

# כזונה קזנטרס

שמונה עשרה

נוסח ספרד

וּאֵת  
הַמִּלֵּה  
VANI TEFILLAH  
FOUNDATION  
'PRAYING WITH FIRE'



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בס"ד ט' כסלו תשע"ח

למע"כ ידידי הנכבד רב פעלים ואיש מצליח הרה"ג המפורסם לרבים ר' אברהם צבי הכהן קליינמאן שליט"א,  
אחרי דרישת שלומו הטוב בברכה מרובה כמשפט.

הוא לפני פעולתו החדשה פרי מחשבתו ועטו הנקרא "כוונה קונטרס" המסודר יפה בביאור כללות התפילות בלשון צח ובהיר, יחד עם פירוש המלות בפרטות, ותכליתו לשמש כספר לימוד לחנך תינוקות של בית רבן ותלמידי ישיבה בעבודת התפילה, שע"י שיבינו ענין התפילה ופירוש המלות ירגישו טעם בתפילתם ויכירו גודל ענינה של תפילה שהוא מדברים העומדים ברומו של עולם.

והנה זה הרבה שנים שכבי' פועל גדולות ונצורות לחזק את ישראל בענין התפילה, ובי"ה כבי' הוא גברא דמריה סיייעיה שזכה להשפיע בזה על רבבות אלפי ישראל מגדול ועד קטן בהרבה מדינות בכל העולם, וגם בפעם הזאת בטוח אני שעבודתו בקודש יביא תועלת לרבים לאלו המעונינים לחזק ערך תפילתם, ונזכה עי"ז לגאולה שלמה בקרוב.

מנאי המברכו בברכת חו"ש והצלחה אמיתית.

ד"ר ברוך  
למנאי קמנצקי

*English Translation of The Novominsker Rebbe's Haskama  
on the following page*

To my dear esteemed friend, a man of great accomplishment on behalf of Torah and Yiddishkeit, Rabbi Avraham Tzvi Kleinman shlit"á, shalom aleichem,

I reviewed the pamphlets you composed for the "young flock" - our Yeshiva students. It is a clear succinct translation and explanation of the Nussach Hat'fillah which we pray each day, with the purpose of ingraining the meaning of the words on the hearts and souls of all Jews. This deeply rooted understanding and comprehension of the berachos and tefillos will be of great benefit to all, as they will recognize before Whom they stand and pour out their hearts.

May it be His will that these pamphlets be warmly received in the schools, and may they inspire our brethren - from young to old - to focus their hearts to our Father in heaven, and may Hashem hear and accept the voice of our prayers with mercy.

With blessings of kol-tuv and arichas yamim tovim,

Yaakov Perlow

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יעקב פרלוב  
קהל עדת יעקב נאוואמינסק  
ישיבת נאוואמינסק - קול יהודא  
ברוקלין, נ.י.

בס"ד

יום א' נח נסאו גשע"ה  
גזכ יודי, דיב היק הלאב, ויג נדאום אמריג ואלר זאג  
גארו אקריגם לפי הינהן קאלינמאן פאטאן, פערער פא אומס אויג יוד.  
דיינע קהלן פרינסט זעג אויב זאגן פריינד, פלען איר איה פער וואלענען  
אמריג קערע דיאוד ואלעס איר וואס המלך שערל מעלאים קבא יום, אדו. בן  
אדריג איר דיאוד פא המלך ארעסטאמענט פא יענא. אדריג איר איר קערע  
דיאוד ואלעס איר איר זיבן איר שיהו. איה. רעלן שיעבאו היקאריס. דיאוד  
דיאוד פרינסט, אקריג יעג ואלעס בן יענא, אקריג ווד אקריג אבולאיר אקריג  
הב"ה קריג פא אבולאיר יומס אקריג  
יעקב פרלוב



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## INTRODUCTION

### ***Kavannah: The Soul of Prayer***

*Kavannah* is a requirement of *halachah*, not merely a stringency. If one is not speaking from the heart, and not speaking with an awareness of Hashem, one is not fulfilling the basic requirements of prayer.

*Like a diamond, a prayer's value is far more dependent on its internal purity than its mass. The small, flawless diamond is worth far more than the larger, imperfect one. Its purity not only defines its value, but it also expresses the purity of devotion with which it is being tendered.*

The words of *Tehillim* (145:18) hold out the promise of a true, deep connection to Hashem for those who pray with their hearts: *Hashem is close to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him sincerely.* The *Radak* says this verse refers to those whose prayers are a unified harmony of mind, heart and words. Fueled by *kavannah*, these are the prayers with the power to reach their destination.

*Just as an arrow's power and distance depends on the pressure exerted by the archer on the bow, the effectiveness of prayer depends on the power of the supplicant's thought behind his prayers.*

So great is the power of *Kavannah* that it can be the difference between life and death.

*Two patients lie in their beds suffering from the same ravaging disease. The first patient recovers, rises from his bed and resumes a healthy, vigorous life, while the other grows weaker each day.*

*The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 18a) asks, "Why was one patient cured while the other was not? The patient who was cured prayed and was answered, while the patient who was not cured prayed and was not answered. And why was this one's prayers answered? Because the one who was answered prayed a 'complete prayer,'*

*while the other one who was not answered did not pray a 'complete prayer.'"*

Rashi (Ibid) defines a "complete prayer," as one prayed with *kavannah*. Thus, the one who was answered and lived prayed with *kavannah*, while the other one who was not answered did not pray with *kavannah*.

## ***Kavannah in Shemoneh Esrei***

How a person approaches someone is an immediate indicator of their relationship. In approaching Hashem in *Shemoneh Esrei*, the *kavannah* can make or break the effectiveness of the entire *tefillah*. Either it tells Hashem that He is our King and we are standing humbly before Him, or it tells Him that we have no awareness of the gravity of the occasion.

There are two forms of *kavannah* necessary in *Shemoneh*. The first *kavannah* (Rambam, *Hilchos Tefillah*, 4:1), obligates a person to view himself as standing before the Master of the Universe. This *kavannah* is required during the entire *Shemoneh Esrei*, and is based on the Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 22a): "One who prays must view himself as if Hashem's Divine Presence is opposite him as it says, *Place Hashem before you always.*" Thus, one's thoughts and intentions when reciting *Shemoneh Esrei* must reflect a steadfast awareness that one is directly beseeching Hashem. (Note: There is disagreement among *halachic* authorities as to whether a lack of this *kavannah* would invalidate the *tefillah*.)

The other essential *kavannah* involves the *peirush ha'milim*, understanding the meaning of the words, which is required, at a minimum, during the first *berachah* of *Shemoneh Esrei*. According to the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Siman* 98, *Se'if* 1), "One who prays must concentrate in his heart regarding the explanation of the words (that come) from one's mouth." However, "...if one cannot concentrate (on the meaning of the words) in all the *berachos*, at a minimum (he must have proper *kavannah*) during (the first *berachah* called) *Avos*."

By mindfully following the halachos, each of us has the opportunity to feel the overwhelming reality of standing before a King of infinite majesty. The Gemara (*Berachos* 28b) promises that by fulfilling our role as Hashem's reverent subjects in this world, we earn a place as the King's beloved servants in the World to Come.

## ***Unlocking the Gates***

“From the day the (Second) Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, the Gates of Prayer are locked,” says the Gemara (*Berachos* 32b) The Satmar Rebbe posed two questions: First, why do we pray if the gates of prayer are locked? Furthermore, Chazal tell us that our prayers rise to “the pinnacle of the heavens.” What purpose do they serve there if they cannot pass through the gates?

The Satmar Rebbe returns to the Gemara (*Berachos* 32b), to offer a beautiful answer: “Even though the gates of prayer are locked, the gates of *dim’ah*, tears, are not locked.” A person’s *tefillos*, standing at the “pinnacle of the heavens,” cannot penetrate the locked Gates of Prayer until he weeps with emotion during prayer. At that moment, the Gates of Tears open. All the *tefillos* standing in wait, including those previously said without tears, can then be swept through to the Throne of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

This inspiring thought has one drawback: It is highly unlikely that the average person would be able to command this intensity of emotion in the absence of any real emotional upheaval. How then, does this concept equip us on a practical level to open Heaven’s gates to our daily prayers?

Rav Yonasan Eibeshutz (*Yaaros Devash*, Volume 2, *Drash* 11) offers an astounding insight that resolves the problem. The numerical equivalent of the word *b’chi*, crying (which can be substituted for *dim’ah*, tears) is 32, the same as the word *lev*, heart. This teaches that the *tefillos* of the one who prays with *kavannah*, intent of the heart, enter Heaven through the ever-open Gates.

*Kavannah* transforms our daily prayers into heartfelt supplications able to reach the Throne of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. It not only propels our present *tefillos*, but reaches back in time to “repackage” the distracted, rushed and mumbled prayers of our past and send them Heavenward with renewed power.

See page 33 for 5 Practical Strategies to Achieve True *Kavannah*.



## HOW TO USE YOUR KAVANNAH KUNTROS

**Kavannah Kuntros** - The **Kavannah Kuntros** is different than any other translation or *sefer on tefillah*. That is because it gives you not just the English translation, but the meaning of the *Shacharis tefillah* you say every weekday in words that are clear and understandable for students your age.

**Why Just a Few Different Words Each Week?** – You will notice that the Kavannah Kuntros is divided into "WEEKS" (i.e. see page 11 where it says "WEEK 1" by "HALACHAH ADVISORY" and page 14 where it says "WEEK 2" on the Left Column by 'איתה קדוש'). This is because when you really want to build your *kavannah*, the best way is to go slowly, step by step. In fact, the *Shulchan Aruch* (1:3) says that "saying a small amount of *tefillah* with *kavannah* is better than saying more words without *kavannah*." Of course, it is important to always first ask a Rebbe when to apply this rule. The main point, says the *Mishneh Beurah* (ibid:12), is not whether we say more or less, but that the words we say are truly directed toward Hashem with *kavannah*.

**Zooming In** - Please note that the bold-faced words in Kavannah Kuntros are the same words listed in "Zooming In" (see the bottom of the Kuntros pages). These are less commonly understood words, which will be included in a *voluntary* Multiple Choice exam scheduled to take place after WEEK 5 and at the end of the 11 WEEK program.

