

AND THEY ARISE EARLY: אָנִי מִשְׁכִּימִים לְדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה – I ARISE EARLY FOR WORDS OF TORAH, וְהֵם מִשְׁכִּימִימִים לְדַבְרֵימִים בְּטִלִּים – AND THEY ARISE EARLY FOR IDLE WORDS. אָנִי עֹמֵל וְהֵם עֹמְלִים – I TOIL AND THEY TOIL: אָנִי עֹמֵל וּמְקַבֵּל שְׂכָר – I TOIL AND RECEIVE REWARD, וְהֵם עֹמְלִים וְאֵינָם מְקַבְּלִים שְׂכָר – AND THEY TOIL AND DO NOT RECEIVE REWARD.<sup>[12]</sup> אָנִי רָץ וְהֵם רָצִים – I RUN AND THEY RUN: אָנִי רָץ לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא – I RUN TO THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME, וְהֵם רָצִים לְבְּאֵר שַׁחַת – AND THEY RUN TO THE PIT OF DESTRUCTION.<sup>[13]</sup>

An incident:

בְּשַׁחֲלָה רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר – The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: כִּשְׁנֵי רֵבָנִין – WHEN R' ELIEZER BECAME ILL, נִבְגְּסוּ תַלְמִידָיו לְבַקְרוֹ – HIS STUDENTS ENTERED TO VISIT HIM. אָמְרוּ לוֹ – THEY SAID TO HIM: רַבֵּינוּ – OUR TEACHER, לְמַדְנָהּ אֲרַחֲתֵי חַיִּים – TEACH US THE WAYS OF LIFE, וְנִזְכֶּה בָּהֶן לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא – THAT WE MAY MERIT THROUGH THEM THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME! אָמַר לָהֶם – HE SAID TO THEM: הִזְהָרוּ בְּכַבּוֹד חֲבֵרֵיכֶם – BE MINDFUL OF THE HONOR OF YOUR COLLEAGUES; וּמְנַעוּ בְּנֵיכֶם מִן הַהֲגִיזוֹן – AND RESTRAIN YOU CHILDREN FROM RECITATION,<sup>[14]</sup> וְהוֹשִׁיבוּם בֵּין – AND PLACE THEM BETWEEN THE KNEES OF TORAH SCHOLARS; וּבְשִׂאתָם מִתְּפִלָּים – AND WHEN YOU PRAY, דַּעוּ לִפְנֵי מִי אֶתֶם עוֹמְדִים – KNOW BEFORE WHOM YOU STAND;<sup>[15]</sup> וּבְשִׂבְלֵי כֶּךָ תִּזְכּוּ לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא – AND ON ACCOUNT OF THIS YOU WILL MERIT THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME.<sup>[16]</sup>

Another incident:

וּכְשִׁחֲלָה רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּכַּי – AND WHEN R' YOCHANAN BEN ZAKKAI TOOK ILL, נִבְגְּסוּ תַלְמִידָיו לְבַקְרוֹ – HIS STUDENTS ENTERED TO VISIT HIM. כִּיִּן שָׂרָאָה אֹתָם הִתְחִיל לְבִכּוֹת – WHEN HE SAW THEM HE BEGAN TO WEEP. אָמְרוּ לוֹ תַלְמִידָיו – HIS STUDENTS SAID TO HIM: נֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲמוּר הַיְמִינִי פְּטִישׁ הַחֹקֶק – LIGHT OF ISRAEL, RIGHT-

