



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד מרדכי מלכא שליט"א נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel MORDECHAI MALKA, Founder & President of Institutions "Or Hamelech"



עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

Yom Kippur

The Power of the *Neilah* Prayer

If an Individual Sees that He Prayed But Was Not Answered – He Should Pray Again

The Gemara states in *Masechet Berachot* (32b), "Said Rabbi Chama the son of Rabbi Chaninah: If an individual sees that he prayed but was not answered, he should pray again. This is as the *pasuk* states, 'Hope to Hashem; strengthen and fortify your heart, and hope to Hashem.'" Which prayer is the Gemara referring to? Can it possibly mean that an individual should repeat *Shemonah Esrei*? If it means *Tehillim*, this is also difficult, for there is no limit to the amount of *Tehillim* that one could recite.

Explanation of the Vilna Gaon

The Vilna Gaon (cited in *Siddur Eizor Eliyahu*) answers that the intention is to the *chazarat hashas*, the *chazzan's* repetition of the *Shemonah Esrei* prayer. *Chazarat hashas* is accepted more readily when one is careful to hear the words of the *chazzan* and to look inside his siddur. In the *Igeret HaTeshuvah*, Rabbeinu Yonah writes, "One should concentrate on each blessing recited by the *chazzan* ... it is as if he prayed twice, once and then again. This is as it states, 'Hope to Hashem; strengthen and fortify your heart, and hope to Hashem.'" These are truly amazing words, and praiseworthy is he who fulfills them.

They Established the *Neilah* Prayer so that There Would be Excessive Prayer

Let us furthermore proceed by explaining the words of the Yerushalmi (*Berachot* 4:1), "What is the source of *Neilah*? Said R' Levi: [The *pasuk* states] (*Yeshaya* 1:15), 'Even if you will pray increasingly, [I will not listen]...' From here we see that anyone who prays increasingly is answered." The Gemara furthermore cites the many prayers of Channah for a child as proof that one who prays excessively will be answered. The *Pnei Moshe* (ibid.) explains that the Gemara was asking that we find an allusion to the other three prayers of Yom Kippur. Our Sages teach that either the Forefathers enacted them or they were enacted to parallel the *Tamid*, limbs, and fat offerings that were burned on the altar. The Mussaf prayer as well was enacted to parallel the Mussaf sacrifice. However, what is the source of *Neilah*? He explains that we see from the *pasuk*, "Even if you will pray increasingly [I will not listen]..." that excessive prayer is indeed effective, and that is why *Neilah* was enacted.

Moshe's Prayer to Enter *Eretz Yisrael*

We similarly find in the beginning of *Parashat Vaetchanan*, that when Moshe desired to enter *Eretz Yisrael*, he prayed exceedingly to Hashem. This was to the point that Hashem told him, "And Hashem said to me, 'It is enough for you; do not continue to speak to Me about this matter.'" In the *Sifri* (*piska* 29) our Sages expound, "If Moshe, who was told, 'And Hashem said to me, 'It is enough for you; do not continue to speak to me about this matter,'" did not hesitate to plead for mercy from Hashem, how much more so, should other individuals do so. Chizkiya was told (*Melachim* 2 30:1), 'Charge your household, for you will die and not live,' yet he did not hesitate to beseech mercy – for he expounded that even if a sharp sword is placed on one's neck, he should nevertheless not withhold himself from mercy. This is as it states (*Yeshaya* 38:2), 'And Chizkiyahu turned his face to the wall and prayed.' How much more so, should the rest of Israel pray."

A Lesson From *Yeshaya's* Reproach

These are also the words of the Navi *Yeshaya*, who offered reproach in the Name of Hashem, saying, "When you raise your hands, I will hide My eye from you; even if you pray increasingly I will not listen ..." There is an apparent redundancy in the *pasuk*, for first it states that even if the Jews raise their hands in prayer, Hashem will hide His eye from it. Why, then, does it state that even if the Jews will pray increasingly Hashem will not accept it? It seems that the Navi is teaching us that there are two levels of prayer: The first is normal prayer and the next is excessive prayer. Here, the Navi was stating that not only would Hashem not listen to the first form of prayer, but even excessive prayer would not be listened to, even though it generally is accepted. This is similar to what was learned out by Hashem telling Moshe to stop praying; it implies that had he continued praying excessively, he, indeed, would have been granted to enter *Eretz Yisrael*.