**Student Contest and Prizes** - A raffle for a **\$150 Grand Prize** and **\$50 Second Place Prize** will take place at the conclusion of the High School Tefillah Initiative. Whoever scores 100 on the Multiple Choice exam wins 5 tickets to enter the drawing. A score of 95 earns 4 tickets; 90 earns 3 tickets; 85 earns 2 tickets, and 80 will earn 1 ticket for entry into the drawing

**What Will I Gain From Using the Kavannah Kuntros?** - BE" H over time, the meaning and the feeling of the words you say in *Shemoneh Esrei* will become very familiar to you. As you *daven*, you'll find that you really feel that you are coming closer to Hashem and that your *tefillos* are becoming more and more meaningful and powerful. This is the one ability you can count on throughout your life, to help bring you success and *berachah* and to help you face life's challenges. May this **Kavannah Kuntros** give power and meaning to your *tefillah* to truly become "*devarim ha'omdim b'rumo shel olam*, bringing Hashem's *yeshuos* into our world.

## שמונה עשרה

we praise Hashem (e.g. גומל חסדים טובים, Who constantly does complete acts of loving kindness for us). Only after praising G-d—truly becoming aware of His greatness and that He alone can give us what we need—are we properly prepared to make our requests in the rest of Shemoneh Esrei.

**HALACHAH ADVISORY:** Bend your knees at the word בָּרוּךְ, then bow at the word אֱתָהּ, and stay in that position until saying the Name of Hashem, at which point straighten up.<sup>6</sup>

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה

Blessed are You [the source of all blessing in the world],

ה'

Hashem (Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be),

אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ

our all-powerful God [Who constantly controls all that goes on in the world],

וְאֱ-לֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,

and the God of our Forefathers  
[each one had a uniquely special relationship with Hashem],

אֱ-לֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם,

God of Avraham [who taught us Shacharis—to pray to Hashem when things are good (i.e., when the sun comes up and shines in the morning)],

**HALACHAH ADVISORY:** Take 3 steps backward, then 3 steps forward. Stand with your feet together and do not interrupt in any way.<sup>1</sup>

**HALACHAH ADVISORY:** There are two types of kavannah necessary in Shemoneh Esrei:

- View yourself as standing before Hashem, the Master of the Universe<sup>2</sup> during the entire Shemoneh Esrei and realize that you are making requests directly to Hashem,<sup>3</sup> and
- Understand the meaning of **all the words** of Shemoneh Esrei.
  - B'dieved [After the Fact]: Concentrate on the meaning of the words of the **first berachah** of Shemoneh Esrei (מוֹדִים, בְּרַכַּת אֲבוֹת) **and of the ends of all the Shemoneh Esrei berachos.**<sup>4</sup>
  - B'dieved [After the Fact]: If that is too difficult, then at least **concentrate on the meaning of the words of** בְּרַכַּת אֲבוֹת.<sup>5</sup>

[מנחה]

כִּי שֵׁם ה' אֲקַרָא, הִבּו גִדְל לֹא-לֵהִינוּ

When I call out [speak] Hashem's Name, ascribe [acknowledge] greatness to our G-d [that His ways are just]

אֲד-נִי שְׁפֹתַי תִּפְתָּח,

My Master, [please] open my lips

וּפִי יַגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ.

so that my mouth may tell [You]  
Your praise.

### אֲבוֹת

OUR PATRIARCHS

*In the first three blessings of Shemoneh Esrei (מִצְוַת אֲבָרָה, מִחֲזֵה הַמֵּיתִים, הֵא-ל הַקְדוּשָׁה)*

WEEK

1



וְזָכַר חַסְדֵי אֲבוֹת,

and He remembers [for our benefit] the kindness done by the Forefathers,

וַיִּמְבִּיא גּוֹאֵל

and He [Hashem, through every event that occurs] brings the Redeemer [(Mashiach) closer]

לְבָנֵי בְנֵיהֶם,

to [us] the [Forefathers'] children's children,

לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ

for His [Hashem's] Name's sake [His Name will be glorified when Mashiach comes],

בְּאַהֲבָה.

with love [even though we may be spiritually unworthy].

בעש"ת

(During the 10 Days of Repentance, i.e. from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, add:)

זְכַרְנוּ לַחַיִּים, מֶלֶךְ חַפְצֵן בְּחַיִּים, וְכָתְבָנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים, לְמַעַן אֶל־לֵהִים חַיִּים.

Remember us for life, King Who desires life, and inscribe us in the Book of Life—for Your sake, Living God.

מֶלֶךְ

[Hashem is] King [accepted as ruler by the Jewish people],

עוֹזֵר

[Hashem is our] Helper [assisting us in all that we do],

אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק,

God of Yitzchak [who taught us Minchah—to pray to Hashem when there's neither good (strong light of the morning) nor bad (darkness of the night)],

וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב,

and the God of Yaakov [who taught us Ma'ariv — to pray to Hashem during a time of distress and exile, a time of "darkness"].

הָאֱלֹהִים

The God [Who is all powerful and Who shows His Presence through acts of mercy],

הַגָּדוֹל

great [God, Who shows His Presence through acts of kindness],

הַגִּבּוֹר

mighty [God, Who shows His Presence through acts of judgment],

וְהַנּוֹרָא,

and awesome [God],

אֱלֹהֵינוּ<sup>7</sup>

the Supreme God [the Cause behind everything that happens in the world],

גּוֹמֵל חַסְדִּים טוֹבִים

Who grants [favorable] good kindness [with no hidden personal benefit]

וְקוֹנֵה הַכֹּל,

and owns [and continually creates] everything;



אֲד-נִי,

My Master [Who has a personal relationship with me].

מַחִיָּה מֵתִים אֶתָּה,

You bring the dead back to life.

רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ.

He [Hashem] provides a wealth of salvation.

[in Winter]

Beginning with Mussaf of Shemini Atzeres until Mussaf of the 1st day of Pesach, say

מְשִׁיב הַרוּחַ וּמוֹרִיד הַגֶּשֶׁם.

[Hashem] causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall.

[in Summer]

Beginning with Mussaf of 1st day of Pesach until Mussaf of Shemini Atzeres, say

מוֹרִיד הַטֶּל

Who makes the dew descend

מְכַלְכֵּל חַיִּים בְּחַסֵּד,

He provides the living with their needs in kindness;

מַחִיָּה מֵתִים בְּרַחֲמִים רַבִּים,

He brings the dead back to life with much mercy,

וּמוֹשִׁיעַ

and [Hashem is our] Savior [rescuing us from dangers that we find ourselves in],

וּמָגֵן.

and [Hashem is our] Shield [protecting us from danger before it arrives].

**HALACHAH ADVISORY:** Bend your knees at the word בְּרוּךְ, then bow at the word אַתָּה, and stay in that position until saying the Name of Hashem, at which point straighten up.<sup>8</sup>



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה

Blessed are You [the source of all blessing in the world],

ה'.

Hashem (Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be),

מָגֵן אַבְרָהָם

Shield of Avraham [Hashem should protect us just as He shielded Avraham from danger].

גְּבוּרוֹת

HASHEM IS POWERFUL

אַתָּה גָּבוֹר לְעוֹלָם

You are Powerful forever,

ZOOMING IN - Week 1

אֲסוּרִים the imprisoned	מְכַלְכֵּל He provides	וּמָגֵן and Shield	עוֹזֵר Helper	גּוֹמֵל Who grants	עֲלִיוֹן the Supreme	וְהַנּוֹרָא and awesome	שְׁפֵתַי my lips
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בעש"ת—

(During the 10 Days of Repentance, i.e. from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, say:)

מי כְּמוֹד אָב הַרְחֵמוּ, זֹכֵר יִצְוֵי  
לְחַיִּים בְּרַחֲמִים.

Who is like You, Merciful Father,  
Who recalls His creatures mercifully  
for life.

וְנֶאֱמַן אַתָּה לְהַחְיִית מֵתִים.

And You are faithful  
[trustworthy] to revive the dead

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה

Blessed are You [the source of all  
blessing in the world],

ה',

Hashem (Master of all, Who  
always was, is, and will be),

מְחִיֵּה הַמֵּתִים.

Who brings the dead back to life.

אַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ

HASHEM IS HOLY

WEEK  
2

אַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ

You [Hashem] are holy [exalted  
above our material world and not under  
any limitations]

וְשִׁמְךָ קָדוֹשׁ,

and Your Name is holy,

סוֹמֵךְ נוֹפְלִים,

He supports the fallen ones  
[whether physically, emotionally, or  
financially],

וְרוֹפֵא הוֹלִים,<sup>9</sup>

and He heals the sick,

וּמַתִּיר אֲסוּרִים,

and He frees the imprisoned

וּמְקַיֵּם אֲמוּנָתוֹ

and He maintains His promise

לִישְׁנֵי עֶפֶר.

[to wake up] those asleep in the  
dust [the dead].

מי כְּמוֹד בַּעַל גְּבוּרוֹת,

Who is like You, Master of  
mighty deeds,

וּמִי דוֹמֶה לָךְ,

and who is similar to You,

מְלַךְ מְמִית וּמְחִיֵּה

King Who causes things to die  
and provides life [to all in our world]

וּמַצְמִיחַ יְשׁוּעָה.

and makes salvation [and  
recovery] grow slowly [and develop].

**אתה חונן**  
KNOWLEDGE AND  
UNDERSTANDING

*In this first of six personal requests (from חונן אתה through חונן through עלינו אתה חונן), we ask Hashem for knowledge and understanding—the brainpower to enable us to recognize Hashem and to fulfill His mitzvos.*



**אתה חונן לְאָדָם דַּעַת,**

You (Hashem) kindly [as a gift]  
give mankind intelligence [the  
ability to think],

**וּמְלַמֵּד לְאִנּוּשׁ בִּינָה.**

and [You] teach to [even the lowest  
of] mankind insight [the ability to  
understand in depth].

**חַנּוּנוּ מֵאֲתָתְךָ**

Kindly provide us from Yourself

**חֻכְמָה בִּינָה וְדַעַת.**

[with] wisdom, insight, and  
knowledge.

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה**

Blessed are You [the source of all  
blessing in the world],

**ה' ,**

Hashem (Master of all, Who  
always was, is, and will be),

**חונן הדַּעַת.**

kind Giver of Intelligence.

