

The Kavanah System

How to work on kavanah — and track it — one line at a time

Kavanah can't be forced and can't be graded — so instead we **train** it, a little at a time, and keep a private record. You take **one line** of davening, work on thinking its meaning in your own davening, and once a week note how it went. It is between you, yourself, and the Rebbe.

The idea, in four steps

- 1. The line of the week.** The rebbe suggests the most important line from what the class has learned — the tefilla to have kavanah on this week. Earlier lines keep going.
- 2. Daven it with kavanah.** Think the pirush hamilos of that line — one word, two, or at most three that flow as one (the way of the *Yesod veShoresh haAvodah*) — as if standing right before Hashem.
- 3. Once a week, 3–5 minutes.** Look back and fill one row of your chart — check off the days you caught the line. Nobody collects or grades it.
- 4. End of the month — write a du"ch** to the Rebbe about how your kavanah went (see the other side).

Two ways in — both optional, same chart

- **The weekly rotation:** one important line at a time, as above — for everyone.
- **The 4–6 week training program:** for the four parts that need kavanah *every day* — שמע/ברוך שם, פותח, and מגן אברהם — building up week by week from Shacharis to Mincha to Maariv. (Older boys, once all four focal points are learned.)

A sample month, filled in

Wk	The line I'm working on (this week's tefilla)	Days I caught it	One sentence: how it went
1	אני — מודה אני — "I gratefully thank You..." (the first thing I say)	6 / 7 days	Once I paused before saying it, picturing Hashem giving me back my neshama, it came easily.
2	פִּתַּח אֶת יָדְךָ — "You open Your hand..." (in Ashrei)	4 / 7 days	Harder — I only caught it about half the days. By Mincha I daven fast.
3	שִׁמְעַי יִשְׂרָאֵל — the first line (Hashem is One)	6 / 7 days	The best week. Closing my eyes and thinking 'Hashem is the only One' really helped.
4	שִׁמְעַי יִשְׂרָאֵל — same line, going deeper	7 / 7 days	Now it's becoming a habit — the thought comes on its own before I even try.

No prizes for kavanah — ever (prizes are for tests). Nothing is forced. No one can see another person's thoughts, so the chart is self-reported — and that honesty is the whole point.

The Monthly Du"ch

דו"ח — דין וחשבון — a report, from you to the Rebbe

A du"ch is a report. Chassidim write the Rebbe a du"ch about their avoda. **Your kavanah is real avoda** — so at the end of every chodesh you take your chart, look it over, and report it, simply and honestly. It is private; no one grades it.

How to write it

- At the end of every chodesh, take your kavanah chart and look it over.
- Write to the Rebbe simply and honestly — **small and real beats big and made-up**.
- Say four things: the lines you **worked on**, what you **accomplished**, what was **hard**, and what you are **taking on** next (bli neder).
- It is private — no one reads it unless you ask for help.

Keep every monthly du"ch. At the end of the year you write one longer du"ch looking back over the whole year — and you will see how far you came.

A sample du"ch, filled in

ב"ה, date: י"ד שבט

— לכ"ק אדמ"ור

This chodesh I worked on these lines of davening:

שמע מודה אני when I wake up, פותח את ידיך in Ashrei, and the first line of שמע ישראל.

What I accomplished (small and real is better than big and made up):

By the second week I was really stopping before שמע מודה אני every morning and picturing that Hashem just gave me back my neshama. שמע became my best week — when I close my eyes and think that Hashem is the only One, I feel it. By the end of the month the kavanah on שמע מודה אני comes on its own before I even try.

What was hard for me:

פותח את ידיך — by Mincha I daven fast and I forgot the line about half the days.

What I am taking on for next chodesh (bli neder):

To think the first three words of שמע slowly, every single Shacharis — and to slow down at the start of Mincha.