MOST PILLAR,<sup>[17]</sup> MIGHTY HAMMER! בּוֹכָה – WHY DO YOU WEEP? אָמַר לָהֶם – HE SAID TO THEM: אִילוּ לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ בֶּשָׂר – IF THEY WERE LEADING ME TO JUDGMENT BEFORE A KING OF FLESH AND BLOOD, שָׁהִיּוּם בְּכָן וּמָחָר בְּכָבֶר – WHO IS HERE TODAY AND IN THE GRAVE TOMORROW, שָׂאֵם בּוֹעַס – WHO, IF HE BECOMES ANGRY WITH ME, HIS ANGER IS NOT AN EVERLASTING ANGER, אִיסוּר – AND IF HE IMPRISONS ME HIS IMPRISONMENT IS NOT AN EVERLASTING IMPRISONMENT, וְאִיִּי וּבֹל לְפִיּוֹסוּ בְּדַבְרֵים – AND I AM ABLE TO APPEASE HIM WITH WORDS וּלְשַׁחְדוֹ בְּמִמּוֹן – AND TO BRIBE HIM WITH MONEY, אִפֵּי עַל פִּי בֶן הַיְיָתִי בּוֹכָה – EVEN SO I WOULD WEEP. וְעַבְשֵׁי שְׂמוּלִיכִים אֹתִי לִפְנֵי מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמַּלְכִּים הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא – NOW THAT THEY ARE LEADING ME BEFORE THE KING WHO REIGNS OVER ALL KINGS, THE HOLY ONE, BLESSED IS HE, שְׂהוּאִי חַי וְקַיִים – WHO, IF HE BECOMES ANGRY WITH ME, HIS ANGER IS AN EVERLASTING ANGER, אִיסוּר – AND IF HE IMPRISONS ME, HIS IMPRISONMENT IS AN EVERLASTING IMPRISONMENT, וְאִיִּי וּבֹל לְפִיּוֹסוּ בְּדַבְרֵים – AND I AM UNABLE TO APPEASE HIM WITH WORDS וְלֹא לְשַׁחְדוֹ בְּמִמּוֹן – AND NOT ONLY THAT, BUT THERE LIE BEFORE ME TWO PATHS, אֶחָד שֶׁל גֶּן עֵדֶן וְאֶחָד שֶׁל גֵּיהֵנוֹם – ONE OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN AND ONE OF GEHINNOM, וְאִיִּי יוֹדַע בְּאִיּוֹ מוֹלִיכִים אֹתִי – AND I KNOW NOT ON WHICH THEY WILL LEAD ME, וְלֹא אֶבְכֶה – AND SHOULD I NOT WEEP?<sup>[19]</sup>

#### NOTES

12. The *Chafetz Chaim* (quoted in *Chafetz Chaim al HaTorah, parashas Bechukosai*) argues that this statement seems strange. Surely anyone who works – be he a tailor, a shopkeeper or one in any other line of work – receives pay for his work. How can it be said that those who labor in other fields “toil but do not receive reward”?

The answer, the *Chafetz Chaim* replies, is this: Should a tailor labor long hours but not produce a suit, he would not be justified in demanding pay. The customer engaged him to sew a suit. If he cannot produce one, even if he labored all week long, the customer will not pay him, because it is not for his effort that he is paid but for the finished product.

Such is not the case with Torah. One who labors hard but still does not fully understand the subject he is studying is rewarded for his effort. This is the meaning of this prayer: We toil and receive reward for the toil, and they toil and do not receive reward for the toil, only for the finished product.

13. I.e. to hell (see *Psalms 55:24* with *Targum and Radak*; cf. *Rambam, Hil. Teshuvah 8:5*).

This last statement (“I run to the life of the World to Come etc.”) is not merely a rewording of the previous one (“I toil and receive reward etc.”). Rather, here a new thought is added: I realize that every day brings me closer (“I run”) to the day of death. Therefore, I arm myself with Torah and good deeds in order to merit a place in the Afterlife. (“I run to the life of the World to Come”). The idlers, however, are oblivious to the fact that the days are passing. They are therefore destined for (“run towards”) hell (*Rabbeinu Yonah*).

From the fact that the Baraisa opens with the words אָמַר, *What does one say*, rather than אָמַר, *What did he say*, *Rambam (Commentary to the Mishnah)* infers that the recital of these prayers is obligatory on everyone, and was not simply a private practice of R' Nechunya ben Hakanah. Indeed, this is the ruling of *Shulchan Aruch* (110:8). *Rosh Yosef* is therefore at a loss to explain why people are apparently not careful to recite these prayers. See, however, *Ritva* and *Meiri* to the Mishnah.

14. Do not accustom them to spend too much time studying Scripture, because they will be drawn to it [and neglect the study of the Oral Torah] (*Rashi*).

This refers even to children who are not yet old enough to begin

learning Mishnah or Gemara. R' Eliezer therefore continues that instead of having them sit idle, their fathers should bring them to sit at the feet of Torah sages, so that they may learn from their beautiful characters (*Maharsha*).