**וְקַדוּשִׁים בְּכָל יוֹם יְהִלְלוּךָ סְלָה.**  
and the holy beings [angels and  
the Jewish people] praise You every  
day forever.

**כִּי אֵ-ל מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל וְקָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה.**  
for God, a King, great and holy  
are You.

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה**

Blessed are You [the source of all  
blessing in the world],

**ה' ,**

Hashem (Master of all, Who  
always was, is, and will be),

**הָאֵ-ל הַקָּדוֹשׁ.**

The holy God [Who is all-powerful  
and Who shows His Presence through acts  
of mercy].

בעש"ת

(During the 10 Days of Repentance, i.e.  
from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur,  
instead of saying הָאֵ-ל הַקָּדוֹשׁ, say:)


**הַמֶּלֶךְ הַקָּדוֹשׁ**

The holy King.

ZOOMING IN - Week 2

דַּעַת and knowledge	מֵאֲתָתְךָ from Yourself	לְאִנּוּשׁ to mankind	חונן kind Giver	ה' Master of all (Who always was, is, and will be)	יְהִלְלוּךָ praise You
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## סְלַח לָנוּ FORGIVENESS

After asking for Hashem's help in doing תשובה for our sins, in this sixth berachah of Shemoneh Esrei we ask Hashem for forgiveness, the next step in the תשובה process. 

**סְלַח לָנוּ אָבִינוּ כִּי חָטָאנוּ,**

Forgive us [do not punish us], our [loving] Father, for we have [unintentionally] sinned,

**מִחַל לָנוּ מְלַכְנוּ כִּי פָשַׁעְנוּ,**  
pardon us [erase the sin], our [powerful] King, as we have [intentionally] sinned,

**כִּי אֵל-ל טוֹב וְסֶלַח אַתָּה.**  
for the God, Who is good and forgiving, are You.

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה**


Blessed are You [the source of all blessing in the world],

**ה' ,**

Hashem (Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be),

**חֲנוּן הַמְּרַבֵּה לְסִלּוֹחַ.**  
the kind One Who pardons abundantly [so many times, even if we sin often].

## הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ REPENTANCE

After asking Hashem for knowledge and understanding in the previous berachah, in this fifth berachah of Shemoneh Esrei we ask Hashem to enable us to use our brainpower specifically to bring us back to His Torah and to do teshuvah. 

**הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ אָבִינוּ לְתוֹרָתְךָ,**

Bring us back, our [loving] Father, to Your Torah,

**וְקָרְבָנוּ מְלַכְנוּ לְעִבּוּדְךָ,**

and bring us near, our King, to Your service [the mitzvos],

**וְהַחְזִירֵנוּ בְּתִשׁוּבָה שְׁלֵמָה לְפָנֶיךָ.**  
and [assist us to] return [to You] in complete teshuvah [repentance].

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה**

Blessed are You [the source of all blessing in the world],

**ה' ,**

Hashem (Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be),

**הַרוֹצֵה בְּתִשׁוּבָה.**  
Who desires teshuvah [repentance].

### ZOOMING IN - Weeks 3

פָּשַׁעְנוּ we have [intentionally] sinned	מִחַל pardon	סְלַח Forgive	הַרוֹצֵה Who desires	וְהַחְזִירֵנוּ and return
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גואל ישראל.

[constant] Redeemer of Israel [the Jewish people].

רפאנו

HEALING FROM SICKNESS

*After asking Hashem to provide redemption from daily suffering and stress in everyday life, in this eighth berachah of Shemoneh Esrei we ask Hashem for healing from sickness.*



רפאנו ה' ונרפא,

Heal us, Hashem—then we will truly be healed [doctors can heal us only because Hashem wills it];

הושיענו ונושעה,

save us [from causes of sickness] and we will be saved,

כי תהלתנו אתה,

for You [not the doctor or medications] are the One we will praise [when we are cured or saved],

והעלה (ארוכה ומרפא לכל

תחלואינו ולכל מכאובינו ולכל מכותינו) רפואה שלמה לכל מכותינו, and bring (a cure and healing for all of our illnesses, all our sufferings, and all our ailments) complete healing [and cure] for all types of illness,

כי א-ל מלך

for You are God [Who is all-powerful and Who shows His Presence through acts of mercy], King,

ראה בענינו

RELIEVE OUR DAILY ANGUISH AND DIFFICULTIES

WEEK 4

*After asking Hashem for forgiveness, in this seventh berachah of Shemoneh Esrei we ask Hashem to relieve our daily suffering and difficulties.*



ראה נא בענינו,

[Hashem] please see our affliction [hardships and natural dangers],

ורבה ריבנו,

and fight our battles [caused by other humans],

וגאלנו גאלה שלמה מהרה

and redeem us [from the trials and struggles of everyday life] with a redemption that is complete quickly,

למען שמך,

for Your Name's sake [please don't wait until we deserve it],

כי א-ל גואל חזק אתה.

for God, Who is a powerful Redeemer, are You.

ברוך אתה

Blessed are You [the source of all blessing in the world],

ה',

Hashem (Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be),

**בקיץ**

Summer: From Chol Hamoed Pesach through Minchah, December 4 (or 5th in the year before a civil leap year), say:

**וְתוֹן בְּרָכָה**  
and give blessings

**בחורף**

Winter: From Maariv, December 4th (or 5th in the year before a civil leap year) until Pesach, say:

**וְתוֹן טַל וּמָטָר לְבְרָכָה**  
and give dew and rain for a blessing [in the right place and time]

**עַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה,**  
on the face of the earth [for things that grow],

**וְשִׂבְעֵנוּ מִטּוֹבָה,**  
and satisfy us [we should feel pleased] from Your goodness;

**וּבְרַךְ שָׁנָתֵנוּ**  
and bless our year

**כְּשָׁנִים הַטּוֹבוֹת לְבְרָכָה.**  
like the best years for blessing.

**כִּי אֵל-ל טוֹב וּמִטֵּיב אֶתְּךָ וּמְבָרַךְ**  
**הַשָּׁנִים.**  
for God, good and generous, are You.

**רוֹפֵא נֶאֱמָן וְרַחֲמָן אַתָּה.**

You are the faithful and merciful Healer.

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה**

Blessed are You [the source of all blessing in the world],

**ה' ,**

Hashem (Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be),

**רוֹפֵא חוֹלֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.**

Who heals the sick of His people, Israel [the Jewish people].

**בְּרַךְ עֲלֵינוּ**

MATERIAL SUCCESS

WEEK 5



*After asking Hashem for healing from sickness, in this ninth berachah of Shemoneh Esrei we ask Hashem for material and financial success.*

**בְּרַךְ עֲלֵינוּ ה' אֵל-לֵהֵינוּ**

Bless for us, Hashem (Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be), our (all-powerful) God [Who constantly supervises all that goes on in the world],

**אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת**  
this year

**וְאֶת כָּל מִינֵי תְבוּאָתָה לְטוֹבָה,**  
and [bless] all the different kinds of produce for the best [for our benefit],

ZOOMING IN - Weeks 4 & 5

וְשָׂא and raise	נִדְחִי the dispersed	וְקָבְצֵנוּ and gather us	שָׁנָתֵנוּ our year	וְשִׂבְעֵנוּ and satisfy us	וְהֵעֵלָה and bring	הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ save us	רִיבֵנוּ our battles	וְרִיבָה and fight
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בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה

Blessed are You [the source of all blessing in the world],

ה',

Hashem (Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be),

מְקַבֵּץ

who gathers [together]

נִדְחֵי עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

the dispersed [including the abandoned] of His people Israel [the Jewish people].

הַשִּׁיבָה שׁוֹפְטֵינוּ

RESTORE THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

WEEK  
6

After asking Hashem to gather the exiles and begin the Final Redemption, in this eleventh berachah of Shemoneh Esrei we ask Hashem to restore the justice system [as in earlier times], a necessary part of the Redemption.



הַשִּׁיבָה שׁוֹפְטֵינוּ כְּבְּרָאשׁוֹנָה,

Restore our judges [the Sanhedrin<sup>10</sup>] as in the earliest times,

וְיִזְעָצְעוּנוּ כְּבַתְּחִלָּה,

and our counselors [prophets who offered advice] as they were at first,

וְהִסַּר מִמֶּנּוּ יָגוֹן וְאַנְחָה,

and remove from us grief [non-physical pain] and sighing [from worry],

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה

Blessed are You [the source of all blessing in the world],

ה',

Hashem (Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be),

מְבָרֵךְ הַשָּׁנִים.

Who blesses the years [with so much goodness].

תִּקַּע בְּשׁוֹפָר

GATHER THE EXILES

[Note: The next six ברכות of Shemoneh Esrei (from תקע בשופר גדול through את צמח דוד) are for communal [the Jewish people's] needs, specifically for the Final Redemption.]



In this tenth blessing of Shemoneh Esrei, we ask Hashem to gather the exiles to begin the Final Redemption.

תִּקַּע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל לְחֵירוּתֵנוּ,

Sound the great shofar [a signal that the Final Redemption is upon us] for our freedom [from exile];

וְשָׂא נֶס לְקַבֵּץ גְּלוּתֵינוּ,

raise the banner [another signal from Hashem] to gather our exiles,

וְקַבְּצֵנוּ יַחַד מְהֵרָה

and gather us together [with unity] speedily

מֵאַרְבַּע כַּנְפוֹת הָאָרֶץ לְאַרְצֵנוּ.

from the four corners of the earth to our land.

**וְלַמְלִשִׁינִים**

REMOVE THE EVIL INFLUENCES  
THAT THREATEN JEWISH LIFE

*After asking Hashem to restore the justice system, in this twelfth berachah of Shemoneh Esrei we ask Hashem to remove the evil influences that threaten Jewish life.*



**וְלַמְלִשִׁינִים**

And as for slanderers [those that speak bad to government about Jews],

**אֵל תְּהִי תִקְוָה,**

let there be no hope;

**וְכָל הַמֵּינִים**

and may all the heretics [those who do not believe in Hashem]

**כִּרְגַע יֵאבְדוּ,**

in an instant may they be lost [destroyed],

**וְכָל אוֹיְבֵי עַמְּךָ מִהֲרָה יִפְרְתּוּ,**

and may all the enemies of Your [Jewish] people be quickly cut off [removed],

וּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ מִהֲרָה אֲתָה ה' לְבַדְּךָ  
and rule over us speedily—  
You, Hashem Alone,

**בְּחֶסֶד וּבְרַחֲמִים,**

with kindness [even if we are not deserving] and mercy,

**וְצַדִּיקוֹנוֹ בְּצִדָּק וּבְמִשְׁפָּט.**

and treat us with righteousness and in judgment [judge us with charity].

**בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה**

Blessed are You [the source of all blessing in the world],

**ה'.**

Hashem (Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be),

**מֶלֶךְ אוֹהֵב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט.**

the King who loves righteousness [in] judgment.

בעשׂי"ת

(During the 10 Days of Repentance, i.e. from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, instead of saying מֶלֶךְ אוֹהֵב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט say:)

**הַמֶּלֶךְ הַמִּשְׁפָּט.**

the King of judgment.


ZOOMING IN - Week 6

וְלַמְלִשִׁינִים And as for slanderers	וְאָנְחָה and sighing	גִּיּוֹן grief	וְהִסֵּר and remove	וְיִוְעֲצִינוּ and our counselors	הַשִּׁיבָה restore
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**על הצדיקים**  
PROTECT AND ASSIST  
THE RIGHTEOUS

WEEK  
7

After asking Hashem to remove the evil influences that threaten Jewish life, in this thirteenth berachah of Shemoneh Esrei we ask Hashem to protect and assist the righteous. 

**על הצדיקים ועל החסידים,**

On the righteous [who follow the Torah exactly] and pious [who do more than required<sup>11</sup>],

**ועל זקני שארית עמך בית ישראל,**

and on the elders (*Gedolei Yisrael*) of the remainder of your people the house of Israel [the Jewish people],

**ועל פליטת בית סופריהם,**

and on the rest of the teachers [of Torah],

**ועל גרי הצדק ועלינו,**

and on the righteous converts [including *ba'alei teshuvah*], and on us [regular Jews<sup>12</sup>],

**יהמונא רחמיך ה' א-להינו,**

please let Your mercy be awakened, Hashem,<sup>13</sup> our God,<sup>14</sup>

**והוידים**

and the evildoers [who make trouble for, or try to influence, Jews, on purpose]

**מהרה תעקר ותשבך ותמגר**

quickly uproot [prevent future growth] and break them down [so they are not effective] and cut up [into small pieces]

**ותכלם ותשפילם ותכניעם במהרה בקמינו.**

and destroy them, pull them down, and humble them [so that they shall be harmless] quickly in our days.

**ברוך אתה**

Blessed are You [the source of all blessing in the world],

**ה'**

Hashem (Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be),

**שובר איבים**

Who breaks [the power of] enemies

**ומכניע זדים.**

and humbles evildoers [makes them harmless].

ZOOMING IN - Week 6

איבים enemies	ותשפילם and pull them down	ותמגר cut up	תעקר uproot	והוידים and the evildoers	תקוה hope
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## וּלְיְרוּשָׁלַיִם

RESTORE YERUSHALAYIM  
TO ITS EARLIER GLORY

*After asking Hashem to restore the prestige and influence of the righteous, in this fourteenth berachah of Shemoneh Esrei we ask Hashem to restore Yerushalayim to its earlier heightened glory.*

וּלְיְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִירָךְ

And to Yerushalayim, Your [when Hashem's Presence is fully recognized there] city,

בְּרַחֲמִים תָּשׁוּב,

may You return with compassion [even if we do not deserve it],

וּתְשַׁכֵּן בְּתוֹכָהּ

and may You settle in it [in the Beis HaMikdash]

כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ,

as You have spoken,<sup>15</sup>

וּבִנְיָה אוֹתָהּ

and may You rebuild it [Yerushalayim]

בְּקֶרֶב בְּיָמֵינוּ

soon in our days,

בְּנֵן עוֹלָם,

a building that is eternal [to last forever],

וְתַן שְׂכָר טוֹב

and give a good reward

לְכָל הַבּוֹטְחִים בְּשִׁמְךָ בְּכָאֵמַת,

to those who truly [in both good and bad times] trust in Your Name,

וְשִׂים חֶלְקֵנוּ עִמָּהֶם,

and put our portion with them [righteous people],

וְלֹעוֹלָם לֹא יִבוֹשׁ כִּי בָךְ בְּטַחְנוּ,

we may never feel ashamed because we trust in You,

וְעַל חֶסֶדְךָ הַגָּדוֹל בְּכָאֵמַת נִשְׁעָנֵנוּ

and upon Your kindness that is great in sincerity.

בְּרִיךְ אַתָּה

Blessed are You [the source of all blessing in the world],

ה' ,

Hashem (Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be),

מִשְׁעֹן וּמִבְטָח לְצַדִּיקִים.

the Support of and Guarantee [the trust] of the righteous.

### ZOOMING IN - Week 7

תְּכִין establish	וּבִנְיָה and may You rebuild	וּתְשַׁכֵּן and may You settle	מִשְׁעֹן Support	נִשְׁעָנֵנוּ do we rely	יְהִמוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ let Your mercy be awakened	פְּלִיטָה the rest
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וְקָרְנוּ תְרוּם בִּישׁוּעָתְךָ,  
and his horn [power and glory]<sup>17</sup>  
may You raise through Your  
salvation [liberation],

כִּי לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קוִינּוּ כָּל הַיּוֹם  
for we [enthusiastically] hope for  
Your salvation [Mashiach] all day.

וּמְצַפִּים לִישׁוּעָה  
and await eagerly for salvation.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה  
Blessed are You [the source of all  
blessing in the world],

ה',  
Hashem (Master of all, Who  
always was, is, and will be),

מְצַמִּיחַ קָרוֹן וְיִשׁוּעָה.  
Who causes to grow [come] the  
horn [power—pride and glory]<sup>18</sup> of  
salvation [liberation].

שְׁמַע קוֹלֵנוּ  
HEAR OUR PRAYERS

*After asking Hashem for Mashiach,  
in this sixteenth berachah we ask  
Hashem to hear our prayers.*

אב הִרְחֵמוּ,  
Father, Who is merciful

שְׁמַע קוֹלֵנוּ ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ,  
Hear our voice [which is like the  
sound of a child crying], Hashem,<sup>19</sup>  
our God,<sup>20</sup>

וְכִסֵּא דָוִד עֲבָדְךָ  
and the throne of your servant  
David [Mashiach]<sup>16</sup>

מְהֵרָה לְתוֹכָהּ תִּבְנֶינּוּ.  
may You quickly within  
[Yerushalayim] establish.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה  
Blessed are You [the source of all  
blessing in the world],

ה',  
Hashem (Master of all, Who  
always was, is, and will be),

בּוֹנֵה יְרוּשָׁלַיִם.  
the Builder of Yerushalayim  
[the process of rebuilding Yerushalayim is  
currently taking place even in our exile].

אַתְּ צִמַּח דָּוִד  
BRING MASHIACH  
AND END THIS EXILE

WEEK  
8

After asking Hashem that  
Yerushalayim be restored to its  
former glory, in this fifteenth  
berachah of Shemoneh Esrei we  
ask Hashem to bring Mashiach  
and end this long exile.

אַתְּ צִמַּח דָּוִד עֲבָדְךָ  
The offspring of Your servant  
David [Mashiach]

מְהֵרָה תִּצְמִיחַ,  
may You quickly cause to  
develop [come],



תִּפְלֵת כָּל פֶּה עַמּוּד יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרַחֲמִים.  
 the prayer of every mouth of  
 Your people [the Jewish nation] with  
 compassion [even if we are not worthy].

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה  
 Blessed are You [the source of all  
 blessing in the world],

ה',  
 Hashem (Master of all, Who  
 always was, is, and will be),

שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה.  
 Who hears prayer.

רְצֵה  
 RESTORE THE SERVICE IN  
 THE BEIS HAMIKDASH

WEEK  
 9

*After asking Hashem to hear our  
 prayers, in this seventeenth blessing  
 we ask Hashem to restore the service  
 in the Beis HaMikdash.*



רְצֵה ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ  
 Be favorable, Hashem,<sup>21</sup> our God,<sup>22</sup>

בְּעַמּוּד יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 with Your people [the Jewish  
 nation]

וְלִתְפִלָּתָם שְׁעָה,  
 and to their prayer turn,

חַוֶּס וְרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ,  
 have pity [since You created us] and  
 mercy [even if we do not deserve it]  
 on us,

וּקְבַל בְּרַחֲמִים וּבְרַצוֹן אֶת תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ,  
 and accept, with mercy and  
 favor, our prayer,

כִּי א-ל  
 because the God [Who is all-  
 powerful and Who shows His Presence  
 through acts of mercy]]

שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלוֹת וְתַחֲנוּנִים אֲתָה.  
 Who always listens to prayers  
 [the standard prayers] and pleadings  
 [private and personal prayers], are You.

וּמִלְפָּנֶיךָ מַלְכֵנוּ  
 and before You, our King,


רִיקָם אֵל תִּשְׁיִבֵנוּ,  
 do not turn us away empty-  
 handed,

חַנּוּן וְעֲנֵנוּ וּשְׁמַע תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ,  
 be gracious with us, and  
 answer us and hear our prayer,

כִּי אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ  
 because You hear

ZOOMING IN - Week 8

רִיקָם empty- handed	וְתַחֲנוּנִים and pleadings	מַצְמִיחַ Who causes to grow	קוֹיֵנוּ we hope	לִישׁוּעָתֶךָ for Your salvation	תְּרוּם may You raise	תְּצַמִּיחַ to develop
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HALACHAH ADVISORY: On Rosh Chodesh and Chol HaMoed add יעלה ויבא  here. (See grey box below.)

וּתְחַזְיֵנָה עֵינֵינוּ

May our eyes [be worthy to] see

בְּשׁוּבָךְ לְצִיּוֹן בְּרַחֲמִים.

the return [of Your Divine Presence (Shechinah)] to Zion [Beis HaMikdash].

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה

Blessed are You [the source of all blessing in the world],

ה'.

Hashem (Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be),

הַמְחִיזִיר שְׁכִינָתוֹ לְצִיּוֹן.

