



Getting Ready to Daven

The importance of attaining the proper mindset before davening is emphasized in both nigleh and Chassidus. As such, a proper hachanah [preparation] is an important part of a Chossid's avodah. The Rebbe teaches us how the various elements of hachanah should be done.



Importance of Hachanah

In this *sicha*, the Rebbe explains how *hachanah l'tefillah* serves as a bridge to davening.

...People complain that although they learn and daven, even davening with *d'veikus* [devotion], they are not taken by it (עס נעמט אים נישט).

This is because they lack the proper preparation.

The reason why [*hachanah* is necessary] is because the essence of Torah is [the world of] *Atzilus* and it is impossible to make a quantum leap (געבן באלד א שפרונג) from eating, drinking, and other physical matters, to matters of the [highest] world of *Atzilus*.

There are occasional exceptions, similar to the concept of *teshuvah*, which effects “in one moment and in one instant” [a complete turnaround—a quantum leap].

However, the standard behavior, as established at *mattan Torah*, is that everything must be done in an orderly, step-by-step fashion. Therefore, the *avodah* needs to be in the manner of “I will slowly banish¹.” First one must separate himself from his physicality by means of *hachanah* before davening; immersion in a *mikvah*, giving *tzedakah*, and studying *Chassidus*...²

Purifying Waters

In this letter, in answer to the question why some Chassidim delay the time of *krias Sh'ma* and *tefillah*, the Rebbe explains why *mikvah* continues to be an essential aspect of *hachanah l'tefillah*.

...The amount of time one needs for *hachanah* before davening depends on the characteristics of their soul, and varies from one person to the next. However, all people are equally obligated to make the *hachanah*, as

the *Mishna* states “One should not pray unless he is in a serious frame of mind³.” This is brought down as a *halacha* in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim *siman* 92, in an annotation.

Included in this *hachanah* is also purifying the body [in a *mikvah*]. Although the *tevilah* of Ezra [—the mandate of Ezra that men immerse in a *mikvah* to purify themselves] was abolished, it was merely the *requirement* that was abolished; but bodily purity is of particular importance to davening [—one should still go to *mikvah* even though there is no obligation], as it is brought down from Rav Hai Gaon and others, and is elucidated according to *Chassidus* in Lekutei Torah parshas Tavo 53a⁴.

Chassidus Far'n Davenen

In this letter to the Hanhola of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Eretz Yisroel, the Rebbe points to the prevalence



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and necessity of the study of *chassidus* before *davening*.

...It's appropriate to arrange the study of *chassidus* before *davening*, and I'm surprised that it hasn't been happening until now - perhaps [it is, in fact, happening, but] was mistakenly omitted from your report. As it is known, [*chassidus* before *davening*] has been the custom in all our *yeshivos* since the earliest days, and [it's] even the custom of laymen [to study *chassidus*] in their homes⁵.

When to Give Tzedakah

While some seforim instruct that tzedakah be given before *davening*, others write that it should be given at *ויברך דוד*. In this letter, the Rebbe explains when is the best time to give.

Since you write that your father follows the good custom of giving tzedakah at "*Vayevarech Dovid*", a custom which is sourced in the writings of the Arizal and elsewhere, he will certainly continue with this good custom. This [giving tzedakah at *Vayevarech Dovid*] can also be considered giving tzedakah before

davening, since the main "*tefillah*" is *shemona esrei* [and *Vayevarech Dovid* comes before *shemona esrei*]. But one can also give additional tzedakah before the beginning of the whole *davening*.

THEY FIRST STUDIED A PEREK OF TANYA AND ONLY AFTERWARDS OPENED THE SIDDUR AND BEGAN HAREINI.

The Rebbe adds in a footnote:

The *Pri Megadim* .. is of the opinion that "*tzedakah* before *davening*" should actually be given while saying "*Vayevarech Dovid*" (and it would indeed seem that the obligation to give tzedakah before *davening* can be accomplished by giving tzedakah during *Vayevarech Dovid*). However, the fact that the Alter Rebbe writes [about these obligations] in his *Shulchan Aruch* in two separate places

(in *siman* 51 and *siman* 92), implies that they are [actually] two [separate obligations of] giving. This seems to be the case particularly when one considers the intent behind [each of the] givings ..as the [intentions] are opposites. Even though the *halacha* that one should give tzedakah before *davening* is mentioned in *Shulchan Aruch* at the end of *siman* 92, the best time for it is actually before *davening*. And of course, there is no reason to create an interruption between the *brachos* of *ga'al Yisrael* and *shemoneh esrei* .. by giving tzedakah. This is not the place [to discuss this at greater length].⁶

Hisbonenus—Contemplation

An important part of *hachanah l'tefillah* is contemplating the Chassidus that one studied, thus internalizing its message. Here the Rebbe details the when and how of this *avodah*.

Forms of Hisbonenus

In reply to your letter, in which you ask for details about the proper time and method for contemplating *Chassidus*:

BETTER TO EAT IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO DAVEN AFTERWARDS THAN THE OTHER WAY AROUND.

