

Back to the basics

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There is a popular Breslov book called [אורח חיים_השלישי](#). It's a collection of teachings from the writings of [Rebbe Nachman](#) and [Reb Nosson](#) on the topic of prayer, authored by [Alter Tepliker](#), a fourth generation Breslover chassid.

The book starts off with a rather lengthy introduction in which he demonstrates how prayer, specifically *hisbodedus* (the practice of setting aside time for improvisational personal prayer in our mother tongue) was a foundational practice used by all of our forefathers and ancestry throughout Jewish history.

I found it interesting that, after the introduction, the author starts off the body of the book with the following piece from [Tinyana 73](#):

"Whoever wants to be worthy of [אורח חיים](#) (coming back to Hashem), should recite Psalms frequently, because reciting Psalms is [אורח חיים](#) (propitious) for returning to Hashem".

In that piece Rebbe Nachman teaches how King David

prophetically embedded Psalms to the 49 gates of , so that all the 12 tribes, whose names total 49 letters, can enter the proper gate to return to Hashem.

But why start with this lesson? If I wanted to teach about *hisbodedus*, surely I would find a better lesson to begin with and inspire my readers. Namely, the second lesson he quotes, **“Hisbodedus is a great virtue and higher than everything”**! Why begin with a lesson about the importance of reciting Psalms?

I think there is a very profound, and layered message that the author might be hinting at by using this lesson as a starting point. Many people think that *hisbodedus* and personal prayer is some immensely inspiring practice. When we go out to the woods or enter another place of seclusion and talk to Hashem we want it to be esoteric and life changing. We’re always seeking inspiration to sweep us off our feet and give us wings to fly. But it doesn’t always happen. Anyone who practices personal prayer consistently will tell you that it doesn’t always flow and you don’t feel significantly different after every session.

To too many people, reciting Psalms is a chore. “I can’t connect”, “I don’t understand what I’m saying”, or “What does saying these old texts really do for me?” I very much relate to Psalms and I think the main reason why most people don’t relate to them is because there’s this bizarre pressure to recite many of them. It’s like we don’t feel that we’ve accomplished anything if we didn’t finish our quota, or a significant amount. We need to **reframe** and put our utmost attention into the few lines we say. Every word is stuffed with holiness, like an overpacked suitcase. If we don’t understand the words, there are available translations in every language possible. Stop trying to finish Psalms and allow yourself to relate in the most simple way to the deepest and simplest words of prayer ever written. Maybe it’s not the most glorious thing to do, maybe it’s hard to focus on but we

must slow it down significantly and get real with it. *Tehillim* is infused with opportunities for □□□□. King David, in his unfathomable greatness, had every one of us in mind when he drew these words down from Heaven, and his ultimate purpose was to draw us back to Heaven.

Try it again...Slow down...Wake yourself up and come back to Him. He's waiting for you to call...

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