

PAUSING AFTER PRAYER

by Rabbi Daniel Travis

In addition to the hours they spent before and during prayer, the original chassidim would wait another hour after their prayers (Berachos 32b). As explained in the previous sections, the hours before and during prayer would put them into the right state of mind for prayer. It is much harder to understand why they needed another hour afterwards.

The Rambam helps us comprehend this halachah. "A person should not relate to his prayers as if he is unloading a burden. Therefore he should wait some time after he davens and only then leave prayer. The original chassidim would wait an hour after they finished their prayers" (Rambam, Tefillah 4,16).

From the words of the Rambam it is clear that the purpose of the time after prayer is to show that the tefillos just completed were not a burden, and that it is difficult to depart from them. The original chassidim were so dedicated to their tefillos that they reveled in its effect for a full hour afterwards. Although we are far removed from their elevated level, we should show our devotion to tefillah when possible by not running out of shul.

The Seder Hayom (cited by Mishnah Berurah 93,1) writes that if one can, he should wait to leave the shul until there are no longer ten people there. Since the Divine Presence only remains in the shul while there are ten people there, he will not be one of the people who caused the Shechinah to depart from the shul. Even though this is not possible for everyone to do, one should at least be careful that he is not the one who leaves when there are exactly ten, thereby directly causing the Divine Presence to leave (Aruch Hashulchan 93,4).

Stop and Think

One of the biggest contemporary challenges is the fast pace of modern day society. Some of us are so busy rushing from one appointment to another that we hardly have a moment to breathe. Life just zooms by, without giving us a chance to think about where we are going.

The Mesilas Yesharim reveals that this practice is a result of the evil inclination influencing us not to think about life. As long as we do not take the time to introspect about our behavior, there is little chance that we will change it. We will just continue with our old habits, without even realizing the urgency for change in our practices.

The Hebrew word for prayer, "l'hispa'el," literally to judge oneself, implies that there is an element of

introspection in prayer. In truth, during each blessing of Shemoneh Esrei that we recite, we are scrutinizing ourselves to determine whether we really believe that Hashem is the only controlling force over each aspect of our lives.

The challenge facing us today regarding the fulfillment of this halachah is that we are so busy, literally without a moment to spare. It is worthwhile to bear in mind that after the original chassidim recited three tefillos of three hours each, there seemingly was not much time to do anything else. However, since they were extremely righteous, they were able to attend to everything else they needed to do in the short amount of time that was left in the day (Berachos 32b).

In all likelihood, most of us will not be able to find an hour before, during and after tefillos. Yet taking a short time to sit in the place where we will later pray, and stopping during and after tefillah, is certainly within our grasp. By following this halachah, we will rise above the fast pace of life and will witness a radical change in our prayers.

Pausing before, during and after prayer, infuses our tefillos with concentration.

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