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A "Short" Tefillah

The peak of the *avodah* on *Yom Kippur* was perhaps when the *kohen* entered the *kodesh ha'kodashim*, the only time of the year he would do so. The *Mishnah* (5:1) adds: "And there he would pray a short prayer in the outer chamber. He would not extend this prayer so that he would not frighten *Yisrael*." He could not extend his prayer as everyone might fear that something terrible had happened to him, like the sons of *Aharon* when "they came before *Hashem* and died". If this occurred, *Yisrael* would fear that their *teshuva* was not accepted.

The *Gemarah* (*Yoma* 53b) explains that once the *kohen gadol* extended his *tefillah*. The other *kohanim* found this difficult and told him off. The *kohen* responded that he was praying that *Beit Ha'Mikdash* would not be destroyed. Nevertheless they still told him to never again behave in this manner citing our *Mishnah*, despite the importance of the *tefillah's* content.

If such an important *tefillah* was to be withheld, what was the short *tefillah* that the *kohen gadol* would pray? One would expect that at the climax of the most important *avodah* of the year the *kohen gadol* would take the opportunity to ask for general requests like the upkeep of *Torah* and *mitzvot* or at least something connected to sustenance, eg, peace, health, etc. Yet to our surprise, the *Gemarah* described this *tefillah* as follows: "May it be Your will before you, *Hashem*, our G-d, that it be a year of rain." A request for rain, for water, is the request that precedes all others!

The *Gemarah* expands on the *tefillah* with three other requests:

1. "That the rulership should not leave the house of *Yehudah*"
2. "That people should not need to be sustained by one another."
3. "That the prayers of the travellers (*ovrei derachim*) should not come before you."

In essence, the first two requests relate to the physical needs of the nation on both communal and individual levels. The third request however is strange as it is constructed in a negative form. *HaRav Shimon Shalom MeAmshinov* זצ"ל asks: Who are these *ovrei derachim*? Are they *tzadikim*? If so, would they pray against rainfall if the earth required it? If they are *resha'im* – would one think

that their *tefillot*, which would be to the detriment of others, be accepted? If so, to whom does this *tefillah* refer? He explains that it refers to a person that worked all day, and is now returning home. It begins to rain and the paths get filled with mud. His wagon gets bogged and he is stuck in the middle of the road. Whilst drenched he calls out, "Oy! How will I ever get home?!" Such a heart-wrenching call requires a response. It is regarding such a person that the *kohen* requests that his *tefillah* not be heard because the nation as a whole depends on the rain and that *klal Yisrael* comes before *Reb Yisrael*.

How do we understand this *tefillah*? Is there a common theme that runs through these requests?

The *Gemarah* (*Brachot* 7a) explains: "It was taught in a *Beraitah*: *R' Yishmael* the son of *Elisha* said, Once I entered the *kodesh ha'kodashim* [on *Yom Kippur*] to burn the *ketoret*, and I saw *Achasri'el* (a prophetic vision of *Hashem*; some explain, an angel of *Hashem*) sitting on an exalted throne. He asked me to bless Him. I said: 'May it be Your will that Your mercy overpower Your anger, and Your mercy overcome Your attributes, and that You should treat Your children with mercy, and go beyond the letter of the law with them. (*lifnim mi'shurat ha'din*)' He nodded His head to me."

In truth we should be judged as being guilty, but he requests that *Hashem* judge *lifnim mi'shurat ha'din*. Perhaps the short *tefillah* also expresses this idea. *Yisrael* – "the land on which *Hashem* eyes are constantly trained" – requires that we pray for rain. The rain in *Yisrael* reflects the spiritual status of the people. When we ask for rain we essentially are asking that He not truthfully assess whether we deserve it, but just that He provide rain. If we had behaved properly, we would not have needed to ask. The request for enduring *malchut*, independence in sustenance and seeing the needs of the community over a deserving individual at times may also require *Hashem* overlook our failings and judge *lifnim mi'shurat ha'din*.

In this brief moment that the *kohen gadol* stand before *Hashem* in the *kodesh ha'kodashim* he asks *Hashem* to judge *lifnim mi'shurat ha'din* whether they be for sustenance on an individual level (rain and *parnasa*) or on a national level (*malchut*).

Uri Orbach
[Ed. Trans.]

Revision Questions

יומא גי: י"א – ה': ז'

- What *pasuk* was associated with those whose innovations were considered positive, and what *pasuk* was associated with those that were not? (גי: י"א)
- What were written on the two cards used for the lottery? (ד': י"א)
- Who was standing to the right of the *kohen gadol* and who was standing to his left? (ד': י"א)
- When and what would the *segan* call out after the lottery? (ד': י"א)
- What thread would they tie onto the goats? (ד': ב')
- Where would they tie the threads on each of the goats? (ד': ב')
- After slaughtering the bulls, where would the person mixing the blood stand? (ד': ג')
- Where would the *kohen gadol* place the shovel full of coals? (ד': ג')
- How was the shovelling of the coal different on *Yom Kippur*? (Two differences) (ד': ד')
- Give three differences in the shovel used on *Yom Kippur*. (ד': ד')
- What was the difference in the amount of incense burnt on *Yom Kippur*? (ד': ד')
- What was the difference in the quality of the incense burnt on *Yom Kippur*? (ד': ד')
- What was the difference in the way the *kohen gadol*, on *Yom Kippur*: (ד': ה')
 - Would ascend the ramp?
 - Would wash his hands and feet?
- How argues, regarding the previous question, that the *kohen gadol* would act in this manner during the rest of the year as well? (ד': ה')
- How many extra piles fires were on the *mizbe'ach* on *Yom Kippur*? (ד': ו')
- In which hands would the *kohen gadol* carry the shovel of coals and the spoon full of incense? (ה': י"א)
- Where was the opening of the curtain that separated between the *kodesh* and *kodesh ha'kodashim*? (ה': י"א)
- What would the *kohen gadol* do after burning the incense in the *kodesh ha'kodashim*? (ה': י"א)
- During the second *Beit Ha'Mikdash*, when the *aron* was absent, how did the *kohen* know where to place the *ketoret*? (ה': ב')
- Where and how was the sprinkling of the bull's blood first performed? (ג': ה')
- Where would he place the remainder of the blood? (ג': ה')
- Which animal was slaughtered next? (ד': ה')
- What were the three places where the various bloods were sprinkled? (ה': ד')
- What was different about the blood that was sprinkled on the *mizbeach ha'zahav* to the blood sprinkled elsewhere? (ד': ה')
- What was different about the way the blood was sprinkled on the *mizbeach ha'zahav* to the way blood is ordinarily sprinkled on the corners of the *mizbeach ha'chitzon*? (ה': ה')
- What was done with all the left over blood after the required sprinkling? (ה': ו')
- What would the *kohen gadol* do if the blood spilt while in the middle of performing the sprinkling on the *mizbeach ha'zahav*? (ה': ז')

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Next Week's Mishnayot...

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
26 th March כ"ו אדר	27 th March כ"ז אדר	28 th March כ"ח אדר	29 th March כ"ט אדר	30 th March א' ניסן ראש חודש	31 st March ב' ניסן	1 st April ג' ניסן
Yoma 6:1-2	Yoma 6:3-4	Yoma 6:5-6	Yoma 6:7-8	Yoma 7:1-2	Yoma 7:3-4	Yoma 7:5-8:1

