comes to speak to Hashem as he evolves stage by stage, from lower to higher. One starts outside, speechless, with a numb heart. He inches toward the threshold until he slowly progresses to *yichud*.

It all begins with preparing the heart to hear Hashem's call, informing him of his value and stature. Then he comes closer as he begins to express his heart's intangible understanding. This brings him to a complete *yichud* for now—for who he is and what he is living *now*.

When you are privileged to make the proper connection, the *hisbodedus* flows with your spoken desire to come close to genuine service of Hashem. You acquire newfound ability and desire to love and be in awe of Hashem; to follow in all of His ways, do His will and serve Him wholeheartedly.





# The Yichud Path of Giver and Receiver

In the upcoming analogy of the rich man and the poor man, we will learn more details about the *yichud* process that takes place between giver and receiver in any relationship, particularly in *hisbodedus* when a Jew becomes a vessel to receive from the Blessed Giver.

The Arizal set out the principles of *yichud*. From these axioms we derive an especially important conclusion: Raising one's stature and self-worth is absolutely vital. Without it, there can be no true *yichud*.<sup>1</sup>




## Rich Man, Poor Man

At a certain house, a poor man shows up to ask for a handout. The wealthy man gives him money brusquely and impatiently, wanting to be rid of the poor man as quickly as possible. In order to save the poor man embarrassment, the wealthy man may even send his gift so they needn't meet.<sup>2</sup> No connection is formed in such a situation. Both of

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1 The Arizal described the process of *yichud* according to the stages of the *Shemoneh Esrei*: the first three blessings, the middle twelve and the culmination in the last blessing, *Sim Sholom*.

2 There are eight levels of giving *tzedakah*. In order of priority, they are:

-  Giving an interest-free loan, or forming a partnership, or giving a grant, or finding a job for one in need, in such a way that the loan/grant/partnership/job results in the recipient no longer being dependent on others.
-  Giving *tzedakah* anonymously to an anonymous recipient via a wise, reliable agent who can give your *tzedakah* money in a most impeccable fashion.
-  Giving *tzedakah* anonymously to a known recipient.

them are absent. The giver gets his mitzvah, the recipient gets some money, and they both go on their way.

There is, however, a different sort of giving. The giver greets the receiver pleasantly (“It’s good you’ve come”) and welcomes him inside. Before they get down to business (why the poor man needs money, and how much), the giver will show that he’s glad for the visit. When the receiver has explained why he has come, the giver will respond, “This is a cause that’s near and dear to my heart. I put aside money especially for this great mitzvah. Thank you for coming for this.”

This kind of reception is an example of what we mean by “raising someone’s stature” (as explained in the previous chapter).

### ☞ *Hard to Believe*

Nevertheless, the above scenario is but a “left-handed” hug (Shir HaShirim 2:6), a weak expression of concern. After all the giver’s pretty words, the receiver still has trouble believing that the giver is actually happy with his coming. Here he is in his humble attire, sitting in the rich fellow’s den. “How could this wealthy man possibly be glad to see me? He’s just offering encouragement. This is probably his standard line to anybody who comes for *tzedakah*.”

Only if he genuinely believes that his host is happy to see him will the light of relationship settle in his heart. This is a “right-handed” hug (*ibid.*). What might convince a poor man of this? If the giver would say to him, “I’m in a tough situation. I need some advice. Do you have time to talk to me?” Such an admission would probably do it!

After all, we usually think that the wealthy people are the ones who know things and have insights that poor people don’t. Instead, this rich person sees the schnorrer—the *Shechinah*’s vehicle—as a bearer of light and fairness, simplicity and wholesomeness, who will illuminate a new, previously unknown path for him.

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- ☞ Giving *tzedakah* publicly to an anonymous recipient.
  - ☞ Giving directly to the poor before being asked.
  - ☞ Giving an adequate amount after being asked.
  - ☞ Giving willingly, but inadequately.
  - ☞ Giving grudgingly.

At this point, when the poor man sees that his host does in fact need him, the idea that the rich man actually is happy to see him will take a greater hold in his heart. Then he is truly uplifted.<sup>3</sup>

### *An Intentional Relationship*

All this is the first stage. Now we need to move on to the next stage of relationship. Two people can meet unintentionally, have a pleasant, mutually beneficial conversation, share information and advice, and still have nothing more than a superficial connection. Why? Because they never intended to make a meaningful relationship.

Our friend Mr. Poor is thinking the same thing about Mr. Rich. “Sure, he likes me now and we’ve moved from being acquaintances to intimates. But he wasn’t looking to meet me. He wasn’t waiting with baited breath for me to come into his life.” Though he feels bigger, Mr. Poor’s stature is still missing something. So, to some extent, the relationship is still superficial.<sup>4</sup>

In order to bring the connection inside, we need a whole new system of communication. The receiver has to understand that from the get-go, the giver needs him and seeks his friendship. He should never again think that he is the weak partner, the needy one. Instead, on his own, the giver will begin to reveal that he needs the receiver and wants to receive from him, and will take the first step to inviting the receiver to draw near.

Then the idea that he is genuinely important will take up full-time residence in Mr. Poor’s heart. Only then will Mr. Poor’s stature truly ripen.

Therefore, at this stage, Mr. Rich must take the initiative to make the connection. For example, he must plant deeply into his heart that a wayfarer<sup>5</sup> brings him bounty. It must become clear to Mr. Rich that

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3 The Arizal writes that this is the way the first three blessings of *Shemoneh Esrei* work to open our “receiver’s” eyes and elevate our stature.

4 This is why the Arizal considers the results of the first three blessings as affecting only the surface of the spiritual worlds, not their depths.

5 The Hebrew word for “guest,” *ORei’aCh*, can be read as *OR Ches*, “the light of the eighth”—meaning *Binah*, which is the eighth *sefirah* counting up from the *sefirah*

he was missing something his entire life, until Mr. Poor came along bearing goodness and light.

With thoughts like these, the giver succeeds in giving the receiver new insight. When their relationship was still superficial, Mr. Poor was unsure whether Mr. Rich liked him or not. But once Mr. Rich takes the initiative to show genuine desire for their friendship and is emphatic about needing Mr. Poor, the latter's stature is fully grown.

Only on the basis of this strength can the receiver move onto the second stage, to speak to the giver from the bottom of his heart, as only true intimates can. After all, the giver genuinely wants the relationship and is happy for the receiver—and he really needs him. Now, when the giver offers praise, the receiver knows it is sincere, coming from genuine *yichud*.<sup>6</sup>

We have come now to a complete merger of giver and receiver, of the two hearts becoming one. They are of equal stature and can meet face to face. There is no longer any protocol of who should go first (see *Etz Chaim, Sha'ar* 39). Their merger is both outward and inward.

This is the type of *yichud* produced by the blessing *Sim Sholom*. As a result of uniting with Hashem “face to face,” the Jew feels a *deveikus* with Hashem so powerful that it actually brings him to all the good, loveliness and preciousness in the honest service of his Maker.

For in the shining of Your countenance, You, Hashem our God, have given us the Torah of Life, the love for doing kindness and charity, blessing, compassion, life, peace and all good.

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closest to our world, *Malchus*. The light of *Binah* is supernatural, which is why a guest should lead the *Birkat HaMazon*.

The *Degel Machaneh Ephraim* writes in the name of the Baal Shem Tov: “Hosting a guest is equivalent to turning on the light of *Ches/Binah*. *Binah* is the source of all light, of all bounty and salvation, and of all blessing.” In *Likutei Moharan* I, 54, Rebbe Nachman teaches that by using a borrowed item, the borrower uplifts the sparks related to his soul and thereby helps the owner to bring the object to its *tikkun*.

<sup>6</sup> The Arizal writes that the depth of connection here is reached via the twelve middle blessings of the *Shemoneh Esrei*. This inner light that the giver grants is so powerful that it elevates the entire essence of the receiver and every detail of his life. This is why each need has its own blessing: *da'at*, *teshuvah*, forgiveness, redemption, healing, livelihood, etc. Each need is elevated by the light that the giver gives to the receiver.

### ☞ *Different Strokes for Different Folks*

It's not so simple to pick someone up, raise his feeling of self-worth. Some people are born being not-receivers. They have never been poor. But through a sudden turn of events, a person like that must take from others. He is unlikely to be broken by his change of circumstance. It's easy to help him up.

Others, however, have been receivers since the day they were born. They've never had a good day in their life. Such people are totally defined by their crushed spirit, and it's a major challenge to lift their spirits. "Elevating the stature" of people like this takes a lot of hard work. It will take a long time for the change to sink in.

Vital to this change is the receiver's understanding that the giver has no hidden agenda. His giving comes from the joy of giving to *him*. But the receiver is like a sickly, homeless child—a failure. It won't be easy to convince him that God loves him.

