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## Tefillah - 138 Hashem's Love for Us

### *Hashem Loves Us, Unconditionally*

**רצה ה' אלוקינו בעמך ישראל** - "Desire, Hashem our G-d, Your nation, Yisrael." We ask Hashem that we be desirable to Him.

This needs understanding. [In the Shemoneh Esrei of Shalosh Regalim we say:] "You chose us from among the nations, You loved us and desired us." If we are already desired by Hashem, why do we ask in the blessing of **רצה** that Hashem should desire us?

It is understandable that we ask Hashem that our *avodah* and *tefillos* be desirable to Him, as we request later in this blessing. But our very essence as a people is clearly desirable to Hashem. If so, why we do ask Hashem here that He should desire His nation?

The simple understanding is that although Hashem desires us, we still pray for the future, that we always be desired by Hashem.

A more subtle answer, though, is as follows.

The Gemara brings a difference of opinion of when we are called "children of Hashem". According to one opinion, when we do the will of Hashem, we are called children of Hashem, but when we don't do the will of Hashem, we are not called children of Hashem. According to the other opinion of our Sages, we are always called children of Hashem, even when we sin.

The rule is that both opinions of our Sages are always correct; how can we reconcile the two opinions? It is as follows. The first opinion of the Sages is referring to the **outer** aspect of our relationship. When we sin, we are not called children of Hashem - with regards to the outer aspect of our relationship with Hashem. But in the **inner** essence of our relationship, we are always called children of Hashem, even if we sin.

Hashem loves us and desires us, but when we sin, the desire that Hashem has for us becomes covered over. It does not go away, *chas v'shalom*; it is just covered over and hidden. For this reason, when a person sins, his soul can feel that he is not called a child of Hashem, because the soul feels the concealment of Hashem's desire for him. Still, Hashem always desires a person, but a person doesn't feel the hidden love.

So in the depths of our relationship with Hashem, we are always called His "children"; He always desires us. It is just that we don't always feel it.

When a person sins, when he doesn't do the will of Hashem, he feels the will of Hashem for him has become concealed. This does not mean that Hashem loses His *ratzon* for us; He always has a *ratzon* for us, but it can be covered over and hidden from us.

Thus, we ask Hashem, **רצה ה' אלוקינו בעמך ישראל** - we are asking Hashem that we should always feel His desire for us. We know that He always desires us, but we want to feel it openly, and we don't want to feel that His desire for us has become concealed. Therefore, we ask Hashem to "desire" us in the sense that it not ever be concealed and hidden from us; we want to feel it openly.

### ***To Always Feel Desired By Hashem***

But there is a deeper understanding as well.

There is no Jew who is perfect. Each person contains some area of imperfection; it is written, "*There is no righteous person in the earth who only does good and does not sin.*" There is always one area in which a person is never perfect in, and with most people, there are several areas in which we have our shortcomings in. But the point is that there is no person who perfectly does the will of Hashem; this includes our sins, as well as a general lack of perfection to how we do the mitzvos.

When a person realizes that he did not do the will of Hashem, what indeed should he think? What should be going through his mind?

Now, if we are talking about a person who has no *Yiras Shomayim* (fear of Heaven), then he doesn't care if he sins. He doesn't feel bad at all after he speaks *lashon hora* or when he neglects any of the mitzvos, and even when he commits worse sins than this, it doesn't bother him afterwards. This kind of person's feelings towards spirituality are very deadened.

But if someone is a feeling person, if he is sensitive to his spirituality, after he realizes that he did not do the will of Hashem, his natural reaction is that he will fear the punishment of sin.

A deeper kind of person, though, is someone who has a bond with Hashem, and it really pains him after he commits a sin, not because he is worried about the punishment – but because he is upset that he has been disloyal to Hashem, Whom he has a constant bond with.

