



TRANSFORM YOUR EMUNAH

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For every individual, the first and most fundamental prerequisite to living a meaningful life is to answer the question — what is my purpose in this world?

Some people opt to avoid the issue by preoccupying themselves with other things, consciously or unconsciously avoiding seeking a truthful answer to this fundamental question. Those who do seek an answer, however, are often not sufficiently informed to be able to find one that is satisfactory.

How should we go about answering this question? Or, for that matter, any question with a bearing on our lives? Common sense and logic are not always the best means to ascertaining the truth; often, one's perspective makes a big difference — whether you see a 6 or a 9 depends on the side from which you view the digit. Furthermore, persuasive orators will suggest convincing answers which may not be true. Millions of people followed the cunning words of Adolf Hitler,

yemach shemo, and he is but one example of a persuasive tyrant.

As Jews, however, we are privileged to have been given the Torah — God’s guide to life — which contains the absolute truth. What, then, does the Torah teach about the individual’s purpose in this world? We will answer this question in four steps.

1. Classic Torah sources teach that Hashem created the universe to share His goodness with us. But one cannot give when there is no recipient. God therefore created us to be the recipients of His bountiful goodness.¹

2. An obvious question is, if God truly loves us and intends to bestow His kindness upon us, why do people suffer so many painful experiences? This can be partially explained by taking into account the existence of *Olam Haba*, the World to Come. We are taught that one moment of the pleasure experienced in *Olam Haba* is infinitely greater than a lifetime of uninterrupted pleasure in our physical world. Hashem’s ultimate intention is to shower us with His light in *Olam Haba*, our place of eternal rest, and not in this physical world. It is there, in *Olam Haba*, that we will experience Hashem’s true goodness, as the Gemara states,² “We do

1. *Mesillas Yescharim*, Chapter 1

2. *Brachos* 34b

not have the capacity to even imagine the magnitude of the pleasure that exists there.” Without belief in an afterlife, life in this world is meaningless. With belief in *Olam Haba*, however, death is not the end; it is just the beginning.³

3. What, then, do we need this physical world for? Maybe we should be born straight into *Olam Haba* and avoid this physical world altogether?

Our classical sources teach that in order to receive the ultimate experience of pleasure in the World to Come, we first need to journey through this physical environment called “life,” only after which we will enjoy the ultimate pleasure the afterlife has to offer, based on our merits and achievements in this existence.

Although a complete understanding of this concept is beyond human capacity, an analogy offered by classic commentators helps to shed light on the topic: If we received a large sum of money as a gift, we would certainly be happy with our good fortune. But this cannot compare to the experience of working hard and earning the money ourselves. When the money is earned through our own efforts, we derive much more satisfaction and pleasure from it. In the same vein, enjoying a share of the pleasures of the World to Come

3. *Mesillas Yesharim*, Chapter 1

we have earned with our own hard work is infinitely more pleasurable than receiving it as a gift.

This is the reason for the existence of the physical world. It does not exist for its own sake, but rather as a platform on which to earn our portion in *Olam Haba*, based on our merits and achievements.⁴ This answers our initial question. What is our purpose in this world? To earn our ultimate reward in *Olam Haba* and to experience Hashem's sublime goodness there.

4. How, practically, do we reach *Olam Haba* and thus fulfill our purpose in this world? Studying Torah — the instructions of the Creator — and performing the mitzvos — His commandments — are obvious methods. However, the Ramban⁵ writes, “The purpose of all the mitzvos, and in fact *the only reason* for Hashem creating us, is that we come to have *emunah* (faith) in Hashem.” Our ultimate purpose in this world is to develop *emunah* in Hashem!

Studying *emunah* as an academic subject is relatively easy. Sincerely internalizing *emunah*, however, takes a lifetime of work. Some of the greatest sages have taught that the distance between understanding *emunah* intellectually and internalizing it emotionally is greater than the distance between heaven and earth! However,

4. *Daas Tevunos* 18

5. Ramban, *Shemos* 13:16

since this is the only purpose for our existence, it is imperative to try to consciously live with *emunah*.

Daily study of and meditation on teachings about *emunah* provides inspiration and constant awareness.

We invite you to explore our *sefer*, **Transform Your Emunah In Just 60 Seconds A Day**, a collection of concise paraphrased Torah sources about *emunah*, each accompanied by a brief commentary. It is our hope and prayer that this collection will inspire many people to fulfill their ultimate purpose in this world and live a truly meaningful life!

DEVELOPING OUR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HASHEM

Once we have internalized that our sole mission and purpose in life is to make maximum efforts to excel in *emunah*, how are we to practically go about doing so? Of course, there are many different forms of serving Hashem, such as the performance of mitzvos, Torah study, and the like. All forms of service to Hashem are important and are ultimately based on having *emunah* in Hashem. For our purposes, we shall now explore one of the most potent forms of applying and living *emunah* in a practical way — perhaps the strongest course in developing our personal relationship with Hashem.

