

## כוונה בתפילה

### הרב נח שפרן

In : מס' ברכות לד, there is a *Beraisa* which states that a person should be *מכוון לבו* with all the *brachos* of *Shemoneh Esray*. If he cannot keep *kavana* in all of them then he should at least keep it in one of them, and the Gemara explains that to be the *bracha* of *Avos* (the first *bracha* in *Shemoneh Esray*). On : ל, דף ל, R. Elazar ben Pedas (an Amora) says that before *davening* a person should evaluate whether he will be able to keep *kavana* or not. If he is not able to then he should not *daven*. He makes no mention of the *bracha* of *Avos* standing out from the other *brachos* in terms of *kavana*. Tosafos and Rosh both learn that R. Elazar ben Pedas is not *cholek* on the *Beraisa* on : דף לד, rather he is referring to the *bracha* of *Avos* in his statement.

Rambam discusses *kavana* in *davening* in two different *perakim*, similar to how the Gemara does so in two different *sugyos*. In *Perek Daled*, he states that *kavonas halev* is requisite in *tefilah* and without it the *tefilah* does not count, even to the extent that if one *davened* without *kavana* he must repeat the *tefilah* and if one is preoccupied it is *assur* for him to *daven* until his mind is clear that he can have *kavana b'tefilah*. Yet, he makes no mention of the *bracha* of *Avos*. In *Perek Yud*, he says that if one has *kavana* in the first *bracha* of *Shemoneh Esray* then he needs no more. The *meforshim* are bothered by this, the Lechem Mishna asks why the Rambam did not mention the *bracha* of *Avos* as being the prime *me'akev* for *kavana b'tefilah* in *Perek Daled*?

There is a famous R. Chaim Brisker on this, in which he has a *chiddush* based upon many *diyukim* in this Rambam. He says there are two *kavanos* in *tefilah*. One is the *kavana* of the meaning of the words and another is the *kavana* of the *ma'aseh* of *tefilah*, the cognizance of standing in front of Hashem while *davening*. He explains that Rambam in *Perek Daled* is talking about the latter *kavana*, that of standing in front of Hashem, and that is *me'akev* throughout the entire *tefilah*. If a person loses sight of this during his *tefilah* then it is like he was *misaseik*. If he doesn't see himself as standing before Hashem during his *tefilah* then we cannot call that a legitimate *tefilah*. In *Perek Yud*, the Rambam is talking about the meaning of the words and that is where there is only a *kepeida, bedi'eved*, in knowing the words of the first *bracha*.

R. Chaim goes further with an even bigger *chiddush lehalacha*. If a person is unable to be *mechaven peirush hamilos*, he still has a *chiyuv* to *daven* so long as he can still maintain the *kavana* of being *omed bifnei Hashem*. This is why the Rambam does not say in *Perek Yud*, when discussing *peirush hamilos*, that if one is *tarud* he should not *daven*. Rather, even if he cannot focus on the meaning of the words he still has a *chiyuv* to *daven* with the awareness of standing before Hashem.

Chazon Ish has many *tynas* on R. Chaim in this and disagrees in *halacha*. His first *tyna* is in the whole reality of the case, it is hard to hear that a person is *tarud* to the point of not being able to focus on the words he is saying yet he can focus fully on the fact that he is standing before Hashem in *tefilah*. He also insists that anyone who *davens* even with a weak awareness of standing before Hashem is still considered a good *tefilah*. Even if he is not fully focused and zeroed in on that point, it is still a good *tefilah bedi'eved*. He also brings a Gemara on דף לב in מס' ברכות that records R. Chiya bar Abba *davened* and then repeated the *tefilah*. The Gemara asks how he did so, if he didn't have *kavana* the first time how was he able to *daven*? Then the Gemara gives a different *pshat* as to why he repeated the *tefilah*. The Chazon Ish asks why the Gemara did not say R. Chaim's *din*- he initially only had *kavana* in *omed bifnei Hashem* and then afterwards repeated it with an added *kavana* in the *peirush hamilos*? Chazon Ish refuses to accept R. Chaim's *chiddush*.