Of course, fear of punishment is necessary, and it is the very first key to entering *Avodas Hashem*. But a person who treasures his bond with Hashem, after he realizes that he didn't do the will of Hashem, is much more bothered about the fact that he has been disloyal to Hashem. His life is based on his relationship with Hashem; when he realizes that he did not do the will of Hashem, he feels no rest at this. Surely when he commits an actual sin does he feel that his bond with Hashem has become damaged.

### ***How Should A Person React To His Spiritual Failures?***

How, indeed, should a person react after he realizes that he did not do the will of Hashem? What is the proper perspective he needs to have towards this when he realizes it?

(It is true of course that sin creates a spirit of impurity to come upon the person; this is called *timtum halev*, "blockage of the heart". This is especially applicable to a person who eats forbidden foods).

When a person cares about his relationship with Hashem, there are different kinds of reactions he has after he doesn't do the will of Hashem.

One kind of person, after he sins, will feel, "Hashem doesn't want me anymore." This kind of reaction

usually does not come to a person who commits a sin he considers to be small. But when a person feels he has done a major sin – especially if it's already 2 or 3 times – he might feel, “Hashem does not want me.” This is the deep source of all of a person's downfalls!

If a person feels that “Hashem doesn't like the **action** that I did”, that would be a wonderful reaction. But when a person feels “Hashem doesn't want **“me”** anymore, now that I've sinned” - this kind of thinking will make a person become disconnected from his relationship with Hashem.

Woe to a person who doesn't do Hashem's will and he doesn't feel bad – but woe to the person as well who thinks Hashem doesn't want him anymore after he sins.

After a person sins, *chas v'shalom*, he must feel two things at once. First of all, he must realize that he has gone against Hashem's will, and that Hashem did not desire at all this evil action that he has done. But at the same time, he must also feel, no less and perhaps even more so, that although Hashem didn't want this action he has committed, Hashem still wants him as a person.

These words are irrelevant to a person who doesn't live a life of connection with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. But if a person is sensitive to spirituality – either because he was born that way or because he has begun to serve Hashem – he must deeply realize that we are always children of Hashem, even when we don't do the will of Hashem. If a person doesn't realize that Hashem always loves him, he is forfeiting his father-son relationship with Hashem, and then his lifestyle will not be a true Jewish one.

### ***Misconceptions About Sin***

How disturbing is it to hear from people who express (out of immaturity) words like: “Hashem doesn't love me! Want proof? Because my life is so hard! I don't have *parnassah!*”, or, “Because I don't have a *shidduch* yet!” or, because “I'm a failure!” A person will come to the conclusion that “Hashem doesn't love me”, *rachmana litzlan*.

One must get rid of this notion totally!

Of course, there is a healthy part in a Jew's soul which feels distanced from Hashem after he sins. But this is the lower part of the soul. The higher part of our soul recognizes the essence of life, which is that our bond with Hashem is inseparable. Surely we must fear sin, and we need to fear it very much. But we must also realize at the same time that our bond with Hashem is not dependent on if we sin or not. We must know that even if a Jew would commit every sin, *chas v'shalom*, Hashem still loves him and desires him.

However, if a person doesn't understand this concept well, then he will go in the other extreme, and he will always feel that Hashem desires him, and it won't bother him when he doesn't do the will of Hashem. So fear of sin is necessary in order for one to avoid sin.

But fear of sin is not all there is to our life. We need to reach the depths of our soul, that we are always children of Hashem. So we need fear of Hashem. We need to fear sin, as well as feel embarrassed from sin.

### ***In Summary***

If *chas v'shalom* a person falls to a sin, he must think two things. Firstly, he should feel ashamed at what he has done. But he also has to feel that Hashem still desires him, no less than before he sinned.

### ***Hashem Is Always With Us***

The truth is that there is no person who does not have failures in his spirituality. Most people are living “either or.” Either people don’t feel bad after they sin, which means they don’t have a bond with Hashem; or they fear sin and feel upset after a sin, but they have no bond with Hashem.

The proper way to live is for a person to build his connection with Hashem all the time. And when a person falls to a sin, even to the worst levels of sin, he must know that Hashem can take him out of there! It is written, “*Hashem dwells among them even amidst their impurity.*” A person can feel the reality of Hashem even in the lowest and most depraved levels he falls to.

