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[Home](#) > Tefillah - 143 Responsibility & Enjoying Life

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## Tefillah - 143 Responsibility & Enjoying Life

### *Introduction*

**ברצון באהבה תקבל ברצון (מהרה) ותפלתם** - We ask Hashem to **“accept our prayers, readily, and with love”**. We ask Hashem to accept our prayers with love for us.

Hashem’s love for us is hidden; we will feel Hashem’s love when we talk to Him with love for Him. If a person talks to Hashem with love for Him – meaning, if he loves to talk to Hashem, so will Hashem love to hear him talking, and He will then accept his prayers with love.

To expand upon this concept, there is a general love and there is a more individualized kind of love that we have towards Hashem. We have a mitzvah to love Hashem, and this is general love to Hashem. But we also have to talk to Hashem, and to love to talk to Him. This is an individualized kind of love for Hashem.

When one feels that he is talking to Hashem and that Hashem is listening to him, it is possible for him to love talking to Hashem. But if a person talks to Hashem and feels that Hashem is concealing Himself from him, it is hard for him to feel a love in talking to Hashem.

Let us reflect into what it means to have a love for doing something, and then will focus on how a person can acquire a love and a pleasure in talking to Hashem.

### *The Responsibilities We Bear*

When a person is a child, he has no responsibilities. As a person gets a bit older and more mature, he goes to school, and he is given responsibilities. He also has to conform to society and learn how to get along with his friends and parents. He gets the idea of what it means to be responsible.

The older a person gets, the more responsibilities he receives – physically, as well as spiritually. He has to accept the yoke of Torah (“*kabalas ol Torah*”) and the yoke of mitzvos (“*kabalas ol mitzvos*”). As life goes on, a person comes across more and more burdens and responsibilities. He gains the yoke of livelihood and of raising children, along with marriage. He has to get along with people and with his surroundings, both with his close surroundings as well as his further surroundings. In addition, we have responsibilities that we accept upon ourselves, as well as responsibilities that are thrown onto us whether we like it or not.

Earning a living is a great burden upon a person that he has to bear. As one’s family expands, *Baruch Hashem*, and the situation comes in which he has to go to work (most people do not have complete

*Bitachon* in Hashem, and therefore they must go to work if they need livelihood), the responsibilities in life increase greatly. Not only does a person have to make a living, but he is doing many actions as well along with this. As children, we barely have any responsibility. When we get older and more mature, the amount of our responsibilities increases greatly.

That's all with regards to our physical responsibilities. But we also have spiritual responsibilities -we must accept the yoke of the mitzvos upon ourselves, from the time we are *bar mitzvah*. At 13 years of age, our *mitzvos* are usually done superficially, but as we gain more *daas*, we realize more what our responsibilities are in doing the mitzvos. We see what *dikduk hadin* (being careful with *Halacha*) is all about, and we see how much it entails. It requires our time, money and our energy. Even more so, the yoke of learning Torah is a great responsibility: one has to be immersed in it the entire day, as the possuk says, "*And you shall toil in it day and night.*"

So the concept of responsibility spans our entire schedule - it takes up all our time and requires all the energies of our soul. Even more so, there are also a few people who are *bnei aliyah* (spiritually aspiring and growing people) who take upon themselves the responsibility of improving the full spectrum of their entire being: working on their actions, *middos*, and thoughts - always seeking to grow.

This is a brief description of the concept, but anyone who knows even a bit about life and doesn't have a totally superficial perspective knows, that we have a lot of responsibilities in our life. The more we mature through the stages of life, the more we see how much there is to do - physically, and spiritually.

### **Overwhelmed**

It's unbelievable when you really think into how many responsibilities you have.

We have to make a living, we have to take care of our spouse, our children, and raise them, and work hard with them. Along with all this, we also carry the yoke of learning Torah on us and exert ourselves in it. It's overwhelming! With a little reflection about this, a person can see that his responsibilities are really beyond his natural energies.

If one doesn't feel how life is full of responsibilities, he has a very superficial outlook on life, and he doesn't know much about life. But if someone has an inner view on life, together with experiences from his life, he sees what responsibilities are all about. (Unless he is one of the rare individuals who trust Hashem so much that they receive all their substance from Hashem. Even if he is not one of these individuals and he is not aware of the responsibilities of life, he is missing the ability to accept a responsibility upon himself).