Who restores His Divine Presence to Zion [Beis HaMikdash].

וְהָשִׁב אֶת הָעֹבֹדָה לְדַבֵּר בֵּיתְךָ.

And return the [sacrificial] service [of the Beis HaMikdash] to the Holy of Holies.<sup>23</sup>

וְאִשֵּׁי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּתְפִלָּתָם

and the fire-offerings [daily animal offerings<sup>24</sup> in the Beis HaMikdash] of Israel [the Jewish people] and their prayers

מְהֵרָה בְּאַהֲבָה תִּקְבַּל בְּרָצוֹן,

speedily with love [please] accept with favor [as if they were actual offerings],<sup>25</sup>

וְתֵהִי לְרָצוֹן תָּמִיד

and may it be favorable [to You], always,

עֹבֹדַת יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמָּךְ.

the service of Your people Israel [the Jewish nation].

יעלה ויבא

א-להינו וא-להי אבותינו, יעלה, ויבא, ויגיע, ויראה, וירצה, וישמע, ויפקד, ויזכר זכרונו ופקדונו, וזכרון אבותינו, וזכרון משיח בן דוד עבדך, וזכרון ירושלים עיר קדשך, וזכרון כל עמך בית ישראל לפניך, לפלטה לטובה לחן ולהסד ולרחמים, לחיים טובים ולשלום ביום עמך

בראש חדש:

בחוה"מ פסח:

ראש החדש

חג הסוכות

חג המצות

חג המצות

הזה. זכרו ה' א-להינו בו לטובה, ופקדנו בו לברכה, והושיענו בו לחיים טובים. ובדבר ישועה ורחמים, חוס וחנו ורחם עלינו והושיענו, כי אליך עינינו, כי א-ל מלך חנון ורחום אתה.

ZOOMING IN - Week 9

המחזיר Who restores	ואשי and the fire-offerings	והשב and return	שעה turn	רצה Be favorable
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לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

forever and ever.

צוּרֵינוּ צוּר חַיֵּינוּ, מִגֵּן יִשְׁעֵנוּ

[You are the] our Rock, Rock of our lives [You keep us alive], Shield of our salvation [our protector],

אַתָּה הוּא לְדוֹר וָדוֹר.<sup>30</sup>

You are the One [Who keeps us alive] from generation to generation.

נוֹדָה לְךָ וְנִסְפָּר תְּהִלָּתְךָ

We thank You and tell [others] Your praise,

עַל חַיֵּינוּ הַמְּסוּרִים בְּיָדְךָ,

for our lives that are given over into Your hand [Hashem keeps us alive],

וְעַל נְשִׁמוֹתֵינוּ הַפְּקוּדוֹת לְךָ,

and for our souls that are entrusted into Your care [when we sleep],

וְעַל נִסֵּיךָ שֶׁבְּכֹל יוֹם עִמָּנוּ,

and for Your miracles [extraordinary events that cause everyone to say "wow"] that are with us every day,

## מוֹדִים

### THANKSGIVING

מודים follows the previous blessing in which we requested Hashem to restore service in the המקדש because before we acknowledge all the goodness we receive from Hashem by thanking Him in מודים, it is appropriate to first accept the obligation to serve Him.



The final blessings of Shemoneh Esrei are the הודאה, thanksgiving portion, in which we offer thanks to Hashem for all the goodness we receive from Him.

**HALACHAH ADVISORY:** מודים is one of the points in Shemoneh Esrei during which we bow.<sup>26</sup> However, at מודים there is no bending the knees. Rather, upon saying the word מודים, bow and stay in that position until you reach the Name of Hashem. Then straighten up and continue with saying the Name of Hashem.<sup>27</sup>



מוֹדִים אֲנַחֵנוּ לְךָ

We give thanks to You,

שָׂאֲתָה הוּא ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ

for it is You Who are Hashem,<sup>28</sup> our God<sup>29</sup>

וְא-לֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ

and the God of our Forefathers,

#### ZOOMING IN - Week 9

לא תמו is never used up	לא כלו never ends	נפלאותיך Your wonders	הפקודות that are entrusted	המסורים that are given over	ונספר and tell	צור חיינו Rock of our lives
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כי מעולם קוינו לך.

For we have always [throughout the history of the Jewish people] put our hope in [only] You.

HALACHAH ADVISORY: On Chanukah and purim add "על הניסים" here. (See grey box below.)



ועל כלם

WEEK 10

For all these [miracles, wonders, and favors],

יתברך ויתרומם ויתנשא שמך מלכנו

may Your Name, our King, [be] blessed and held and upraised in high regard

ועל נפלאותיך

and for Your wonders [everyday, common, familiar events that we are used to seeing],

וטובותיך שבכל עת, ערב ובקר וצהרים.  
And for Your favors in every time [of the day]—evening, morning, and afternoon.

הטוב כי לא כלו רחמיך,

[Hashem, You are] the Good One, because Your compassion never ends;

והמרחם כי לא תמו חסדיך,

[Hashem, You are] the Compassionate One, because Your kindness is never used up.

על הניסים

ועל הנסים, ועל הפרקו, ועל הגבורות, ועל התשועות, ועל הנפלאות, ועל הנחמות, ועל המלחמות, שעשית לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

לפריים

בימי מרדכי ואסתר בשושן הבירה, כשעמד עליהם המן הרשע, בקש להשמיד להרוג ולאבד את כל היהודים, מנער ועד זקן, טף ונשים ביום אחד, בשלשה עשר לחדש שנים עשר, הוא חדש אדר, ושללם לבוז. ואתה ברחמיך הרבים הפרת את עצתו, וקלקלת את מחשבתו, והשבות לו גמולו כראשו, ותלו אותו ואת בניו על העץ.

לחנכה

בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן כהן גדול חשמונאי ובניו כשעמדה מלכות יון הרשעה על עמך ישראל, להשמידם תורתך ולהעבירם מחקי רצונך. ואתה ברחמיך הרבים, עמדת להם בעת צרתם, רבת את ריבם, דנת את דינם, נקמת את נקמתם. מסרת גבורים ביד חלשים, ורבים ביד מעטים, וטמאים ביד טהורים, ורשעים ביד צדיקים, וזדים ביד עוסקי תורתך. וך עשית שם גדול וקדוש בעולמך, ולעמך ישראל עשית תשועה גדולה ופרקו כהיום הזה. ואחר כן, באו בניך לזכיר ביתך, ופנו את היכלך, וטהרו את מקדשך, והדליקו נרות בחצרות קדשך, וקבעו שמונת ימי חנכה אלו, להודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול.

**HALACHAH ADVISORY:** *Bend your knees at the word בָּרוּךְ, then bow at the word אֲתָהּ, and stay in that position until saying the Name of Hashem, at which point straighten up.*<sup>32</sup>



בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה

Blessed are You [the source of all blessing in the world],

ה',

Hashem (Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be),

הטוב שְׁמֶךָ

"The Good One" is Your Name

וְלָךְ נֶאֱדָה לְהוֹדוֹת.

and it is appropriate to thank [You].

שִׁים שְׁלוֹם

REQUEST FOR PEACE

*The concluding blessing of Shemoneh Esrei is a request for peace, as that is the ultimate blessing—without peace all other blessings are meaningless.*



*(see grey box on the following page for שלום רב.)*

שִׁים שְׁלוֹם,

Establish peace,

תְּמִיד לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

constantly [every day and] forever.

בעש"ת

(During the 10 Days of Repentance, i.e. from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, add:)

וּכְתוֹב לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים כָּל בְּנֵי בְרִיתְךָ.

and inscribe [write] for a good life, all the children of Your covenant [the Jewish nation].

וְכָל הַחַיִּים

And all the living [even those who are unfortunate in life]

יִדְוָךְ סְלָה,

shall praise You forever,

וַיְהִלְלוּ וַיְבָרְכוּ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ הַגָּדוֹל

בְּאֵמֶת, לְעוֹלָם כִּי טוֹב,

and praise and bless Your Name that is great sincerely [even in the difficult times of our lives] forever for it is good,

הָא-ל יִשׁוּעָתֵנוּ וְעִזְרָתֵנוּ סְלָה, הָא-ל-

הטוב.

the God<sup>31</sup> Who saves us [in times of trouble] and Who is our Helper forever [even if we suffer in this world we will be helped in the World to Come] the God who is good.

ZOOMING IN - Week 10

בָּאוֹר פְּנֵיךָ with the "light of Your face"	חַן graciousness	וְעִזְרָתֵנוּ and our Helper	יִדְוָךְ shall praise You	וַיְתַרְוֵנוּ and held in high regard
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עֲלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲמָךְ.  
upon us and upon all Your  
people Israel [the Jewish nation].

בְּרַכְנוּ אֲבִינוּ,  
Bless us, our [loving] Father [as  
one would His child],

אֲנַחְנוּ וְכָל עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל,  
we and all Your people, the  
House of Israel [the Jewish nation],

לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים וּלְשָׁלוֹם.  
for good life and for peace.

*HALACHAH ADVISORY: Many say the usual conclusion of the beracha עֲמָךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ הַמְּבָרָךְ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׁלוֹם (see below). Some say the following ending to the beracha.*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' עוֹשֵׂה הַשָּׁלוֹם  
Blessed are You, Hashem, Who  
makes the peace.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה  
Blessed are You [the source of all  
blessing in the world],

ה',  
Hashem (Master of all, Who  
always was, is, and will be),  
הַמְּבָרָךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׁלוֹם.  
Who blesses His people Israel  
[the Jewish nation] with peace.