So on one hand, a person has to strengthen his fear of Hashem and avoid sin, but if he does fall, he must immediately summon forth his bond with Hashem and feel desired by Hashem in spite of what he has done. The more a person feels how Hashem is with him even after he has sinned, his feeling of this reality will deepen, until he begins to feel ashamed to sin when he’s tempted, because he feels Hashem’s Presence with him.

In the final generation which we live in, we are amongst the lowest levels of impurity possible. We are influenced by our surroundings. We are surrounded by *She’ol*, the lowest levels of spiritual impurity. But even if a person has fallen into the depths of *Sheol*, he must know that he is never disconnected from Hashem! Many people have fallen into sin and believe that they can’t come out. But one must know that his bond with Hashem is not conditional.

We must internalize that Hashem always desires us and connect to Him in any situation. This will help us realize that He is everywhere, even when we are in this generation, in which we are surrounded with so much evil. This helps a person gain a bond with Hashem that is unconditional.

One needs to feel how Hashem is always with him, and then he will feel the deep bond with Hashem which is unconditional.

Thus, when we ask Hashem that we always be desired - **רצה ה' אלוקינו בעמך ישראל** - it means that we want to instill in ourselves that we are always called children of Hashem, even when we are in a low spiritual level.

### ***Why Do We Do The Mitzvos?***

When these words are understood, a person’s approach towards Torah and mitzvos changes completely, for the good. It is to understand that since we are always called children of Hashem, the reason why we must do His will is not so that we should become close to Him, but because we simply have to do His will.

If we are only close to Hashem when we do the will of Hashem and fulfill the mitzvos, that would mean that we should only do the mitzvos on condition that we become close to Hashem. But the depth of life is to understand that we are always found with Hashem, even when we are in the depraved depths of *‘sheol’*! We must do Hashem’s will even if we wouldn’t be close to Him! Because it should be our will to do His will.

Without this perspective, a person does mitzvos only to get close to Hashem, and if not, he wouldn’t do the will of Hashem.

True, much exertion in Torah and mitzvos is needed in order to get to this high understanding, but once a person reaches there, the avodah of *lishmah* begins. It is when a person realizes that he must do the will of Hashem - even if he wouldn’t be close to Hashem!

Whether one understands or not why he must do the will of Hashem, he can do the will of Hashem,

because he feels connected to Hashem no matter what. He does the mitzvos simply because Hashem said to do them - not because he's doing them to get close to Hashem, rather because he is a child of Hashem, no matter what. "It is our will to do Your will."

These are two deep root abilities in our soul: when one sins he can know that he is still a child of Hashem, and when one does the mitzvos, he can do them not in order to get close to Hashem, but because he wants to do them *lishmah*, to do it because Hashem said so.

Of course, when this is done without any thought, a person simply does the will of Hashem because he knows "that's what Hashem commanded", but it can still be coming from his motivations of *shelo lishmah*, and perhaps he's doing it to get reward or for the spiritual bliss of feeling close to Hashem, which is also a kind of *shelo lishmah* (albeit deeper). But when a person is doing the mitzvos *lishmah* - when he knows that we are always children of Hashem, and that is why he does all the *mitzvos* - this is the true way to perform the will of Hashem. It connects a person to Hashem in every situation.

### ***Advice For Overcoming Evil Temptation***

This is all the meaning of the verse, "*Yiras Hashem tehorah, omedes lo'ad*" - "Fear of Hashem that is pure lasts forever." This deep perspective towards our life will be the kind of *yiras shomayim* (fear of Heaven) that can save a person from sin when he is tempted: when he remembers Hashem's Presence in front of him even as he's facing evil, for he knows that he is forever bound with Hashem, no matter when and where.<sup>[1]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> In relation to this shiur, see ***Tefillah #051- Healthy Self-Improvement***

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**Source:** <https://bilvavi.net/english/tefillah-138-hashems-love-us>