



Volume 7. Issue 2.

Kevi'ut in Tefillah

In *Masechet Berachot* (4:4) we are introduced to the opinion of *Rebbi Eliezer* who teaches a rather cryptic lesson about the process of prayer:

HaOseh Tefilato Kevah, ein tefilato tachanunim.

One who makes his prayer “fixed” – this prayer is not a supplication.

The *Gemara* in *Berachot* 29a outlines the opinion of *Rav Oshaya* who explains the above teaching as referring to one’s approach to prayer. The term ‘*kevah*’ is translated by *Rav Oshaya* as a ‘burden’. This individual is essentially approaching prayer as something that is heavy and burdensome, and therefore this prayer is not an appropriate supplication.

The *Rabbanan* disagree with *R’ Oshaya* by stating that *kevah* refers not to one’s mindset but rather to the manner the prayer is said. The *Rabbanan* seem to indicate that in order for prayer to be appropriate it must be said with appropriate degree of supplication.

R’ Yona develops the opinions of these *Amoraim* further. Seemingly, the *Rabbanan* hold that even if one had the mindset that davening is burdensome, yet still uses the appropriate supplicatory language – even though he is davening because he has a *chiyuv* and does not need anything – since he is using the appropriate language his prayer is appropriate. Additionally, according to the *Rabbi*’s even if one wants or needs something from G-d, yet uses inappropriate language, his needs will still not be fulfilled. According to *Rabbi Oshaya* however, the dependence of an appropriate davening is on whether one sees it as a burden or not.

Therefore, it is not enough to have only the correct mindset when approaching davening but one would have to ask appropriately as well. The reason behind this could be because a person who sees prayer as a burden, views *tefillah* as an obligation to be discharged like any other. This individual has no passion or desire to use it as a tool to achieve a sense of closeness with *Hashem*. However, one that appreciates *tefillah* and approaches it with the proper

mindset would have the correct thoughts and tone when approaching G-d to beg for his needs.

Interestingly the *Tifferet Yisrael* offers other interpretations for the word *kevah*. The *Tifferet Yisrael* mentions that one who makes his *tefillah* fixed is one who does not say his *Tefillah* with supplication (i.e. one who is brazen). He also offers another interpretation which refers to a person who does not say anything new in his prayers (*eino mechadesh bo davar*). Another interesting and more stringent interpretation that he offers is that *keva* refers to one who does not daven at *netz ha’chamah*. It is all these people whose prayers are not seen as supplications before *Hashem*.

According to the *Pnei Menachem* (*Berachot* 32b) the term *kevah* means a finite amount. Using this interpretation this *Mishnah* is saying that one who puts a limit on his davening – his *tefillah* is not an appropriate supplication. This is because this person simply *davens* once and expects his prayers to be answered. The true accomplishment lies in continually working on one’s *tefillah* and improving one’s understanding and *kavanah* over time.

The *Tosfot Anshei Shem* focuses on the end of the passage by interpreting the words ‘*tachanunim*’ in *Rebbi Eliezer*’s statement. He states that one who *davens* in a fashion of *keviut* will not find *chen* (favour) in the eyes of *Hashem*.

Tosfot Anshei Shem also provides a second interpretation. He states that a person requires *Hashem* at every instance in the day. Without *Hashem*, we could not survive in this world for a second. Therefore, it is incumbent upon a person to supplicate himself before *Hashem* at every instant. A person who makes his davening ‘fixed’ is essentially saying to *Hashem* that he only requires his help at times that are fixed by that individual. This brazen attitude demonstrates that a person is only supplicating before G-d when it is convenient for him and therefore it is not a desperate request for G-d to sustain that type of person at all times.

Yehuda Gottlieb

Revision Questions

ברכות ג' ב' – ה' ב'

- What is the law regarding the obligation of *sh'ma* for people attending a funeral as the mourners pass by them after the burial? (ג' ב')
- What are the *mitzvot* that women, servants and minors are exempt from listed in the *Mishnah* and why? What are the listed *mitzvot* that they are obligated to perform? (ג' ג')
- What is the debate about a *ba'al ker*i 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? (ה' ג')
- Explain the debate about a *zav* that also becomes a *ba'al ker*i. What are the other cases included in this debate? (ו' ג')
- Explain the debates 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.) (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*. (ו' ג')
- What was different about how the *Chasidim Rishonim* 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*? (ה' ב')
- Explain the argument about the placement of *havdalah* in the *sh'monah esrei*. (ה' ב')

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Sunday -Thursday

After *ma'ariv*
Mizrachi Shul

Friday & Shabbat

10 minutes before *mincha*
Beit Ha'Roeh

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
18 th July ז' אב	19 th July ח' אב	20 th July ט' אב	21 st July י' אב	22 nd July יא' אב	23 rd July י"ב אב	24 th July י"ג אב
Berachot 5:3-4	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

