

# The Only Way Back Home

written by Davy Dombrowsky

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[Torah 52](#) is one of the most fundamental lessons in [Likutei Moharan](#) about *hisbodedus*. (*Hisbodedus* is the practice of setting aside time for improvisational personal prayer in our mother tongue). [Rebbe Nachman](#) starts the lesson by dispelling the heretical belief that God was compelled to create the universe. In other words, some believe He had no choice but to create the world. The Rebbe argues that only God Himself is an essential reality, and it was/is His choice whether or not to create and, for that matter, to sustain the world.

Asks the Rebbe, what causes these atheists to make this mistake? Because after Hashem decided to create and bring down the Jewish souls into this world, He is, in a certain sense, forced to continue creating and maintaining the universe for them. But surely it was His choice to create their souls or

not. Just after He decided to go ahead with it, he is compelled to preserve the world on their behalf.

Next, the Rebbe teaches the reason why Hashem created the world for these Jewish souls. Very simply, so that they do His will and thereby return to their essence, which is an aspect of Himself, which, again, is the only essential reality. So when we do His will, we unite with Him and also become essential to existence.

But how do we return to our essence, to our root, and align ourselves with Hashem? Says Rebbe Nachman, there is only one way to become one with Hashem in such a real way – By being *hisbodedus* ourselves. *Hisbodedus* literally means to nullify oneself, but I like to think of it as making ourselves transparent. We naturally have desires and habits that are opposed to Hashem's will. Those negative actions, feelings and thoughts stand in the way of our unity with Him. When we clear out those barriers, then we mirror Hashem's desires and we align ourselves with His will in the deepest way. The only way to do this, says the Rebbe – the only way to remove all the obstructions that prevent our return to Him – is through *hisbodedus*.

Rebbe Nachman explains what type of *hisbodedus* he refers to:

הַיְסוּדוּת הַחַסִּידוּת הַחַסִּידוּת ,הַיְסוּדוּת הַחַסִּידוּת הַחַסִּידוּת  
הַיְסוּדוּת הַחַסִּידוּת הַחַסִּידוּת הַחַסִּידוּת הַחַסִּידוּת הַחַסִּידוּת ,הַיְסוּדוּת  
הַחַסִּידוּת הַחַסִּידוּת הַחַסִּידוּת הַחַסִּידוּת הַחַסִּידוּת הַחַסִּידוּת  
הַחַסִּידוּת הַחַסִּידוּת הַחַסִּידוּת ,הַיְסוּדוּת הַחַסִּידוּת

*Hisbodedus* can be many things for many people but one key element of this practice is to use the time to systematically align ourselves with the will of Hashem, by praying to Hashem for help in suppressing our negative habits which interfere with our ability to line-up our will with His will. Rebbe Nachman suggests working on one negative attribute at a time, and praying endlessly for help to overcome our limitations.

Anyone familiar with the legends told of the Rebbe will know that this practice of praying for help was his essential tool to greatness. In his biographies, [Reb Nosson](#) writes how the Rebbe struggled in learning. First in Chumash, then in Mishna, then in Gemara etc. but each time he struggled he wouldn't cease beseeching Hashem for help to understand and progress. No matter how many times he failed to understand or succeed, he kept on coming back and asking again and again in different ways. Sometimes he felt so rejected that it took a few days for him to pick himself up and start asking again, but he never gave up. He always continued begging for closeness. This is why he said, "anyone can be as great as me". Because it doesn't take pedigree or intellectual brilliance to rise to greatness, all it takes is an iron will and an unrelenting desire to be one with God.

In studying this lesson I was bothered by the following question: What prompted Rebbe Nachman to talk about the argument of whether the world is an essential reality in the same lesson where he teaches about *hisbodedusthrough* working on aligning ourselves with the will of Hashem?

I think there is a subtle but critical point he's making by the juxtaposition. It is here in this lesson that the Rebbe is teaching the reason for creation (ה' בראנו לזיווג וליקוץ) and the path (ה' בראנו לזיווג וליקוץ) to reach our fullest potential (ה' בראנו לזיווג וליקוץ). He bluntly says that it's not possible to reach our best in any other way. (In other places he said that he spoke with other great *tzaddikim* who all agree that every *tzaddik* who ever lived only reached their exalted levels through this one practice). This is not a good idea for success. This is the only possibility for success in serving Hashem. What's more is that it's a certainty for success. If a Jew commits himself to this one practice with as much energy and devotion as he can, he is sure to be successful and have his prayers answered; guaranteed. Why do I say that? Because this is why the Rebbe juxtaposed the two

ideas. By consistently practicing *hisbodedus* with the intent of removing all the obstructions between us and our Creator, we get closer and closer to unifying with Him in the most awesome way. This growth makes us more and more an essential reality, just like Him, and in that hallowed space our will is one with His will. When we want something, we will have it because He wills it too. We become connected at the root to Him and where one goes, the other goes. This is why *hisbodedus* of אבודת הדעת is the most crucial aspect of service and the only path to succeed, because it takes us out of the realm of possibility to the world of certainty.

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