

Kindert Torah

Parashas Ki Savo

ד'בס

A Final Plea

“Abba, we have finished the nineteen blessings of the *Amidah*. What a monumental accomplishment!”

“I agree, Avi. We have stood before the *Shechina* and made nineteen requests on behalf of ourselves and the Jewish nation. Now, while we are still in the Divine Presence we follow the custom of Mar Bereh DiRavina¹ and add a final personal plea. We ask for *siyata di'shmaya* (heavenly assistance) in the areas of guarding ones speech, humility, learning Torah, keeping mitzvos, protection from those who wish to harm us, acceptance of our *tefillos*, peace, building of the Beis HaMikdash, and return of the *Avodah*.”

“What a tremendous merit and opportunity we have to make this request, Abba.”

“Indeed, Avi. Come let us learn about it. We begin with the words, ‘My G-d, guard my tongue from evil.’ This is from the verse, ‘Guard your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.’² Although (the free choice between) good and bad are in man’s hands, he still requests *siyata di'shmaya* to do good. ‘To those who curse me let my soul be silent.’ This is in addition to ‘guard my tongue from evil’. Not only do I ask not to belittle the other person first, but I also request that I be able to bear his derisions, as the Gemora states, ‘They hear their disgrace and do not answer back.’³ ‘Let my soul be like dust to everyone.’ This is in addition to ‘and my lips from speaking deceitfully.’ Not only do I request not to deceive others, but I also request an even greater level of humility, to be like dust before everyone. ‘Open my heart to Your Torah.’ This is connected to the next verse which states, ‘Turn from evil and do good,’⁴ for the only good is Torah, as the verse states, ‘For I have given you a **good** teaching, do not forsake My **Torah**’⁵ (from Gemora *Avodah Zara* 19b). However, if you do not put your learning into practice, you have nothing, therefore, the prayer continues, ‘And let my soul pursue Your commandments.’ Since I am pursuing Your commandments, save me from ‘All who plan evil against me, quickly (with no hesitation) annul their counsel and frustrate their intention.’ Put an end to it while it is still in the planning stage, before it comes to fruition. For pursuing mitzvos helps nullify the pursuit of enemies.⁶

“What a powerful prayer, Abba.”

“Without a doubt, Avi. The next four phrases have special significance. The Tur⁷ cites the Aggadah of Shmuel, which states, ‘All who are careful to say these four things will merit receiving the countenance of the *Shechina* (Divine Presence). ‘Act for Your Name’s sake; act for Your right hand’s sake; act for Your sanctity’s

sake; act for Your Torah’s sake.’” At the time of the *churban* (destruction of the Beis HaMikdash) the Holy Name was defiled, the strength of His right hand weakened (so to speak), the might of the Torah was missing, and the holiness desecrated. Therefore, we include these four requests.⁸

“Why do we request these things? ‘In order that Your beloved ones be released’⁹ ‘Rebbe Abahu’¹⁰ said, “Every salvation that comes upon Yisrael is The Holy One’s (salvation), as the verse states, ‘I am with him in distress ... and I will show him My salvation’ (Tehillim 91:15,16). Yisrael said, ‘Master of the universe, since You said, “I am with him in distress,” therefore, “Save (me) with Your right hand and answer me” (Tehillim 60:7). For if you answer us, the salvation is Yours, as the verse states, “It is for You to save us” (Tehillim 80:3).”

“We hope to see that salvation today, Abba.”

“Amen, Avi. Now we have an opportunity to add personal requests. We then make the final appeal that our prayers be accepted. ‘May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart find favor before You, Hashem, my Rock and Redeemer.’¹¹ The intention of this request is that whether the prayers were merely ‘words of my mouth’ (without *kavannah*) or they were indeed ‘thoughts of my heart’ (with *kavannah*) may they both find favor before You.¹² Another explanation of ‘the words of my mouth’ is that the one who guards his speech is on the highest level, and his words arouse Heavenly favor. ‘And the thoughts of my heart’ are what I cannot express in words. Hashem, You know everything! It is in front of Your countenance! Although words did not go into the air, my thoughts reach the heart of the heavens! ‘(May they) find favor before You, Hashem, my Rock and Redeemer,’ for You are the One Who searches a person’s innermost thoughts and feelings.¹³ The Seder HaYom explains that saying this sentence with *nachas* and *kavannah* will help very much acceptance of the *tefillah* with favor and not returning empty.”

“This is unbelievable, Abba.”

“You see what a privilege we have to stand before Hashem, Avi. We now prepare ourselves to leave His Presence. We bow down and take three steps backwards.”

“Why three steps, Abba?”

“I know of three answers to that question, Avi. We were standing in prayer, in a holy place, with the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) above our heads, as the verse states, ‘I have set Hashem before me always’ (Tehil-

lim 16:8). The holiness extends four *amos* (cubits). Therefore, when we finish our *tefillah*, we step backwards three steps in order to exit that holy place and stand in a regular area.¹⁴ A second answer is that we are like servants who take three steps backwards when departing from the presence of their masters.¹⁵ Finally we recall that the wicked Nebuchadnezzar stepped three steps to honor Hashem, and by way of this merited monarchy and destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. When we pray to our Creator, we also step three steps backwards to honor Hashem. He says, ‘May it be Your will that these three steps build and fix the Beis HaMikdash which was desolated by way of the three steps of that wicked one.’¹⁶

“We now say, ‘He who makes peace in His high heavens,’ for the upper worlds need peace; ‘may He make peace upon us and upon all Israel,’ for how much more so do we in the lower worlds, who are contentious and divisive, need to ask for peace and pursue it. ‘And say Amen.’¹⁷ Although there are angels of mercy and angels of din in His high heavens, they make peace between them to carry out His will. So too, we request that He fix peace upon us – that each one of us fulfills his purpose according to the strengths and attributes that were given to him. Everyone’s goal should be to fulfill His Will. Then and only then will there be true peace.¹⁷ May it be an ‘*es ratzon*’ (favorable time) for our *tefillos* to be accepted on high. ‘To build the Beis HaMikdash speedily in our days (so that we will have the true *avodah* of *korbonos* and not merely the substitute of prayers). ‘And grant us our share in Your Torah’ – Even if we are not deserving of the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash, at least give us our portion in Your Torah. Give us *Siyata DiShmaya* that all of our energies be put into learning Torah. ‘There we will serve You in fear as we did in the old days, and the offerings of Yehuda and Yerushalayim will be pleasing to You as they were in the days of Moshe Rabbeinu and Shlomo HaMelech.’”¹⁵

“Amen.”

¹ Gemora Brachos 17a

² Tehillim 34:14

³ Gittin 36b

⁴ Tehillim 34:15

⁵ Mishlei 4:2

⁶ Abudarham

⁷ Orach Chaim 122:3

⁸ Achareis LiShalom

⁹ from Tehillim 60:7

¹⁰ Medrash Tanchuma Acharei Mos 12

¹¹ Tehillim 19:15

¹² Iyun Tefillah

¹³ Etz Yosef

¹⁴ Shaar HaRachamim

¹⁵ Avodas HeTefillah

¹⁶ Etz Yosef cites Ageres HaTiyol

¹⁷ Kavannas HaLev