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A Mother's Prayers

There was once a widow who had an only son. She enrolled him in yeshiva, and requested from the yeshiva's staff to look after the boy, for he was her only joy in life. Sometime later, the boy took ill. The rabbis in the yeshiva were doubtful whether or not they should tell the mother, since she was a widow, and knowledge of the matter would cause her distress. They therefore decided to treat the boy without her knowledge. Unfortunately, the boy's condition worsened until he passed away from the illness. They were forced to tell the mother. Understandably, her world was shattered, and at the funeral procession, she requested to eulogize her son. There was a great doubt whether it was appropriate for a woman to offer a eulogy before the entire crowd, but since she was a widow and in terrible anguish, they allowed her to speak. She began by saying that she had no doubt that the yeshiva staff did not inform her about her son's illness in order not to cause her anguish. However, for one matter it was difficult to forgive them. She said that even though they all prayed for her son's recovery, but who knows what the many prayers of a mother could have accomplished? Perhaps they could have nullified the decree? They validated her claim, and admitted their mistake.

Story With Rabbi Leib Chasman zt"l

On the last Yom Kippur of the *tzaddik* R' Leib Chasman's life, he returned home after the *Neilah* prayer, because he was very weak from the fast. A group of ten *bachurim* from the yeshiva went with him and waited to pray *maariv*. R' Leib said, "In the *haftara* of mincha we read that Yonah said to the men on the boat, 'Pick me up and cast me into the sea.' It must be understood why Yonah needed to say first, 'Pick me up?' Would it not have been enough simply to say, 'Cast me into the sea?' Rather, we can explain that Yonah said this in order to gain one more moment of life; perhaps he could pray increasingly and perhaps annul the decree?" He concluded by saying, "We must understand and be aware of the fact that there remains yet another moment of the holiness of Yom Kippur; we should not lose this precious pearl mindlessly."

Explanation of Our Sages Words and the Greatness of *Neilah*

From here we have learned a new concept in prayer. There is prayer and then there is **excessive prayer**. The power of excessive prayer is far greater than the power of regular prayer. It has the power to annul every harsh decree, as we learn from Channah who bore Shmuel. This is how we can explain the intention of the Gemara in *Berachot* that an individual must continue to pray as much as he can. For excessive prayer annuls a decree. He should not give up hope that he has already prayed and was not answered. He should not wonder, *what will one more prayer help?* This is incorrect; rather, the more he prays, the greater the chance that the prayer will be answered in the end. Therefore, *Neilah* was enacted on Yom Kippur, for the many prayers recited have the power to bring about a good outcome.

Does Yom Kippur Atone at the Beginning of the Day or Specifically at the End?

This is especially true in light of what we are taught, that Yom Kippur atones specifically at the end of the day. See the Gemara in *Masechet Shavuot* (13b) which states that Yom Kippur atones only once it is dark outside. This is the version of many *Rishonim*, and from their words we can conclude that Yom Kippur atones specifically at the end of the day. Therefore, one who sins on Yom Kippur and dies, does not receive atonement on Yom Kippur, since he was not alive at the end of the day. So when the *pasuk* states, "For on this day He will atone for you, to purify you," it refers specifically to the end of the day.

Words of Mussar

We have learned that Hashem has revealed to us the great secret of just how effective it is when an individual prays increasingly. Even if there is a sharp sword on his neck, and even if the decree has already been cast, nevertheless, through excessive prayer it can be annulled. This is what our Sages have said that prayer stands at the loftiest heights and yet people make light of it. For we should know that prayer is meant for man's benefit. Therefore our Sages have said, "It should be that man would pray all day." The *Neilah* prayer is at the end of the day, when we are tired and thinking about the end of the fast. It is specifically then that man's fate is decided, and it is in the power of that last prayer to work wonders to exonerate him, and atone for all his deeds. Therefore



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man should gird his strength and make every effort to pray with all his strength. By doing so, we will all merit a
gmar chatimah tovah, for a good life with peace. Amen ve'amen.

Gmar Chatimah Tovah,
Rav Mordechai Malka