



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

Rav Kehilla, Nofei HaShemesh
Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org
Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh

Enhancing our Avoda Shebalev

In this week's parsha we encounter the second paragraph of Kriyas Shema "ve'haya im shamoah". Within this section appears the followings phrase: לְאַהֲבָה אֶת-ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְלִעְבֹדוֹ בְּכָל-לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ: "to love Hashem, your God, and to **serve Him** with all your heart and with all your soul." (Devarim 11:13). We are commanded to "love" Hashem with all our heart and soul. Yet, if we look at the pasuk closely, we notice that love is not the only thing alluded to – we are also required "**l'avdo**" to serve Him. Hazal interpret "**l'avdo**" as *avoda shebalev* – essentially *tefilla* (Ta'anis 2a).

In other words, we are obligated to pray with all our heart and soul! This is not a

simple task. How are we able to improve our *kavanah* (concentration) during davening? We have all had those moments during *shemona esre* where we lose track of where we are at, or when we started to pound our heart Friday night during Maariv while reciting "*selach lanu*" to suddenly realize we are reciting the weekday *amida* in error.

Tefilla is a personal conversation with our creator. Unfortunately, all too often we recite words by routine without the proper understanding or intention. Rabbi Shimshon Pincus (Tifferes Shimshon) offers advice to help us improve our tefilla experience. The word kavana – stemming from the work לכוון – means to aim. When one shoots an arrow, he is unlikely to hit his target unless he initially focuses, aims and directs the arrow towards the target. This is true with respect to Tefilla as well. The gemara in Berachos (30b) tells us that the early *Chassidim* used to sit and prepare themselves for tefilla an hour prior to the

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services. This was necessary in order for them to get into the proper frame of mind prior to engaging in conversation with the Almighty. The least we can do is to arrive at minyan a few moments early so we are able to contemplate that we are about to converse with God. It will set the tone for a more meaningful davening. We need to focus so we can “aim” our “*kavana*” in the proper direction. This also means that we need to detach ourselves from distractions, such as conversations with neighbors or glancing at our cell phones.

I heard recently that a chasid once came to the Sanzer Rebbe, the Divrei Chaim, and asked him what he does to prepare for tefilla? The Rebbe answered that I daven that I should daven properly! We need to daven to daven, an amazing concept!

In addition, if we understood our prayers, we would recite them with more meaning. Imagine, if we tried to better understand one word, or paragraph a day – after a year, we would have mastered over 300 words or paragraphs. That would surely enhance our *kavana* while reciting those *tefillos*. We read *Kriyas Shema* twice daily asserting that we are to worship God with all our heart and soul. We are slightly more than a month away from Rosh Hashana. Now is the time to invest in ways of enhancing our *tefillah*. We offered concrete suggestions above. Prepare for tefilla in advance, detach from distractions and try to better comprehend the meaning of the words we recite. May our prayers be heard and as we request during *birchas Hachodesh*: - שְׁמַיִלְהָ ה' מַשְׁמַח לְבָבוֹ לְטוֹבָה May Hashem grant our hearts requests for our benefit! ■



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