



Volume 13. Issue 3

Concentrating on Tefillah

The beginning of the fifth *perek* of *Masechet Berachot* discusses the preparation one must have prior to *davening shemoneh esreh*. It states that in general, one should stand and *daven shemoneh esreh* with appropriate concentration. In fact, the early *chasidim* used to prepare themselves for one hour prior to davening.

The term the *Mishnah* uses for this preparation and concentration is “*koved rosh*”. The *mefarshim* discuss the meaning of this term. *Rashi* states that *koved rosh* is submission and seriousness. This term is the opposite of the term “*kalut rosh*”, literally a ‘light head’, which is generally a word that represents joviality and typically has a negative connotation when used in the context of *tefillah*. The *Talmidei Rabbeinu Yonah* state that the word ‘*koved rosh*’ is used as a parable to indicate that just as one’s head is heavy and is propped up and supported by the body, so too all one’s limbs should be ‘carried’ and subservient in their service of *Hashem*. The *Pnei Yehoshua* seems to take elements from both these explanations and states that the term indicates that one should subjugate his mind and turn away from all mundane matters to focus solely on *Hashem* prior to *davening*.

The fact that the *Mishnah* specifies that one must stand prior to *davening* is discussed by *mefarshim*. The *Tifferet Yisrael* states that the *Mishna* uses the term ‘standing’ as this precedes *shemoneh esreh* during which one must stand in any event. The *Maggid Ha'alumah* states that, from the word ‘standing’ we understand that this is referring specifically to someone who is *davening shemoneh esreh* (the *Amidah*) without *davening* any of the preceding *tefillot* (i.e. *pesukei d'zimrah* and *kriat shemah*). Since this person is approaching *shomeneh esreh* without the appropriate preparation, the *Mishnah* states that he should stand in order to put himself into the right frame of mind. However, if one was to say the

preceding *brachot* and *mizmorim*, then one would have undertaken the appropriate preparation and would be in the appropriate frame of mind to *daven shemoneh esreh* with *kavanah*. The further *chiddush* here is that it is only the routine prayers, the *Amidah*, that one must stand for and first apply appropriate concentration. However, if one was *davening* or calling out to *Hashem* because he was in a state of *tza'ar* or needed salvation, he would not need prior preparation for the appropriate *kavanah* required and can turn to *Hashem* immediately.

The *Sefer Haminhagot* comments on the language of the *Mishnah* which states that one must daven “*mitoch koved rosh*” (literally: in the midst of concentration) and not just “*b'koved rosh*” which would be a much simpler expression. This is because one must not approach *tefilla* in an unprepared manner where one is not concentrating, but should rather undertake all the appropriate preparation by saying the *mizmorim* and prior *brachot* with *kavanah*, and then approach *Shmoneh Esreh* and achieve an even deeper level of concentration. The *Kedusha U'Bracha* adds to this that the language of the *Mishnah* infers this by stating the directive in a roundabout way (i.e. we do not stand for *shemoneh esreh* unless we are in the midst of concentration) rather than instructing one using a directive (i.e. ‘one must concentrate for *shemoneh esreh*’) to imply that one must already have a level of concentration prior to the *Amidah* prayer. This is supported by the next part of the *Mishnah* which brings a story of the early *chasidim* who used to prepare themselves for one hour prior to prayer. This is brought to show that one must not only concentrate for the *shemoneh esreh* itself, but rather should approach the *amidah* with the appropriate level of preparation and concentration. With this base level, one can then say the *amidah* with an even deeper level of concentration and therefore increase the quality and (hopefully effectiveness) of the *tefillah*.

Yehuda Gottlieb

Revision Questions

ברכות ד' ד' – ו' ה'

- 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? (ו': ד')
- Explain the debate regarding *t'fillat mussaf*? (ו': ד')
- What was different about how the חסידים 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 *sh'monah esrei*? Explain the argument about the placement of *havdalah* in the *sh'monah 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 kohanim*? (ד': ה')
- If a *chazzan* is the only *kohen* in the shul and it is time for *birkat kohanim* what should he do? (ד': ה')
- What was special about the *tefillot* of R' Channinah ben Dosa? (ה': ה')
- What *bracha* should one make on: (א': 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*? (ב': ו')
- For which foods does one recite a *shehakol*? (ג': ו')
- Explain the debate between R' Yehudah and the *Chachamim* about which food has preference when there are many different types of food to choose from? (ד': ו')
- True or false? (ה': ו')
- A *bracha* on wine before the meal also covers the wine drunk after the meal.
- A *bracha* on the *parperet* before the meal also covers the *parperet* after the meal. (What is *parperet*?)
- A *bracha* on bread also covers the *parperet* eaten during the meal.
- A *bracha* on the *parperet* also covers bread.

Melbourne, Australia

Sunday -Thursday

10 minutes before *Mincha*
Mizrachi Shul
Melbourne, Australia

Friday & Shabbat

10 minutes before *Mincha*
Mizrachi Shul
Melbourne, Australia

Efrat, Israel

Shiur in English

Sunday -Thursday

Rabbi Mordechai Scharf
9:00am
Kollel Magen Avraham
Reemon Neighbourhood

ONLINE SHIURIM

Rabbi Chaim Brown
www.shemayisrael.com/mishna/

Rabbi E. Kornfeld
Rabbi C. Brown
<http://www.dafyomi.co.il/calendars/myomi/myomi-thisweek.htm>

SHIUR ON KOL HALOSHON

Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss
In US dial: 718 906 6400
Then select: 1 – 2 – 4

Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
10 April ב' ניסן	11 April ג' ניסן	12 April ד' ניסן	13 April ה' ניסן	14 April ו' ניסן	15 April ז' ניסן	16 April ח' ניסן
Berachot 4:4-5	Berachot 4:6-7	Berachot 5:1-2	Berachot 5:3-4	Berachot 5:5-6:1	Berachot 6:2-3	Berachot 6:4-5