We've just described the *sefirah* of *Malchus*. "It has nothing of her own" describes her foundation and existence.

This is why the process has to repeat itself over and over and over. Every time the receiver comes to the Giver/giver, the giver has to start anew to elevate the receiver's stature, from the outside in, in every detail, in order for them to again have complete *yichud*, until the receiver is capable of growing on his own.

### ☞ *Hashem is Not Human*

You'll find some receivers who think differently. "How many times can I hear the giver lovingly gush that he desires me? Is it possible to hear this *every* day? Is it necessary?"

We must point out a basic mistake in his thinking. This questioner mistakenly equates the relationship between receiver and giver (and between himself and Hashem) as a superficial relationship between the two. In the physical world, the two are distinct and separate. When everything is said and done, each one has his own body, his own home and his own soul. Each has different thoughts, desires and concerns that have nothing to do with the other.

Even if they agree to help one another, it's just an instance of "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." For example, Reuvein invites Shimon to a restaurant and Shimon goes even though he's not hungry, because they help each other. Even if he goes out of his way to eat with Reuvein, Shimon is really not interested. The connection is lacking because even while they are sharing this meal, Shimon has no need for it.

This is an accurate description of a connection between two separate people. But relating to the Blessed Holy One is different. A creation has no separate, independent existence. "It has nothing of her own." Rather, a creation lives solely by the grace of the Giver smiling upon him, the same Giver Who elevates his self-worth and provides his very existence.

So really, a person should never, ever tire of hearing how beloved, wonderful, dear and precious he is to Hashem. If he doesn't have this, does he have anything else? He needs the energy this praise provides. It is oxygen for serving his Maker and doing His will passionately, with awe and *deveikus*.

When a Jew realizes that he has nothing—that all his material possessions and spiritual accomplishments are just window-dressing compared to *yichud* itself—and admits that in his heart, it will be 100% clear to him that building his stature is the foundation and root of his life, and that he needs the Giver to do it for him, nonstop.

This is why Chazal mandated that we *daven*, three times a day, all eighteen blessings of the *Shemoneh Esrei*. A Jew can't live without it.

### ☞ *Who Needs Him?*

What does it mean if a Jew feels no need to pray or to connect with Hashem? It means he's gotten used to "I'll take care of it myself" and to a partial eclipse of Hashem's light. Were Hashem's light to shine on him fully, he would realize that he is completely dependent on Him.

There is a certain degree of eclipse in which a Jew still senses that his mission in life is to reveal Hashem's glory in his every act. But since he is so preoccupied with a great many concerns, he doesn't sense it fully. Thus, his heart cries out to the hidden God.

Then there is the full eclipse of success. Success smiles on him all the time. Everything he touches turns to gold. From morning to night, he's busy, busy, busy. God makes him prosper in whatever he does. But he never realizes that the years are rolling by and not once has he opened his eyes to recognize his Creator.

Consider the head of a family who thinks he has no say in what goes on at home because everything is running smoothly without him. He's overseas on business for long stretches of time, and the family has learned to take care of all the household concerns, large and small, without him. When he makes his rare appearance, he has no input. He doesn't even know what questions to ask, let alone what answers to give.

It would be a completely different picture if his family depended on him. They would always be asking what to do about everything. Then, because of the constant contact, he would know all that he needs to know and always be prepared to provide instruction and direction.

When a Jew arranges his life so that all his concerns, large and small, always depend solely on Hashem, and when he discusses frankly every detail with Hashem, then their relationship is open and forthright. Over time, he will realize his need for this openness because of his absolute dependency on the One, Only and Unique Source.





## *Revealing One's Inner Beauty and Self-Worth During Yichud*

Hashem chose the Jewish people to be His instrument for demonstrating and portraying the honor of His Kingdom within Creation. Before the world was created, this demonstration was concealed and un-actualized. It was only “at the time He willed, all was made; then He was proclaimed King” (*Adon Olam*). We couldn't say it if Hashem Himself didn't say it: God made it seem that He needed His people. “I have created this nation for My sake, that they should speak My praise” (Yeshaya 43:21).

Hashem also arranged that His creations should have a constant, absolute need for Him. They can only perfect their souls and satisfy their material needs by coming to Him. When we think a little about this amazing symbiosis in light of what we wrote earlier, we realize that God wanted to elevate the stature of His receivers that they should be His “peers” (to the degree that that can be said about a created thing). This allows us to fulfill the mitzvah of attaching ourselves to Him (Devarim 10:20).

Having *hisbodedus* with Hashem is a communion in which the Jew carves out the essence of his uniqueness in order to see it with his very own eyes. In order for the receiver to stand face to face with the Giver, on equal footing, he must know who he is, and recognize and feel his self-worth. When he does, having faith is not a burden, a result of suppressing his worth and choosing faith only because there are no better options. Instead, knowing who he is, he willingly chooses to fall in love with Hashem for the sake of *yichud*.

Attaching oneself to Hashem does not result in bitterness or an inferiority complex for the receiver. On the contrary! It shows him how precious he is.<sup>1</sup> Ideally, after *hisbodedus*, a Jew should have a greater appreciation of his unique self-worth than he ever had before. This leads to cheerful, happy-hearted serving of Hashem.

It's as if God told him now how good he is, nourishing him with a kind word by pointing out to him his genuine *nekudah tovah*. This is the secret of Creation: to carve out and sculpt one's buried essence and gift it to its Owner.<sup>2</sup>

This is one way a Jew lives, to “walk modestly with your Lord” (Michah 6:8). A person doesn't show to other people what God has shown him about himself. He shares this special beauty with Hashem alone. Is there anything sweeter than a Jew realizing how good and special he is, and discovering more good in himself while having a *tête-à-tête* with Hashem? This is *Azamra!* (*Likutei Moharan* I, 282).

*Hisbodedus* is the right time to talk about your inner beauty. It's safe from prying eyes, on display only for Hashem. *Hisbodedus* establishes a powerful, deep-seated connection that shines brightly on your whole life of Torah and mitzvahs, and whatever you do for Hashem.

The crux of modesty is showing off at the right time and place, and nowhere else. The soul that properly shows herself is happy, content and whole. She has no need or interest to show herself in an unbecoming manner. The *misboded* who uncovers another of his virtues while talking with Hashem, who feels “I am good in His eyes” (Esther 8:5), has no need of anyone else's approval.

A Jew understands that his virtues are gifts from God, not unlike the gifts of a groom to his bride. These virtues are for him to wear when he comes to Hashem, to appear more beautiful and delightful, a “giving You what You have given us” (cf. I Chronicles 29:14). Your *nekudah tovah* is God's gift to you, for you to see what makes you special, and how you can give Him something special.

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1 There are times for making a reckoning of one's actions. We will discuss this in a later chapter.

2 When creatures are hewn out of their source and created, they become a window to the innerness of the Divine Kingdom's dignity, which had been buried until now.

Even your shortcomings and inner turmoil have a special essence that you need to carve out when you are attached to Hashem. There is a right way to interpret such things so that the correct lessons are learned. As a result of *hisbodedus*, you won't view them as a disease or aberration, but as a part of you that needs attention. You need to "listen" closely and analyze what is happening. Then you will be able to cut away the pressing burden and discover the purpose it has for you.

Many tzaddikim found an allusion to this idea in what Queen Esther, a symbol of the Jewish *neshomah*, said: "If it is good for the king, and if I have found favor before him; if the matter is proper to the king and I am good in his eyes" (Esther 8:5). When a Jew knows and believes that he is special to Hashem, he has the ability to arouse Hashem's will to fulfill his request.

The words "I am good in His eyes" are a life-giving "open sesame" for the Jewish *neshomah*.

### *Don't Ruin the Mood*

When close friends get together to share quality time, everyone sees only the best in each other, as in the prayer of the Rebbe, Reb Elimelech, and as Chazal point out in a different context that one shouldn't see something ugly that will turn him off. You have to be very careful to not notice anything that will create distance or separation.

That's how Hashem operates. When He is alone with a Jew, He is careful not to notice (as it were) anything unseemly or offensive in him. This is the meaning of "[Hashem] does not look at wrongdoing in Yaakov and sees no vice in Yisroel" (Bamidbar 23:21). As Rashi notes, "When they transgress His words, He does not nitpick with them."

There are those who make the mistake of using their privileged time of *yichud* to speak of their sins and their shortcomings. They ask for forgiveness and help in regard to their failures. What they should be doing is talking *deveikus*, how much they want to be ever-attached to Hashem. (Taking stock of your behavior and asking for what you think you need is for some other time.) These people fail to grasp that this is not the right time for such talk. Like a child who tells his father how rotten he is when the father is in a good mood and proud of him, it ruins the atmosphere.

