

# SIMAN 101: ONE MUST CONCENTRATE UPON ALL OF THE BLESSINGS, AND ONE CAN PRAY IN ANY LANGUAGE

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**101:1.** A person (1) who is praying must (2) concentrate upon all of the blessings, and if he cannot concentrate for all of them, he should at least concentrate (3) for "Avos" [Forefathers, the first blessing], and if he does not concentrate during Avos, then even though he concentrated upon all of the remainder, he must go back and pray again. [Rama: (4) In our day we do not go back because of a failure to concentrate, because it is quite likely that even during the repetition he will fail - and if so why should he go back? (Tur).]

**MB 1:** *Who is praying - A person should train himself to concentrate at least upon the conclusion of each blessing.*

**MB 2:** *Concentrate - Referring to the meaning of the words. Therefore, how great it is for people to learn the meaning of the words of all of the prayer, and at least of the blessing of Avos - and "Modim" [the blessing of thankfulness], certainly one must know its meaning.*

**MB 3:** *For "Avos" - Because one is saying the praises of the Holy One, and it is inappropriate for him to divert his mind to other things. There are decisors who rule that "Modim" is equally important, at least ideally. If one realizes that he will be unable to concentrate even for Avos, then one should not pray at all until his mind has calmed enough to permit him to concentrate during Avos.*

**MB 4:** *In our day - The Chayei Adam wrote that because we are still technically obligated to go back, therefore if one realizes [that he failed to concentrate] before saying "Baruch Atah H" [Blessed are You, G-d - at the conclusion of the first blessing], then he should at least go back to "Elokei Avraham" [G-d of Abraham] and continue from there.*

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Siman 101. One must concentrate upon all of the blessings, and one can pray in any language (cont.)

**101:2.** One should not pray in one's heart alone, but rather should clearly enunciate the words with his lips and (5) make them audible to his ears in a whisper. One (6) should not make his (7) voice heard [i.e. say it loudly], but if he cannot concentrate when saying it (8) in a whisper then it

**is permitted for him to (9) raise his voice. This is only when he is alone, but (10) in a congregation it is prohibited, because he will disturb the others. {Rama: And if he raises his voice when praying at home in order that the members of his household learn from him, then this is permitted (Tur).}**

**MB 5:** *Make them audible - There are those who wrote that one must worry about the words of the Zohar, that even ideally one should not even make his voice audible to his own ears. However, the Magen Avraham wrote that there is no proof from the Zohar, and so too the Gaon of Vilna in his explanations wrote that even the Zohar agrees with the Shulchan Aruch, and so wrote the other later authorities that ideally one should make his voice audible [as a whisper]. [In other words, these other opinions suggest that the Zohar does \_not\_ say that ideally one should not even be able to hear himself.] After the fact, all agree that even if one whispered so quietly that even his own ears could not hear his voice, he has still fulfilled his obligation because the words nonetheless left his lips.*

**MB 6:** *Should not make his voice heard - Because it is written concerning the prayer of Chana that "only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard." Anyone who makes his voice heard when praying is of little faith, because it is as if he does not believe that the Holy One, Blessed be He, hears whispered prayers. And anyone who \_raises\_ his voice when praying is from the false prophets, whose practice was to cry out to their idols. And see in the Birkei Yosef and in the Chayei Adam, who say that ideally one must pray in a whisper so quiet that even someone standing right next to him will be unable to hear him. Nonetheless, if it is impossible for him to concentrate that way, he should say his prayers in such a way that he will be able to concentrate - but he must be careful not to disturb others, as we see below.*

**MB 7:** *His voice - Even when saying the Pesukei D'Zimrah, the Verses of Praise, it is good not to raise one's voice, because the Holy One, Blessed be He hears even a whisper, and not [to be] like those who raise their voices beyond what is reasonable. Nonetheless, on Shabbos, where our practice is that one person reads the Pesukei D'Zimrah aloud, this is fine [Pri Megadim].*

**MB 8:** *In a whisper - The Taz wrote that even if he can concentrate when whispering, but not as well as he could speaking, then this is also called "unable to concentrate", and when praying alone he can speak the words. And see in the Biur Halacha, where we wrote that one should not be lenient in this matter [meaning that one should not follow this Taz - praying in a whisper is greatly preferable].*

**MB 9:** *Raise his voice - This is in a case where even were he to raise his voice slightly [above a whisper] he would be unable to concentrate, because if not it would be forbidden [to speak with a "full voice"].*

**MB 10:** *In a congregation it is prohibited - Even to make his voice partly audible, and all the more so to raise it.*

**101:3. Some say that on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur it is permissible to raise their voices in**

