

חובות הלבבות • שער יחוד המעשה • פרק שני

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

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In this chapter, the Chovos HaLevavos shows us the practical path to achieving true yichud hama'aseh—how a person can reach the level where every single one of his actions is done purely for the sake of Hashem. The Rabbeinu Bachya teaches us that this is not an impossible dream, but rather a goal we can reach by establishing ten fundamental pillars deep within our hearts.

By learning and internalizing these ten essential matters, a Yid clarifies for himself the very roots of his avodah. Once these truths are firmly set in his neshama, he will no longer look to or hope for the approval of any human being, but will direct his entire heart solely to doing the will of Hashem.

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

אבל במה יהיה יחוד המעשה לאלהים לבדו?

But how can a person achieve the dedication of all his actions to Hashem alone?

NOTE Yichud hama'aseh means purifying one's intentions so that every single mitzvah and action is done solely for the sake of Heaven, without any ulterior motives.

בעשרה ענינים.

Through ten matters.

כאשר יתקיימו בלב האדם, ויתברר אצלו כי הם אדני עבודתו ושרשי מעשהו, ישלם יחודו בהם לשם האל, ולא יפנה אל זולתו, ולא יקוה בלעדיו, ולא יכון בהם זולתי רצונו.

When these are established in a person's heart, and it becomes clear to him that they are the very pillars of his avodah and the roots of his actions, his dedication of deed to Hashem's Name will become complete; he will not turn to anyone else, he will not place his hope in any other, and he will have no intention in his actions other than to fulfill Hashem's will.

הראשון: יחוד האלהים בלב שלם, כאשר קדם בתחלת ספרי זה.

The first is: declaring the absolute oneness of Hashem with a complete heart, as was explained at the beginning of this book.

NOTE This refers to Shaar HaYichud, the first gate of the book, which establishes the intellectual and emotional foundation of Hashem's absolute unity.

והשני: הבחינה בטובות האלהים והתמדתן עליו, כאשר בארנו בו.

The second is: reflecting deeply upon the favors of Hashem and their constant flow upon him, as we have explained in its place.

NOTE This refers to Shaar HaBechinah, the second gate, which teaches us to look at the world and our own lives to recognize Hashem's constant kindness.

וְהַשְׁלִישִׁי: שְׂיִקְבֵּל עָלָיו הָעֲבוּדָה לֵאלֹהִים, כְּאֲשֶׁר זָכַרְתִּי בּוֹ.

The third is: that he accept upon himself the service of Hashem, as I have mentioned there.

NOTE This refers to Shaar Kabalas HaAvodah, the third gate, where a person willingly accepts the yoke of Heaven.

וְהָרְבִיעִי: שְׂיִוְדָּה בְּבִטְחוֹן עָלָיו מִבְּרִית הַבְּרוּאִים.

The fourth is: that he acknowledge the duty of placing his trust in Hashem alone, and not in created beings.

וְהַחֲמִישִׁי: שְׂיֵאֱמִין כִּי הַתּוֹעֵלֶת וְהַנֶּזֶק אֵינָם בְּיַד נִבְרָא וְלֹא בִּיכְלָתוֹ, מִבְּלִיתִי רְשׁוֹת הַבּוֹרָא.

The fifth is: that he believe with complete faith that benefit and harm are not in the hands of any created being, nor within their power, without the permission of the Creator.

NOTE This is a fundamental principle of bitachon: realizing that people are merely instruments, and only Hashem decrees what actually happens.

וְהַשֵּׁשִׁי: שְׂיִהְיֶה שׁוֹה אֶצְלוֹ אִם יִשְׁבַּחוּהוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם אוֹ יִגְנוּהוּ.

The sixth is: that it should be completely equal to him whether people praise him or criticize him.

NOTE This is the high spiritual level of 'hishtavus' (equanimity), where a person is so focused on Hashem's approval that the opinions of other people no longer sway him.

וְהַשְּׁבִיעִי: שְׂיַעֲזֹב הִפּוּי לְבִנֵּי אָדָם.

The seventh is: that he abandon trying to beautify and adorn his actions to find favor in the eyes of people.

וְהַשְּׁמִינִי: לְפָנֹת לְבוֹ מַעֲסָקֵי הָעוֹלָם בָּעֵת שֶׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂה לַעֲוֵה"ב.

The eighth is: to clear his heart of worldly involvements at the time he is acting for the sake of the World to Come.

NOTE When a person davens or learns, he must completely shut out his business and mundane worries to focus entirely on his connection to Hashem.

וְהַתְּשִׁיעִי: שְׂיִירָא מֵאֲלֹהִים וְיִבוֹשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ.

The ninth is: that he fear Hashem and feel a deep sense of shame and embarrassment before Him.

וְהָעֲשִׂירִי: שְׂיִוַּעֵץ עִם הַשֹּׁכֵל בְּכָל הִרְהוּרֵי הַיֵּצֶר בְּלִבּוֹ, וּלְקַבֵּל עֲצָתוֹ מִבְּלִיתִי עֲצַת יֵצֶרוֹ.

And the tenth is: that he consult with his intellect regarding all the promptings of the yetzer hara in his heart, accepting the intellect's counsel and rejecting the counsel of his yetzer.

NOTE The 'sechel' here refers to the Torah-guided intellect, which acts as the soul's defense against the deceptive arguments of the yetzer hara.

WHAT TO TAKE FROM IT

The chapter outlines these ten pillars of pure avodah: first, having complete emunah in the absolute unity of Hashem; second, constantly reflecting on the endless chesed and favors Hashem bestows upon us; third, accepting the absolute duty to serve Him; fourth, placing our trust entirely in Hashem rather than in flesh and blood; fifth, realizing that no created being has the power to help or harm us without the Creator's permission; sixth, reaching a state of equanimity where human praise and scorn are equal to us; seventh, abandoning the desire to show off or embellish ourselves to others; eighth, clearing our minds

of worldly worries when we are busy with spiritual matters; ninth, having a deep yiras Shamayim and feeling embarrassed before Hashem; and tenth, always using our intellect to overcome the urges of the yetzer hara.

למעשה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

My dear talmid, the holy Chovos HaLevavos is laying down the very foundation of our avodah here. We often think that serving Hashem with a complete heart is a lofty, unreachable level, but the Rabbeinu Bachya shows us that it is built on practical, daily steps. When you realize that no human being can truly help or harm you without Hashem's decree, the heavy burden of trying to please everyone just melts away. Why waste your precious energy trying to embellish yourself or seek the approval of others when their praise and their scorn are ultimately meaningless?

To truly dedicate our actions to Hashem, we must practice clearing the mind of worldly noise when we are doing a mitzvah or learning Torah. When you stand before Hashem in tefillah or sit down to learn, that is not the time to plan your business or worry about what others think of you. It is a time to feel a healthy shyness before the Creator of the world, who is showering you with constant, undeserved kindnesses at every single moment.

Today, when you do a mitzvah or daven, take thirty seconds beforehand to quiet your mind, remind yourself that only Hashem's will matters, and consciously let go of any desire for human praise or recognition.