טוֹבָה וּבְרָכָה,  
goodness, and blessing,

חַיִּים, חַוּ וְחֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים  
life, graciousness and kindness  
and mercy

במנחה ובמערב

שָׁלוֹם רַב עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲמָךְ תָּשִׂים לְעוֹלָם  
Establish abundant [much] peace  
upon Your people forever

כִּי אַתָּה הוּא מֶלֶךְ אֲדוֹן לְכָל הַשָּׁלוֹם  
For You are King, Master of all peace

וְטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ לְבָרְכֵנוּ וּלְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמְּךָ  
יִשְׂרָאֵל

May it be good in Your eyes to  
bless us and to bless all of Your  
people

בְּכָל עֵת וּבְכָל שָׁעָה בְּשָׁלוֹמְךָ  
At every time and every hour  
with Your peace

בעשי"ת  
(During the 10 Days of Repentance, i.e.  
from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, add:)

בְּסֵפֶר חַיִּים בְּרָכָה וְשָׁלוֹם, וּפְרִיָּסָה  
טוֹבָה,

In the book of life, blessing,  
and peace, and good [much and  
easy] livelihood

נִזְכָּר וְנִכְתָּב לְפָנֶיךָ,  
may we be remembered and  
inscribed [written] before You,

(בְּרוֹב עֹז וְשָׁלוֹם)  
(with much strength and  
peace)

בעשי"ת  
(During the 10 Days of Repentance, i.e.  
from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, add:)

בְּסֵפֶר חַיִּים בְּרָכָה וְשָׁלוֹם, וּפְרִיָּסָה  
טוֹבָה,

In the book of life, blessing,  
and peace, and good [much and  
easy] livelihood

וּגְזָרוֹת טוֹבוֹת, יְשׁוּעוֹת וְנַחֲמוֹת  
and decrees that are good,  
rescues and comforts,

נִזְכָּר וְנִכְתָּב לְפָנֶיךָ,  
may we be remembered and  
inscribed [written] before You,

אֲנַחְנוּ וְכָל עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל,  
we and all Your people, the  
House of Israel [the Jewish nation],

לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים וְשָׁלוֹם.  
for good life and for peace.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה  
Blessed are You [the source of all  
blessing in the world],

ה',  
Hashem (Master of all, Who  
always was, is, and will be),

כְּלָנוּ כְּאַחַד בְּאֹר פְּנֶיךָ,  
all [together] as one with the  
"light of Your face"<sup>33</sup> [a symbol of  
friendliness and love],

כִּי בְּאֹר פְּנֶיךָ  
because with the "light of Your  
face"

נָתַתָּ לָנוּ, ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ,  
You gave us, Hashem,<sup>34</sup> our God<sup>35</sup>

תּוֹרַת חַיִּים  
[at Mount Sinai] a living Torah [to  
teach us how to live]

וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד,  
and loving [to do] kindness [which  
promotes peace]

וְצִדְקָה, וּבְרָכָה,  
and righteousness, and  
blessing,

וְרַחֲמִים, וְחַיִּים, וְשָׁלוֹם,  
and mercy, and life, and peace,

וְטוֹב יִהְיֶה בְּעֵינֶיךָ  
and may it be good in Your eyes

לְבָרְכֵנוּ וּלְבָרְךָ אֶת כָּל עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל,  
to bless us and to bless all Your  
people Israel [the Jewish nation],

בְּכָל עֵת וּבְכָל שָׁעָה בְּשָׁלוֹמְךָ.  
in every time in all hours with  
Your peace.

וּלְמַקְלֵי נַפְשִׁי תְדוּם,

And to those who curse me, let  
my soul be silent [calm; please help  
that I do not react in a bad way],

וּנְפֹשִׁי כְעָפָר

and [may] my soul be like dust  
[humble]

לְכֹל תִּהְיֶה.

toward everything [help me so that  
I do not become arrogant if I am praised].

פָּתַח לִבִּי בְּתוֹרַתְךָ,

Open my heart to [receive and  
desire] Your Torah,

וְאַחֲרַי מִצְוֹתֶיךָ

and after Mitzvos

תִּרְדָּף נַפְשִׁי.

May my soul run [with great  
energy].

וְכָל הַקָּמִים וְהַחֹשְׁבִים עָלַי לְרָעָה,

and all those who rise up and to  
think to do evil [bad] against me,

מְהֵרָה הִפְר עֲצָתָם

quickly cancel their plans

וְקַלְקַל מַחְשַׁבָתָם.

and disrupt their thoughts [so  
that they can't even plan bad against me].

הַמְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשָׁלוֹם.

Who blesses His people Israel  
[the Jewish nation] with peace.

\*\*\*

יְהִי לְרָצוֹן

May they find favor

אִמְרֵי פִי

the words of my mouth

וְהַגִּיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ,

and the thoughts of my heart  
[find favor] before You,

ה' צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי.

Hashem<sup>36</sup> my Rock and my  
Redeemer.

א-להי, נְצוֹר

USING THE GIFT OF SPEECH  
TO SPEAK WITH HASHEM

*We began Shemoneh Esrei by asking Hashem to enable us to use the gift of speech to speak with Him—שְׁפֹתַי-“ה’ שְׁפֹתַי יִגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ” “Hashem open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise.” We now conclude Shemoneh Esrei with a similar request.*

א-להי, נְצוֹר לְשׁוֹנֵי מְרָע,

My God, [help me] guard my  
tongue from [speaking] evil [lashon  
hara]<sup>37</sup>

וּשְׁפֹתַי מִדְּבַר מְרָמָה,

And my lips from speaking  
dishonestly.

ה'

Hashem (Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be),

צוּרִי וְגֹאֲלִי.

my Rock [You keep me alive] and my Redeemer.

**HALACHAH ADVISORY:** *Take three steps back, bow left and say "עֲשֵׂה," bow right and say "הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה," bow forward and say "וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל."*



עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם (בעשׂי"ת - הַשְּׁלוֹם) בְּמְרוֹמָיו,

He Who makes (the) peace in His heights [in the spiritual world of the angels],

הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ,

may He make peace on us [on Earth],

וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל.

and on all of Israel [the Jewish people].

וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

and they [the angels who guide our prayer] say Amen.

עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן שְׁמִדָּה,

Act for Your Name's sake [for the sake of *Kiddush Hashem*],

עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן יְמִינְךָ,

act for Your "right hand's" sake [for the sake of *Kiddush Hashem*],

עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן תּוֹרַתְךָ, עֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן קִדְשֵׁיךָ.

act for the sake of your Torah [for the sake of *Kiddush Hashem*], act for Your holiness's sake.

לְמַעַן יִחַלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ,

So that Your beloved ones [the Jewish people] be given rest [relief from their troubles];

הוֹשִׁיעָה יְמִינְךָ וְעֲנֵנִי.

may Your "right hand" save them, and answer me [in this prayer].

**HALACHAH ADVISORY:** *Some say a verse with the initial of their name*



יְהִי לְרִצּוֹן אִמְרֵי פִי וְהִגִּיוֹן לִבִּי לְפָנֶיךָ,

May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart find favor before You,

ZOOMING IN - Week 11

תַּרְדֵּף נַפְשִׁי may my soul run after	תְּדוֹם be silent	וְלִמְקַלְלֵי and to those who curse me	נִצֵּר guard	וְהִגִּיוֹן לִבִּי and the thoughts of my heart	יְהִי לְרִצּוֹן may they find favor
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כִּימֵי עוֹלָם

[when the Beis HaMikdash stood], as in  
olden days

וּכְשָׁנִים קְדָמוֹנִיּוֹת.

And in previous years.

וְעִרְבָה לָהּ

and may it be pleasing to  
Hashem

מִנְחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַיִם,

the offerings of Yehudah  
[the portion of the Tribe of Yehudah in  
Yerushalayim]

כִּימֵי עוֹלָם

as in olden days

וּכְשָׁנִים קְדָמוֹנִיּוֹת.

and [as they were] in previous  
years [when the Beis HaMikdash  
stood].

יְהִי רְצוֹן

יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְפָּנֶיךָ

May it be Your will before You,

ה' אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ וְאֱ-לֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,

Hashem,<sup>38</sup> our God<sup>39</sup> and the  
God of our Forefathers,

שִׁבְנָה בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ

That the Beis HaMikdash will  
be rebuilt

בְּמַהֲרָה בְּיָמֵינוּ,

speedily in our days,

וְתֵן חֶלְקֵנוּ בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ.

and give us our share in Your  
Torah.

וְשָׂם נַעֲבֹדְךָ בִּירְאָה,

And may we serve You there  
with awe [respect and admiration].



ZOOMING IN - Weeks 11

וְעִרְבָה and may it be pleasing	קְדָמוֹנִיּוֹת previous	יְחַלְצוּן יְדִידֶיךָ Your beloved ones be given rest	מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם their thoughts	וְקָקַל and disrupt
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1. שר"ע ארו"ח סי' קדא.
2. שר"ע ארו"ח סי' צח וסי' קא ס"א ובמ"ב שם ס"ק א-ב.
3. סנהדרין כ"ע"א.
4. שר"ע ארו"ח סי' צח וסי' קא ס"א ובמ"ב שם ס"ק א-ב.
5. מ"ב שם ס"ק ג. For additional alternatives, see *Praying With Fire*, p. 108, fn 7.
6. ארו"ח קיגו מ"ב ס"ק יב.
7. Who is all-powerful Who shows His Presence through acts of mercy.
8. ארו"ח קיגו מ"ב ס"ק יב.
9. Following are examples of the abundant kindness extended to the living.
10. Twenty-three to seventy-one men appointed as judges in every city in Eretz Yisrael in olden times.
11. לפנים משורת הדין.
12. Not mentioned above.
13. Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be.
14. Our all-powerful God [Who constantly supervises all that goes on in the world].
15. "And I will dwell in Jerusalem" (*Zechariah* 8:3).
16. A direct inheritor of David HaMelech.
17. Just as the strength and beauty of an animal—its "glory"—is highlighted by its horns, which are very strong.
18. Just as the strength and beauty of an animal—its "glory"—is highlighted by its horns, which are very strong.
19. Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be.
20. Our all-powerful God [Who constantly supervises all that goes on in the world].
21. Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be.
22. Our all-powerful God [Who constantly supervises all that goes on in the world].
23. In the Beis HaMikdash.
24. *Korbanos*.
25. *Tur (Orach Chaim 120)*. However, according to Vilna Gaon cited in *Mishneh Berurah* 120:1, the meaning of this segment of *Shemoneh Esrei* is: "...and return the service...and the fire-offerings of Israel [the Jewish people]." "Their prayer accept with love..."
26. שר"ע סי' קיג ס"א.
27. מ"ב שם, והא דמתבנו שזוקפין לפני אגירת השם, היינו כדעת הקיצור שולחן ערוך (סי' י"ח ס"יא) הסידור יעב"ץ.
28. Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be.
29. Our all-powerful God [Who constantly supervises all that goes on in the world].
30. Alternatively, "... you are the One [Who keeps us alive]. [New sentence] "From generation to generation we thank You and tell [others] Your praise" (*Rav Schwab on Prayer, ArtScroll*, p. 514.)
31. Who is all powerful and Who shows His Presence through acts of mercy.
32. ארו"ח קיגו מ"ב ס"ק יב.
33. Although Hashem does not have a physical form, the Torah uses language as it would occur in humans so that people can better understand (*Rashi, Shemos* 15:8).
34. Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be.
35. Our all-powerful God [Who constantly supervises all that goes on in the world].
36. Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be.
37. Classified as a terrible sin (see *Rambam, Teshuvah* 3:6).
38. Our all-powerful God [Who constantly supervises all that goes on in the world].
39. Master of all, Who always was, is, and will be.

