

Noam Siach

Lessons in Avodas Hashem

Based on Noam Elimelech

EXAMPLE LESSON

Lessons on preparing ourselves for prayer through meditation, and drawing down shefa through davening and doing mitzvos, learned from the Korban Pesach

Parshas Bo

Hachanos – Hisbonenus – Hisbodedus

The Rebbe Reb Melech teaches us:

At the time when the tzadik davens and he wants to prepare himself to pray or to perform or fulfill any of the Blessed Creator's commandments he needs to ready himself and prepare himself on three levels:

NOAM SIACH:

One of the primary characteristics of avodas haChassidus as taught by the Hasidic Masters, disciples of the holy Baal Shem Tov is the concept of *hachanos* – preparation before performing mitzvos and especially the involved, intense and sometimes lengthy preparations before davening. Including but not limited to such practices as cleaning oneself from all forms of internal waste, immersion in the mikvah, meditating on Hashem's greatness, reciting Tehillim and various liturgical poems, studying Gemara and Zohar and intense devotion during Pesukei DeZimra to prune the way.

1. As the Gemara (Berachos 30b) says that the original earlier Chassidim would spend an hour preparing themselves before prayer and then praying. They would ponder and meditate on the loftiness and greatness of G-d before davening. The word used Shohin – is understood to mean like the pasuk HaIsh Mishtaeh – observing and pondering in wonder. By meditating on G-d's greatness and loftiness they were moved to amazement over His splendor and glory.

Each and every one of us is obligated to meditate on G-d's greatness as much as we are capable of on our own level of understanding the higher worlds. By doing so we draw down our souls up into the higher worlds and then we can receive an abundance of holy shefa and blessings from there and it descends down to us. This is the meaning behind the Zohar's concept of touching but not touching. [Like the parable of Haazinu of an eagle hovering over its young, touching but not touching, our mind connects to the Divine, our intellect is pondering Divine mysteries, so that these matters are hovering just above our understanding, touching but not touching.]

This is the meaning of Chazal's statement in Pirkei Avos: There is no man that does not have his hour. Which we are explaining to mean that whoever does not set aside a designated specified time to ponder and meditate on G-d's greatness as we just explained above, should be considered in your eyes as no man at all (he is not even on the level of a human, a man, if he cannot find the time to do *hisbodedus* and meditate on the Divine.)

NOAM SIACH:

Another primary teaching in avodas haChassidus is the concept of *hisbodedus* – meditation. Unlike true self seclusion that some preached however, the Noam Elimelech's derech in hisbodedus was to teach us that we can even be alone with Hashem in a room full of people.

Rav Kalonymous Kalman Epstein of Cracow, a talmid of the Rebbe Elimelech, in his magnum opus Maor vaShemesh teaches that his rebbe was staunchly against those who secluded themselves and cut themselves off from others instead he taught that the proper and correct path the Noam Elimelech was espousing was dibuk chaverim attachment to friends and fellow Chassidim and that they way they would help each other serve Hashem. For example in parshas Kedoshim he teaches: "The Midrash rabba VaYikra 24:9 teaches us that we read the pasuk Kedoshim Tihyu be holy – can you be holy like Me? Talmud Lomar rather – I am Holy, Hashem says My holiness is different and on another level than yours. Says the Maor vaShemesh, if a person desires to do hisbodedus and seclude himself and be alone and imitate Hashem Who is also One, standing alone, thinking that in this way he will acquire and achieve a high level of holiness, the Midrash answers him, I am Holy, Hashem responds back My holiness is above yours, this idea of being alone and separate only applies to the Creator alone. However if a person wishes to draw down the sanctity of the Creator upon himself he can only do so when he is together with others. Only together in a group serving Hashem united as we explained, and further on there in parshas Kedoshim he continues and

cites his rebbe: “as I once heard from my master and mentor the Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk who explained the pasuk Yermiya 23:24 which says If a person hides himself [and thinks] I won’t see him says Hashem,” as follows: If a person secludes himself alone and hides himself all alone in his room, and he thinks that this is the true and proper path to serve Hashem, However Hashem responds ‘I won’t see him! I won’t look at him!’ Rather the true and correct path is to attach oneself to others kosher Jews and tzadikim alike and this will bring him to true Avodas Hashem to learn from their good deeds.” The true hisbodedus, continues the Maor VaShemesh, is to meditate in your mind of G-d’s greatness even when you are among many people attach your mind to Hashem as the Chovos haLevavos teaches in the Gate of Perishus that true separation and perishus is to imagine you are alone with Hashem even in a room full of people. This is the primary true path of hisbodedus.”