On the contrary, when you begin *hisbodedus* cheerfully, connecting to your true self-worth, ignoring your sins and vices, your heart is sensitized to Hashem. Your regret is deeper and more genuine, making you better. But if you jump right into the bad stuff, you're likely to get depressed, remain stuck in the mud, and sink into it more deeply, God forbid.

The definition of “broken heart” is “God-sensitive heart,” not “depressed heart,” God forbid. The former is a “heart of flesh,” the latter a “heart of stone” (Yechezkel 36:26). To be broken-hearted is to be pitiful, joyful and nothing in Hashem’s presence. As Rebbe Nachman says:

When a person is happy throughout the day, it's easy to set aside some time each day to feel his heartbreak and express his thoughts before God. But when one is depressed, God forbid, it's difficult to take the time to be alone and speak to God. One must encourage, even force himself, to be constantly upbeat, especially during prayer.

The Rebbe said that of all spiritual practices, cheer is the most difficult thing to attain. “It seems that it is impossible to achieve cheer without some sort of silliness, like clowning around or telling jokes.”<sup>3</sup>

It's clear from this that a broken heart is a product of joy, never of depression.

This brings us to the classic statement of the holy Reb Bunim of Peshischa: “There is nothing more whole than a broken heart.” This idea is also mentioned in *Ramasayim Tzofim* in his commentary to *Tanna d'bei Eliyahu*. He writes: “A broken heart is a wonderful thing. The cure for it is to clean away all its depression, leaving nothing but the broken heart. No depression whatsoever, just joy. This is the level of the great tzaddikim who are sinless.

“The *ba'al teshuvah* should long for this level his entire life. Perhaps Hashem will notice his distress and accept him, granting him a pure heart, free of depression.”

The Rov of Lentchna once asked the *Ramasayim Tzofim* if he had ever seen a tzaddik who had a whole broken heart. He answered, “Yes—Reb Moshe Leib Sassover.”

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3 *Sichos HaRan* #20. See also *Likutei Moharan* II, 24; *Chayei Moharan* #243; *Zohar* 3:47b; *Pesachim* 117a.

### 🕊️ *You're Not the Only One Who Needs Cheering Up*

Another part of genuine *deveikus* is the part in which the Jew speaks to Hashem's heart, as it is written, "Speak to Jerusalem's heart" (Yeshaya 40:2). This exhibits to Him, as it were, the glory of His far-flung Kingdom. We find that Dovid HaMelech sang many psalms of praise and constantly thanked Hashem for everything.

This is the cause of authentic *sholom*—when the receiver feels that the Blessed Giver actually needs him, as it were. About this, Chazal say, "The Jews provide livelihood for their Father in Heaven" (*Zohar* III, 7b). This is Hashem's humility—in order to show us grace, He lowered Himself to receive from His beloved children.

This is the secret behind all glorifying, singing and praising that Jews proclaim before Him about the greatness of their God. They are nourishing, as it were, the One on High by telling Him that we recognize so much of His greatness, power and kindness. The *Shechinah* in exile suffers, so in Heaven they look forward to these prayers. They hope against hope that the Jewish people will not be silent, but will recognize how precious they are, that *they* are the ones invited to cheer and publicize the hidden glory.

The Maggid of Kozhnitz writes:

This is analogous to a human king who has many possessions, means of happiness, and musicians at his beck and call. If some royal business brings on a melancholy state, the king calls for the top musicians to play and cheer him up.

The same is true, as it were, of the Divine Kingdom. Hashem has many angels in Heaven that sing to Him, but since the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, there is gloom in the outer chambers. So we need someone who holds Hashem dear in heart to take the initiative and go inside, throw off all of his own gloom, and cheer up His Royal Highness. Someone who will tell Him, "You have always been our King, are our King, and always will be our King, forever! Compared to You, everything else is nothing. It won't be long till redeemers will ascend Har Tzion and all the peoples of the world will come to crown You as The King." ...

This is *the* mission. Hashem has more delight from this than from our joy and happiness when times are good ... (*Avodas Yisroel, Parashas Masei*).

### ☁ *What We Give To Hashem*

As we mentioned, a Jew comes to Hashem to speak His praises. This time, Hashem waits in anticipation to be the Receiver, as it were, to the Jew's giver. This relationship is described by Chazal's phrase "[God's] love for [Yisroel] kept growing until He called her 'Mother.'" As it were, Hashem calls the Jews "My mother" and wants them to soothe and comfort Him, as a mother does for her child. This is the concept we will soon see from Chazal: Hashem is calmed by Yisroel's praises of Him.

The Midrash teaches:

Rabi Chunya related that Rabi Shimon ben Yochai once asked Rabi Elazar ben Rabi Yosi, "Perhaps you heard from your father the meaning of the verse 'In the crown with which his mother crowned him' (Shir HaShirim 3:11)?"

"Yes. He said it was like a king who had a daughter whom he loved ... he called her his sister. He kept on loving her until he called her his mother. In the same sort of way, the Blessed Holy One loves Yisroel. He calls them 'My sister, My beloved, My dove, My perfect one' (ibid. 5:2). He loved them so that He called them His mother, as it says, 'Listen to Me well, My people. My nation, give Me your ear' (Yeshaya 51:4). The word *u-l'UMI* (My nation) can be read homiletically as *u-l'IMI* (My mother)."

Rabi Shimon ben Yochai stood up and kissed Rabi Elazar ben Rabi Yosi on the head. "If I would have come to this world merely to hear this reason from your mouth, it would have been reason enough to live" (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 12:8).



Chazal have more to say on this subject:

When Hashem looks at His world and sees that theaters and arenas are comfortable while His Beis HaMikdash is in ruins, He looks at His world threateningly, with an eye to destroy it.

But when Yisroel go to shul and the *beis ha-midrash* every morning to proclaim His Oneness by saying the *Shema* ... all the ministering angels gather to the Holy Blessed One and say to Him, "You were before the universe was created; You were since the universe was created. You are

in this world and You are to be in the World to Come. Sanctify Your Name on those who sanctify You” (Morning Liturgy).

The Holy Blessed One immediately calms down for the sake of Yisroel, and does not destroy His world. This is the meaning of the verse “The Holy One is enthroned (*YoSheV*) on the praises of Yisroel” (Tehillim 22:4). Hashem calms (*m’YaSheV*) Himself on account of Yisroel’s praising Him (*Yalkut Shimoni, Devarim 6:836*).



The holy Reb Avrohom of Parisov told the following story:

The *Toldos Yaakov Yosef* once came to the *beis ha-midrash* of the holy Baal Shem Tov. He saw a young *talmid chocham* whom he did not know. The younger man was pacing around the *beis ha-midrash*, obviously thinking about a very deep topic. The *Toldos* greeted him, “*Sholom*. Where are you from?”

“One minute, one minute,” came the reply. The *Toldos* waited and asked again.

“One minute, one minute.” After a few attempts at trying to start a conversation, the young man finally asked, “What’s the difference where I’m from?!”

The *Toldos Yaakov Yosef* answered, “If two people from different parts of the country meet somewhere and ask each other how they are, they become friends. Although they go their separate ways, if and when they meet again, they’ll be glad to see each other. Each of them will thank Hashem that they met again. Some praise is generated for Hashem.

“The verse says, ‘The Holy One is enthroned on the praises of Yisroel.’ Hashem is waiting with anticipation for praise from Jews. The praise Jews give Him is very, very precious.”

When the *Toldos* finished his explanation, he saw that the young man had disappeared. He understood that something was going on. He went to see the Baal Shem Tov in his study and told him what had happened.

The Baal Shem Tov told him, “That was no young man. That was Eliyahu HaNavi, *zachur l’tov*. He came to hear your explanation of the verse and is now teaching it in Heaven, in your name.”

“Understand well how huge a friendship for the sake of Heaven is.

Even if you don't know who someone is, if you see that he is a God-fearing Jew of good character, you ought to make his acquaintance. This will lead to praise of Hashem."

### *An Equal Reception*

This point has to be deeply absorbed because it is at the root of every single relationship and type of relationship. For, as we said, the receiver is convinced of his stature and the equality of the relationship only when he is certain that the Giver/giver needs something from him as well. Then the two have genuine *sholom*.

Is there any greater Giver than God Himself? But even He calls out a request to His people, "Attribute might to God!" (Tehillim 68:35). He is, as it were, waiting to receive. The holiness Hashem has in Heaven comes from the holiness that Yisroel gives Him here on Earth: "The glory given by the holy ones befits the Holy One" (High Holiday Liturgy).

It's obvious that Hashem lacks nothing and has no need to receive. But this is what the holy *Zohar* means when it says that "Yisroel provides livelihood for their Father in Heaven" (*Zohar* III, 7). Jews have the opportunity and ability to make a pleasant fragrance for Hashem, as in "A fire-offering of pleasure (*NaChaS*) for God" (Vayikra 1:9). Chazal teach that God says, "I said something should be done, and it was done" (*Rashi*, *ibid.*). This means that Hashem lowers (*NaChuS*) Himself, as it were, to receive from His creations.

