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Becoming One With Your Prayer

שעה וּלְתַפִּילָתָם וְכוּ' אֱלוֹקֵינוּ וְכוּ' רָצָה ה' - We ask of Hashem to desire us and to turn to our prayers.

The word **שעה** means to turn to (“*poneh*” in Hebrew),^[1] like we find by the story of Kayin and Hevel, when Hashem “turned” to the *korbon* of Hevel and not to the *korbon* of Kayin. We ask Hashem to turn to our *tefillas*, to reveal His face towards us.

Chazal say that *tefillah* (prayer) is a matter which resides in the exalted heavens, yet people disregard its importance^[2]. The Alter of Kelm said that the understanding of *tefillah* is not that we are found here on this earth while *tefillah* is in heaven; rather, *tefillah* is like Jacob’s ladder ascending to Heaven, thus, as one davens here on this earth, he becomes *tefillah* (as it is written, “I am prayer”), and just as *tefillah* is in heaven, so does the person davening ascend to the heavens. “Its head reaches the heavens.” The person davening ascends to the very place where his *tefillas* ascend to – which is heaven^[3] (when he approaches his *tefillah* with this perspective).

So when we ask Hashem to turn to our *tefillas*, we are not merely asking that Hashem turn to our *tefillas*. It means that since when we *daven* we become one with the *tefillah* we are *davening*, we are asking Hashem to turn to us, for we have become intertwined with our prayer.

When Hashem didn’t accept Kayin’s offering, and Kayin was upset, Hashem said to him, “Why has your face fallen?” Kayin’s offering wasn’t accepted, but Hashem was telling him that he shouldn’t take it personal. So why was Kayin upset? But it was because Kayin felt that he was offering himself with the *korbon*, therefore, Hashem’s refusal of his *korbon* felt to Kayin as if he himself was being rejected.

Let us try to understand what we ask for in Shemoneh Esrei that Hashem should turn to our prayers, which includes not only that our *tefillas* be accepted - but that in addition, that **we ourselves** who are praying be accepted by Hashem.

Tefillah - Turning Outward

Mesillas Yesharim writes in several places that any intelligent person, upon a little reflection, can understand that prayer is to literally feel that one is front of Hashem and conversing with Him. When a person is davening, especially in Shemoneh Esrei, it is upon a person to recognize and feel that he is literally in front of Hashem! *Tefillah*, by very concept, is to stand in front of Hashem.

But there is an even more fundamental understanding.

The Sages state that the world stands on three pillars – Torah, Avodah (which is parallel to *Tefillah*\prayer) and *Gemillus Chassadim* (or *chessed*\kindness). Simply, these three *mitzvos* are actions that we do. But the deeper understanding of this matter is that Torah, Avodah, and Chessed are all abilities in our soul.

We have two parts to ourselves, and there is also a third part of ourselves which is more subtle. One part of us is our internal life, and the other part of us is our outside life. Our outside life can be used for either good or evil. It is used for evil when a person seeks worldly desires. But when it is used for good, a person does *chessed* for others.

There are two ways of being involved with others: either to give to another, or to take from another. These two aspects are behind *avodah*\tefillah and *chessed*. With *chessed*, we turn to others in order to give to another. In *tefillah*, we turn outward [to Hashem], in order to receive things from Hashem.

So there are two ways to turn outwards to others. Either we turn outward in order to give to others, or to take and ask for things. (Our power to take is used for holiness when we use it to only turn to Hashem for receiving things, and we only ask Hashem, not people).

Thus, our *Avodah* and *Chessed* aspects both involve our **outward** aspect; with *Avodah*, we turn outwards, in order to receive [from Hashem], and with *chessed*, we turn outward to others in order to give.

But our **inward** aspect is the pillar of “Torah” in us. The Torah must become “absorbed in our innards”, according to the language of our Sages. Exertion in Torah is to become immersed in our internal aspect. Yaakov is called the “man of tents”, hinting to how learning Torah involves using our inward aspect. Our Torah learning is an inward point, not an outward point.

Giving is our power of *chessed*, taking is our power of *Tefillah* (and this is the holy way to use the power of taking), and these two aspects are part of our outward aspect. But Torah is our inward aspect.

How Torah and Tefillah Are Intertwined

Upon this, we can now understand the following.

