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The *halachah* is that a person bends his knees upon saying the word *baruch*, straightens upon saying the word *atah*, so that he can be erect upon saying the word *Hashem*.

We find that on *Yom Kippur*, the *Kohen Gadol* would pronounce the Name of Hashem, when he was totally spread out on the ground. If so, why do we do differently when we daven *Shemoneh Esrei*? Why are we erect by Hashem's Name in *Shemoneh Esrei*?

The answer lays in the following. When we say the word *Hashem*, it is brought in *halachah* that one needs to have in mind that Hashem was, is, and always will be the "*Adon Hakol* — Master of everything." What does it mean that Hashem is the Master over everything? There is a kind of master who rules over his slave, but this is not the kind of master Hashem is. "Master over everything" implies that He is the King, because it is impossible to rule over everything without being the king.

So when we bear in mind that Hashem is the *Adon*/Master of the world, it is because we are declaring His kingship. *Adon Hakol* simply means "Master of the world," but the purpose of saying this is to realize that we are His servants.

The depth behind recognizing ourselves as "servants" of Hashem is not just limited to when we bear in mind by the word *Hashem* that Hashem is the Master of everything. Being a servant of Hashem means that we are constantly cognizant of this. The *halachah* is that a person must have a set place where he davens every day — the depth behind this is that a person has to show consistency in being a servant of Hashem, that he is always in the same place to stand in front of Hashem.

Now we can understand why we must be erect by the time we say Hashem's Name. It is because we need to recognize that we can only stand erect due to Hashem's allowing it. A person is able to talk to Hashem like a friend, as the *Mesilas Yesharim* states, and this is the special quality that Hashem endows man with, as opposed to animals. Ever since the Snake sinned, animals cannot stand erect; only humans can stand erect. Why? It is because man is created *b'tzelem Elokim*, in the image of G-d. Because we were created with a *tzelem Elokim*, Hashem let us stay "erect" — and this is also why we stand erect in *Shemoneh Esrei*. Just like Hashem "stands," so did He create us with the power to stand — because we are created with a *tzelem elokim*.

This is the depth behind the concept of "standing in front of the King." In order to stand erect in front of the King, we first need the ability to stand. We need to be prepared, constantly, for Hashem. "Hashem, Yisrael, and the Torah are one" — if we recognize ourselves as being "one" with Hashem, we then have the ability to always stand in front of Him.

We make this preparation, practically, by saying the blessing of *Ahavah Rabbah* right before *Shema* and *Shemoneh Esrei*. In the blessing of *Ahavah Rabbah*, we express our deep connection with the Torah, and we become one with Hashem and His Torah — and we are then able to stand in front of the King in *Shemoneh Esrei*.

When we say “*Baruch*,” we bend our knees and bow, to nullify ourselves to Hashem, as we explained previously. But we have an additional deep power in our soul, which is to “stand in front of the King.” Standing in front of Hashem is not the same thing as nullifying ourselves. Rather, standing in front of Hashem reflects a different aspect of our *avodah*, which is that we were created with a *tzelem Elokim* — we connect to it in the *Ahavah Rabbah* prayer, where we connect ourselves with the Torah.

In order to stand in front of Hashem, we need these two aspects — we need to be nullified to Hashem, which is called *bittul* (nullification), and we need to identify ourselves as being one with Hashem, which we accomplish through learning Torah. If someone learns Torah, but he doesn’t want to nullify himself to Hashem, he is the epitome of a *baal gaavah* (haughty person). But if a person goes in the opposite extreme and is always nullified to Hashem, but he isn’t connected enough with learning Torah, then he also cannot really stand in front of Hashem. He is not one with the Torah, and thus he does not have the power to become one with Hashem.

It is written, “Even those who grasp My Torah do not know Me.” This is referring to a person who does not want to feel nullified to Hashem. Even when such a person straightens himself up so he can be erect when he says Hashem’s Name, he is not straightening himself up for Hashem out of awe — rather, he is doing so out of arrogance.

These are the two sides of the coin in our *avodas Hashem*. We have two abilities in our soul that we need to make use of, and one without the other will not suffice. We have the ability of *bittul*, to be nullified to Hashem, through *tefillah*. And we have the ability to connect to learning Torah. Both of these are equally important.

Chazal say that “there is a time to learn Torah, and a separate time to daven.” Simply speaking, there is set time for learning, and a set time for davening, so we can’t learn while we daven or daven while we learn. However, ultimately our Torah and *tefillah* must work together. Our *tefillos* require us to purify ourselves internally, and they also require us to develop our minds properly, through learning Torah.

For this reason, before *Shemoneh Esrei*, we forge a deep connection with the Torah when we say the blessing of *Ahavah Rabbah*. Only after we have a deep connection with Torah can we truly “straighten up” in *Shemoneh Esrei* when we say Hashem’s Name — to straighten up for Hashem because we recognize our humility as we are in front of Hashem (and not out of a feeling of low self-worth).

Source: <https://bilvavi.net/english/tefillah-008-standing-front-king>