



Tefillat Beit Midrash

The *Mishnah* (4:2) discusses the *tefillot* that *R' Nechunya ben Hakana* would recite when entering and leaving the *Beit Midrash*. When he would enter, he prayed that no error would occur and when he exited, he would thank *Hashem* for his portion in learning. The *Gemara* elaborates on the text of these *tefillot*. The *tefillah* of thanks when leaving makes sense. Put simply, we are very fortunate to be able to learn *Torah* and that *tefillah* elaborates on that point. The *tefillah* when entering however requires thought.

The *Gemara* (28b) includes the text of the *tefillah* and a longer version is found in the *Tur* (OC 210). The following is the version printed in the front of the *Gemara*:

May it be Your will, Hashem... that no mishap transpires because of me, and I will not err in matters of *Halacha* and that my friends rejoice in me. And I will not declare that which is impure as pure, nor pure that which is impure. I will not declare permitted that which is forbidden, nor forbidden that which is permitted. And my friends should not err in matters of *Halacha* and I will be happy with them. "For Hashem grants wisdom; knowledge and discernment are His decree" (*Tehillim* 2:6) "Open my eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of Your teaching" (*Tehillim* 119:16)

Previously (1(3)) we have focused on the request not to err and how that section of the *tefillah* should be punctuated. Is the expression "that my friends rejoice in me" a request that they should not rejoice in my errors (*Tifferet Yisrael*) or is it a separate request that one should rejoice in his friends learning (*Maharsha*)? In this article however we will pose a different question. After requesting that one should not make any errors in learning, why does the *tefillah* continue with request not to make mistakes in *tumah* and *tahara* or *issur* and *heter*?

The *Maharsha* explains that the continuation is simply elaborating on the request not to err. The *Pirchei Kehuna* however asks that if that was the case, the elaboration should have come immediately after the request not to make a mistake. In truth however the request regarding rejoicing is placed in between. The *Pirchei Kehuna* therefore explains that these are two different requests. The first is regarding

matters that are dependent on logic, about which there is a risk that other will rejoice in his failure. The second is regarding matters of tradition, laws that one received from their teachers.

Perhaps we can suggest a different explanation based on the comment of the *Tifferet Yisrael*. Why are we learning about this *Mishnah* now? The *Tifferet Yisrael* explains that it is based on the teaching that if one goes directly from *shul* to the *Beit Midrash* – from *tefillah* to learning – he merits to receive the divine presence. Since the previous *Mishnah* discussed the time for daily prayers, it therefore makes sense that it is followed with this *tefillah*.

The *Tifferet Yisrael* continues that the flow of the *Mishnayot* contain the key to spiritual growth. The *shul* is the place of emotional connection, which is directed to *Hashem*, while the *Beit Midrash* is where one engages their mind. If one goes directly from the *shul* to the *Beit Midrash* they will be successful in their growth, since they engage both these elements – the heart and mind – which is the entirety of man.

Perhaps with this explanation we can understand the *tefillah*. When entering the *Beit Midrash* there are requests regarding protection or help for both the intellectual (errors) and emotional (*simcha*). If there is an imbalance the effects can be devastating. Intellectual excellence without an emotional connection can lead to a distortion of purity and impurity, while emotional ecstasy without intellectual grounding might be well intended, yet lead to confusion of the permitted and forbidden. This second part of the *tefillah* is a request for the critical balance and reminder that without it one's perspective is lost.

Finally, this then explains the addition of the two *pesukim*. The first, focus on the granting of wisdom, knowledge and discernment. The focus is on the intellectual and that it is *Hashem* that grants it. The second is about the perception of wonders and a request for *Hashem* assisting in connecting on that plane. Consequently, when entering the *Beit Midrash* we recognize that necessity and pray from help in directing both our mind and heart toward *Hashem* and His *Torah*.

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Revision Questions

ברכות ג' ד' – ה' ד'

- What is the debate regarding a *ba'al keri* regarding *sh'ma* and *birkat ha'mazon*? [To which *takanah* does this debate (and the next three *Mishnayot*) refer?] (ג' ד')
- If someone was in the *mikvah* close to *netz ha'chamah* what should they do with regards to *sh'ma*? What if the water was filthy? (ג' ה')
- Explain the debate about a *zav* that also becomes a *ba'al keri*? What are the other cases included in this debate? (ג' ו')
- Explain the debate about the starting and finishing times for all the *tefillot*? (ד' א')
- What is the nature of *R' Nechunya ben Hukana's tefillot* recited when entering and exiting the *beit midrash*? (ד' ב')
- What are the three opinions regarding what to say when praying the *sh'monah esrei*? (ג' ד')
- 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.) (ה' ו')
- 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 *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? (ג' ג')
- Does a *chazzan* respond with *amen* to the *birkat kohanim*? (ה' ד')
- If a *chazzan* is the only *kohen* in the shul and it is time for *birkat kohanim* what should he do? (ה' ד')

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Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
9 January ז' שבט	10 January ח' שבט	11 January ט' שבט	12 January י' שבט	13 January יא' שבט	14 January יב' שבט	15 January יג' שבט
Berachot 5:5-6:1	Berachot 6:2-3	Berachot 6:4-5	Berachot 6:6-7	Berachot 6:8-7:1	Berachot 7:2-3	Berachot 7:4-5

