

## Nourishment for the Neshama

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### Being Jewish is Wonderful!

Being Jewish is wonderful!

Most Jewish people I know have a connection to Judaism that is very happy. It could be as small as remembering a beloved grandparent whose love meant so much, all the way to daily practice of our religion. Without negating these emotional experiences of joy regarding Judaism, I recently began to understand how wonderful it is to be Jewish in a much different way.

The concept has to do with the ability we have to have a relationship with the Creator of the world. When the Jews were redeemed from Israel, Moshe would teach us the Torah and then each person would go off and speak out to Gd, attempting to internalize it and learn it and draw closer to Gd. This practice is called 'hisbodidus,' literally seclusion. The Jews in the desert would take a good close look at themselves "in Gd's presence" and they would adjust themselves to His Commandments, both ritually and characteristically (i.e. in emulating Him.) Prayer was instituted as a way to re-create this type of dialogue, three times a day. However, if a person is not finding that their prayers are building the relationship and sense of closeness they would like to have in their lives with the Creator, hisbodidus may be something to explore!

The Creator already knows everything that we have done and what our intentions were, what is in our hearts and minds, so there is absolutely no need to cover it up or try to rationalize it, as we may do with a trusted friend! Instead, we can speak to him about our foibles and our yearning to improve in His presence and then we can gain insight as to how we may improve and make ourselves in His Image.

Here are some beneficial outcomes:

1. When we sincerely look at ourselves in Gd's presence and seek His approval, the approval of others does not have as much power over us; we have more confidence in our ability to do what is good and right in Gd's eyes
2. We are able to inch our way down an infinite path of emulating Gd's love, forgiveness, kindness, patience, overlooking of faults, giving the benefit of the doubt and more. When we bring these characteristics to our actions each day, we are bringing in light and shining it into the darkness of this world. We benefit others, but because WE have chosen to do this, the light comes first to us and then goes outwards and OUR lives are enhanced with a sense of joy.
3. Stretching ourselves by aspiring to be more like the Creator and taking action to do so is rising above our nature. Each time we rise above our nature to shine light, we create holiness for ourselves and for the world. The effect is a declaration of Gd's unity with a resulting experience of joy in our life

I am joyous about having the great privilege to be Jewish, because we can express gratitude to Gd for the great honor of serving Him in this world and feeling the joy of a connection that is literally out of this world (unless we bring it in!).

Links below offer some ways to begin:

[The Clarity Seminar](#)

[Rabbi Jonathan Rietti](#)

[Jewish Women's Project for Ahavas Yisrael](#)