There is a famous question posed by the Biur Halacha: If a person started *Shemoneh Esray* and already passed the first *bracha* then remembers he did not have *kavana* in the first *bracha*, the Chayei Adam is *mashma* the person should continue his *Shemoneh Esray* and not return to the first *bracha*. He sees this *mashma*'us because Chayei Adam only says to go back if he has not yet completed the first *bracha*. The Biur Halacha asks, doesn't that mean he won't be *yotzei* his *tefilah*? He did not have *kavana* in the first *bracha*. How could such a person continue saying what would appear to be *brachos levatala* if he won't be *yotzei tefilah*?

Of course, if we go with R. Chaim's *mehalech* and assume there is still a *mitzvah* of *tefilah b'kavanas omeid bifnei Hashem* even without *kavana* in *peirush hamilos*, we can hear that this person continuing his *Shemoneh Esray* is still accomplishing a *tefilah*. However, even according to him if the person is completely spacing out of what he is doing then it is fully a *Shemoneh Esray livatala*.

The Steipler has a creative idea which he himself concludes as a "*tzarich iyun*" of its source. He says there are two *mitzvos* of *tefilah*- *tefila* of *mitzvas kavana* and *tefila* of *mitzvas amiras hatefilah*. Even though a person is not *yotzei* the *ikur din* of *kavana b'tefilah* (and we are *noheg* not to go back, like the Rema says), there is still a *mitzvah* of reciting the words of *tefilah* which he is certainly *yotzei*. This could be a *yishuv* for the Chayei Adam as to why one does not go back to the first *bracha* when he realizes in the middle of his *Shemoneh Esray* that he did not have full *kavana* in the first *bracha*.

[As an aside, the Steipler also offers that if one finds himself in that situation, he should make sure to have full *kavana* in the *bracha* of *Modim*. This is because the Rokeach holds the *Modim* is the "*bracha achas*" referenced by the Gemara to be *yotzei tefila* with *kavana* in one *bracha*. It seems that his *girsas* included *birchas Modim* with *birchas Avos*.]

The truth is that this idea of a *mitzvah* to merely recite the words of *tefilah* even without *kavana* and that doing so is not hollow is found in our *parsha*, *Parshas Vayechi*. Yaakov says, "*אשר לקחתי...בחרבי ובקשתי*" (בראשית מ, כב), which Targum Onkelos translates as, "*בצלתי ובבעותי*"- *my tefilah and bakasha*. Meshech Chachma outlines the difference between these two types of *tefilos*. The former is the type of *tefilah* which is *kavua*, a standardized *tefilah*, is compared to a sword. A sword itself inflicts damage, regardless of the force put into it by its wielder, and cuts whatever it comes into contact with. The *tefilah* established by the *Anshei Knesses Hagedola* has power in and of itself, no matter how a person recites it. A personal *bakasha* composed by the individual, on the other hand, draws its *koach* strictly from the one saying it. The *koach* which a person puts into his *bakasha* requires a high level of *kavana*. *Zugt* the Meshech Chachma, *tefilah* which is *kavua* requires a minimum of *kavana* in only the first *bracha* because the words themselves are effective, like a *cherev*. An arrow needs the force put into it by the one shooting it, and so too a *bakasha* needs full *kavana* because the words don't have the same power. Therefore, they need the *kavana* to infuse them with the proper power. [I also recently saw that R. Chaim Kanievsky explains that "*...תתקבל צלותהון ובעותהון*" in *קדיש שלם* means our *tefilos kavuos* and *bakashos*.]

A similar idea is attributed to the Brisker Rov. A person who says a *tefila kavua* does not need to be on a high *madreiga* in order for it to be *miskabel* because he is drawing upon the power infused into it by the *Anshei Knesses Hagedola*. A *bakasha* requires the *koach gavra* of the person composing and praying the *tefila*.

Perhaps this would explain the Steipler's idea that the words of *Shemoneh Esray* themselves have a power and even if one was not *yotzei* his *din tefilah*, it was not for naught. The Nefesh Hachaim says as well, even though we call *tefila* "*עבודה שלב*", when a person *davens* by saying the words carefully and clearly, the *dibbur* of the *Anshei Knesses Hagedola's nusach hatefilah* is guaranteed to be constructive. Even though it is not of a high *madreiga* if the person lacks *kavana* when he says them, the *tefilah* is certainly effective.

In addition to the awareness that we stand in front of the Ribono Shel Olam during *tefilah*, we must also realize that the words which we utter have an innate power and potency even when not recited with *kavana*.

*Im yirtza Hashem*, we should be *mechazek* in *tefilah* to say the words carefully and slowly and our *tefilos* and the words themselves should be *miskabel*.