

CHAPTER 6: THE SEQUENCE OF THE DAY □ PARAGRAPH 10

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Knowing that G-d listens to our prayers and changes things and circumstances as a consequence of them, our sages set out to formulate the very prayers that would foster the sort of effects needed, as we said earlier (4:5:4). So let's now concentrate somewhat on what's affected by our morning prayers.

The morning prayer service is divided into four major components, as we'd said. The first ("korbanot") is centered on the sacrificial offerings, the second ("p'sukei pezimrah") consists of praises of G-d, the third is concerned with the recitation of Sh'ma Yisroel and its blessings, and the fourth focuses upon the Sh'mone Esrei and the various prayers that follow it. There's a lot to be said about all this, but we'll touch upon only some of the broader purposes served by the recitation of each.

The readings centered on the sacrificial order are arranged to help us uplift and purify the physical world (much the way a mere beast-of-burden would be uplifted and made as pure as possible when offered in the Holy Temple), and to remove any impediments to the world's physical and spiritual sustenance (much the way we'd take pains to prepare our food well enough to make it fit to eat).

The praises of G-d we enunciate in the second component serve to encourage G-d to shine His presence upon us (which we can only appreciate once we recognize how great and luminous He is by thanking Him for His rich favors).

We've already explained the significance of Sh'ma Yisroel and its blessings at great length from one perspective (see 4:4:1-12), but there's another way of approaching it altogether. And it's based on this.

As we'd discussed early on, the universe is comprised of a series of spiritual impetuses and infrastructures (see 1:5:3), and everything in it plays a part in the grand sequence of events cascading downward from the transcendent forces to the physical world.

We're taught that everything must be bound to everything else before G-d's material and spiritual sustenance can reach them. And that happens as follows: the most mundane of things attach themselves on to higher entities (on some recondite level), which then attach themselves on to yet higher entities, until the highest among them attaches themselves on to the transcendent forces which draw their sustenance from G-d Himself. G-d can then extend His sustenance to the transcendent forces, and they can then pass that downward until they reach the material realm in such a way that everything can be sustained and retain its status and function.

The point is that our recitation of the praises in the blessings before and after Sh'ma Yisroel allow for all that to happen. And the process is then enforced and strengthened by our recitation of the Sh'mone Esrei prayer, which we'll discuss in the next chapter from yet another perspective.

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