There are two ways a parent can tell a child to do something. He can command: "Clean your room!" Or he can request: "It would make me very happy if you cleaned your room." The first way, the parent remains the superior. The second way, the parent willingly descends, to be a receiver, like the child. The parent is saying, "I need something and you can give it to me."

If this is the relationship between the Jews and their Maker, certainly human relationships can be complete only if the receiver can contribute something. This is how they become a unit and share common cause.

If one person in a relationship feels that the other is the stronger and needs nothing from him, he will feel inferior, even if the other grants him his every request. The giver will never be able to stand the



receiver on his own, because the receiver always feels like an empty nothing. There may be something given, but their uniting will never happen. Only when the truth hits him, that the giver really does need him—maybe not at this moment, but the mutual dependency is there—will they be of equal stature and be able to receive from one another.

Many times a giver mistakenly thinks that if he shows any weakness, he will be losing face. For example, many a rebbe insists that his students see him only when he is in “rabbi mode,” at his rabbinic best. He does this because he is afraid that if he appears ordinary, his students will no longer accept anything from him. In reality, both he and his students lose the true light of *yichud* that could be theirs—but, as the Arizal teaches, only if they were of the same stature.<sup>4</sup>

### *Unspoken Messages*

From the words of “reconciliation, grace and harmony” that rise from the receiver’s heartfelt intuition, we can learn a fundamental truth that sheds much light on all the praise that Yisroel gives Hashem. Some statements say no more than what the words contain. For example, when a person goes into a store and asks for an item, that’s all there is to it.

There are also statements that say more than their words. The listener hears more than one message. This happens when a young child wants to tell his father something and the father responds lovingly because his child wants to share with him. The father is hearing much more than just a story.

But there’s a more subtle level, when the child knows how much it means to his father that he shares what’s going on his life and so the child speaks to his father for that—that his father should enjoy

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<sup>4</sup> Of course, even when they are sharing the *yichud* engendered by being of equal stature, the student is fully aware that the rebbe is more spiritually advanced and that he, the student, is not suddenly his peer—just like the beggar knows that he hasn’t become Mr. Rich’s colleague simply because he lowered himself to be a receiver. Rather, for now, he’s fully comfortable to receive from Mr. Rich because the latter has done him the kindness to receive from him in turn.

the sharing. He doesn't say anything from the depths of his heart, anything that would touch his father's heart deeply.<sup>5</sup> He just tells a story. But the father understands that his son is not just sharing what's going on in his outer world, but what's going on in his inner world. For that, his love for the child grows.

The two share a secret language. An outsider won't hear past the words, but their hearts are throbbing with the deepest emotions for each other. Just like a wartime letter written in code, the censor will miss what's written between the lines; the writer and reader will not.

So, too, the praise from receiver to giver. As impressive as the words may be on the surface, their depth transmits a much more profound message: the receiver is bringing his self to deliver the praise. This is a wordless, inner statement about their wondrous closeness.

This is how to understand all of Yisroel's praising of Hashem, like *Pesukei d'Zimra*. Beyond the sacred, straightforward meaning that is said, there's a deeper praise that is not being said: "O my King! If my heart thinks of coming to You to sing Your praise, it is because of our exalted connection."

These poignant words arouse the heart of the giver to spread the wings of his love over the receiver. There's a personal secret here, a secret secret, between giver and receiver. The only ones who hear this are the Jew's heart and his Maker. The precious words of praise carry and conceal an even more precious love that shines from within them.

And so the love keeps growing stronger and stronger. Ultimately, the Giver entrusts what He owns and treasures to the receiver who has aroused Him to such a strong love and shown himself to be the most trustworthy.

### *You Can't Beat Me*

*Hisbodedus* gives a Jew the ability to maintain a staunch relationship with Hashem and not to lose his bearings, no matter what. The Jew hears Hashem constantly telling him that he's precious. Reb Noson

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5 Like, "I'm your beloved, only son and I trust you enough to bare my soul."

writes that Moshe Rabbeinu understood that God and the Jewish people were eternally bound to each other. So when it was determined after the sin of the *eigel ha-zahav* that *B'nei Yisroel* deserved to be wiped out, God forbid, Moshe Rabbeinu broke the *Luchos*. His reasoning was went like this:

That there should be Jews and a Jewish people is the whole idea underlying Creation. It is more to Creation than even the seven things that logically precede Creation (*Pesachim* 54a). God will never, ever trade His people for another.

So if He tells me, “Let go of Me and I will destroy them,” He doesn’t really mean that. He means that I should step forward and defend them. “Master of the World! You told me a different truth! You told me that You chose us *forever ...*” (*Likutei Halachos, Ribis* 5:28).

This is the power of an intimate: he won’t abandon the relationship even if things get ugly and go horribly wrong. “Our friendship is eternal, and will outlast this current crisis. This is the meaning of a *bris*, an unbreakable, supra-rational connection linking the essences of two people, a connection that has no ‘close’ or ‘distant,’ just ‘together.’” This is how an intimate defeats estrangement. As Hashem told Moshe, “*Yasher ko’ach*, you did right to break them.”

During *hisbodedus*, the inner-truth comes to the fore. Hashem illuminates the Jew with his essential/basic connection to Him. It is so strong that a Jew can hold on to it even at times when he feels truly far. He can hold it and say, “Hashem, I’m neither flustered nor broken by the gap between us. I’m going to come back to You, no matter what.”

This is what Rebbe Nachman teaches:

“*Shir Mizmor, la-menatzei’ach*—A song, a psalm, to the victory-giver.” Sing to the One Who rejoices when conquered (*Pesachim* 119a).

When a person speaks before the Holy One and explains his words using argumentation and entreaties, he wants to defeat God, so to speak. The Holy One takes pleasure from this. He therefore sends him words with which to defeat Him, so to speak, so that He might receive the pleasure. For without this, it would surely have been impossible for a man of flesh and blood to defeat the Holy One. But God Himself

sends and makes available to him these words and arguments, so that he might defeat Him, as above (*Likutei Moharan* I, 124).

Master of the Universe! You know I have no vitality or strength, hope or words with which to speak to You, were it not for the sacred and awesome, exalted and amazing path revealed by our teachers from Dovid HaMelech's words, "I will sing to my God with whatever I have."

We need to search, seek and find, each and every one of us in himself, our good points, and take joy in them, just as You praise and laud Your people Yisroel in their exile and subjugation (*Likutei Tefillos* I, 90).

## *Yichud at the Giver's Level and Per His Will*

### *The Greatness of Hisbodedus When the Receiver Wants and Needs Nothing*

It is known that before the giver gifts the receiver any sort of spiritual bounty, the receiver has to awaken within himself a desire for that gift. That desire, in turn, awakens the giver.

The holy Arizal writes that there are two levels to the receiver's desire. We will explain what he meant, clearly and simply, in order to understand an important foundation in the paths of *yichud* found in *hisbodedus*, as well as in living life in the glow of Hashem's countenance.

At the first level, the receiver wants to absorb the light of the giver. That triggers a will and desire in the heart of the giver to give it to him. When the receiver has received it, we say that he has received the giver's light in his *keilim* (vessels). The giver had no interest to share his light. However, he acquiesced to the receiver's desire. Light received in such instances is receiver-level. He had a lack and now it is filled.

There is a second, higher level. Before being asked, the giver wants to give. He has his reasons and motives. The receiver precipitates this desire when he says, "I am here to receive what you can give. I have no ulterior motive in receiving. I am willing to receive so you can give, from your self, as much as you will."

What happens at this second level is that instead of the giver stepping down to illuminate the receiver, the receiver has climbed up into his lap to bestir the giver and receive.<sup>1</sup>

### ☞ *Small or Extra-Large?*

The difference between these two levels becomes clearer from the following analogy. If a woman wants to get married because she's tired of living alone (what the Gemora calls "Better to live as a duo than as an *uno*" [*Kiddushin* 7a]), then the desire for marriage is only going to grow to her individual level, and be limited to what she can form. However, a woman who understands that the reason and purpose of her life is to be a wife—and without that she will be incomplete and like an item lost to its owner (see *ibid.* 2b)—will come to marriage with a desire to become one with her husband.

She might be only twelve years old and has never tasted loneliness, but she may already want to be one with her husband, to be his—because she realizes in her heart that she has no other purpose in life but to make him complete. This is the meaning of rising to elicit and receive.

This is the difference between two people, one who comes from afar and one who was to the manor born and has never spent a day away. It seems that the one who comes from afar has a certain advantage. He is so enthusiastic and hungry to receive. But, as we've said, this enthusiasm is no greater than his inborn *keilim*; he was lacking and seeks to be filled. Dovid HaMelech, however, said something else.

