

Tefillah Thoughts

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Promoting appropriate decorum and kavanah during davening

Pirush Ha'Milos:

“ישמחו השמים ותגל הארץ ויאמרו בגוים ה' מלך”
“The heavens will rejoice, the earth will exult, and among the nations they will proclaim, ‘the L-rd reigns’”.

The letters of ישמחו, “shall rejoice” are the same letters as the word משיחו, “His anointed one” – Moshiach. When Moshiach comes, there will be joy above and below.

The letters of ותגל, “and shall exult” are the same letters as the word גלות, “exile”. When the exiles return to the Land of Israel, the Holy Land will exult and fill with joy.

“ירעם הים ומלאו יעלץ השדה וכל אשר בו”
“The sea and its fullness will roar; the field and all therein will jubilate.”

“אז ירננו עצי היער מלפני ה' כי בא לשפוט את הארץ”
“Then the trees of the forest will sing before the Lord, when He comes to judge the earth”

POINTS OF INTEREST:

No matter how much effort is exerted no one can earn one cent more than G-d has ordained that he – this particular person – shall earn. One must do what is necessary, but one must remember that all his work is but an adjunct. The main thing is Hashem’s blessing, and that blessing is earned by being observant of Hashem’s commandments: **Davening with a minyan**, observing Shabbos b’hidur, meticulous observance of kashrus, having children instructed by sincerely religious teachers.

(Hayom Yom Av 4)

Avodas Ha'Tefillah:

The Mashpia, the Rashbatz, taught the students the virtue of having a set place for praying. When he would see a student walking to and fro during his prayers, he would say: “Look here, my son. I can understand why you left your original place of prayer. Most likely, you considered the second place more conducive to concentrate. What I don’t understand is why, having considered the first place less desirable, you felt it necessary to return to it.”

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



Laws and customs:

These are the blessings during which we bow: At the beginning and end of the first blessing and at the beginning and end of the Modim blessing. If one seeks to bow at the end or at the beginning of any other blessing, he should be instructed not to bow, lest this lead to uprooting an ordinance of the Chachamim, for people at large would conclude that whoever bows is being stringent according to his individual desire, and that there is no ordinance of the Chachamim to bow. This would lead to their being lax and failing to bow during the first bracha and the Modim bracha.

(The Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Oruch: sec. 113:1)

A Story:

The Mashpia Reb Shmuel Groinem was once discussing the service of prayer with his students. “A person who approaches God only with requests for material benefits forfeits a lot.” He then went on to explain this concept with a parable:

“Once a king had invited all his needy subjects to his palace, promising to fulfill any requests they made. Among the many who made their way to the king’s palace was a leper, who waited anxiously for his turn to approach the king. When the leper’s turn came, he bowed humbly and made the following request: ‘Oh mighty ruler. I am afflicted with this agonizing disease. Please, have backscratchers custom-made for me so I can itch my sores more easily.’ Granted his wish, the leper left the palace with a contented smile. The people he encountered outside, however laughed at him: “What a fool you are! The king had promised to grant your request. If so, why did you waste the opportunity asking for something that will give you only temporary relief? Why didn’t you ask for medical treatment to cure your dreadful malady entirely?”



Biur Tefillah: “Malbish Arumim”

Getting dressed in the morning is, of course, one of the most natural things. But it is characteristic of the Jewish way of life that even such a simple and natural thing as putting our clothes on in the morning is an occasion for a blessing. We bless Hashem Who clothes the naked.

This blessing has its origin in the narrative of the Torah, when it is stated that Hashem made clothes of skins for Adam and Chava and clothed them. Our Chachamim tell us that the story of Hashem clothing Adam and Chava teaches us to follow Hashem’s example and to clothe the needy and the poor. This is one of the first things of which this Bracha reminds us. The blessing is a timely reminder every morning, to observe our Jewish standards of modesty in our daily conduct.

In a deeper sense, still, our Chachamim speak of “clothes” in terms of Mitzvot and good deeds, the “garments” of the Neshama. The Neshama, like the body requires “food” and “clothes,” except that the Neshama’s food and clothes are spiritual: knowledge of the Torah is the “food” of the soul; the observance of the Mitzvot and the practice of good works in the daily life are the “garments” of the soul. Therefore, just as the blessing reminds us of our duty to feed and clothe the needy and poor, so are we reminded of our duty to “feed” and “clothe” our own souls, as well as the souls of those that are poor in spiritual matters. We must help them to acquire more knowledge of the Torah and Mitzvot and the Jewish way of life, so that they should be well-fed and well-dressed in every respect, materially and spiritually.

(My Prayer)

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