## 5 PRACTICAL STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE TRUE KAVANNAH

### ***The Next Step***

Between knowing and feeling lies an ocean. Anyone who has given even a little thought to the concept of prayer knows that it is a conversation with the Almighty. Anyone who has pondered the concept of the Almighty knows that He is a King before Whom a person must stand in utter awe. Nonetheless, even with that knowledge, many people are perfectly capable of speaking the sacred words of *tefillah*, specifically the *Shemoneh Esrei* without feeling a thing. We become expert at the mind-boggling feat of mouthing prayers while thinking about anything from the dinner menu to the weather.

Nevertheless, the requirement for *kavannah* still stands; a key axiom of the Torah says that Hashem does not demand the impossible, and therefore, *kavannah* must be within our reach. According to Rav Yehudah HaChassid (*Sefer Chasidim, Siman 784*) there is no single magic formula; each person must implement the ideas that attract him, based on his desires and abilities.

Spiritual growth can be compared to ascending a mountain in a wagon. As long as there is forward movement — even if progress is marked by spurts and stops — the wagon is still considered to be advancing. However, if the wagon stops straining forward, it will not stand still; it will slide back down the slope.

*Kavannah* provides the life-force of *tefillah*, and one must strive to understand how to activate this “vital organ” of our souls. The following strategies are a small step along an upward path, designed to bring your individual prayers, and the prayers of the Jewish nation as a whole, to new depths of emotion and new heights of power.

## **Strategy 1: Quieting the Mind**

*The mind is never still. Either it focuses on the sounds and words spoken around a person, or on the words he himself is speaking, or on the thoughts running through his head. Even in one's sleep, his mind is still busy producing words and images.*

*The first imperative for building concentration in prayer is get the chatter, both internal and external, to stop.*

If a person begins praying immediately upon entering the synagogue, his mind is often preoccupied by other thoughts. He is not settled, and consequently, he will be unable to concentrate properly and focus on his prayers.

*It is not uncommon to "catch up on the news" by listening to the radio in the car. However, if a person does this on the way to shul, he may hear the news replaying in his head as he tries to pray. Perhaps the stock market dropped, or a political scandal has unfolded or — to his deepest chagrin — his favorite team lost a big game. It is nearly impossible to digest such information, and then, minutes later, speak directly to Hashem.*

*For this reason Dayan Dunner of London advised his congregation several years ago not to listen to the radio on the way to shul. With this simple, practical recommendation, he offered a prime example of something anyone can do toward removing the distractions that interfere with kavannah.*

The Shulchan Aruch (Siman 90, Se'if 20) recognizes the need for a person to reorient himself before praying. It rules that one should not hurry to pray immediately upon entering [*the beis haknesses*]; rather, "One should enter the Synagogue to the extent of two entrances and after that he may pray." As the *Mishnah Berurah* (Siman 90, Se'if Katan 62) explains, the purpose of this halachah is to allow one to be settled and calm, and ready to pray with *kavannah*, "For when one begins to pray precipitously, immediately on entering, he is not yet composed."

The Rambam also advises (*Hilchos Tefillah* 4:16), "How does one concentrate and what constitutes proper intentions? One should divert and empty his heart from all (foreign) thoughts and view himself as if standing in front of the *Shechinah*. Therefore, one must settle in a little before the *tefillah* in order to concentrate his heart and thereafter pray in peace and supplication."

This is an investment of just a few minutes, but they are minutes that establish the success of the entire venture. Like a diver who takes a few deep



breaths before he goes under water, one who pauses before immersing himself in tefillah will have what he needs to make the rest of the effort worthwhile.

## **Strategy 2: Take Time to Prepare**

*The principal of the only High School Rachel wanted to go to was coming to visit her home to help determine whether she would be admitted. Rachel looked around the house and decided it was a complete embarrassment. "The curtains are dusty. The kitchen cabinets have fingerprints on them. There are piles of papers on every table and shelf. This is a disaster!"*

*Rachel dusted, polished, organized and bought a huge bouquet of fresh flowers for the fireplace mantel. Her mother baked a wonderful variety of cakes, and her father purchased a bottle of fine schnapps. Meanwhile, Rachel's younger brother looked on in bewilderment. "You know, he's going to find out sooner or later that our house doesn't always look like this. I'll bet the principal's house doesn't look like this either."*

*"No matter," her mother replied. "When you prepare for people, you make them feel important. How would the principal feel if he walked in and everything was flying? Like we didn't even care enough to make a good impression."*

In general, preparation shows the value a person places on the event for which he is preparing. Preparing to pray not only shows Hashem that one values the opportunity to speak to Him; it instills in oneself a sense of the importance of the occasion. It helps a person internalize what he knows to be true — that this is an opportunity not to be wasted.

Pausing to empty one's mind of foreign thoughts is the vital first step in preparing to pray. There is a second step as well, and that is to refill the mind with thoughts that arouse a person's longing to connect to Hashem. The Rambam (*Hilchos Tefillah*, 4:16) says pausing before praying provides an opportunity to focus on the idea that one is about to stand in front of Hashem. Apparently, the Rambam is informing us of a *halachah* that a person must prepare properly in order to have kavannah.

The spirit of this halachah would therefore be violated by arriving late for *Shacharis*, which results in no preparation time and a hasty struggle to don *tallis* and *tefillin*; by arriving at the last minute to "catch a *Minchah*"; or by "flying" through *Maariv* in an effort to catch up. A late arrival simply rules out a properly prepared *tefillah*.

*In 2001, several rabbis from the New York metropolitan area were granted a meeting with President George W. Bush. One rabbi later described the great amount of careful thought that went into preparing meaningful remarks that could be conveyed to the President in the few moments they had. Would only a fraction of that preparation go into coming before Hashem, one could not even imagine the massive increase in the power of the words of tefillah.*

If a person wishes to enhance his preparation in order to improve upon his *kavannah*, there are techniques he can develop. He might find it helpful to summon certain thoughts, words and images.

*Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk would say the following words before entering the synagogue to pray: "Know where you are entering; what you will do there; Who is in this house; Whose house it is; and Who empowered you to enter this house."*

Even in the midst of prayer, preparation is necessary. For each of the *berachos* in *Shemoneh Esrei*, a person should pause before *Baruch Atah Hashem* (at the end of the *berachah*) and think into the blessing he is about to recite. For example, before ending the *berachah* of 'binah', understanding, one should reflect on the fact that Hashem is a 'chonein hada'as', *gracious Giver of knowledge*.

*The Chofetz Chaim wrote that he personally used the following method of preparation: "Zimein li HaKadosh Baruch Hu k'tzas eitzah she'yesader beda'ato heiteiv techilah mah ledaber" — Hashem granted me a little advice that in the beginning [of each berachah] one should arrange well in his mind what he is about to say."*

*In his will, Rav Naftali Amsterdam left several suggestions for preparing to recite Shemoneh Esrei: One method is to think about the sequence of the berachos. Another is to stop periodically at appropriate points to focus on the fact that one is standing before Hashem, Who can grant any request. He suggested Atah Chonein (fourth berachah), Teka B'Shofar (tenth berachah) and Retzai (seventeenth berachah) as berachos particularly suited to this thought.*

It is true that preparation takes time — even if it is just a few minutes. This small investment of time, however, is crucial in insuring that the *rest of the time* spent on *tefillah* is not undermined by a rushed, inattentive approach. By taking the time to prepare, we not only change our state of mind, we change our state of heart. From there, our true *kavannah* — our soul's deep desire to feel connected to Hashem — can freely flow.

### **Strategy 3: Feeling The Need**

*A young boy was straying from the path of Torah. His parents' terrible distress transformed their Shemoneh Esrei into a daily, tear-soaked plea to their Father in Heaven. Previously, the words "Who resurrects the dead" carried no relevant meaning. Now their heart cried out that their wayward child's soul be revived. When they prayed for wisdom, they desperately begged Hashem to show them which way to turn, what to say. When they prayed for salvation, they pleaded that every Jewish parent be spared such anguish. When they said "grant peace," they said it with a longing for peace in their home, in their son's heart and their own. Suddenly, this age old liturgy had become their own fervent prayer.*

Need is one of prayer's most potent fuels. A person with no needs is crippled in his efforts to connect to Hashem. As explained in *Praying With Fire Day 16, Filled With Dust*, Hashem cursed the serpent more than all the animals and beasts of the field — *...and you shall eat dust all your life* — for convincing Chava to eat the forbidden fruit (see *Bereishis*, 3:14). The Rebbe, Rav Bunim of P'shische points out that this curse was particularly severe because the serpent, supplied with a constant food source, no longer needed to connect with and beseech Hashem.

In contrast, the curse of man (the need to earn a livelihood) and woman (the pain of childbirth) was not as severe, because these struggles cause a person to seek Hashem and to come before him in prayer.

The Gemara (*Yevamos* 64a) states that our Patriarchs were infertile because Hashem desires the prayers of the righteous. Rav Dessler further explains that their difficulties were ultimately for their benefit, since their inability to have children inspired them to reach more deeply into the depths of their souls to cry out to Hashem.

The *Shelah Hakadosh* teaches that when a person strongly feels a need — especially when he faces immediate danger — prayer becomes more relevant and filled with *kavannah*. On the other hand, a person who does not feel any need will find it difficult to pray with *kavannah* because he has no internal drive to reach out to Hashem.