"I am Your slave, son of Your maidservant" (Tehillim 116:16). I am like a child born in his owner's home. Never for a moment have I been free. I was conceived to be a slave. I own nothing. Whatever *keilim* I have are my master's, to be used only in his service. His desire is

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1 At first glance, the words of the Arizal seem to imply that only at the beginning of Creation did the initial desire come from Hashem. Today, though, everything starts with "an awakening from below"—from our desire to receive. The explanation is as follows. At the start of Creation, both the light and the vessel were coming from the Upper Will. Today, the vessel begins with that which is already created. However, one way the vessel can be made is by the receiver coming to the Giver because of the Giver's desire, not the receiver's. Study and perceive.

aroused because I told Him, ‘You have goals and objectives which I cannot comprehend, about which I cannot be interested. Still, I am ready to be Your tool and slave, forever.’

This approach enables you to receive what the Giver can give.<sup>2</sup>

This is the difference between the Exodus from Egypt and the future exodus from our current exile. We were slaves in Egypt. We needed to be saved and we knew it. “*B’nei Yisroel* groaned because of the bondage” (Shemos 2:23). This is why our song then was *shirah chadashah*, a feminine song, a song at the receiver’s level. We knew what we lacked and that when we arrived in the Promised Land, that lack would be filled.

The song we will sing at the future exodus will be *shir chadash*, a masculine song, a song at the Giver’s level. The receivers that will be redeemed don’t have a clue how the exodus will occur and what new light will illuminate them. That’s why we don’t hunger for it—we don’t know what we’re missing. The light that awaits us is so beyond our comprehension. Yet we await the redemption, even though we don’t understand what it will actually be like or why we should want it so much.

### Attachment to Tzaddikim

Let’s see how this applies to *hisbodedus*. Sometimes the soul longs to speak and pour out her heart to her Maker. This is the nature of the *Yiddishe neshomah* that yearns for its source from whence it was hewn. This is the weaker way of arousing the Giver’s desire. It yields only what the receiver can currently hold.

At other times, the heart feels no compulsion to rush and speak in *hisbodedus*. It’s not lacking or hungering for anything. It enters *hisbodedus* for the sole purpose of being an instrument of Hashem’s will, to be a trustworthy slave who shares with the world Hashem’s daily guiding light. This is “the son of Your maidservant” level, the “I have no independent desire; I’m Yours to do with as You like” level.

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<sup>2</sup> In his work *Pri Ha’Aretz*, Reb Mendele Vitebsk (may his merit protect us) writes that one coming from afar should also aim for receiving at the Giver’s level. For a genuine seeker, this is a difficult challenge.

This level is almost 100% guaranteed to have results and to place you in the Giver's lap (as it were).

This is very difficult. When you know that you're hungry and what you're missing, you know where you stand and why you came. You've already laid the groundwork, as it were, and built a few stories; now you want to build more and add some more light. But "the son of Your maidservant" has no idea at all where he is going or what he might receive. He has no hunger or desire because he has no *keilim*. It's all about the Giver and what He can do. This is a different kind of *hisbodedus*.

Since *hisbodedus* is greater than anything, you ought to bind yourself to tzaddikim and, with their aid, be *misboded* with Hashem. The *Noam Elimelech* writes:

Here is another way to interpret "It will be in the wake (*b'eikev*) of your listening to these statutes" (Devarim 7:12). The word *b'eikev* literally means "in the heel." This "heel" refers to those who are not spiritually advanced. They cannot grasp Hashem's greatness or how to serve Him with truth and perfection. So they associate with sincere people who do know Hashem's greatness and what it means to serve Him. With that, it is reckoned that what they did for Hashem is as perfect as what the perfect tzaddikim did for Hashem.

So now we read "It will be *b'eikev* of your listening to these statutes" as follows. If the spiritually-simple Jews will attach themselves to the more spiritually-developed who properly understand the statutes, and obey their guidance, then "you will keep and observe them"—that is, Hashem will consider that you kept it as well as they (*Parashas Eikev*).

This is expressed again by Dovid HaMelech when he said, "My soul is eager for Hashem, for it is with those who wait for the morning, who wait for the morning" (Tehillim 130:6). When I attach myself to Hashem, thanks to the tzaddikim who watch and wait for the morning of redemption, I am also counted as one who watches and waits for that morning.

### *Where You Go, I Go*

Even though it's uncommon now, once upon a time a merchant's wife would travel with him wherever he went on business. Since he



was totally immersed in his business, he wouldn't be able to take proper care of himself. So when they arrived, they would check in to their lodgings. He would go to take care of business and she, after consulting with neighbors, would set up house. When he got home at night, dinner would be waiting.

Sometimes the merchant understood that no business was to be had there. In the morning they would be moving on. So, despite all her information-gathering and hard work, his wife dutifully packed their bags, getting ready to set out again for an unknown destination. And when they got there, she would start the process all over again, until her husband told her again it was time to move on.

Over the years, as she grew more accustomed and more experienced, she stopped asking him for an itinerary. Why? Because she knew full well that her primary function was to set up house wherever he decided business would be best. An itinerary became irrelevant.

This is how the Jewish people traveled in the desert. "Sometimes the cloud stayed from evening to morning; as the cloud lifted in the morning they would travel. [Sometimes the cloud stood for a] day and night; when the cloud lifted, they would journey. Whether it was two days, a month or a year—however long the cloud lingered over the Mishkan—the Jewish people remained encamped and did not travel; only when it lifted did they journey" (Bamidbar 9:21-22).

This degree of faithfulness is to be had from every Jewish heart. This is the secret of "a woman of valor is her husband's crown" (Mishlei 12:4). A Jew is ready for any direction in which Hashem takes him. He knows that Hashem has millions of ways to run the world, and is prepared for whatever may come his way. Even if he has to do a dozen different jobs in a dozen different places, he is ready.<sup>3</sup>

This is the moon-like way Dovid HaMelech served Hashem. The moon's path, its rising and setting and phases, changes throughout

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<sup>3</sup> This is reflected in our Rosh HaShanah greeting "*Kesivah v'chasimah tovah*—[May you be] written and sealed for good [this year]." A Jew doesn't present Hashem with a "written" shopping list of his requests, pleas, plans, desires and ambitions, asking Him to sign and "seal" it. A Jew gives Hashem a blank form to fill in whatever way He likes.

the month. Each day it reflects the sun's light and Hashem's Kingdom in a different way. Similarly, a Jew who serves Hashem like the moon reveals Hashem's light differently each day.<sup>4</sup>

The world places no value on starting afresh every day. But a Jew who serves Hashem places no value on yesterday's accomplishments. Instead he says, "Today is all about serving Hashem in the way He asks me *today*." And he is sufficiently trustworthy to do what Hashem wants done now.



Tucked away in the mind of a rebbe are deep secrets. He does not share these with everybody. He looks for that chossid who is especially right to receive them. This chossid becomes the vault for the rebbe's deepest teachings. This chossid is the fertile ground from which these secrets will bear fruit. This is why the secrets are not shared with everybody, but only in *yichud*, between the rebbe and that special chossid. This is the secret of total *yichud* which the Arizal taught regarding the order of the levels.

Hashem seeks a vault for holding deep mysteries that He wants to blossom into His glory. He will handpick the right Jew for the job. So when you come to *hisbodedus*, be aware that you are coming as a receptacle to hold your Master's confidence and secrets. Understand this.

"For when a Jew wishes to speak to Hashem, He casts aside everything else. Evil decrees, God forbid, and everything else are set aside at this time. Hashem puts aside everything to listen to the person seeking His presence" (*Sichos HaRan* #70).

A Jew is willing to risk the heaviest, most painful consequences for the sake of a moment's *yichud*. What's more, even after experiencing these sometimes painful fruits of *hisbodedus*—which serve to reveal Hashem's honor—he doesn't flinch. He returns to *hisbodedus* with an awakened desire to attach himself to Hashem, via *hisbodedus*.

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4 This kind of service of Hashem is called *nishmas Dovid HaMelech*.

### ☁️ *Serve Hashem, Not Yourself*

This is how one grows in the service of Hashem. At first, a Jew bestirs himself to understand Chassidic concepts and to have deeper insights, and so on. But he does this only with his *keilim*, receiving only the limited amount he can hold. Yet these ideas prod him to go further. They transport him to a higher level, of *bitul* and *hisbodedus* solely for Hashem.

However, many fall when they reach this level. Their lament is along these lines: “We desired and sought deeper insight, joy, salvation from the *yetzer hora*, etc. Somehow we arrived at a level that we had no desire or interest in. From serving Hashem intelligently, we have become slaves, ‘the son of Your maidservant,’ without any independent will, totally without being. We didn’t want this at all.