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REB YOEL KAHAN DELIVERS A SHIUR CHASSIDUS IN THE SMALL ZAL AT 770.

Obviously, *hisbonenus* must begin with understanding the concept, and sometimes one will merit that it automatically reveals the pleasantness and sweetness within the concept [being studied].

Regarding the various methods and times for *hisbonenus*; you should study—in depth—the letters of my father-in-law, the Rebbe, זצוקללה"ה, נבג"מ זי"ע, printed in *Hatomim* issue 4 p. 46, as well as the attached [material].

In general, you should discuss such matters with your *mashpia* who teaches you Chassidus, and elders of *anash* who were pupils of the elder Chassidim in *Tomchei Temimim* in Lubavitch, and they will instruct you.

With blessings for Torah study with *yiras Shamayim* and success in the *avodah* of davening; and may you also influence your friends in all this.⁷

The Words or the Meaning?

In reply to your letter, in which you ask if thinking *Chassidus* during

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davening needs to be specifically with the *osiyos harav* [exact wording]: This isn't required; on the contrary, thinking about a concept without being particular about the wording often involves one's mind more and adds enthusiasm (טראגט מען זיך מער חיות (צו און מען קריגט מער חיות [this method] is [anyway] preceded by careful study of the *osiyos harav*, you will certainly not stray from the point...⁸

Hisbonenus in tallis and tefillin

The essential part of this *avodah* is through *hisbonenus* in *tallis* and *tefillin*, as explained in the *maamar* titled *Lo Yetzei Ha'ish* 5632, and in greater detail in the letter of the Rebbe Rashab, which explains the greatness of *hisbonenus* before davening; specifically when done while wearing the *tallis* and *tefillin*.⁹

Think About the Rebbe

...I would suggest that your wife should put *tzedakah* in the *pushkah* of

Rav Meir Ba'al Hanes before lighting candles every Erev Shabbos and Erev Yom Tov, and that you should remind yourself, while putting on *tefillin*, that you are connected with my father-in-law, the Rebbe, ה"ק"מ. This will serve as the channel through which the blessing [for healthy children] will be fulfilled.¹⁰

Perek Tanya

Chassidim have the custom to study an entire *perek* of Tanya every morning.

The study of Torah should be strengthened and increased in a way of *mehadrin* (beautifying the mitzvah) and *mehadrin min hamehadrin* (beautifying the mitzvah in an exceptional manner), in each place and in every circle in a way appropriate [for that place and circle]. The *minhag* of Chassidim (in previous generations as well as this one) to study a *perek* of Tanya every day before davening should be included in this. This custom should be publicized and encouraged.

It is astonishing that this custom isn't publicized, despite there being Chassidim in our generation who perform this custom, as I have seen myself [to be the case] regarding Chassidim of our generation.

I didn't ask them whether this study [takes place] prior to the very beginning of davening —[meaning] even prior to reciting *Hareini*—or after reciting *Hareini*. It would make sense to say that this study took place *prior* to the beginning of davening; even prior to reciting *Hareini*. This means that they first studied a *perek* of Tanya and only afterwards opened the siddur and began *Hareini*.¹¹

Perek Mem Alef

The advisable [way to attain] *kavana* [concentration] during davening is by spending several moments before davening

contemplating before Whom one is about to daven. It is appropriate for you to also memorize the beginning of *perek* 41 in Tanya until the word המלך on the second page, and before davening you should either recite it or think about its content.¹²

Mezonos

Although generally we are careful not to eat before performing a mitzvah in its proper time, an exception was made for davening *shacharis*. The Rebbe explains why.

The Tzemach Tzedek's saying is well-known, that it is preferable to eat in order to be able to daven afterwards, rather than the opposite—davening in order to be able to eat. Due to the [relative] feebleness of our generation, even eating *mezonos*¹³ has been permitted (of course, only after reciting the "small *shema*"¹⁴) for those who finish their prayers long after awakening. There is no need to be stringent in this regard, as stringency can lead to a weakening in *avodas Hashem*.¹⁵ **T**

1. Shemos 23, 30. Hashem promises to slowly banish the inhabitants of Eretz C'naan to facilitate the Jews' conquest. Here, the *avodah* must be to slowly separate from *gashmiyus*, as the Rebbe elaborates.

2. Toras Menachem vol. 16 p. 341.

3. Brachos ch. 5 Mishna 1.

4. Igros Kodesh vol. 14 p. 407.

5. Ibid. vol. 4 p. 215.

6. Ibid. vol. 19 p. 72.

7. Ibid. vol. 12 p. 204

8. Ibid. vol. 11 p. 380.

9. Toras Menachem Hisva'aduyos vol. 2 p. 883.

10. Igros Kodesh vol. 4 p. 51.

11. Toras Menachem 5749 vol. 3 p. 68, p. 75.

12. Igros Kodesh vol. 17 p. 111.

13. Which is more likely to be considered a full meal.

14. I.e. just the paragraphs of *shema*, *vehaya*, and *vayomer*, prior to davening.

15. Ibid. vol. 14 p. 19.