The Gemara says that if one “closes his ears from hearing Torah”, his prayers are abominable in front of Hashem. From these words of our Sages we learn that one is not successful in his prayers if he doesn’t learn Torah. Based upon this, the Chazon Ish zt”l in a letter wrote that “Torah and *Tefillah* are intertwined with each other.”

If a person excels in *chessed* and in *tefillah*, he has two of the major three pillars that uphold the world. It would seem that his world should be able to stand, because he has two out of three pillars; he has most of what is needed. But based upon the deeper understanding here, it won’t be enough; why not?

It is because both *chessed* and *Tefillah* are two sides of the same coin. They both involve our ‘outward’ aspect.

If one excels in *chessed* and *tefillah* but he doesn’t have Torah in his life, he only has his outward aspect; he has no internal world. Either he will turn outward and pursue the desires of this world, or he will simply be involved all of his life in the outside world; he will be entirely living in this world of action. In order for a person’s *avodah* in life to be completed, he needs to make sure that he has already developed his internal world when he turns ‘outward’.

Torah is one's internal world. When a person is *davening* or doing *chessed*, he is turning 'outward', but if he learns Torah in addition to this, he is not entirely found outside in the world; he is turning outward, but from *within* himself. He is able to bring his *internal* world, *outward*.

This is the meaning behind the concept of "learning Torah *k'halacha* (according to the conclusions of *halacha*)" – it is that when a person's life is mainly internal, he is able to be involved with the world properly, for he has properly developed his internal world.

Such a person's *tefillos* are "turned to" by Hashem, and this is the meaning of **שְׁעָתֵנוּ שְׂמֵחָה**. It doesn't just mean that Hashem accept our prayers and listen to them. It means that when our internal world is developed – a life of learning Torah – we can then turn outward to Hashem, in the proper way.

Turning To Hashem From Your Innermost Depths

This is the depth of why *tefillah* must be "*mema'akim*" – it must stem "from the depths"^[4]; the simple meaning of praying from our inner depths is because *tefillah* is called "avodah of the heart". But the deeper meaning is because in order to turn to Hashem properly, we need to develop the depth of our internal world.

It is written, "*Pour out your heart like water, in front of Hashem.*" This means to turn to Hashem from your innermost depths when you're in front of Hashem.

The more a person develops his internal world of spirituality, the better he can turn to Hashem properly in prayer. His *panim* (face) reveals more *pnim* (inwardness), as it is written, "*The wisdom of a man illuminates his face*".

The *panim*\face of a person shows the *chochmah*\wisdom that is found in one's *pnim* (inside). The more that a person's *avodah* is stemming from his *pnim*\inside, the more he is turning to Hashem from his *pnim*\inside when he davens. When one turns to Hashem in prayer from his own *pnim*, Hashem shines back toward him His own *he'aras panim* (illumination).

Sensing My Closeness With Hashem: Next To Me vs. Inside Me

To understand this concept with even more clarity, there are two perspectives with which how a person can have towards the Creator.

One perspective in the soul is that a person feels that Hashem is next to him, but still 'outside' of the self.

A person who doesn't attain inner purity will never feel the existence of Hashem at all. When a person purifies himself, he begins to feel the reality of Hashem.

However, the initial perspective of a person is that he feels that Hashem is distant from him; that Hashem is in heaven, while he is in earth. He feels that Hashem exists, of course, but he feels far from Hashem. The more a person attains inner purity and holiness, the more he feels how Hashem exists, which causes him in turn to feel closer to Him.

He can keep getting closer and closer until he can pour out his heart to Hashem and feel that he is literally in front of Hashem. However, the person will still feel that Hashem is "outside" of himself.

But there is another perspective in our souls [a more inner perspective], which feels the meaning of the verse, "*The rock of my heart and portion is G-d.*" Hashem is called "the heart of the Yisrael", and the Jewish people are also called *chad*, "one", with Hashem. This part of the soul can feel that not only

is Hashem nearby you, but that He resides inside you, so to speak. This is because there is *Shechinah* (Hashem's Presence) in every person.

So a person can feel how Hashem is existing and real, yet he feels that Hashem is outside of himself, while another part in a person can feel that Hashem dwells inside himself, so to speak.

Now we will connect this concept with the topic of this discussion: Our pillars of *Tefillah* and *Chessed* are the parts in ourselves which are turned outward, the part in us which feels that Hashem is "outside" of us. If a person does not attain inner purity, he feels that Hashem is far from him, and if he does attain some inner purity, he feels that Hashem is next to him.