A *bar daas* is aware of his responsibilities and he accepts them, both his physical responsibilities as well as his spiritual responsibilities. When a person realizes it, though, he might throw up his hands in despair.

It appears that some people have it easier and live a very comfortable life. However, many times, those people don't know how to be responsible, and they don't know what life is about. They might be successful in a particular area, but they lack knowledge about the general picture of life.

When a person truly realizes though how much responsibilities he has, it will appear simply overwhelming.

### **The Solution**

The true perspective to have, though, which we will explain here, is to acquire a positive perspective towards our many responsibilities: to do things **lovingly**, and **happily**.

### ***How To Lessen The Burden***

The truth is that we really cannot carry out all our responsibilities, naturally speaking. It's simply impossible. How, then, can we indeed succeed?

We have to do what we can and not go beyond our capabilities, and Hashem does the rest; the Sages said "The task is not upon you to complete". This is true, but even more so, when a person reveals forth his power to perform the obligations of the Torah out of love for Hashem, and out of joy, then his life becomes easier.

When a person does things but he has no love for what he does, and he forces himself to do the mitzvos, or he does them all because he knows that he has to want to do it (but he doesn't really want to do it) - it is very hard for him to perform the mitzvos.

If a person just acts upon his his natural abilities, and he exerts himself to perform all his duties in life, he will push himself too much and strain himself. There are both calm periods in a person's life as well as stressful periods in life, but even when things are calm, he will still be strained, because he doesn't have the ability to do things happily. He will cave in from all the areas of improving his Avodas Hashem: taking care of his children, being sensitive and mindful to others, exertion in learning Torah, trying to have a relationship with Hashem. And, all of these things require intense character improvement, as well as being careful with Halacha. There is much to work on in our life - and it seems impossible.

But that's only if a person forces himself to do all these things, and he does everything out of obligation. But when a person opens his heart and he reveals love for Hashem, for Torah, and for Creation, things look differently. His Avodas Hashem will not be performed on an intellectual level or because it's "what he wants" in the superficial sense.

Of course, one must exert himself; as it is written, "*man was created for exertion.*" But exertion doesn't have to be just exertion; it can be coming along with love for the mitzvos. And when one exerts himself in his Avodas Hashem because he loves to do what he does, the inner recesses of the soul become opened in the person, and this gives one the strength to perform all that he has to do.

Without this feeling of love for the mitzvos, it is really impossible for one to survive in his Avodas Hashem!

Generally speaking, there are two powers in the soul which make things easier for a person to do all his obligations towards Hashem. One is the power of **love**, which is rooted in the element of water in the soul; and the other is the power of **joy**, which is rooted in the element of fire in the soul. Without love, and without joy, it's really impossible for a person to be able to fulfill all his obligations in Judaism.

### ***Surviving Judaism Vs. Living It***

When a person is unaware of this concept, he will "survive" life, but he suffers internally. He has no inner joy in life.

We can see people who get older and more mature in life, but they look like their life is over already; they look like they are old and weak, unable to bear the burden of whatever life brings. This is not referring to physical aging. We are describing an internal kind of aging, in which a person can be

young yet still be old and weak inside. You can see it in a person who has raised his children and married them off, and he has gotten through life, but all of this has taken its toll on him; he feels weak and gone from strength. He is crushed by the burdens of life.

But when a person reveals his power to do things out of love, he is full of energy, and this makes it easier for a person to get by whatever he has to go through in his life. Of course, some people have more *siyata d'shamaya* (Heavenly assistance) more than others, and this is decided by the will of Hashem, so ultimately everything is up to Hashem. But a large part of the *siyata d'shamaya* is a direct result of a person's love and joy in what he does for Hashem. If there is love and joy present in a person's obligations, he receives new strength from Hashem, and then life becomes easier.

A person who reveals love and joy in the mitzvos lives a life full of energy and he can get by life easier. Even when he gets physically older, he will be full of inner vitality.

