

Kindert Torah

בס"ד

Parashas Beha'aloscha

Take the Time

“What time is it, Imma?”
“Ten to seven, Yossie.”

“Ten to seven?! Oy vey! *Shacharis* (morning prayer) begins in ten minutes, and I am just getting out of bed! I must hurry!”

Yossie rushes to wash, dress, and run to the Beis HaKinesses. He arrives at seven minutes past seven, just eight minutes before “Borchu”. He quickly dons his tefillin, speeds through the morning blessings, and skips over most of “Pesukei Di’zimra.” He answers “Borchu” with the congregation and proceeds to finish the “Pesukei Di’zimra” before he begins the brachos before “Kriyas Shema.” He is understandably late in saying “Kriyas Shema” and does not begin “Shemoneh Esray” with the congregation. Everything he says is rushed and without proper kavannah (intention). His morning prayers are a shambles all because he rose from his bed ten minutes late.

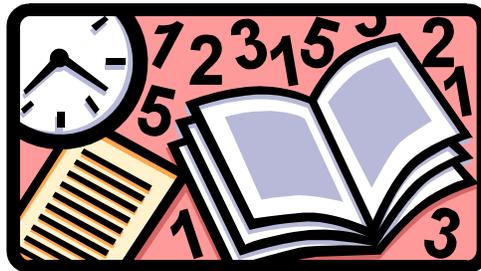


Many people want to improve their kavannah in tefillah. They look for all sorts of advice, plans, and formulas to achieve their goal. Rav Shimshon Pincus zt”l deals with this subject in the introduction to his sefer “*Shaarim Bi’Tefillah*.” He relates that one must put effort into learning about the exaltedness of tefillah. This will inspire him to pray better. He should then learn the meaning of the words that he is saying. Finally, when it comes to actually tefillah, he must take the time necessary to pray properly. This is a foundation for success in tefillah and indeed anything in life. One who is rushed or rushing will never take the time to properly consider what he is doing. He is prone to hasty decisions and haphazard work which will damper or ruin the success of the entire effort. Contrast this with the one who takes the time to think and act deliberately. His carefully planned efforts reach a higher level.

Tefillah requires concentration without distraction. This is not easy to achieve. A good way to ruin ones concentration is to rush. Therefore, the first foundation of kavannah in tefillah is to arrive at the Beis HaKinesses early enough to prepare oneself to pray properly. In the morning, this includes enough time to don the tefillin. He must also take the time necessary to fix in his mind that he is about to stand before the Creator of the universe and speak to Him. Proper concentration on the afternoon and evening prayers require arriving early enough to settle down from the traveling, take care of physical needs, and collect ones thoughts by remove stray notions from one’s mind. One must choose a minyan care-

fully. It should move at approximately the same pace as the individual is comfortable with.

Rav Pincus vividly describes the scenario of rushing through tefillah. Imagine someone who has an appointment with high-level minister who can help him in all sorts of ways. He arrives late for the appointment. He speaks to the minister very quickly. “I need life, income, health, a wife, children, a house, good neighbors, and moshiach. Thank you very much. *Sholom u’vrocho*.” What a lack of derech erez (consideration)! What a bizayon (humiliation) to the minister! How could anyone think to treat such an important person in such an offhanded way! And yet, that is exactly what we do when we arrive late and pray too quickly. To compound the embarrassment, we are speaking to no ordinary minister, rather the King of kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He! How shameful are our deeds!



Someone once asked a chochom what is the proper amount of time to dedicate to the tefillah of shmoneh esray. “Until you finish,” was the wise answer. And so, that is the key – taking the amount of time to do the job properly.

The sefer “*Avodas HaTefillah*” has a list of 54 eitzos (pieces of advice) to improve kavannah in tefillah. Eitzah number fourteen is to read the words of prayer from a siddur. This may seem simple; however, many people know the prayers by heart. They find it very easy to say the words while looking around the room. Their eyes focus on all sorts of images, which then occupy their mind. Instead of contemplating the tefillos that they are saying, they think about what they are seeing. Even worse is the person who communicates with another person in “sign language” during the tefillah. This travesty of insult to the Almighty shows that the person has no concern whatsoever for what he is doing and Whom he is speaking to.

One of our Gedolei Baalei Mussar was once asked for advice on improving his kavannah in tefillah. “Do not look out of the siddur during ‘Pesukei Di’Zimra.’” was the answer. “But Rebbe, I want to correct my heart, and not my eyes,” said the person. “First worry about your eyes.

Your heart will follow.”

And so, we want our hearts to turn to Hashem. If we follow the advice of our great Rabbonim, b’ezras Hashem we will move in the right direction.

Kinderlach . . .

“Take the time to do it right.” That is a good motto for anything that you undertake in life. Tefillah is no exception. It takes learning time, preparation time, and enough time to simply say the words with kavannah. The purpose is to focus our minds and hearts on our Father in Heaven. Therefore, we must also keep stray images from our eyes and stray activities from our hands. You come to the Beit HaKinesses with one single purpose – to pray! Do not look around! Do not conduct your business affairs! Give Hashem your undivided attention and pray to Him with all of your heart and soul.

Always At Home

“All aboard, train number 545, leaving in five minutes on track #3! All aboard!”

A mother stood with her infant baby, waiting for her husband to arrive on the next train. The noise of the busy train station frightened the baby.

“Waaaaa! Waaaaa! Waaaaa!”
“Sha baby. Sha, sha sha.”

The mother lifted the baby out of her stroller and hugged her in her arms.

“Sha baby. Sha, sha sha.”

The baby quickly quieted down, comforted by her mother’s embrace.

“Upon Hashem’s word they camped, and upon Hashem’s word they traveled” (Bamidbar 9:20). Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz zt”l explains that the baby’s home is in the mother’s arms. He can travel to the ends of the world, however, if he is on his mother’s arms, he is always home. Rav Beifus, Shlita, explains that the Jewish people trusted Hashem. They followed Him into the desert into an unsown land (Yirmiyah 2:2). Their trust was so complete that wherever they traveled, they always saw themselves in His presence.

Kinderlach . . .

Don’t you enjoy coming home? It is cold and rainy outside, and the wind is howling. You open the door to the house and step inside the warm room. Imma’s warm smile and the smell of delicious chicken soup on the fire greet you. It’s great to be home. We are always at home. Hashem is our home. Wherever we are, He is with us and we are with Him. When you feel lonely, open your Tehillim (Psalms) and call him. He will warm your heart. It’s great to be home.

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