

Targeted Tefilah

There are very few places in the Torah that we find an outlined text for saying a specific *tefilah* to Hashem. At the conclusion of offering the tithes in the third year, the Torah instructs a person to ‘confess’- to declare that he followed the protocol as instructed, he then says, “Gaze down from your holy abode [*ma’on*], from the heavens and bless your people Israel and the ground that You gave us...” (*Devarim* 26;15). Why is doing the will of Hashem referred to as a confession and how do we qualify this *tefilah*?

Rav Soloveitchik explains that this type of confession is a prerequisite to confessing when one has done something wrong. A person must know that he is capable of accomplishing and doing mitzvot the exact way Hashem has commanded. If a person cannot confess and recognize this, then when it comes to sins, he will more readily abdicate responsibility and claim

that he incapable of doing the right thing. As such, he will have zero expectations from himself. Only when a person can state his honest adherence to mitzvot, will his confession of sin takes on significance.

Rav Diner, in *Mikdash Halevi* points out the curious expression used here, “I have done, ‘*kechol*’ of what was commanded.” One does not say that he has completely fulfilled the command, rather, **almost completely**, with the ‘*kaf*’ before ‘*kol*’. Ultimately, this is the confession. Even when we manage to do what we are commanded there is always room for improvement. We never do ‘*kol*’ – everything - to the extent and with the correct mindset that has been mandated. As we stand a few weeks before Rosh Hashana, our introspection is not limited to what we have done wrong, it also includes what we have done right, considering how we can improve and do better. We daven, can we have more *kavanah*? We keep Shabbat, can we make our conversation more in sync with the spirit of Shabbat?

The *Ohr Hachayim Hakdosh* notes the double language – ‘your holy abode’ and ‘heaven’ -- refers to two kinds of blessing. The first is a spiritual blessing, to infuse purity into the people. The second is a blessing of physical abundance for the land. Rav Moshe Goldstein in *Sha’arei*

רפואה שלמה
טובה אסתר בת לאה מרים
צילה בת מרים

Chayim draws our attention to the heaven termed *ma'on*, the highest of the seven heavens. When one completes a mitzvah there is great joy, *ma'on* is the heaven where this joy is found.

The Chafetz Chayim infers from this that there exists an auspicious time to daven at the conclusion of a mitzvah. It is a time of favor in heaven that can be accessed to draw down blessing. Hence, the Torah is teaching us here a paradigm of when and how to daven. This is one of the reasons that we have the *'harachaman'* at the conclusion of *birkat hamazon*, a mitzvah *diorayta*. Upon concluding the *bentching* we add our special *tefillot* to invite bounty into our lives. Likewise, women traditionally embrace candle lighting on Friday night as a special time of *tefillah* for the spiritual welfare of their families.

So here is the take-home; strive to do mitzvot with fullness and completeness. The goal is to feel the simcha of a mitzvah that reaches the level of *'ma'on.'* Each mitzvah we do creates an opportunity for us to daven and ask Hashem at this time of favor for His generous bounty to flow from Above. ■

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