

Tefillah Thoughts

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Promoting appropriate decorum and kavanah during davening

Pirush Ha'Milos:

“אשר כרת את אברהם ושבועתו ליצחק”

“The covenant which he has made with Avrohom, and His oath to Isaac.”

The words “**koras**” by Avrohom, and “**shvuah**” by Yitzchok, coincide with the way they are addressed in the Torah. By Avrohom the Torah uses the loшон of a “covenant”, as it says “Bayom ha’hu **koras** Hashem es Avram bris leimor”. By Yitzchok the Torah uses the loшон of an “oath”, as it says “**U’shevuosi** l’Yitzchok” and “Vahakimosy es **ha’shvuah**”.

“ויעמידה ליעקב לחק לישראל ברית עולם”

“He established it for Yakov as a statute, for Israel as an everlasting covenant.”

“לאמר לך אתן ארץ כנען חבל נחלתכם”

“Stating, ‘to you I shall give the land of Canaan’ – the portion of your inheritance.”

The word אתן – I shall give, in addition to the simple meaning, can also be referring to the three remaining nations: Kainy, Knizi and Kadmoiny, which will be given to us when Moshiach comes.

The word כנען is an abbreviation for: כנור נעים עם נבל – the pleasant harp with the flute. The lesson from this is; the task of transforming Eretz Canaan into Eretz Yisroel has to be performed in a joyous manner.

(Ohr Ha’Tefillah vol. 3)

POINTS OF INTEREST:

“Rabbi Elazar said: A person should always pray, and not wait until trouble strikes. Reish Lakish said: Anyone who puts effort into his prayers down below will not have enemies in the upper realm.”

(Sanhedrin 44b)

Avodas Ha’Tefillah:

“One should stand on a single spot while davening, and not wander about. For aside from the fact that walking around during prayer is disruptive to one’s devotion and meditation, a person cannot help then but to notice all that is going on around him, which will disturb him. Therefore a person should remain on a single spot, and focus his mind and heart only on davening.”

(Kuntres Ha’Tefillah)



Laws and customs:

One should always rise early to go to shul, so that he will merit being one of the first ten to arrive. Provided he davens together with them, even if a hundred men come afterwards, he is granted a reward equivalent to the reward of them all.

(The Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Oruch: sec. 90:15)

“One should embark on the Tefillah of Shemoneh Esray only out of earnestness,” which is the submissiveness that stems from the fear of Hashem, as it is written, “serve G-d with fear.” Implied is that Tefillah, which serves as a substitute for the avodah in the Bais Hamikdash, should be undertaken in fear.

(The Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Oruch: sec. 93:2)

A Story:

Once, when Rabbi DovBer of Lubavitch, the son of the Alter Rebbe, was a young man, he was visiting with his father-in-law in Yanovitch. There he met with one of his father's chassidim. The chassid noticed that the young "Rebbe's Son" was all too aware of his achievements in scholarship and meditative prayer, and felt that some "cutting down to size" was in order.

The chassid said to Rabbi DovBer: "Considering who you are and how you've lived, what's the big deal? Your father -- well, we all know who your father is. You were certainly conceived under the holiest of circumstances, and I'm sure that your father secured a most lofty soul to bring down into the world. Then you were raised in a Rebbe's home and great care was taken to mold your character and safeguard you from any negative influences. All your life you've been exposed to scholarship and sanctity, and to this very day you're preoccupied only with the study of Torah, and the teachings of Chassidism. So you've amassed a certain amount of knowledge and you pray with fervor and devotion. Big deal.

"Now, take me, for example. My father was a simple man, and we can well imagine what was on his mind when he scraped out a simple soul from the bottom of the barrel. And do you know what I do with my life? Let me tell you how I earn my living. I loan money to the peasants during the planting season and then, during the winter months, I make my rounds of their villages and farms to collect the debts before they have a chance to squander their entire harvest on vodka. This means setting out several hours before sunrise, well before the permissible time for prayer, equipped with a flask -- for without a drink one cannot begin to talk business with a peasant. After drinking to his health, one must share a *l'chayim* with the woman in the house as well -- otherwise she can ruin the whole deal for you. Only then can you sit down to settle part of the account. "After three or four such stops I make my way home, immerse myself in the *mikveh* and prepare for prayer. But after such preliminaries, what sort of prayer would you expect...?"

The words of this chassid, who was, in truth, renowned for his refined nature and soulful prayers, made a deep impression on Rabbi DovBer. The young man immediately traveled home to his father and poured out his heart. He bewailed his spiritual state, saying that his service of G-d is worthless, falling so short of what is expected from him.

The next time the chassid from Yanovitch came to the Alter Rebbe, the Rebbe said to him: "I am most grateful to you. You have made a chassid out of my Berel."



Biur Tefillah: "Asher Yotzar"

Having returned from the unconscious world of slumber, we become aware of one of the greatest miracles of this universe; our physical body, with all its fine and delicately constructed organs and vessels. The daily rebirth of our physical power moves us to sing Hashem's praises long before we realize the greatness of the Creator through the wonders of nature in the world around us. The "simple" process of respiration, digestion and all other normal functions of our body are miracles of Divine wisdom; we hardly think of them, unless, G-d forbid, anything goes wrong. We would be ingrates if we were to take these blessings for granted and not thank Hashem every morning for His care as the "Healer of all flesh."

The bracha is characteristic of our Jewish view that our human body is something to be kept clean and sacred. It reminds us that not merely the highest organs of the human body, but even the lowest, fulfill vital functions, upon which our wellbeing and very existence depend.

(My Prayer)

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