

Tefillah Thoughts

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2 Langeries Drive Monsey, N.Y. 10952

Promoting appropriate decorum and kavanah during davening

Pirush Ha'Milos:

“הודו לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו”

“Give thanks to the L-rd for He is good, for His kindness is everlasting.”

“His kindness” is referring to Torah which is everlasting.

(Ohr Ha'Tefillah)

“ואמרו הושיענו אלקי ישענו וקבצנו והצילנו מן הגוים להודות לשם קדשך להשתבח בתהלתך”

“And say, ‘help us, G-d of our salvation, gather us and deliver us from among the nations that we may give thanks to Your holy name and glory in Your praise.”

“And say” is a plural term, referring to the request of all Yiden – men, women, and children – for the complete redemption.

(Ohr Ha'Tefillah)

“ברוך ה' אלקי ישראל מן העולם ועד העולם ויאמרו כל העם אמן והלל לה”

“Blessed is the L-rd, the G-d of Israel, to all eternity; and all the people said Amen and praise to the L-rd.”

POINTS OF INTEREST:

There is not the vaguest shadow of doubt that, wherever our feet tread, it is all in order to cleanse and purify the world with words of Torah and Tefillah. We, all of Israel, are emissaries of Hashem, each of us as Divine Providence has decreed for us. None of us is free from this sacred task placed on our shoulders.

(Hayom Yom 5 Adar 1)

Avodas Ha'Tefillah:

Those that think that davening b'avoda is relevant only to ovdim are mistaken. Davening b'avoda is a personal responsibility just like putting on Tefillin and tzitzis, which everyone needs. Some think that to daven b'avoda one must know by heart at least 50 ma'amorim and know precisely all the details of the ma'amor. Wrong. The primary ideas of avodah is quality not the quantity of how much time one spends davening. The most important issue is that during davening one should be attached to his davening, causing him to forget about time and space. Quantity is relevant in material matters, but in spiritual issues quality is the decisive factor.

(Sefer Hasichos 5696 p198)

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Laws and customs:

One should not add to the adjectives used with relation to Hashem beyond “the great, mighty, and awesome G-d.” For when one adds further terms and closes his list, it appears that he has, according to his conception, covered all of Hashem’s praises. And who can declare all His praise? Indeed, we would not have used even these three epithets had they not been written by Moshe in the Torah and incorporated in the prayers by the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah. One should therefore not deviate from the text laid down by the Chachamim.

(The Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Oruch: sec. 113:8)

A Story:

The shul in the town of Nevel was humming with conversation. The prayers had not yet begun and the local townspeople were exchanging their daily experiences of small *shtetl* life. Observations were made on the fine milk that Yankel's cows produce, the amount of hay Shmerel's horses consumed, and the damage Yossel's goat had caused to the vegetable patch. Once the prayers began, however, all conversation ceased. The people blocked out all distracting thoughts and worries and immersed themselves in prayer.

Once at a gathering, Rabbi Michoel the elder elaborated on the sanctity of a synagogue. "It hardly seems appropriate to speak about cows and horses in this holy place," he said. The people agreed and decided that from then on they would not speak about mundane matters before or after their prayers. They adhered to his resolution with utmost respect.

About a month later, Rabbi Michoel ascended the podium one morning and requested the congregation's attention. "I suggest we no longer pay attention to the resolution we made. From now on, we may talk about mundane matters in synagogue before the prayers begin as we used to. Needless to say, this should not be done during the service itself."

In response to the many questioning looks, Rabbi Michoel continued, "Although we had proper intention, it seems that this resolution caused more harm than good. Before the resolution, we shared our daily difficulties with each other. We knew when a person needed a loan to replace his cow which had stopped producing milk, or when another person's horse had come of age and he needed funds to purchase a new one. When we stopped talking before the prayers, we lost touch with each other and were unable to show our care."



Biur Tefillah: "Hanosain La'Yaef Koach"

Having opened our eyes after a good night's sleep, having stretched our limbs, straightened our back, and clothed ourselves, we are now ready to begin a new day with fresh vigor. The bracha "who gives strength to the weary" therefore follows in logical order.

The miracle of rest and renewed strength is experienced every morning, when we rise from our sleep to begin the new day with renewed energy. But, as in the case of many other wonders which we see daily, or at regular intervals, like the rising of the sun and the changing of the seasons, our attention is not usually excited by these events. Thus, our prayers and blessings remind us not to take things for granted. This is why we say the bracha "Who gives strength to the weary" in the morning, so that we should thank our Creator for His wonderful kindness and infinite wisdom and power in making it possible for His creatures to rise every morning full of strength to perform their duties.

When we start a new day, which may be a difficult one, it is good to bear in mind that it is Hashem "Who gives strength to the weary." With hope and trust in Hashem, no road is too long or too hard, and no obstacles are too difficult.

(My Prayer)

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