

חובות הלבבות • שער יחוד המעשה • פרק ראשון

Sentence by Sentence • Punctuated Hebrew with Translation and Notes • Navy & Gold Edition

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In this first chapter of Shaar Yichud HaMaaseh, we begin to learn the true meaning of dedicating our actions to Hashem. The Chovos HaLevavos opens this gate by defining what it means to have absolute sincerity in our avodah, showing us how a Yid must direct his heart toward Hashem in everything he does.

We will explore how this purity of intent must penetrate every single aspect of our lives, whether we are performing mitzvos in public where others can see us, or in the quietest, most hidden corners of our private lives.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

אבל מה הוא יחוד המעשה לאלהים?

But what is the true dedication of action to Hashem?

NOTE The term "Yichud HaMaaseh" (dedication of action) refers to purifying our deeds so they are directed solely to Hashem, without any ulterior motives.

הוא הכוונה בנראה ובנסתר במעשה עבודת האלהים לשמו, להגיע אל רצונו בלבד, מבלי רצון הפרואים.

It is the inner intention, both in our outwardly visible deeds and in our hidden ones, to perform every act of service to Hashem purely for His Name's sake, solely to attain His favor, and not to seek the favor or approval of created beings.

NOTE This is the foundation of lishmah (doing a mitzvah for its own sake). A person's avodah must be consistent, whether others are watching or if it is done in complete privacy.

WHAT TO TAKE FROM IT

The chapter teaches us that true devotion of our actions to Hashem means having the pure, unadulterated intent to do every single act of service solely for His Name. To truly serve Hashem, a person must seek only Hashem's favor and completely cast aside any desire to win the approval, praise, or favor of other people.

The Rabbeinu Bachya is opening our eyes to a deep and beautiful truth about our avodah. It is so easy to fall into the trap of living for the eyes of others. We are social creatures, and the yetzer hara loves to whisper in our ear, "Look at how nicely you are davening, look at how much you are learning, what will people say about your frumkeit?" But the Chovos HaLevavos teaches us that true yichud hama'aseh—dedicating our actions to Hashem—means clearing away all that noise. It means that whether someone is watching us or we are completely alone in a room, our only goal is to bring a nachas ruach to Hashem.

Think about how much energy we waste trying to manage our image and win the approval of people who are just as fragile and fleeting as we are. When we shift our focus to pleasing Hashem alone, a tremendous weight is lifted off our shoulders. There is a beautiful peace that comes with knowing you have only One Master to please. If He is happy with your actions, nothing else in the world matters.

Today, choose one small mitzvah or act of chesed and do it completely in secret, or pause for three seconds before you daven to say to yourself: "I am doing this solely for the pleasure of Hashem, and for no one else."