“We came for a specific spiritual salvation, according to who we were, because we were lacking something. Suddenly we found ourselves on a whole other spiritual plane! A level where a person becomes one with an amazing light. It is wonderful, holy and exalted—but the salvation we came for, we still don’t have. This spectacular light which has become ours, we didn’t ask for and never knew it existed.”<sup>5</sup>

This, in fact, is the difference between one who seeks to serve himself and one who seeks to serve Hashem. The former, those with the above lament, fall, left without the desired salvation and a light he doesn’t want. But the one who is ready to serve Hashem understands that he has been privileged to something greater than himself. So what if his personal goals are not met and his hunger is unsatisfied? He is a servant and vessel in the embrace of the Giver! This is an altogether different plane of life!<sup>6</sup>

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5 Some beginners are flooded with this spectacular light and overwhelmed. This is a result of their lacking the tzaddik’s teachings and guidance. Since the light is too great for them to contain, they wander around unable to translate the light into service of Hashem. They cry out, pleading, “What have You done to me?! Why do You illuminate my *neshomah* so?! I can’t handle it!”

6 Ultimately, he will receive salvation for his personal concerns as well. This is similar to a house-slave toiling in the master’s home, who knows he will be fed. When he finds himself doing work he never dreamed of, like polishing diamonds, he knows that his meals are already taken care of.

Hold on well to this concept. It will keep you calm and more in control. Instead of bringing the light to your *keilim*, rise up and be the vessel to light that is of a greater magnitude than your mind and heart. This is the light of Rebbe Nachman and of *hisbodedus* done with true loyalty to Hashem.

Even if one doesn't come to this level of his own volition, or feels dejected that he didn't seek it out, and never even knew that such a level existed, still, he should not be so childish as to remain at his current, lower level just because he is familiar with it and asked for it. (That's like a little child who insists, "I want to do it by myself!")

You should be overjoyed that the great *ovdei Hashem*, with their great perception, have chosen you to join them in working on their objective. By the light of the tzaddikim, they want to make eternal servants for Hashem. They first hooked you into serving Hashem with a spirituality you understood and hungered for. They got you with the *shelo lishmoh* (not for the sake of Heaven). You lived through "the six days of working," the path everyone must walk to reach the level of Shabbos.

Once they had you, then they showed you the truth, the *lishmoh* (for the sake of Heaven), Shabbos. They showed you that your *keilim* are just the beginning, the threshold: the Inner Chamber is something else entirely. Then they threw you in, to be Hashem's slave, in His embrace, on a level you never in your life conceived of or lacked.

Clearly, it's impossible to live on this level nonstop. A person has to rest his mind on a regular basis,<sup>7</sup> returning to the level of lack and hunger from which he started. Then he has to start the climb again. Rebbe Nachman teaches:

Sometimes the greater person's light is so huge that the lesser person cannot receive it at the greater one's place/level. It's too huge and too much. So the greater person must step down and humble himself to the lower person by going to his place/level. This will somewhat reduce and dim the light, allowing the lower person to receive it (*Likutei Moharan* II, 38).

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<sup>7</sup> Rebbe Nachman calls this rest "studying the revealed Torah."

Still, if you occasionally do “son of Your maidservant”-*hisbodedus*, it can illuminate and elevate the rest of your life, even if you sometimes hit the rock bottom of your meager *keilim*.<sup>8</sup>

### 🕊️ *My Rosh HaShanah*

Let's take a look at two revelations Rebbe Nachman made. “My Rosh Hashanah is greater than everything” (*Chayei Moharan* #403). Specifically “my Rosh Hashanah.” You could go to the Rebbe for *your* Rosh HaShanah—i.e., hungering for what you don't have, wanting to receive the Rebbe's light in your puny *keilim*. Or you can go for “my Rosh HaShanah,” to let the Rebbe use you for what he intends to accomplish.

It is well-known that Rebbe Nachman wanted every one of us, his chossidim, to be with him for Rosh HaShanah. “It is impossible to imagine his powerful insistence to be with him on Rosh HaShanah. He demanded this many times. He said that his whole mission was Rosh HaShanah. Even on the last Rosh HaShanah of his life, he spoke of the greatness of those privileged to be with him on Rosh HaShanah: ‘What can I tell you? There is nothing greater than this!’” (*ibid.* #126).

“Yet the Rebbe never explained or revealed why his Rosh HaShanah was special. All he did was remark that if people didn't understand his emphasis on Rosh HaShanah, it would only mean that had one more thing to question him on” (*ibid.*).

This is giving of a much higher order. The receiver is rising to be embraced by the giver, to trigger the desire of “I am Your slave, son of your maidservant.” He is coming to accept what the tzaddik can give, and to be his tool for preparing the world for Hashem's Kingship, in ways he doesn't yet know.

When you spend so much time, expense and effort to come without knowing anything—why you came, what you contribute or what the results will be—you are indicating that you have made yourself a

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<sup>8</sup> This is somewhat like saying *Krias Shema*. Saying *Shema Yisroel* is a touch of the truth of the Upper Unity (*Yechudah Ila'ah*) and of losing our independent existence. It shines on our *Baruch Shem Kevod Malchuso L'Olam Va-ed*-level of life (*Yechudah Tata'ah*).

tool to awake the giver's desire and receive at his level, at that higher order. Coming for "my Rosh HaShanah" is part of the secret of what the Rebbe said: "Whether he *davens* or doesn't; whether he eats or doesn't, he must be with me for Rosh HaShanah!" (ibid. #403).

These two levels correspond to the two types of Shabbosim that Rebbe Nachman used to spend with his chossidim. The three Shabbosim on which he traveled to his chossidim are of the first kind; he would shine into their *keilim*. The three Shabbosim that they would come to him, the Rebbe would give according to his level.<sup>9</sup>

Our descent into the Egyptian exile was brought about via Yosef. Therefore, when we left Egypt, it was via Moshiach *ben* Yosef—i.e., according to the *keilim* we had. The exile that resulted from the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash was an exile of the Kingdom of Dovid and Shlomo. To leave that exile requires Moshiach *ben* Dovid, a level of "I am Your slave, son of Your maidservant." It requires the greater level, that of the giver.

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9 In *Likutei Moharan* II, 38, the Rebbe teaches:

Sometimes the greater person goes and travels to the smaller one, and sometimes it is the reverse. In other words, sometimes the tzaddik travels to the provinces to enlighten his disciples, and other times the disciples come to him. ...For it is obvious that the smaller person ought to come to the greater one, as he needs to receive from him. However, occasionally, the greater person's light is so exceptionally great that it is impossible for the smaller person to receive from the greater one when the latter is in his place. The light is then too great. The greater person must therefore lower and subordinate himself in relation to the smaller one and travel to where he is, in order that the light will be somewhat diminished and less refined. This is so that the smaller person will be able to receive it. ...

The primary purpose is to turn *mochin d'katnut* (immature consciousness) into *mochin d'gadlut* (mature consciousness). In other words, he shines light into the smaller person in order to expand his mind, so that the latter grows out of his smallness and becomes great—i.e., he attains great-mindedness. This is the concept of mitigation.

Sometimes [the greater person] enlightens [the smaller] through the light and through reassurances in his expression, by smiling at him with a beaming face—[the concept of] "a glowing face." But sometimes [the smaller person] is incapable of receiving through this, and so is subject to the principle "When a log won't light, they strike it" (*Zohar* III, 168a). It is necessary to enlighten him through suffering; it is necessary to cause him to suffer and to embarrass him, so that by reducing his ego he is able to receive..." This is not the place to elaborate on this level.

Leaving this exile requires the light of the holy Baal Shem Tov, the first glimmering of Moshiach's light. It demands of us to be clean of ulterior motives and absolutely dedicated to serving Hashem faithfully. "Negate your will to His will" (*Avos* 2:4) to be completely dedicated to Hashem, like Moshiach *ben* Dovid.





## *The Need for Connection and Its True Fulfillment*

A human being is incapable of being alone. Hashem designed His world so that a person always needs contact with someone or something outside himself.

Nowadays, we clearly see man's incapability for "aleness." If a person had to go a few days without his mobile phone, he would go insane! "People need to be in touch with me!" "I need to speak to him!" These connections are integral to his life; they are his oxygen. How could we possibly expect him to remain alone?

(Yes, a person occasionally thinks of relaxing for a few days without the distractions. But it becomes quite clear, quite soon, that he is chained to the machine. True, it became an unbearable distraction, weighing so heavily on his soul that he needed to get away from it. But, soon enough, he realizes that he still needs it.)

A human being is incapable of living a solitary life because he craves social contact and interaction. He'll flee from his inner self to what's going on outside himself every time. Whether it's a family member or neighbor, a job, hobby or chore, all these external pulls provide a sanctuary from aleness.

When someone goes to work, he's really doing it for other people. How so? He uses whatever he earns to pay others for what they provide him. He is concerned about other people and their needs. Again—he is not alone. Indeed, most people don't work only for the money. They do it to have a reason to wake up in the morning and to have a place that will save them from aleness.