**prayer, (11) even in a congregation. [Rama: And so is our custom, but nonetheless one should be careful not to raise one's voice (12) too much.]**

**MB 11:** *Even in a congregation - In order to arouse one's concentration, and we do not worry about disturbing the congregation because everyone has a Siddur or Machzor [holiday prayer book] in his hands. And see in the Magen Avraham, who concludes that it is better to pray in a whisper if he can concentrate, and so wrote many later authorities.*

**MB 12:** *Too much - Because this is like the prophets of Ba'al [an idol in Isaiah's time], concerning whom it is written "And they called with a great voice." Otherwise, certainly by doing so one person will confuse his neighbor. Nonetheless, it appears to me that the Chazzanim who raise their voices in order to arouse concentration, and in order that their words should be heard well, are doing a good thing - because the prayer [repetition] of the leader itself was established specifically to be said in a loud voice. However, those who do so in order to show off their voices are certainly doing something improper.*

**101:4. One can pray (13) in any language (14) that he wishes; and this is in a congregation, but when praying alone one should (15) only pray in the Holy Tongue. And there are those who say that this is when he is asking for his needs, as when he is praying (16) on behalf of a sick person or due to some trouble that he has related to his household, but when praying the prayer (17) established for the congregation [of Israel - i.e. everyone], even one praying alone can say it in any language. And there are those who say (18) that even one praying alone when asking for his needs can nonetheless pray in any language that he desires except for (19) Aramaic.**

**MB 13:** *In any language - The best way to perform the Mitzvah is only in the Holy Tongue. See in 62:2 and in the Mishna Brura there, what we wrote in the name of the later authorities concerning this. Also see in the Tshuvos of the Chasam Sofer on Orach Chayim Siman 84 and 86, who wrote at length with several proofs that the permission to pray in any language is only occasionally, but to establish it as a permanent thing and to set up a prayer leader [to pray in another language] and to cause the Holy Tongue to be forgotten completely - this is totally impossible, see there. And further, because of many, many strong reasons all the great minds of the era wrote at length in the book Divrei HaBris, and they all agreed that to do so is completely forbidden. And this is contrary to the new groups that have spread out from outside the country, and who have translated the entire prayer service into the language of the gentiles. And "one transgression leads to another," for they have skipped the blessing of the ingathering of the exiles\* and the blessing of "And to Jerusalem, your Holy City," and just as they wish to cause the remembrance of Jerusalem to be forgotten, so too do they want the Holy Tongue to be forgotten from Israel, lest they be redeemed in merit of the fact that "they did not change their language.\*\*" The Holy One, Blessed be He, should protect us from heretical beliefs such as these. And see in the Biur Halacha. [\* The Mishna Brura is speaking about the early development of liberal streams in Judaism. Recently many of these trends have reversed themselves. \*\* The Jews in Egypt had not yet been given the Torah -*

*so how did they maintain an independent community, free of assimilation? The Midrash says: because they did not change their language, dress or names. -- YM]*

**MB 14:** *That he wishes - This is if he understands that language clearly; but with the Holy Tongue one can fulfill his obligation even if he does not understand the language.*

**MB 15:** *Only pray in the Holy Tongue - Because the serving Angels are not bound to Aramaic and so too other languages, but only the Holy Tongue. However a congregation does not need someone to plead its case, because the Holy One, Blessed be He receives their prayer himself.*

**MB 16:** *On behalf of a sick person - Meaning to say, when not in front of the sick person; but in front of him it is permitted in any language, because the Holy One, Blessed be He is found there. [The Divine Presence dwells upon the bed of a sick person.]*

**MB 17:** *Established - Because since the prayer is established for the congregation, the Holy One, Blessed be He turns towards it Himself, even at a time when the congregation is not praying.*

**MB 18:** *That even one praying alone - Because their opinion is that the Angels recognize any language, but they are not bound to Aramaic because it is disgusting in their eyes. And for this reason it is permitted for women to pray in other languages. [In his time, many women did not know the Holy Tongue even if their husbands did. Today this is no longer true. There is considerable discussion about what is particularly negative about Aramaic over other foreign languages. -- YM]*

**MB 19:** *Aramaic - In a congregation it is permitted even in Aramaic. Thus we understand why we say "Yekum Purkan" [May salvation arise - after the Torah reading, before the additional service on Shabbos] and "Brich Sh'mei" [Blessed be the Name - when removing the Torah from the Ark] and similar things when in a congregation. According to this, if one prays at home he cannot say either "Yekum Purkan" [there are two such paragraphs], and so is proven in the Ohr Zarua HaGadol in the laws of Shabbos Siman 50.*

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