

SECTION 1: BASIC DAVENING

CHAPTER 1. REQUESTING AND THANKING HASHEM FOR OUR NEEDS

Every Jew possesses an inherent belief that Hashem is the Creator and Master of the world. This belief dictates that a person should ask Hashem for whatever he needs whenever he needs it, since He alone is the One who can provide him with his needs. Similarly, one must thank Hashem for what He has given him, since everything a person has comes from Hashem Himself (although He utilizes various channels to direct His blessings to us).

It is a *mitzvah min hatorah*¹ to ask Hashem for whatever you might need, and this is something you must constantly do. For this reason, a person asks Hashem for anything he might need three times a day in *Shemonah Esrei*. Halacha also allows one to add additional requests when saying the middle blessings of *Shemonah Esrei* (i.e., from *Chonen Hada'as* until *Shema Koleinu*), provided the content of the request is similar to the content of that particular blessing (for example, in the blessing of *Refa'ainu* one can ask Hashem to cure a specific person).² In the blessing of *Shema Kolainu* and after *Shemonah Esrei* (before the second *Yihiyu Leratzon*) one may add any request.³

You should accustom yourself to ask Hashem at least three times a day to help you with whatever is bothering you.⁴ This means to simply ask Hashem for what you need or really desire, whether physical requests⁵ (for example, to provide financial means and the like) or spiritual ones

1. According to the Rambam this is a *mitzvah* that must be performed daily, while the Ramban is of the opinion that one must do so only when one feels a particular need. See the beginning of *Shoresch Mitzvas Hatefillah (Derech Mitzvosecha*, p. 229) where the different opinions are brought.

2. שו"ע או"ח סי' קי"ט ס"א.

3. In a letter dated 11 *Shevat* 5746 (printed in *Likutei Sichos* Vol. 39 p. 281), the Rebbe says that "requests for healing for specific individuals should be added in *Shema Kolainu*. You should consult the Rav of your city for more details."

The Rebbe was of the opinion that as a rule, one should limit inserting additional requests to *Shema Kolainu*, as opposed to the other *brachos* (heard from R. Yitzchak Meir Gurary).

4. A suggested time to do this is when saying *Shema Koleinu* (during the week) or before the second *Yihiyu Leratzon* (both during the week and on Shabbos or Yom Tov) where Halacha allows one to add personal requests.

5. We see a similar idea from the statement of the *Zohar* that R' Ya'isa would ask Hashem to provide him with food, even though the food was already prepared and ready to eat. See *Lekutei Sichos* (Vol. 26, p. 95) for an explanation of this idea.

(for example, to assist in understanding Torah, doing proper *teshuvah*, developing *ahavas yisroel*, and so on). Even if you have already davened that day, you should ask Hashem for assistance if you need something in particular, and you should rely on Him to help you.⁶

The same applies to thanking Hashem for what He has given you. In addition to saying *Modim* during *Shemonah Esrei*,⁷ you should thank Hashem in your own words throughout the day, and particularly when you see how He has given you what you need.

A central idea in asking Hashem for assistance and thanking Him is that a person can talk to Him as he would talk to another individual *kevayachol*. This is an essential concept in *avodas Hashem*—to recognize that Hashem is real, at least as real as a person *kevayachol*.⁸ A person may fulfill mitzvos simply because he was instructed to do so by his parents and teachers, and not necessarily because of a conscious recognition of the presence of Hashem. You must therefore strive as much as possible to view Hashem as being real, and one of the basic ways of accomplishing this is by constantly talking to Hashem. This is also the reason why *Chazal* instituted the many prayers and blessings we say every day and directed us to recite one hundred *brachos* daily, so that our awareness of Hashem's presence will increase.