(This goal is so deeply rooted in the subconscious that most people aren't even aware of it. Certainly, if someone asks why they work, they'll say they're doing it for the money. Over time, however, it becomes clear even to them that another reason is at play. After enough vacation, people are anxious to get back to their workaday routine. Why? Because it's difficult for a human being to meet himself and see what he looks like on his own.)

A human presence is not the only solution. Many people who live alone have pets. Taking care of a pet is an external, a reason to go out of oneself in order to avoid aloneness. The same drive pushes people to spend hours and hours listening to the news, wanting to know all the details. At the core, it's because they simply cannot be alone. They need something that will pick them up and give them a place to think about and to be.

Even a nosh or a coffee break is a result of the need to run away. In this case, it's an escape to a sensation or a taste—anything except being trapped in the desolate land of aloneness. So a person will have another cup of tea, another shot of whiskey, or another smoke. These are all ways to avoid the aloneness.

This, then, is the secret behind everyone's search for connection, for someone to be with. As our Sages put it, "Better to sit as two than to sit alone" (*Kiddushin* 41a). The search for a spouse brings great relief from the oppression of aloneness. The thought that "maybe someone will want me and say yes" slightly eases the soul, because "I'm not *absolutely* alone."

(However, reaching out to others does not always alleviate aloneness, because a person is loath to admit to himself that he harbors this need. He might be sitting with a good friend or visiting one of his relatives, but as long as he cannot openly admit his human weakness—that he's lonely and needs company, that he feels uncomfortable being by himself—the other person cannot really help him. Instead, this person has to make all sorts of excuses and rationales that have nothing to do with the real purpose of his visit. This is why many people who have lots of friends experience no relief from their aloneness. It's beneath their imaginary dignity to admit that they need a refuge from themselves.)

Even religious activities can serve as a haven from aloneness. For example, a person may decide to travel somewhere or do something inherently good because it will improve his *avodas Hashem*. But if he does so because he needs an external refuge, then the deed may be just another escape from aloneness.

The primary purpose of any positive act is to connect the doer to the Life of life, blessed be He. Thinking that the act is the goal in itself would be running away from ourselves. (Yes, Chazal do say that one who performs a mitzvah insincerely will eventually perform it sincerely, but one should be aware of the goal. He must not allow any matter of *kedushah* to remain merely a means to success or status, or to become a refuge from loneliness or boredom.)

### *Pseudo-Solutions*

Every once in a while, a person craves a food with a specific taste—spicy, sweet, or what have you. He won't be satisfied with bland or mild food because what he really wants is a taste of himself. Even if his pantry is full of bland-tasting foods, it is empty to him. There's nothing to eat. It's as if nothing is on the table. Why? Because he has a craving for something specific—namely, that taste that can contain *him*—now!

Similarly, an intellectual won't be content knowing the news or the latest local goings-on. They bore him. They are unsatisfying and meaningless. Instead, he'll search for a field or topic that has depth. That's the only thing that will give him relief.

For example, if such a person finds himself among people who are chatting about topics that don't interest him, he won't come out of himself, even though he's physically with them, listening and answering. He has bigger, more pressing issues on his mind—*his* interests. Another example: An honest person genuinely appreciates simple, honest behavior, even from someone a little offbeat or different. This gives him more of a refuge than something which is pretty and dignified, but false.

From this, we can understand why many people restlessly search for the slightest harbor. They fail to find it because a substitute cannot calm them. And because they cannot bear extended periods

of aloneness, they continue to search relentlessly until they find what they seek.

### 🕊️ *Avoiding the Person in the Mirror*

Most people have never met themselves face to face. Day and night, they're busy with work or other people. They need money, food and success. These matters so completely occupy their mind and interest that most people never have a chance to connect with their genuine self.

Only when they approach old age—"the unwanted days" (Koheles 12:1)—might they suddenly realize the truth, that a human being has nothing and the whole world is worthless and temporary. One who is privileged to this insight will meet himself for the first time in his life.

Some people can't handle that. Suddenly they begin having all sorts of aches and pains. In reality, they are searching for something, anything, to distract them. (Some of these people never noticed any problem before. But now, when nothing prevents them from taking a good look at themselves, out of the blue they realize that something is bothering them. It must be taken care of. This pain is really a product of having the free time to be alone with themselves. But since they can't bear being alone with themselves, they flee to their newly-discovered pain.)

We see something similar happen at the beginning of every winter. At the end of the year, in Elul and Tishrei, Jews have plenty to keep them occupied, between thinking about Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur and the physical preparations for Sukkos. But on the heels of these holidays come the seemingly endless, unchanging winter months, with their cold, rainy days, when they're cooped up at home. Then—out of nowhere!—a person discovers himself as he really is.

Therefore the beginning of winter heralds a flurry of activity. People dive into new projects or restart an old one with new vigor. They don't want to fall into the clutches of aloneness! They don't want to be forced to see themselves as they really are.

So they immediately retreat into lectures, courses and hobby circles that sprout like mushrooms. They are looking for any haven to protect them from aloneness.

This is the meaning of the verse “It is not good for man to be alone” (Bereishis 2:18). A person can’t stand being alone. He always needs an external crutch to save his life.

### 🕊️ *Only One Place to Run – To Me*

However, the connection between Hashem and the Jewish people brings a Jew to flee to *hisbodedus* and be alone with Hashem. It’s because he feels in his heart that this is his refuge in life; from here he can draw vitality. As Dovid HaMelech says, “For God alone wait silently, my soul, for my hope comes from Him. He is my rock and my deliverance ... Trust in Him at all times .... Pour out your hearts before Him; God is our refuge, forever” (Tehillim 62:6-7, 9).

It’s as if Hashem says to every Jew, “Your soul knows no rest. Day and night, you run away to some other refuge or shelter because you can’t bear the way you are. Listen well, My child. *I will be your shelter. Come to Me and be safe. You’ll never be alone again.*

“Of all the things I created in the universe, none can bring you genuine calm or true joy and tranquility. Only I can provide that. Come to Me, and discover serenity.

“In fact, I created you so that you cannot be solitary. ‘It is not good for man to be alone.’ I want you to hunger for Me, to need Me. Aloneness, and the lack of inner calm that comes with it, is not something to run away from. It’s a *path*, a way to get you talking to Me, to unite with Me through *hisbodedus!*”<sup>1</sup>

Dovid HaMelech says this a number of times: “You have been my haven, a refuge in my day of trouble” (ibid. 59:17). “You have been our refuge in every generation” (ibid. 90:1). “Be my rock of shelter to which I may always go; You commanded [others] to save me, for You are my rock and my fortress” (ibid. 71:3).

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<sup>1</sup> See Rambam, *Peirush HaMishnayos, Kesubos* 1:4. There he explains that “speaking” is a euphemism for intimacy.

Indeed, once the *misboded* is privileged to taste what it is to be alone with Hashem, he won't seek out any other refuge. No endeavor or activity will give him the calm or fulfillment that a moment of *yichud* with Hashem does.

If this taste disappears on him, he will become hungry and weak, finding no enjoyment in life. "Like parched earth longs for rain, my soul longs for You" (ibid. 143:6). To the *misboded*, life's pleasures are like a dry, inhospitable land. He desires to gaze at the strength and glory of his Creator and Maker, and restore the connection that they shared in the past. (During such periods, we clutch onto our faith, despite the distance. The desire to be re-united builds the coming *yichud*.)

This is the secret of *hisbodedus*. On the one hand, it removes a Jew from what people think of as civilization and society—a secure and supportive situation—to the grasslands and trees, under the open sky, like a beast in search of food, roaring in prayer to Hashem. On the other hand, he ends up finding life through his *yichud* with Hashem.<sup>2</sup>

Since everything else seems so lifeless, the *misboded* will search and search for this life-giving moisture in every word of Torah or *davening* that he utters, and in every mitzvah that he does. Everything

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2 It should be pointed out that there are two meanings to the concept of *misboded* (one who is alone). The first is that what he does for Hashem is not public. He does his *avodas Hashem* when he is by himself and in a private place. This meaning of *misboded* is vis-a-vis others, "the public." He is not together with them.

The second meaning of *misboded* is in relation to himself. The *misboded* wants to focus on an issue that he wishes to internalize. So he abandons the company of others in order to concentrate more strongly and completely.

For example, someone who goes with his *chavrusa* from the *beis ha-midrash* to a side room is, according to the first definition, getting away from the crowd. According to the second understanding, he wants to pay more attention to what he and his *chavrusa* are studying. Similarly, if he would go the side room to study on his own, to be fully focused on the Gemora, this would not be a getting away from people but a going-in, merging with the Gemora by planting its discussions deep into his mind and heart.