Another explanation of this phrase by *Rashi*: Do not allow your children to while away their precious time with children's chatter (see *Avos 3:10*).

A third explanation: Train your children not to translate literally those verses whose plain meaning might create ideological misconceptions (*Meiri*). [For additional explanations of this phrase, see *Iyun Yaakov, Eitz Yosef, Tzlach*.]

15. In order that you pray with awe and concentration (*Rashi*).

16. [The three things mentioned by R' Eliezer correspond to the three things upon which our Sages teach the world stands: Torah, the Temple service, and acts of kindness [תּוֹרָה עֲבוֹדָה וְגִמְלוּת חֲסִדִּים] (*Avos 1:2*). Placing one's children at the feet of Torah scholars corresponds to Torah bearing in mind before Whom one stands corresponds to the Temple service (since prayer today takes its place) and being careful with the honor of one's fellow corresponds to acts of kindness (*Pnei Yehoshua*).

17. [Solomon placed two massive pillars in the Temple (see *I Kings 7:2*). The rightmost pillar is singled out here because the right side is always considered the more important (*Rashi*; see *Iyun Yaakov*).]

18. I.e. he has the power to kill me only in this world, not in the World to Come (*Rashi*).

19. Even if I indeed am not sentenced to everlasting Gehinnom or eternal destruction as are the most wicked, I may still be made to pe through Gehinnom (to traverse the “path of Gehinnom”) for a limited time to purge my sins before I enter Gan Eden (see *Maharsha*, based *Rosh Hashanah 17a*).

Another explanation of what R' Yochanan ben Zakkai meant to add saying, “And not only that . . .”: When a person is judged by a court of flesh and blood, the outcome of the trial is limited to either punishment or freedom therefrom. If he is found guilty he is punished, and if he is acquitted he is set free. Reward, however, does not figure into the case.

Not so one who is judged by the King of kings. Here the difference between acquittal and conviction is the difference between punishment

אָמְרוּ לוֹ – THEY SAID TO HIM: רַבֵּינוּ בְּרַכְנוּ – OUR TEACHER, BLESS US! אָמַר לָהֶם – HE SAID TO THEM: הֲיֵי רַצוֹן שֶׁתְּהֵא מוֹרָא – MAY IT BE THE WILL OF God THAT THE FEAR OF HEAVEN BE UPON YOU LIKE THE FEAR OF FLESH AND BLOOD. אָמְרוּ לוֹ תְּלַמִּידָיו – HIS STUDENTS SAID TO HIM: עַד כַּאֵן – THUS FAR and no more?! I.e. should our fear of God not exceed that of mortal man? אָמַר לָהֶם וּלְנָאִי – HE SAID TO THEM: WOULD that it were equivalent to your fear of men, for then you would desist from many sins! תִּדְעוּ – KNOW that this is so, for

בְּשֶׁאֵדָם עוֹבֵר עֲבִירָה – WHEN A PERSON COMMITS A TRANSGRESSION in private, אֹמֵר שֶׁלֹּא יֵרְאֵנִי אֲדָם – HE SAYS: O THAT A PERSON NOT SEE ME!<sup>[201]</sup>

The Baraisa continues:

בְּשַׁעַת פְּטִירָתוֹ אָמַר לָהֶם – AT THE MOMENT OF HIS PASSING, HE SAID TO [HIS STUDENTS]: פְּנוּ כְּלִים מִפְּנֵי הַשּׁוּמְאָה – REMOVE THE UTENSILS BECAUSE OF THE TUMAH,<sup>[21]</sup> לְחֻזְקָהּ מִלֶּךְ וְהִכִּינוּ כִּסֵּא לְחֻזְקָהּ מִלֶּךְ – AND PREPARE A SEAT FOR CHIZKIYAHU KING OF JUDAH WHO HAS COME to escort me.<sup>[22]</sup>

