



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

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Tefillas Mincha A Gift

From a *pasuk* in this week's parsha. "ויצא יצחק לשוב בשדה" (Bereshis 24: 63), - *chazal* derive that Yitzhak enacted tefillas *Mincha*. (Berachos 26). The Gemara (Berachos 6) stresses that one should be very careful so as not to miss the opportunity to daven *Mincha* since it was at *Mincha* time that Eliyahu Hanavi's request was answered on Har HaCarmel.

What is so special about *Mincha*? Why does the gemara emphasize that one should be cautious not to miss *Mincha*. There is no such warning about *Shachris* or *Maariv*!

The Kli Yakar explains that after Yitzhak davened *Mincha*, his prayers were immediately answered. The *pasuk* tells us: "And Yitzhak went forth to pray in the field towards evening, and he lifted his eyes and saw, and behold, camels were approaching." (Bereshis 24:63). Within the same *pasuk* in which we are told that Yitzhak prayed, as he lifts us his eyes, he immediately sees Rivka approaching. As Eliezer was on his mission to find Yitzhak's shidduch, Yitzhak

was surely praying that Hashem would ensure that Eliezer was successful in finding Yitzhak the appropriate mate. It is only when Yitzhak davened *Mincha* that we witness an instantaneous response to a *tefillah*. Avraham prayed on behalf of Sedom and did achieve his desired results.

What is so special about *Mincha* that we are to take such caution not to miss davening *Mincha* and that during *Mincha*, Yitzhak's request was fulfilled?

The Tur explains that there is less of a chance that someone will forget to, or be distracted from, davening *Shachris* or *Maariv*. When we wake in the morning the first thing we do before we start our day is daven *Shachris*. Before we go to sleep it is easy to remember to daven *Maariv*. However, when we are busy during the day at work, driving carpools, in school – we may lose track of time and suddenly, we look out the window and notice it is nighttime and the time to daven *Mincha* has passed. We have to engrain in ourselves, that during the day we need to take a break. To stop everything and dedicate a short period of time to focus on *Mincha*. Due to all these distractions, the reward for davening *Mincha* is great. Why such a great reward? Perhaps by taking time from our busy day we are emphasizing that Hashem is a part of every aspect of our daily lives.

An idea brought down by Rav Chaim Shmulevitz in the Sichas Musar - helps us

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further understand how Mincha is critical in enabling us to properly establish our day. Rav Shmulevitz addresses how a break in the action adversely affects one's progress. To illustrate his point Rav Shmulevitz provides the following example. If you want to boil water, you have to keep it on a flame until it reaches its boiling point. If you remove the pot of water from the flame before it boils and then the pot of water cools off-in order for it to boil it again has to remain on a flame for a set period of time. The fact that the pot of water had previously been on a flame is irrelevant. It does not expedite the boiling of the water. Breaks in the middle of something disrupts the consistency and adversely affects what one is trying to accomplish. It delays and can even inhibit the desired result. One complete item is not the same as two halves.

We could apply this idea to explain the importance of *Mincha*. When one is busy at work or with running errands all day and not partaking in any spiritual endeavor, to break up the day with davening *Mincha* or listening to a shiur – interrupts the monotony of the day and infuses it with *kedusha*. That spiritual break weakens the lack of spirituality for that day by separating it into two halves. The part of the day before *Mincha* and the part of the day after *Mincha*. That is why *Mincha* is so important and one who davens *Mincha* merits a great reward.

An application of this, is the story told of Rabbi Akiva who returned home after

12 years and as he approaches his home he hears his wife saying to a friend that she would be happy to hear that her husband remain in Yeshiva for another 12 years. Rabbi Akiva without even stepping into his home, turns around and goes back to Yeshiva. Why didn't he at least stay for a few hours and say hello? Rabbi Akiva knew this would be a *hefsek* – it would be an interruption. 12 years +12 years of learning is not the same as 24 years of learning.

The *Kedushas Levi* (Rav Levi Yitzhak M'barditchiv) inquires as to why the tefilla is called "*Mincha*". The first prayer is *Shachris*, which we recite each morning when we arise, in part to express gratification for being granted another day. Maariv, we recite at night, thanking Hashem for the day that was just completed and we ask for protection during the following night. *Mincha*, however, is not connected to any particular item. Not to the day, not to the night. There is no specific request that is required. Perhaps that is why it is referred to as "*Mincha*"- a gift! It is our way of showing our unconditional commitment to and appreciation of, Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

The Aruch Haschulchan refers to *Mincha* as the daily *neila* as it is the last tefilla of the day! As the days become shorter in the coming months, may we be careful to daven *Mincha* at the proper time and use this as an opportunity to offer our gift of appreciation to Hashem, even when it may be our busiest time of day. ■



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