

Tefillah Thoughts

Published by Congregation Tzemach Tzedek, Lubavitch of Monsey
2 Langeries Drive Monsey, N.Y. 10952

Promoting appropriate decorum and kavanah during davening

Pirush Ha'Milos:

“חילו מפניו כל הארץ אף-תכון תבל בל-תמוט”
“Tremble before Him, all the earth; indeed, the world will be firmly established that it shall not falter.”

Rashi explains in his commentary on Divrei Ha'Yamim 1 (16:30) that when a power-hungry king sees that his subjects are wary and afraid of him, he tries to strike terror into them, so they will cater to his every wish, lest he destroys their homes.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not this way. When humanity fears him, the world is fixed so that it will not falter. He takes swift vengeance on robbers and bandits and humanity lives in peace. The righteous prosper and everyone feels secure. Therefore, “Tremble before him everyone on earth” without worry, for the widespread fear of Him will cause him to firmly establish the social order and life will run smoothly. On the other hand, when humanity does not fear Him and sin is widespread, He will disrupt their lives and destroy them.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

My grandfather once explained in a ma'amar the statement, “*R. Elazar first gave a coin to a pauper and then davened:*” Davening must be with life. By giving, before davening, charity to a pauper- thereby giving him life- one's davening is suffused with a great increase of 'aliveness'. So saying he motioned with his hand in an upward gesture to indicate that the increase is beyond imagination. Indeed my father would often seek out a pauper before davening to give him food.

(Hayom Yom 2 Kislev)

Avodas Ha'Tefillah:

Chassidim of Kotzk once asked the Rebbe Maharash why Lubavitcher Chassidim spend such a long time praying. They illustrated their question in parable form. “When one is riding through a village and hoodlums begin throwing stones at the carriage, is it not better to whip the horses and ride faster?” The Rebbe Maharash answered: “That would be the right thing to do, when the hoodlums are throwing stones from the outside.” “If, however, they have already entered the carriage, the only alternative is to stop the carriage and cast them off.”

(“Stories from my father's Shabbos table”)



Laws and customs:

A hundred and twenty elders, among them several prophets, instituted the recitation of the eighteen blessings of Shmoneh Esray in a certain sequence. The first three are placed at the beginning in order that one should open by setting forth praise of Hashem, like a servant who first sets forth his master's praises and then asks him for a reward. The last three blessings are analogous to a servant's taking leave of his master after receiving his reward. The thirteen intermediate blessings are the request for the reward. Therefore, if an individual wishes to request the fulfillment of his own needs in the intermediate blessings, he may do so. By contrast, in the first three and the last three blessings, one should not ask for the fulfillment of individual needs.

(The Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Oruch: sec. 112:1)

A Story:

One Yom Kippur, the Baal Shem Tov was praying with his students in a small Polish village. With his spiritual vision, the Baal Shem Tov had detected that harsh heavenly judgments had been decreed against the Jewish people, so he and his students were crying out to G-d, imploring Him to rescind these harsh decrees and grant the Jews a year of blessing.

Their deep feeling took hold of all the villagers, and everyone rent his heart in prayer. One of these villagers was a simple shepherd boy. He did not know how to read; he could barely say the letters of the *alef-beis*. He could not read the words of the Machzor, or even mimic the responses of the other congregants. Yet he felt moved to pray with the others, so he opened the prayer book and began to recite the letters *alef, beis, gimmel*, reading the entire alphabet. He then called out to G-d: "This is all I can do, G-d. You know how the prayers should be pronounced. Please arrange the letters in the proper way."

This simple, heartfelt plea resounded powerfully within the Heavenly court. G-d rescinded all the harsh decrees and granted the Jews blessing and good fortune.



Biur Tefillah: "Zokef Kefufim"

David Hamelech, in Tehilim, praised Hashem with the words "Hashem supports all the fallen, and raises up all those who are bowed down." This Posuk is also the origin of the above blessing. It is recited in the morning, for the same reason that the previous blessings are recited; the reason being that these brachos reflect the various stages of awakening and getting up. So to with this Bracha. When we get up, we stand and walk upright, and we thank Hashem for "raising us up," since all our movements are possible only thanks to Hashem, just as we owe our very life to Hashem.

At the same time, we think of these words in the sense that David Hamelech wrote them, namely, that Hashem raises up those who are "bowed down" under various burdens, economic or spiritual, or are "weighed down" by worry and anxiety. For Hashem knows everybody's burdens, and He is kind and merciful in helping everyone carry one's burden, or lifting the burden altogether. We also think of those who are "bowed down" in the sense of being humble and subservient to Hashem. Humility and obedience are qualities which Hashem holds in high esteem, and He "raises up" those who cultivate these fine qualities.

When a person sleeps, and the mind is at rest, he lies prostrate in bed. In this position the head and the legs, with all other organs in between, are on the same level, as in an animal. For when the human being is inactive, not doing anything which is superior to the lower animals, he is to all intents and purposes the same as they. But when he awakes, jumps out of bed, ready to serve his Creator, he is man again, standing on his two feet on earth, but his head reaches out to heaven. His human stature at once marks him for the man than he is.

We, Jews, take note of the human stature every morning, and have a special blessing, whereby we thank Hashem, our creator, for our erect posture, symbolic of our special station in the scheme of creation. It remains up to us to "walk upright," not only physically, but also spiritually, in our daily conduct as human beings, and not as beasts in human form.

(My Prayer)

Your comments and feedback are welcome: tefillathoughts@monseychabad.com