The motivating power of real need becomes clear when one contrasts the usual mode of daily prayer with the emotion that is aroused on Yom Kippur, or when there is a crisis in Israel, or when a loved one is sick. The piercing sensation

of need spurs us to pray with greater *kavannah*, expressing our heartfelt hope and belief in Hashem's powers.

The Mishnah (*Taanis* 16a) tells us that when a fast day is proclaimed to pray for rain, "they send down to lead the prayers an elder, well-versed in prayer, who has children, and whose house is empty of food, so that his heart should be completely devoted to his prayer."

Rabbeinu Nissim (*Raan, Taanis* 16b) explains that because the elder is afflicted by his family's desperate need, he will pray with greater intensity. The *Me'iri* (Bais Habechirah, *Taanis* 16b) comments that in general, all those in a situation of great need will be similarly immersed in prayer, which will come from the depths of their heart.

*The disciples of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai asked him why the manna did not fall just once a year for the Jews in the desert, in the same way that rain falls in a single season to make the crops grow. He answered with a parable:*

*The king's only son, whom he loved dearly, visited his father once yearly to collect his allowance. Longing to see his son more frequently, the king decided that henceforth, the funds would be distributed on a daily basis. He was then able to have the pleasure of his son's company each and every day. (Yoma 76a).*

Similarly, Hashem longed for the pleasure of the prayers of his chosen people, and so He provided just one day's portion of *manna* at a time. Klal Yisrael was thus motivated to pour out their hearts in prayer every morning and evening.

Need strips away our illusions of self-sufficiency and causes us to feel acutely our dependence upon Hashem. Through it, the true potential of our *prayers* is revealed to us thereby awakening the "need" to pray with intense *kavannah*.

The Gemara (*Berachos* 12b) refers to *prayer* in several places as "compassion." By calling prayer "compassion," we remind ourselves that need is not just an occasional, dramatic occurrence, but rather, the human condition. The bottom line is that it is only because of Hashem's steadfast compassion that we have anything at all.

### **Strategy 4: Understanding the Meaning**

*A small child doesn't know the difference between a hundred dollar bill and a scrap of green paper. If he were given the currency to hold, he might drop it out the*

*window or cut it into pieces; he would never understand what he had lost. To value something, you have to know what it is and how much it is worth.*

A person who prays with little understanding of what he is saying and what the words are supposed to accomplish is missing a vital source of inspiration and *kavannah*. Learning the meaning of the words of *tefillah* and the holy origins of the prayers are vital steps in developing *kavannah* and maintaining it during *davening*.

As early as the 14th century, the *Abudraham* recognized that understanding the words of prayer is vital to having our prayers answered: "...Most of the masses raise their voice in prayer before Hashem but are going about it like a blind man in darkness and they do not understand the words they are saying...When I saw that the gates of *tefillah* are locked, I decided to write this (his) sefer explaining *tefillah*..."

*If a person had no sense of taste, what would motivate him to bite into a juicy rib steak? What would entice him to tackle a messy bowl of spaghetti? Why would he subject his mouth to the freezing sensation of ice cream? If people ate for the sake of nutrition alone, simply because "it's good for you," most people would be wasting away. This is born out by research that indicates that many people neglect to take important medication because the medicine has no taste.*

In prayer, the "taste" is in the meaning.

For example, much is added to a person's recitation of the *Baruch She'amar* prayer if he has knowledge of its meaning and origin. This prayer, recited at the beginning of *Pesukei D'Zimrah*, was instituted by the Men of the Great Assembly almost 2,400 years ago. The text is based on a script that literally dropped down from the Heavens. Knowing the lofty origin of *Baruch She'amar*, one can easily understand why one is required to stand when reciting it.

After the *Pesukei D'Zimrah*, which speak of the glory and wonder of nature, we recite the blessing *Yotzair Ha'Meoros Who creates the luminaries*. We then proceed to proclaim 'Ahavas Olam' (or 'Ahavah Rabbah') in which we express our eternal love for Hashem, leading to a proclamation of Hashem's Oneness in *Shema*. Progressing along this path, we build a connection with Hashem that culminates in the recitation of *Shemoneh Esrei*.

Rav Shmuel Auerbach testified about the way his father Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach recited *Shemoneh Esrei*: "Every *tefillah* was recited with hislahavus, fervor...His prayers were pleas, not rote utterances...From beginning to end

he recited them with kavannah... And he said that what counts most is understanding the meaning of the words.”

*Among the closing prayers is ‘Aleinu LeShabei’ach’, which, according to the Kolbo (Siman 11 and 16), is one of the first prayers ever composed. It was established by Yehoshua when he captured Jericho. The Chidah comments that after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai instituted it as part of our daily prayer to strengthen the Jews faith in Hashem at a time when they were dishonored and heartbroken.*

*The Mateh Moshe says that when one stands to recite Aleinu, Hashem also stands with all the angels in Heaven and all say, Praiseworthy is the people for whom this is so, praiseworthy is the people whose G-d is Hashem (Tehilim 144:15). This holy prayer, said at the conclusion of prayer, serves as protection over all our prayers by declaring our faith in Hashem’s Oneness.*

*Rav Sheftel Horowitz, in Vovey Ha’Amudim (Amud HaAvodah, Chapter 10) wrote: “When I was the head of the beis din (Jewish Court) and the yeshivah in Frankfurt, I instituted a great establishment whereby groups would gather to study all of the tefillos from beginning of the year to the end. They learned at least the meaning of the words so that their prayers would go up to the One Above. Praiseworthy is the one who listens to my words and sees to it that the meanings of the tefillos are fluent in his mouth.”*

Of the many means to find inspiration in one’s prayers, understanding their meaning is among the most easily accomplished in our times. The book stores and *shuls* are filled with beautifully translated and annotated prayer books that offer everything from simple translation to mystical insight. Taking one word at a time, one verse at a time, anyone can learn to speak the language of prayer .

### **Strategy 5: Praying From a Siddur**

Having driven the roads of his town hundreds of times, the man became bored with the road signs. Stop. Yield. Left Only. No Passing. He knew what to expect at each corner. He decided to stop paying attention to the signs and just drive according to the dictates of his heart. Naturally, he soon caused an accident. “I guess you really do have to pay attention each and every time,” he surmised.

Prayer is no less demanding a skill. To maintain one’s focus, absorb the

meaning of the words and form a live connection to them, one has to pay attention each and every time. The road signs in this journey are the words of the *siddur*, and surprisingly, the more expert the “driver,” the more careful he is to read the signs.

The Vilna Gaon recommended reciting every word of the prayers from a *siddur*. He finds an interesting allusion to the importance of praying from a *siddur* in Megillas Esther (9:25) which states: “*Ub’voah lifnai hamelech amar im hasefer yashuv machashavtoe.*” Literally, *When she [Esther] appeared before the king [Ahasuerus], he commanded by means of letters that [Haman’s] wicked scheme should be overturned.* Homiletically, the Gaon translates these words as follows: “When one appears before the King [Hashem] in prayer, he should recite the words from a *sefer (siddur)*, [for in that way] he will cast aside any inappropriate thoughts.”

Similarly, the *Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim, Siman 93, Se’if Katan 2)* tells us that the Arizal davened exclusively from a *siddur*. This practice was also exemplified and advised by the Maharal, the Chofetz Chaim, and more recently, by Rav Moshe Feinstein. In fact, the Chofetz Chaim, stated that using a *siddur* was one of the foremost priorities for proper *tefillah*.

*While davening from a siddur, the Alter of Kelm once walked to the back of the shul to glance into another siddur and then returned to his regular place. When questioned, he explained: “A word was missing from the siddur I was using. Because I always daven from a siddur, I felt compelled to find the missing word and to read it from a siddur”.*

The Manchester Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Yehudah Zev Segal, who was known for the power of his *tefillah*, was a compassionate messenger for thousands of Jews who, throughout his lifetime, asked him to beseech Hashem on their behalf. He not only prayed from a *siddur*, but was often seen pointing with his finger to each word he uttered, in order to guarantee his exclusive focus on the meaning. Even the berachos he recited were always read from either a *siddur* or a printed card.

By praying from a *siddur*, one discovers new shades of meaning in the words of the *tefillos*. In addition, seeing the words provides another sensory channel through which the words can penetrate the heart. Simply put, praying from a *siddur* enhances *kavannah*.

When a person looks at the words in a *siddur*, he is literally keeping Hashem’s

Name before his eyes. That alone can create a noticeable impact on the power of his prayer. The Steipler Gaon says that praying from a *siddur* helps a person recite Hashem's Name with *kavannah* befitting to this momentous utterance, and also enhances concentration in the vital first *berachah* in *Shemoneh Esrei*.

So often, using a *siddur* reveals itself to be the tool of the intellectual giant, not the crutch of the intellectually weak. The more one understands and masters *tefillah*, the more one demands the constant reinforcement of the *siddur*.

*During the ominous years leading up to World War II, one of the key figures in Europe at that time, Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, wrote down his resolutions for the New Year. The following words, written on Erev Yom Kippur 5694 (1934), were found among his writings: "To concentrate deeply when praying or reciting blessings; especially, to recite from a text."*

*Did Rav Chaim Ozer need the siddur to jar his memory? Rav Schach, relates the following telling incident: Rav Chaim Ozer kept a notebook listing all the deposits and expenditures made for various orphans and widows. Once, the ledger was misplaced and could not be found. Rav Chaim Ozer's wife became distraught, worrying about the loss of so much information that was vital to so many people. When Rav Chaim Ozer heard about the loss, he said to his wife, "Don't worry about it! Please bring a new empty notebook." Within several hours he had reconstructed the entire record book, with all its numbers and information, all from memory.*

The original book was found a short time later, and all the information in it corresponded exactly to Rav Chaim Ozer's reconstructed ledger. Rav Schach observed, "One who never met Rav Chaim Ozer can have no idea how phenomenal his memory was."

Rav Schach drew a lesson from this episode: "Despite his tremendous memory, Rav Chaim Ozer never davened or bentched without looking in a *siddur*."

Praying from a *siddur* is not of minimal importance since this was what the great Rav Chaim Ozer chose to focus on in the face of the gravest of circumstances. The world needed the full force of prayer then, as it does now; this requires not only pronouncing the holy words and understanding their meaning, but keeping them before one's eyes.

See **Praying With Fire**, Chapter 6, pages 160- 219 for Thirteen Practical Strategies to Achieve True Kavannah.