



TOWARDS MEANINGFUL

TEFILLA

BY REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI

Director of OU Israel L'Ayla Women's Initiative

רצה

There is a famous *mashal* told about a wealthy man named Moshe. Moshe had twin sons named Reuven and Shimon. Moshe loved his son Reuven more than anything in the world. Unfortunately, the same could not be said about Moshe's relationship with his son Shimon. Moshe just could not get along with Shimon and they had terrible quarrels. When Reuven and Shimon celebrated their 20th birthdays, their father told them it was time for them to step out into the real world. He presented Shimon with a briefcase stuffed with a million dollars in cash. He handed it to Shimon and wished him a good life. He then turned to Reuven and handed him a fifty dollar bill and a cellphone. He instructed Reuven to use the money to get through the first day and to call him at the end of the day for more.

On first glance, one might think I got the names confused in this story. After all, if Shimon was Moshe's favorite son, why would Reuven receive the million dollar briefcase and not Shimon?! The answer is that Moshe wanted nothing more to do with his son Reuven so he gave him enough money to keep him settled for life, so that he would never

need to interact with him again. On the other hand, Moshe wanted to have a continuous relationship with his son Shimon and so he purposely only gave him enough money to last for one day. He wanted to make sure that Shimon would need to call and interact with him on a daily basis. This way he could enjoy Shimon's company all the time.

We understand from this story that Hashem created us with many needs and deficits, specifically because He relishes hearing from us. He wants to make sure that we continuously need to turn to Him on a daily basis to request all that we are lacking. The whole purpose of this exercise is to grant Hashem the opportunity to speak and connect with us every single day.

This idea can be found in the bracha of רצה. After finishing up the section in the Shemoneh Esrei of the בקשות, the requests, we now turn to Hashem in the first bracha of the concluding section, רצה, and express our hope that we have found favor in Hashem's eyes, that Hashem enjoyed our conversation as much as we did, and that He took pleasure in connecting with us.

Let's look at the words inside:

רצה ה' אלקינו בעמך ישראל ובתפלתם והשב את העבודה לדביר ביתך ואשי ישראל ותפלתם באהבה תקבל ברכון ותהי לרצון תמיד עבודת ישראל עמך. ותחזיקה עינינו בשוכך לציון ברחמים ברוך אתה ה' המחזיר שכינתו לציון.

May You Hashem be pleased with Your nation and with their Tefillot. May You bring back the Avoda to the Beit Hamikdash. May



You accept the fire-offerings/people of Israel and their Tefillot with love and acceptance. And may the Avoda of the Jewish people always find favor. May our eyes witness Your return to Tzion with mercy. Blessed are You Hashem who returns His Shechina to Tzion.

Some people might wonder why these words are not included in the בקשות (request) section. After all, it appears that we are *requesting* that Hashem accept our Tefillot. But now that we recognize the greater context of these words, we understand that this is not a prayer to accept and answer our Tefillot, but rather, a hope that Hashem has enjoyed our Tefilla and is pleased with us. As Rabbeinu Yonah writes in the Shaarei Teshuva, sometimes Hashem fulfills our requests (whether it be for forgiveness or anything else) but He is still not happy with us. Here it is not the results that we are striving for, but the actual process. We want to make sure that the process has been successful, that we have taken full advantage of the prayer experience, and truly connected with Hashem in a very real way.

We can see this in the words themselves – רָצָה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּעַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבְתַפִּלָּתָם – we ask that Hashem not only be pleased with our Tefilla but with us as a people as well.

The Tefilla then seems to take on a different focus. Suddenly we are davening about the return of the Avodah (service) in the Beit Hamikdash. How is that connected to the theme of our bracha? The Seder Olam explains that this bracha was originally said during the times of the Beit Hamikdash every day, after the completion of the offering of the Korbanot. The people would express their great hope that Hashem would be pleased with their Korbanot

service and with the relationship they had built with Him through the Korbanot. Once the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed, the words וְהָשֵׁב אֶת-הָעִבּוּדָה לְדָבִיר בֵּיתְךָ (bring back the service to the Beit Hamikdash) and וְתִתְחַיֶּה עֵינֵינוּ בְּשׁוּבוֹךְ לְצִיּוֹן בְּרַחֲמִים (may our eyes witness Your return to Tzion) were added.

In this bracha, we recognize that the whole point of all of our Tefilla and our requests is to build a relationship with Hashem. We are able to do that every day in our davening, yet we recognize on how much of a different level we would be able to do so if we only had the Beit Hamikdash back. It is in Hashem's house, the place where the Shechina resides and where we can feel His presence so clearly, that our relationship with Hashem can truly blossom. And so, as we conclude our Shemonah Esrei with the hope that Hashem was pleased with our connection through the Tefillot, it is only fitting to mention on the side, that we only wish we could bring that up a level in the place where this is truly meant to be done, the Beit Hamikdash.

May we be Zocheh to continue to work every day on building and developing our relationship with HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and in the merit, may the Beit Hamikdash be rebuilt speedily in our days. ■

בס"ד

MAXI**BOX**
Storage

Your place for extra space

053-7272-815