



When to Say *Yehiyu L'ratzon*

Question: Does *Yehiyu L'ratzon* (=YL) come before or after *Elokai Netzor* (=EN) and/or personal requests at the end of *Shemoneh Esrei* (=SE)?

Answer: The *gemara* (Berachot 4b) cites R. Yochanan as instructing to recite the *pasuk* “*Hashem sefatai tiftach ...*” (=HST) (Tehillim 51:17) in the beginning of *SE* and “*Yehiyu l'ratzon ...*” (ibid. 19:15) at its end. The former asks for divine assistance in *davening* effectively, and the latter requests that Hashem receive the *tefilla* favorably. While this was apparently instituted well after *Shemoneh Esrei* was composed (see Igrot Moshe, Orach Chayim V:24), it, to at least some degree, has become incorporated with *SE*. The *gemara* (ibid.) asks why *HST* does not create a break between “*Ga'al Yisrael*” and *SE* and answers that *SE* with the *pasuk* has become “similar to a long *tefilla*.”

To the extent that *YL* and *HST* are equivalent bookends, we would expect *YL* to come right after *SE*, like *HST* comes right before *SE* (note that one may not

say “*Ki shem Hashem ekra ...*” after *YL*-*Mishna Berura* 111:1). Indeed, some *Rishonim* (see *Beit Yosef*, OC 122 in the name of *Rabbeinu Yona* and the *Ra'avad*) say that *YL* should be said right after *SE*, before any other *tachanunim* (special requests) are said, and this is how the *Shulchan Aruch* (OC 122:2) rules.

However, this approach is not clear cut for a few reasons. For one, adding *tachanunim* to *SE* is important and connected enough to *SE* to be permitted even in the midst of *SE* (*Shulchan Aruch*, OC 119:1). Actually, *Rabbeinu Yona* (above) says this is a reason that it is only recommended and not crucial for *YL* to be before *tachanunim*, as we see the requests are not totally like moving on from *SE* and therefore not a serious break before *YL*.

Also, the presumed fact that *YL* is a step in finishing *SE* may weaken subsequent requests. Additionally, if *YL* is first, then when do we ask Hashem to accept the *tachanunim* favorably? The *Shulchan Aruch* (OC 122:2) answers the latter claim – one may say *YL* a second time after the *tachanunim*.

An instructive source is the *gemara* (*Berachot* 29b) regarding one who left out *Ya'aleh V'yavo*. If he is still in the midst of *SE*, he goes back to *R'tzei*; if he finished *SE*, he must go back to the beginning of *SE*.

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The *gemara* says that someone who has finished *SE* proper but usually recites *tachanunim* afterward is not considered finished until after the *tachanunim*. Rabbeinu Yona (ibid.) asks why the *gemara* doesn't use *YL* as the marker of the end of *SE* and concludes that it is because *YL* is recited before *tachanunim*. However, this *gemara* also can teach us the extent to which *tachanunim*, when recited, are an integral part of *SE*. This motivated the Gra (cited by many *Acharonim*, including *Ishei Yisrael* 23:208) to conclude that one should not recite *YL* before *tachanunim*.

We should point out that *tachanunim* include two different things in our experience. Although we generally view *EN* as a set part of the end of *SE*, this is a misnomer. The *gemara* (Berachot 16b-17a) cites personal prayers that various *Amoraim* used to say at the end of their *SE*. *EN* happens to be one of them (approximately). This may explain why *EN*, as well as *HST* and *YL* are in singular, as they are personal, as

opposed to *SE* proper which is in plural. Practice has developed to choose *EN* as standard (albeit not required – see Mishna Berura 122:6) *tachanunim*. The Aruch Hashulchan (OC 122:8) says that while reciting the prayers of all of the *Amoraim* would be wrong, separating *YL* too far from *SE*, it is appropriate to say one. Alternatively or additionally we can all recite our own personal requests (Shulchan Aruch, OC 119:1). There is not a fundamental difference between the two.

The Aruch Hashulchan also suggests (ibid. 6) that a reason that *EN* was chosen is that it actually concludes with *YL*. This brings us to perhaps the most common practice and recommended *Acharonim* (see Mishna Berura 122:3) practice (although not the only legitimate one – see Darchei Moshe, OC 122:2). One recites *YL* twice: 1) right after *SE*; 2) at the end of *EN*, which anyway is the way the original *EN* concluded. ■

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