

WHAT TO PRAY FOR

written by Chaim Kramer
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***It is good to begin your hitbodedut by saying:
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Rebbe Nachman teaches: It is good to begin your *hitbodedut* by saying: Today I am starting to attach myself to You! Start anew every day. If yesterday was good, I hope that today will be even better. If yesterday wasn't the way it should have been, well today is a new beginning and it will be good (*Tzaddik* #437). The Rebbe himself would start each day by "placing" the day's activities in God's hands, asking that he do everything according to God's will. "This way," he would say, "I have no worries. I rely on God to do as He sees fit" (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #2).

The spiritual. Start your day by having *hitbodedut* that everything go according to God's plan, that you act in accordance with His desire. By doing this, your prayers are automatically focused on God's drawing you closer to Him. The Rebbe said that these prayers can comprise regrets for the past and requests for the future – each person according to his own spiritual level. He stressed that this advice is universal, it is for anyone who wishes to draw closer to God. Whatever you lack, whatever you feel you need in order to serve God, this is the way to attain it (see *Likutey Moharan* II, 25).

The material. Rebbe Nachman was once talking to one of his followers about clothing: One must pray for everything. If your clothes are torn, pray to God to give you new clothes. Although the main thing to pray for is closeness to God, still, you must pray for *all* your needs, large and small. The Rebbe then said: A person who doesn't pray to God for his needs can be compared to an animal. An animal is also fed and sheltered, without asking for it. To be considered a person, you have to draw all necessities of life from God through prayer (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #233).

Start your day by having hitbodedut that everything go according to God's plan, that you act in accordance with His desire!

Reb Noson writes: I was once talking to the Rebbe about something I needed. the Rebbe said, "Pray for it." Having considered it to be an insignificant item, not at all a necessity, I was surprised to learn that one must pray to God even for such trivial things. The Rebbe rebuked me saying, "Is it beneath your dignity to pray to God for something like that?!" (*Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom* #233).

Once, while Reb Nachman Chazan was hammering a nail, the hammer slipped and he hurt his hand. Reb Noson said to him;

“Why didn’t you practice *hitbodedut* before swinging the hammer? You should have prayed to hit the nail and not your hand...” (*Siach Sarfei Kodesh* I-687).

While standing at the gravesite of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Meron, Reb Avraham Sternhartz was overheard practicing *hitbodedut*: “God, please help me to get up in the morning. Let me say the *modeh ani*, wash my hands thrice, recite the morning blessings, pray...” Whatever we want, we have to ask for it with total simplicity.



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Hitbodedut encompasses the entire spectrum of life: from the simple, daily affairs of man, to the lofty spiritual heights to which we aspire. When Rebbe Nachman taught that we need to express ourselves in prayer before God for everything we can think of – he meant everything! Whether we need good health (and who doesn’t?), success in business and livelihood (and who doesn’t?), help with raising our children (and who doesn’t?), caring for elderly (or not so elderly) parents, or whatever our hearts’ desires, we must raise our eyes, hearts and mouths in supplication before God. We must ask Him to make sure that everything goes alright. If it does, good. If not,

pray again. And again. And again. *Hitbodedut* is not something we do once and then stop. *Hitbodedut* is daily.

For example, if your car needs repairs, pray that you get a good mechanic and that he spots the trouble right away. Pray that you won't have to keep going back for repairs. What about your washing machine, sewing machine, refrigerator, etc..? *Hitbodedut* might mean praying that you get the right clothing back from the dry-cleaners, the right products delivered from the supermarket, or even that you don't overpay on an item you purchase. Nothing is too trivial! As long as you even think you need it pray for it!

Certainly, a person must focus his prayers on the ultimate goal – serving God. Pray, plead, beg, ask and beseech God that He reveal His ways to you, that He show you His mercy, that you merit coming closer to Him. Pray that you will be able to perform His will, each mitzvah in its own time. Pray to feel the beauty in Torah, pray to feel the sweetness in the mitzvot. Reb Nachman Chazan once labored tirelessly to erect Reb Noson's *sukkah*. That evening, while sitting in the *sukkah*, Reb Nachman remarked, "There is a different feeling of joy and satisfaction when sitting in a *sukkah* which one has worked very hard to build." Reb Noson replied, "That may be, but this you haven't yet tried. Spend an entire day crying out to God: 'Master of the Universe! Let me taste the true taste of *sukkah*!' Then see what feelings a person can experience in the *sukkah*" (*Aveneha Barzel*, p. 52 #12).

Once you grow accustomed to *hitbodedut*, you'll begin to see how it's possible to pray for everything – from the most exalted spiritual desires to the most trivial material needs, and everything between. Don't be put off by the following scenario which sometimes happens. There are those who, as they develop their *hitbodedut*, begin to feel awkward about praying for success in business and the like. "Here I am," this person says, "I'm (finally) praying to God, and all I can think about is money?" If it's not money, it's something else material,

and it seems to him that this is not what *hitbodedut* is all about. Feeling guilty, he begins focusing his prayers exclusively on the spiritual. But, because his heart isn't fully in it, his prayers begin to slacken. In time, his *hitbodedut* might even stop altogether. Regarding this, Reb Noson once said: Pray to God for a livelihood. Specifically for livelihood. You'll probably start feeling embarrassed that you're asking and pleading so much for the material and you'll eventually pray for the spiritual, too (*Aveneha Barzel* p. 49).

(Taken from the book [*Crossing the Narrow Bridge: A Practical Guide to Rebbe Nachman's Teachings*](#) chapter 9 – Hitbodedut)