

Tefillah Thoughts

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Promoting appropriate decorum and kavanah during davening

Pirush Ha'Milos:

"זכר רחמיו ה' וחסדיו כי מעולם המה"
"Lord, remember Your mercies and kindnesses, for they have existed for all time."

"תנו עז לאלקים על ישראל גאותו ועזו בשחקים"
"Ascribe power to G-d; His majesty is over Israel, and His might is in the skies."

"נורא אלקים ממקדשיך קל ישראל הוא נותן עז ותעצמות לעם ברוך אלקים"
"G-d you are feared from your Sanctuary; it is the G-d of Israel who grants strength and power to (His) people; blesses is G-d."

Rashi explains, "as a result of the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, the whole world fears Hashem. People say, 'since He showed no pity on His sanctuary, all the more so the evil ones and the idol worshippers have no reason to feel safe.'"

The Radak writes, "The Bais Hamikdash is the source of fear of heaven, for there dwelled the Shechina. Miracles were seen there. Also, when the Bais Hamikdash stood, the many wonders that were done for Israel were done from there. Therefore, the Passuk says 'G-d you are feared' that its root and source is 'from your Sanctuary'"

POINTS OF INTEREST:

The miracle of Purim teaches us that prayer and repentance can open all doors and tear all decrees asunder. "Even after a decree is finalized, it is possible to annul it with prayer" (Rosh Hashana 16). "Tefillah is so powerful that it can change nature, save a person from danger and invalidate a guilty verdict" (Rabbeinu Bechaya on Tefillah).

Avodas Ha'Tefillah:

"Prayer is referred to as a labor. What exertion is required of us? The Ramban explains that a man's thoughts are all over the place. In a short time he can think about hundreds of things. As we daven, various thoughts vie for our attention—thoughts which have nothing to do with prayer. The effort to halt this stream of thoughts and focus on our prayer is the exertion required of us...and it is not easy."

(Ramban, Shir Ha'shirim).



Laws and customs:

One should always endeavor to pray in a synagogue together with a congregation even though he can pray in his own home with (a quorum of) ten, for "the King's glory abides amidst a multitude." Moreover, "a person's prayers are heeded only in the synagogue," as (implied by) the Passuk, "to listen to the songs of praise and prayer." (For from the juxtaposition of "song" and "prayer" the sages taught:) "Prayer should be recited in a place of songs of praise" – i.e., "in a shul, where the congregation sings songs and praises in sweet and pleasant tones." It is there that prayer will be heeded.

(The Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Oruch: sec. 90:10)

Dedicated by Avraham Hayman in honor of his engagement to Devorah Gralnik.

A Story:

The Friedike Rebbe once told: Once, after returning from a walk with my father, he reminded me of a spot we passed – a busy street corner. "At that spot," he said to me, "I suddenly had an extremely rich and inspiring thought. I imagine that this is because a Jew once prayed *Mincha* at this spot."

That Jew probably prayed with half a mind, disturbed and jostled by the traffic on this busy street. Yet the holy words of prayer purified the air so that when my father passed that spot many years later, his sensitive mind was stimulated to generate an especially pure and refined idea.



Biur Tefillah: "She'asah Li Kol Tzorki"

In the Talmud this blessing is associated with the tying of the shoestrings. Thus, this blessing follows in logical order the previous blessing "Who directs the steps of man." The connection between this bracha and the tying up of the shoestrings is explained by the Avudraham in the sense that as long as a person is barefooted, he cannot go out to work, but when he puts his shoes on and ties them up, he is ready to go out and take care of his needs.

In making this blessing, we declare that all our needs are actually provided by Hashem. Note that the past tense is used in this bracha ("provided"). The reason is that we express our conviction that all our needs are already provided by Hashem, even before we start the day; for it has already been decreed by Divine Providence how much each person should earn that day. It is up to us to go out and make the necessary effort to "collect" what has been set aside for us. Our efforts provide natural channels to receive that which has already been decreed for us by the supernatural blessings of Hashem. And so it is written, "and G-d, your G-d, will bless you in all that you do." Our "doing" is the "channel" or "vessel," whereby we receive Hashem's blessing.

Success or failure in business is not necessarily a measure of a person's cleverness or stupidity; nor of a person's industry or laziness. Ultimately "it is the blessing of Hashem that makes one rich." The person who realizes this, will make the necessary effort, but will not kill himself in trying to amass a fortune. He will rather use his excess energy to advance himself spiritually and intellectually. For in the realm of the spirit and of knowledge, effort and success are indeed closely linked together.

The psychological effect of starting the day with the thought of this blessing firmly implanted in our mind cannot be over-emphasized. The conviction that G-d provides-indeed, has already provided-all our material needs, leaves no room for anxiety and worry, this kind of disposition is good not only for one's health, but worry; for overexertion and undue mental strain. On the contrary, the person goes about his daily business with confidence; with a peaceful mind and joyous heart. Moreover, this kind of disposition is good not only for one's health, but also for one's business. Incidentally, this blessing is not said on Yom Kippur and Tisha B'av, since we are not permitted to put on leather shoes on those days.

(My Prayer)

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