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Tefillah Thoughts

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Inspiring thoughts promoting appropriate decorum and kavanah during davening

Pirush Ha'Milos:

”זרע ישראל עבדו בני יעקב בחיריו“

“Descendants of Israel His servant, children of Yakov, His chosen ones.”

”הוא ה' אלקינו בכל הארץ משפטיו“

“He is the L-rd our G-d; His judgments extend over the entire earth.”

”הוא ה' אלקינו“

The word “Hu” represents consistency. When we say “He is” it means, that from beginning to end that is what he is. In Midrash Raba it lists five times in the Torah where the word הוא is used for evil ones who were consistently evil, and five times for righteous ones who were consistently righteous.

The five evil ones were:

- 1) Nimrod – “**Hu** hayah gibor tzayid”
- 2) Eisav – “**Hu** Eisav Avi Edom”
- 3) Dason and Aviram – “**Hu** Dason va'Aviram”
- 4) Achaz – “**Hu** Hamelech Achaz”
- 5) Achashveirosh – “**Hu** Achashveirosh”

The five righteous ones were:

- 1) Avrohom – “Avram **Hu** Avrohom”
- 2) Moshe and Aharon – “**Hu** Moshe ve'Aharon”
- 3) Dovid – “ve'Dovid **Hu** hakoton”
- 4) Yechizkiyahu – “**Hu** Yechizkiyahu”
- 5) Ezra – “**Hu** Ezra alah mi'Bavel”

The Midrash concludes: there is one “Hu” that is righteously above all others, and that is Hashem, as it says: “**Hu** Hashem Elokeinu, bechol ha'aretz mishpotov”.

(Ohr Ha'Tefillah)

POINTS OF INTEREST:

“Tefillah can accomplish more than good deeds. Moshe Rabbeinu had more good deeds to his credit than any other human being, yet he was only granted his request in the merit of his prayers.”

(Brochos 32)

Avodas Ha'Tefillah:

“The following is well-known and is a tradition, regarding the *kavanos* in davening: for those intellectually incapable of meditating on those *kavanos* (either because they lack knowledge, or because they cannot remember the specific *kavanos* during prayer) it is sufficient that they keep one general *kavanah* in mind: That his prayers be heard by G-d, with all the *kavanos* described in the *kabala* literature.”

(Hayom Yom 11 Adar 1)



Laws and customs:

“Before one prays, he must pause for a time, in the place where he is praying, in order to direct his heart toward the Omnipresent. Similarly, one must pause for a time after praying, so that his prayer will not appear as a burden from which he is hastening to be released.

The pious men of the early generations would pause [before and after prayer] for literally an hour. For other people a short time suffices, as long as it takes to walk the width of two entrances, i.e., eight hand-breadths.”

(The Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Oruch: sec. 93:1)

Toward the end of Boruch She'Amar one should pause between the words מלך and משבח, because the former word belongs to the previous phrase.

(Sefer Ha'Minhagim)

A Chassidische Story:

Rabbi Hillel of Paritch was once struck with an immense longing to spend Shabbos with his Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch. Getting there was another matter, as it was already late in the week and many miles separated Babroisk from Lubavitch. A young Chassid offered to take him; with his sleek coach and superb horses, they would be able to make it in time. But because time was short, Rabbi Hillel had to agree to two conditions. They would take the highway – which Rabbi Hillel normally did not use, since it had been constructed by the wicked Czar Nikolai – and Rabbi Hillel would keep his prayers short. Having no other option, Rabbi Hillel agreed.

That night they slept at a wayside inn. In the morning the young fellow prayed and ate breakfast, then looked in on Rabbi Hillel who was still praying. A short time later he checked on him again. He was in the same position. Hours went by, and still the older Chassid continued to pour put his heart before his Creator. When Rabbi Hillel finally finished, his companion was quite upset. “I do not understand,” he complained. “You wanted to spend Shabbos with the Rebbe, and you promised to hurry with your prayers. Now there is no chance of reaching Lubavitch on time!”

Reb Hillel answered, “Suppose you wished to journey to the Leipzig fair to purchase some rare merchandise available nowhere else, and on the way you met another merchant offering the same wares at a good price. Only a fool would say, “but I must go to Leipzig!” The purpose is not the town but the merchandise.” “I travel to the Rebbe to seek guidance on praying with love and awe of G-d. If my praying goes well on the way to Lubavitch, should I dump the merchandise and run to Leipzig?”



Biur Tefillah: "Modeh Ani"

The first thing we become aware of when we awake from our sleep in the morning is that we are awake and alive. When we went to bed the night before, we were tired and exhausted, “dead-tired”; we wake up refreshed, in both body and soul, as if we were reborn again. It is only right that we should thank Hashem for it.

Our Sages have told us that every night when we go to sleep, our Neshama returns to its heavenly abode and gives an account of the deeds which the soul, in partnership with the body, had done during the day. Indeed, in the prayer before going to bed we say, ‘Into your Hand I pledge my soul; You have redeemed me, oh G-d, G-d of truth.’ A pledge is something that the debtor gives to the creditor as security that the debt would be paid, and usually the creditor will not return the pledge as long as the debtor still owes him money. But Hashem is very merciful, and although every day we are indebted to Him, He returns our soul to us.

Furthermore our Chachomim declare: When a person gives a pledge, even if it is a new thing, it becomes old and stained by the time it is returned. But Hashem returns our “pledge” new and polished, even though it had been “used” and so it is written, “They are new every morning; great is your trust.” How grateful we must be to Hashem.

Incidentally, the fact that we go to bed “dead tired” and wake up refreshed, returning from the unconscious world of slumber, is something like a “revival of the dead.” It strengthens our conviction of Techias Hamaisim, and this adds further meaning to the words “great is Your trust,” for we have absolute trust in Hashem, not only that He will return our Neshama in the morning, but also will return our soul into our body at the end of days, when the righteous dead will rise from their “sleep”. Modeh Ani is said immediately upon awakening, even before we have washed our hands, because Hashem’s proper Name is not mentioned in this prayer, but only “King.”

(My Prayer)

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