When I talk to a friend, I do so because I know that he will listen; talking to a wall is dispiriting because it is futile. On the other hand, when I send a voice message to someone, I communicate as if that person is in front of me, even though he may currently be on the other side of the globe, offline and unresponsive.

Why? Because I *believe* that he will hear my words, even though we are not currently together.

If I sincerely believe in the existence of Hashem, talking to Him is like leaving a voice message for a friend. These days we do not receive direct revelations from Hashem. We do not experience His Presence in the tangible way that we experience another human being. But if we believe that God permeates the entire world, and that He is listening to every word that we utter, we should certainly communicate with Him at the very least in the same way that we communicate with another person. Talking to Hashem in one's own words and thereby developing a personal relationship with Him is often referred to as *hisbodedus*.

The *Mesillas Yesharim*⁶ writes that the early pious sages would practice *hisbodedus* and bond with Hashem in seclusion. He writes that as early a luminary as Dovid Hamelech spoke approvingly about the practice of *hisbodedus*, and that the prophets Eliyahu and Elisha would spend large amounts of time secluded in the mountains, practicing *hisbodedus* with Hashem. To quote the *Mesillas Yesharim*, “*Hisbodedus* is more precious than anything else.”

The *Mesillas Yesharim* explains that by isolating ourselves from society and practicing *hisbodedus* with

6. *Mesillas Yesharim*, Chapter 15

Hashem, we clear our mind and heart of mundane matters, thereby creating room for success in our spiritual endeavors. Our lives involve serving Hashem in many ways, expressing our submission to and love for Him. We observe many mitzvos with all their intricacies. We have *chessed*; we have Torah study. All of these are extremely important! It is fascinating, however, to note this potent and rare expression used by the *Mesillas Yesharim*, which highlights the power and effectiveness of *hisbodedus* — “*Hisbodedus* is more precious than anything else!”

The *Sefer Chareidim*⁷ and *Shelah Hakadosh*⁸ write, citing masters of Kabbalah, that “The effect that *hisbodedus* has on the soul is seven times greater than the effect of learning Torah.” Every morning, we recite a mishnah which states that the value of Torah learning is so profound that it equals that of all the mitzvos put together.⁹ Yet the *Sefer Chareidim* and *Shelah Hakadosh* teach that the effect of *hisbodedus* on the soul is seven times stronger than even that of Torah learning!

The Chofetz Chaim¹⁰ writes, “The reason that we do not merit salvation from all the hard times that befall us is that we do not pray and cry out to

7. *Sefer Chareidim*, Chapter 65

8. *Shnei Luchos Habris*, Yoma Ner Mitzvah 2

9. *Peah* 1:1

10. *Likutei Amarim* 11

Hashem enough.” He continues, “It is not sufficient to daven *Shemoneh Esrei* three times a day. Rather, several times a day, while alone, a person must pour out his heart in prayer to Hashem from the depths of his soul. Since one is accustomed to the daily recital of the *Shemoneh Esrei*, one does not say these prayers with absolute sincerity. On the other hand, when it comes to speaking to Hashem with our own words, in our own way — this type of prayer emanates from the depths of one’s soul, with true sincerity. This type of prayer will, without question, not be denied by Hashem!”

Much has been written about *hisbodedus* and I urge you to research this topic further via the many superb *sefarim* and online resources available. Ultimately, however, no external resource can give over the precise details, just like one cannot be robotically directed as to what to discuss or when, where, and how often to connect with one’s spouse or best friend. You do not need to be a scholar or have a diploma in order to enter into a relationship. *Hisbodedus* is a relationship — your own personal relationship with Hashem.

We need to remind ourselves that *emunah* is belief. Sometimes, I may not know, nor do I necessarily experience or feel. Still, I always *believe* that He is there. I believe that He is listening. I believe that by talking to

Hashem, I am fulfilling the most precious *avodah* that exists in the world.

I once came across the following analogy. A prince became alienated from his family and began to wander the streets. One day, a friend of the king saw the prince scrounging in a rubbish heap. In shock, he asked the prince what he was doing. The prince responded that he was hungry and searching for food. Astonished, the king's friend said, "Your father is the richest man in the country. Go back home and ask him for food and he'll gladly provide you with whatever you need!" The prince responded, "You don't understand. I have such a busy schedule. I am just too busy to go talk to him. I don't have one minute to spare to make my way to my father's house." The silliness of the prince's response is obvious. A person with sincere *emunah* in Hashem's existence will certainly find the time to regularly talk to the King of Kings and treat it as the highest priority.

Behatzlachah!



This write-up was personally reviewed by
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presented to the public.

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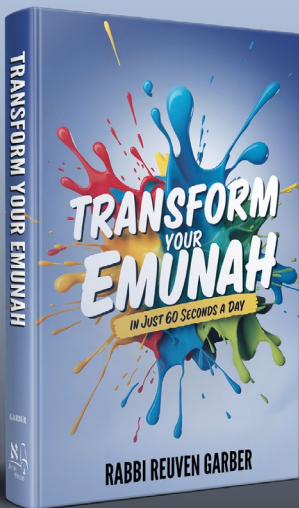




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