This idea—that we must relate to Hashem with simplicity and pray to Him as would a child⁹—is a fundamental concept in Yiddishkeit in general and in Chassidus in particular. The Baal Shem Tov would urge people to say words of praise to Hashem in their own language and constantly say “with Hashem's help,” “*Boruch Hashem*,” and similar phrases. He revealed that these simple words are more powerful and effective Above than the mystical *kavanos* of the *mekubalim*.¹⁰

There is a difference between *Chagas Chassidus* and *Chabad Chassidus* in the correct approach to this idea. *Chagas Chassidus* focuses on the concept of speaking to Hashem as a fundamental part of *avodas Hashem*, while *Chabad Chassidus*, which emphasizes the use of one's mind to understand Hashem, doesn't put as much of an emphasis on focusing on this concept.

6. This idea is based on the opinion of the Ramban (see fn. 1) that the mitzvah of *tefillah min hatorah* is to request for help whenever there's something in particular that's bothering you.

7. You should realize that Hashem's kindness is with you every moment, and you should thank Him for helping you continuously. This theme is expressed in the words of *Modim*: נודה לך ונספר תהלתך על חיינו המסורים בידך ועל נשמותינו הפקודות לך, ועל נסידך שבכל יום עמנו ועל נפלאותיך וטובותיך שבכל עת, ערב ובקר וצהריים.

8. See Shabbos (28b) where R' Yochanan Ben Zakai tells his students: “You should fear Hashem as much as you would a person. Just as one refrains from sin when a person is watching, so should one be constantly aware of Hashem's presence and refrain from sin.”

9. שו"ת ריב"ש סי' קנ"ז.

10. ספר השיחות תש"ג ע' 163 ואילך.

However, the difference is only regarding *how much* emphasis is placed,¹¹ but the actual idea is as important according to *Chabad Chassidus* as well. Additionally, *Chabad Chassidus* demands that we should try to understand the value of talking to Hashem with simplicity,¹² and explains that by realizing that our physical necessities come from Hashem and thanking Him for them, we can achieve the ultimate fulfillment of *dirah betachtonim*.¹³

Thus, the most basic idea of davening is to simply talk to Hashem, to ask Him for what we need and thank and praise Him for what He does for us.

¹¹. A practical difference between *Chagas Chassidus* and *Chabad Chassidus* in this regard is that according to *Chabad Chassidus*, when you speak to Hashem you don't necessarily need to speak loudly or for a specific amount of time, and in general there is more of a focus on avoiding *chitzoniyus* and *blitos*.

¹². ראה ד"ה באתי לגני תשכ"ט ס"ח בענין ואתה קדוש יושב תהלות ישראל.

¹³. ראה לקו"ש ח"ז ס"ע 136 ואילך.

CHAPTER 2. THINKING ABOUT HASHEM THROUGHOUT THE DAY

There is an entire *siman* in Shulchan Aruch dedicated (as expressed in its title) to explaining “that all of one’s intentions should be *lesheim shamayim*.”¹⁴ The Shulchan Aruch explains that one should not engage in physical activities—such as eating, drinking, sleeping, exercising, conducting business, and so on—for one’s personal pleasure; rather, one should have in mind that he is doing these activities to be able to serve Hashem. For example, when eating one should have in mind that he is eating to have the strength to serve Hashem. Similarly, before going to sleep he should have in mind that he is resting in order to regain strength to serve Hashem. When doing laundry he should think that he is cleaning his clothing to be able to serve Hashem. The idea is that you should think about Hashem as many times throughout the day as possible, which will lead you to a state of constant focus on Hashem. (As mentioned in Chapter 1, this is why *Chazal* instituted that we should recite one hundred *brachos* throughout the day.)

Just as you should train yourself to think the *pirush hamilos* of davening (as explained in Section 2), so should you train yourself to focus on Hashem constantly and have Him in mind before every activity you perform. Asking and thanking Hashem for your needs throughout the day (as explained in Chapter 1) is also part of being constantly aware that whatever you have comes from Hashem. The Baal Shem Tov explains that on a certain level, this is the idea of constant *deveikus*, to always be focused on Hashem.¹⁵

¹⁴. שו"ע או"ח ס' רלא.

¹⁵. עיין צוואת הריב"ש סי' פא.