



Volume 1. Issue 3.

A Prayer for Learning

The *Mishnah* in *Brachot* (4:2) relates how *R' Nechunya ben Hukana* used to recite a prayer when he entered a Beit Midrash. The *Gemara* in *Brachot* (29b) elucidates the complete prayer. Contained in the prayer is *R' Nechunya's* plea that *Hashem* should help him “avoid an incorrect ruling that would make [his] peers joyous...And that they should not err that [he] should be happy”.

This prayer begs two questions:

Firstly, how could *R' Nechunya's* friends rejoice at his mistakes? They were accomplished scholars who were fearful of misrepresenting *Halacha*. Would not such action be totally inappropriate for such great rabbis?

Secondly, the *Tiferet Yisrael* asks why *R' Nechunya* did not first pray that his friends should not err? The order of his prayer seems selfish in that he was primarily concerned that he should not make a mistake. Perhaps it would have been more appropriate for a person of such high moral standard to first pray for his peers.

The *Maharsha* punctuates the prayer in a different way thereby answering the first problem. He reads the prayer as saying, “May I not slip up, and may my friends be happy because of me.” He interprets the two phrases as separate pleas. *R' Nechunya* is first praying for *Hashem's* guidance in decision making and then he prays that his *Torah* teachings be of a high standard that will enlighten his peers thus making them happy. The *Beit Yosef* adds that the other sages would rejoice because Torah study brings genuine happiness to those who delve into it.

The *Tiferet Yisrael* answers the second question by explaining that we must read the wording of the prayer such that the word “not” not only applies to the first plea regarding ruling, but also to the second plea

against laughing, i.e. “There shouldn't be...happiness amongst my friends (because of my failure).” Consequently, *R' Nechunya* really did pray for his friends first.

However, the *Tiferet Yisrael* maintains that one should only pray for another person first in matters of physical wellbeing, however, regarding spiritual matters it is proper for one to first pray for oneself. For example, if two people have the opportunity to perform a positive commandment, it makes no sense for one to say that, out of brotherly love, he will not perform the mitzvah and leave it to his friend. Even a son need not act in such a manner towards his father despite the many other sacrifices that a son must make. Furthermore regarding a negative commandment, we learn in *Masechet Shabbat* (4a) that a person may not sin to enable his friend to do a *mitzvah*. If this is the case, why did *R' Nechunya* put himself in a position conducive to sinning to save his peers from being in that position?

We can bring at least three answers.

1. According to *Tosfot Yom Tov*, *R' Nechunya's* peers included his rabbi. He therefore felt it inappropriate to eagerly pray that his rabbi should not make a mistake because suspecting such an event appears disrespectful. However inserting it after a plea recognising his own frailty may have been more appropriate.
2. Since *R' Nechunya* was more conscious of the danger that he may feel joyous at the stumbling of his friends, he felt a greater need to pray for his friends.
3. The *Tiferet Yisrael* answers this question by citing *Bava Kamma* (92a) that teaches that a person who prays for others has his own prayers answered first! Therefore we find that *R' Nechunya* did selflessly pray for his peers first. However, this selflessness made him worthy of having his own prayers given first priority.

Yoni Fisher

Revision Questions

ברכות די: בי - ר: ג:

- What is the nature of *R' Nechunya ben Hukana's t'fillot* recited when entering and exiting the *beit midrash*? (ד: ב:)
- What are the three opinions regarding what to say when praying the *shmonah esrei*? (ד: ג:)
- Who said "העושה תפלתו קבע אין תפילתו תחנונים" (ד: ד:)?
- What should one do if it is time to pray but they find themselves in a dangerous place? (ד: ד:)
- What should one do if they are riding a donkey and it is time to pray? (List the three different scenarios.) (ד: ה:)
- What are the three other cases listed with a similar ruling to the previous question? (ד: ו:)
- Explain the debate regarding *t'fillat mussaf*? (ד: ז:)
- What was different about how the *חסידיים ראשונים* prayed and why? (ה: א:)
- What are the two cases brought to illustrate the point that one should be completely focused while praying? (ה: א:)
- Where and what are the additions to *shmonah esrei*? Explain the argument about the placement of *havdalah* in the *shmonah esrei*? (ה: ב:)
- What are the three expressions which the congregation must prevent a *chazzan* from saying? (ה: ג:)
- Does a *chazzan* respond with *amen* to the *birkat cohanim*? (ה: ד:)
- If a *chazzan* is the only *cohen* in the shul and it is time for *birkat cohanim* what should he do? (ה: ד:)
- What was special about the *t'fillot* of *R' Channinah ben Dosa*? (ה: ה:)
- What *b'racha* should one make on: (ה: ו:)
 - Fruit?
 - Wine?
 - Bread?
 - Vegetables (include both opinions)?
- In which cases does one fulfil his obligation of reciting a *bracha* even if he said the wrong *bracha*? (ו: ב:)
- For which foods does one recite a *shehakol*? (ו: ג:)

Local Shiurim

Sunday -Thursday

Between mincha & ma'ariv

Mizrachi Shul

David Bankier

9:50pm (after ma'ariv)

Beit Midrash -

Naftali Herc

Yehuda Gottlieb

Friday & Shabbat

10 minutes before mincha

Mizrachi Shul

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO START!!!

This Sunday (24/10) at 7pm in *Beit Midrash Naftali Herc* there will be special *shiur* revising **all** the *Mishnayot* learnt to date. This provides people with a unique opportunity to join the program *now!*

Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
24 th Oct. ט' חשוון	25 th Oct. י' חשוון	26 th Oct. י"א חשוון	27 th Oct. י"ב חשוון	28 th Oct. י"ג חשוון	29 th Oct. י"ד חשוון	30 th Oct. ט"ו חשוון
Brachot 6: 4-5	Brachot 6: 6-7	Brachot 6:8-7:1	Brachot 7: 2-3	Brachot 7: 4-5	Brachot 8: 1-2	Brachot 8: 3-4