But the inner part of our soul, our pillar of "Torah" within, is the part in us that feels one with Hashem (for Hashem, the Torah, and the Jewish people are all *chad* one), and this part of our soul feels how Hashem dwells inside us.

Davening Vs. Learning Torah

There are people who feel that Hashem exists, so they would rather spend more of their time immersed in *davening* rather than learning. But the root of this problem is because their perspective towards Hashem doesn't go beyond the level of *tefillah* (turning outward), and they haven't yet revealed the inner perspective of the soul, which is 'Torah' (to live internally with Hashem, because a person feels "one" with Hashem).

It is not simply because such people only recognize Hashem when they daven and not when they learn Torah. Rather, it is because this kind of person feels that Hashem is outside himself, and even if he can conceptualize that Hashem dwells inside himself, he only feels this reality at rare times. For the most part, he feels that Hashem is outside himself, and that is why he prefers to daven more rather than learn Torah more.

But if a person has reached his point of "Torah" within – the true kind of Torah learning, of course, and not the superficial kind of Torah learning – he can feel the reality of Hashem existing within himself! The more a person attains inner purity, the more his Torah learning reveals to him how Hashem really dwells deep inside himself.

We have explained here that the three pillars of the world – Torah, Avodah and Chessed – are not just actions that we do. They are root powers in our soul.

If we look at them as just actions, then our Torah, Avodah, and Chessed is all being done superficially. But if we learn how to view Torah, Avodah and Chessed at their root functions - as we explained here - we can understand that Avodah and Chessed is our outward aspect, while Torah is our inward aspect.

Connecting Our Avodah of Tefillah With Torah

Based upon this, now we can understand the meaning of the words **שעה ולתפילתם שעה** and how it connects to the next words of the blessing, **והשב את העבודה לדביר ביתך**.

When we ask Hashem to turn to our prayers, afterwards we ask Hashem to return the avodah of the Beis HaMikdash. From there, the Beis HaMikdash, came the true light of Torah to the world. "For from Zion comes forth the Torah, and the word of Hashem from Jerusalem." The depth of our prayer here is that we want our *tefillos* to become connected to the Torah to the internal layer of reality that exists.

The present level of *tefillah* which we know of today is not the perfected level of *tefillah*; it does not replace the *Beis HaMikdash*. The *avodah* of the *Beis HaMikdash* was the source of true Torah in the world.

Practically Applying This Concept

Making this practical, the more a person davens to Hashem from his innermost depths, he should try to discover from which part in himself he is *davening* from. Don't make this introspection while you are actually *davening*. Think about it before you *daven*.

A true *tefillah* emanates from your real level, from the depth in yourself that you have reached. This is not a self-accounting about how much *kavanah* (concentration) you have when you daven. It is about how much of your *tefillah* is emanating from your innermost depths - to ask yourself if your *davening* is flowing out from your deepest parts.

Feeling Hashem 'Next To' You and 'Within' You

If someone penetrates into the depths of his soul, he will automatically feel the reality of Hashem existing within himself, and he will surely feel that he is in front of Hashem when he davens.

Initially, a person feels that Hashem is outside of himself, and the more he contemplates the reality of Hashem, the closer he feels to Him, which helps him feel more and more that Hashem dwells inside him. In fact, he will be able to feel Hashem both outside of himself as well as inside himself.

At first, when a person begins to sense the reality of Hashem, he can only feel Hashem outside of himself, but with more that a person senses Hashem, he can more how Hashem dwells inside him as well.

In Conclusion

The words here were about a subtle point in our soul.

When a person lives an internal kind of life, he can feel Hashem inside himself even when he's not *davening*. And when he is in middle of davening, now is the time where he turns 'outward' to Hashem.

Thus, the inner way to serve Hashem is that you don't only feel Hashem when you're *davening*; you are concentrating on turning 'outwardly' to Hashem as you *daven*, but you can feel His Presence *inside* yourself even when you are not *davening*....

This is the depth behind our prayer, **ולתפילתם שעה**.

[1] See also ***Tefillah #029 - True Salvation*** and ***Tefillah #0129 - Awaiting The Salvation of the Future***

[2] Talmud Bavli: Berachos 6b

[3] See ***Tefillah #001 - Ladder Ascending To Heaven.***

[4] Tehillim: 130

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