This doesn't mean that he won't feel the burdens of life. There is always a burden, for Chazal say "It is good for man to bear a burden in his youth." But the burdens of life can be carried with enthusiasm, with joy, with the knowledge that "It's the will of Hashem and therefore, it's the will of my very soul."

Of course, some things are easier to do happily than other things we do. But when a person truly believes that the burdens we face in life are the will of Hashem, he is able to do everything with joy and with love, and he doesn't feel that the burdens of life are like a heavy weight upon him.

This helps a person enjoy a quality life with the more burdens he comes across in his life.

### ***Praying With Meaning***

This concept is a great fundamental in one's Avodas Hashem. Now we will see how it gives meaning to the words **ותפילתם באהבה תקבל ברצון**.

A person davens to Hashem three times a day, an hour and 15 minutes a day at least. On Rosh Chodesh and Shabbos and Yom Tov we daven more than that. On Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur we daven even more. We daven to Hashem for many, many hours of the year. It might all just be a superficial lip service to a person, in which he keeps repeating the words of prayer which our Sages established...

If a person just repeats the words all day and all year and he does not reveal any inner depth to the words he keeps saying, what happens? It becomes very difficult for a person to daven. He's just saying the same words, over and over again. With such an attitude towards prayer, prayer becomes very taxing upon a person, beyond his strengths.

But when a person is doing his obligation out of love and joy, when he feels the reality of Hashem and he feels that he is standing in front of Him, and he feels his soul (to be more specific, his G-dly soul, the *Nefesh Elokis*) speaking with Hashem, "as if he's talking to a friend", like the *Mesillas Yesharim* says; when one loves to talk to Hashem and he feels yearnings for Him.

Without these three factors - feeling the reality of Hashem, feeling that one is standing in front of Him in prayer, and to love talking to Him - how can a person go for so many years of life saying the same words of prayer?! It is only natural that he will dry up from all of this.

Of course, even without a feeling for prayer, it's still good that a person has fear and love of Hashem and that he knows that there is a Judge, and that he would never think of skipping *davening*, *chas v'shalom*. But how long can one go on already without any feelings in his prayers? How can he daven so many prayers in his life with no feelings for what he says? It's impossible for the soul to endure

this.

Although we can see people who go their whole life davening without feeling and they seem to be doing just fine, they are only surviving on a superficial level, but their souls inside constantly wish they could escape such a situation. The soul simply cannot put up living for so many years with constantly repeating a dry and superficial act.

When a person does things out of love, everything will be different. Of course, every day is different. Sometimes the soul is more opened to spiritual feelings and sometimes it is more closed off. But if a person has a lifestyle in which **1) He recognizes the reality of Hashem** and **2) He realizes that when he prays, he stands in front of Hashem** and **3) He enjoys talking to Him**, feeling a love and yearning for Him - such a lifestyle will be a life that is constantly full of vitality.

### ***In Conclusion***

**ותפילתם באהבה תקבל באהבה** - When a person davens out of love for Hashem and he wishes he could stay in prayer with Hashem, he becomes more and more connected with Hashem through every prayer; such prayers keep awakening his yearnings for Hashem.

Davening out of a love for Hashem is the key to having one's prayers accepted lovingly by Hashem. Just as he feels loving toward Hashem, so will Hashem reciprocate the love and accept his prayers with love.

When one goes his whole life davening and he never feels an enjoyable feeling when he talks to Hashem, he never davened one true *tefillah* in his life! He is missing "the pillar of *tefillah*", one of the three pillars of the world.<sup>[1]</sup> To illustrate, if a person learns Torah but he doesn't really want to learn and he doesn't love to learn, clearly, he is missing the "pillar of Torah"; if one does *chessed* all the time but he has no love for *chessed*, he does not have the "pillar of *chessed*". (In fact, even if one finished *Sefer Ahavas Chessed* and he learned it in-depth and he does *chessed*, he might still be doing all his *chessed* purely on an obligation level, and he has no love for *chessed*! Of course, he'll get reward for learning Torah, but...)

When one loves to speak with Hashem, such *davening* is called "the pillar of *tefillah*". And when one loves to speak with Hashem, Hashem loves to hear his prayers. Such prayers are accepted lovingly by Hashem - **ותפילתם באהבה תקבל ברצון**.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Avos 1:1