The same is true of *hisbodedus*. The *misboded* does not merely take a walk beyond the city limits, leaving civilization behind. Rather, he seeks a place where he can contemplate uniting with Hashem. (True, "the entire world is filled with His glory," but a person can merge better, with deeper contemplation and focus, when he is in a solitary location.)

revolves around uniting the heart, the *Shechinah's* home, with the Holy Blessed One.

The *Degel Machaneh Ephraim* writes:

We can also explain the verse “The words of the wise spoken *b'nachas* (gently) are *nishma'im* (heard)” (Koheles 9:17) with the teaching of the Gemora, “*N'chos* (step down) a level and marry a woman” (*Yevamos* 63a). This is a coded message on how to unite the Holy Blessed One and His *Shechinah*. Namely, everything a *talmid chochom* does and says is *b'nachas/n'chos*, always for the purpose of “marrying” the Holy Blessed One to His *Shechinah*. The word *nishma'im* here alludes to *yichud*, as the Gemora tells us (*Sanhedrin* 106a). Understand this (*Parashas Ki Sisa*).

### 🕊️ *All By Your Lonesome*

This is the deeper meaning of what Chazal say, “Therefore Adam was created alone...and the King of kings, the Holy Blessed One, stamped every human being with the seal of Adam, yet no two people are alike. This is why every person is obligated to say, ‘For my sake the world was created’” (*Sanhedrin* 37a). That is, after everything is said and done, a person remains all by himself, totally alone in the world, just as “Yaakov remained alone” (*Bereishis* 32:25). Everything that one does for other people, or for other reasons, will not help him because they are not relevant to him.

Why? Because the essence of human existence is absolute aloneness. There is no escape or way of avoiding this, except by merging with the Only One, as if he and only he were all that existed in Creation. This is the only way to ease our spirit and calm our mind.<sup>3,4</sup>

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3 The part of the soul called *Yechidah* parallels *Keser*. *Yechidah* is awakened if and only if a Jew thoroughly separates himself from and cleanses himself of self-interest in worldly matters. When that happens, a Jew can attain *bitul* and inclusion in the Only One. With that, he brings Creation to its goal, i.e., providing Hashem a home in the lower worlds.

4 In regard to marriage, one who has found his helpmate has found a recipient for his light and has “found good” (*Mishlei* 18:22; see *Brochos* 8a). This is the opposite state of “It is not good for man to be alone.” However, in regard to the Upper Union (or marriage, as it were), each person is the *kallah* of his Beloved, the One God, the only One Who exists. The human being becomes the vessel for

This is what the *Degel Machaneh Ephraim* writes:

“Yaakov remained alone” (Bereishis 32:25). The Midrash comments, “What is written about [our ancestor] is written about Hashem: ‘None but Hashem will be exalted on that day’” (Yeshaya 2:11; *Bereishis Rabbah* 77:1). This Midrash is astounding. We can explain it with the Gemora’s statement “Every person is obligated to say, ‘For my sake the world was created.’” When we take this statement to heart, it gives us a great deal of instruction and guidance. If the entire world was created only for him, then there is no one else in the world but him. The existence and well-being of the world depends on the goodness of his deeds and behavior. The opposite, *chas v’sholom*, would destroy the world.

His serving Hashem can be completely free of ulterior motives, with no need for people’s applause or the like—because he is already the most important person in the world! The entire world is subservient to him. *He* doesn’t need them. *They* all need him!

It is a tremendous privilege to serve Hashem at this lofty level. At that level, one is serving Hashem without any confusion, conflict of interest or false motivation. He neutralizes all the *kelipos*, making them servants of the holy *Shechinah*, as it were.

This is the point of the Midrash’s allusion. When one reaches the high level of “Yaakov remained alone”—of understanding and believing that he is all alone in the world, and that the entire universe depends on him and what he does—then “None but Hashem will be exalted.” Namely, his service of Hashem will be perfect, complete and pure. The *kelipos* will be neutralized and made subject to the authority of *kedushah*. It will be clearly seen that Hashem alone is exalted, that He is Alone and there is no other, just He and His Name. Understand this (*Parashas VaYishlach*).<sup>5</sup>

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Hashem’s light, to be absorbed and incorporated into it.

This is the secret of “it is not good (*lo tov*).” The *gematriya* of *lo tov* is the same as Hashem’s two Names, *HaVaYeH EHYeH*.

5 See also what the *Degel Machaneh Ephraim* writes in *Parashas Balak* on “Behold! A nation alone” (Bamidbar 23:9), and in *Parashas Ha’azinu* on “Hashem alone guided them” (Devarim 32:12).



### ☞ *Likutei Moharan Postscript*

This approach to *hisbodedus* gives us a better understanding of why our holy Rebbe founded *hisbodedus*, and talking to one's Maker, on divesting oneself of self-interest and merging into Hashem. As he explains:

So certainly now, after the *neshomos* of Yisroel have been emanated and created, Hashem is forced, as it were, to create and maintain the world. It was for this reason that He emanated the *neshomos* of Yisroel, in order to create for them all the worlds...and they would rule over everything.

Now, the main intention behind His creating the entire world for Yisroel was so that Yisroel should carry out His will, and that they should return to and cleave to their Source—i.e., that they should return and be encompassed in Hashem...

For by doing His will, they return and are encompassed in Him...and along with them, all the worlds that are dependent on their *neshomos*...

However, to merit this, to be encompassed in one's Source...is possible only through *bitul*. A person has to make himself totally transparent, until he is encompassed in the Oneness of Hashem.

And the only way to attain *bitul* is through *hisbodedus*. By secluding himself and speaking at length with his Maker, a person merits to diminish all of his physical desires and bad character traits, to the point that he merits to neutralize all his physicality and become encompassed in his Source (*Likutei Moharan* I, 52).

### *Likutei Moharan I, 22*

And every person must show great compassion for the flesh of the body, illuminating it with every insight and perception that the soul perceives. The body should also be informed of this perception, as in “Hide not from your own flesh” (Yeshaya 58:7). Specifically from “your own flesh.” Do not hide your eyes from showing compassion for your flesh—the flesh of your body.

For it is necessary to show great compassion for the body, to see to purify it, so as to be able to inform it of all the insights and perceptions which the soul perceives. This is because the soul of every human being is continuously seeing and comprehending very exalted things. But the body knows nothing of them. Therefore every person must show great compassion for the flesh of the body. He should see to purify the body so that the soul will be able to inform it of all that she is always seeing and comprehending.

Now, when the body is in this category, it benefits the soul. For there are times when she falls from her level. However, if the body is clear and illuminated, the soul is capable of picking herself up and returning to her level because of the body. That is, through the pleasures of the body, she will be able to recall and ascend to her own pleasures. For now that the body is also good and right, it doesn't get trapped in the pleasures. Thus the soul is capable of returning by means of the pleasures of the body, to her position and her pleasures.

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### *Likutei Moharan I, 34*

**D**isgrace and humiliation shatter a person's heart. And the rectification for this is binding one's heart to the *nekudah* applicable to one's heart at that moment. ... Each and every Jew possesses an aspect of "a tzaddik rules" (II Shmuel 23:3) ... for in every Jew there is something precious, an aspect of a *nekudah*, which his friend does not have ... and with this aspect in which he surpasses his friend, he influences, enlightens and inspires his friend's heart. And his friend has to receive inspiration and this aspect from him ...

The influx of bounty is commensurate with the opening wide of the mouth and the vessels of speech, each person in accordance with his aspect ... Consequently, each person has to speak privately with His Maker, the aspect of "My mouth utters wisdom," through which the foreskin of the heart, the evil loves, is eliminated.

Each person also has to talk to his friend about the fear of God, so that his heart receives inspiration from the *nekudah* in which his friend surpasses him, as in "And one received from the other" (*Targum*, Yeshaya 6:3). For this aspect in which his friend surpasses him is an aspect of a *nekudah* ... and this *nekudah* shines into his friend's heart ...

All these *nekudot*—i.e., the *nekudah* that is called "My mouth utters wisdom" and also the *nekudah* that each person has which his friend does not—are extensions of the tzaddik ... Everyone first has to receive from the tzaddik, and afterwards they will receive from each other. And each person will receive from within himself.

Through these three aspects, the disgrace/foreskin of the heart/evil loves is eliminated. This corresponds to "Love covers up all faults" (Mishlei 10:12), because that is where holy love resides ....

At the end of that lesson, Reb Noson adds: When a person talks to his friend about fear of God, he receives the *nekudah* in his friend's heart without a covering. But there are times he receives the *nekudah* from his friend by means of other things they discuss. For it is occasionally possible to receive light and inspiration to serve God from his friend's *nekudah* by means of the everyday conversation one has with him. Then one receives the light of the *nekudah* by virtue of its being covered. For sometimes the *nekudah* has to be within a cover, and so it covers itself within these words and he receives from it.