**Mishnah** The Mishnah returns to the topic of the daily Prayers:

בְּכֹל יוֹם וְיוֹם מִתְפַּלֵּל אֲדָם שְׁמוֹנֵה עָשָׂרָה – Every single day a person must pray the eighteen blessings.<sup>[23]</sup> רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֹמֵר – R' Yehoshua says: מֵעֵין שְׁמוֹנֵה עָשָׂרָה – An abridgment of the eighteen.<sup>[24]</sup> רַבִּי אֶבְיָא אֹמֵר – R' Akiva says: אִם שְׂגוּרָה תְּפִלְתּוֹ בְּפִי מִתְפַּלֵּל שְׁמוֹנֵה עָשָׂרָה – If his prayer is fluent in his mouth, i.e. he is accustomed to its text and can recite it without stumbling, he prays all eighteen blessings, וְאִם לֹא – but if not, מֵעֵין שְׁמוֹנֵה עָשָׂרָה – he prays an abridgement of the eighteen.

Another ruling regarding Prayer:

אִין תְּפִלְתּוֹ תְּהוֹנִים – One who makes his Prayer fixed,<sup>[25]</sup> רַבִּי אֶלְעִזֵּר אֹמֵר – R' Eliezer says: הַעוֹשֶׂה תְּפִלְתּוֹ קֶבֶעַ – his Prayer is not a genuine supplication.

In circumstances wherein concentrating is extremely difficult, the Sages exempted the person from the formal Prayer formula. Instead, a different prayer is recited:<sup>[26]</sup>

הַהוֹלֵךְ בְּמִקוֹם סְכָנָה – One who travels in a dangerous place מִתְפַּלֵּל – R' Yehoshua says: הוֹשַׁע ה' אֶת עַמּוֹךְ אֶת שְׂאֲרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – Save, O Hashem, Your nation, the remnant of Israel; בְּכֹל פְּרָשָׁת הַעֲבוּר יִהְיֶה צְרִיכָהּ לְפָנֶיךָ – at every *parashas ha'ibbur*<sup>[27]</sup> may their needs be before You. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלָּה – Blessed are You, Hashem, Who hears prayer.

The Sages decreed that Prayer be recited while standing and facing towards the Temple (see below, 30a). The Mishnah discusses the law for situations in which adopting this posture is difficult or impossible:

יָרַד וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל – If someone was riding on a donkey and the time for Prayer arrived, he should dismount and pray.<sup>[28]</sup> וְאִם אֵינוֹ יָכוֹל לִירֵד – And if he is unable to dismount because there is no one to hold his donkey,<sup>[29]</sup> יִחְזִיר אֶת פָּנָיו – he should turn his face towards Jerusalem and pray while sitting on the donkey. וְאִם יִכְוִין אֶת לְבוֹ בְּנֶגְדַּי בֵּית קִרְשֵׁי הַקִּדְשִׁים – he should concentrate his thoughts towards the Holy of Holies.

יִכְוִין אֶת לְבוֹ בְּנֶגְדַּי בֵּית – If he was traveling on a boat or was imprisoned in stocks,<sup>[30]</sup> קִדְשֵׁי הַקִּדְשִׁים – he should concentrate his thoughts towards the Holy of Holies.<sup>[31]</sup>

#### NOTES

and reward. If the outcome of the trial is favorable, the person will delight in Gan Eden in addition to being spared the agony of Gehinnom. Conversely, if he is convicted, he not only suffers retribution, but forfeits reward in Gan Eden.

This is what R' Yochanan ben Zakkai meant by saying, "And not only that . . ." That is, unlike the outcome of a trial before a mortal king where the alternatives are only punishment or release therefrom, here the stakes are higher. I stand not only to be led down the path to Gehinnom, but I would thereby experience the terrible pain of having lost the opportunity to delight with God in Gan Eden. For this I weep (*Kochvei Or* by R' Yitzchak Blazer, ch. 1).

See there also for what someone as great as R' Yochanan ben Zakkai, who surely was aware that he had fulfilled the entire Torah in a superlative manner, had to fear. See also *Sichos Mussar* by R' Chaim Shmulevitz, 5731, §33.

In his famous ethical work *Orchos Chaim* (§32), *Rosh* admonishes: "Be mindful always of the day of death . . . and let your thoughts terrify you when you recall the dread of R' Yochanan [ben Zakkai], of blessed memory."

20. Though he fully believes that God sees all, this knowledge does not restrain him from sinning (*Rashi*). [For an in-depth analysis of this paradox, see *Shaarei Or* by R' Yitzchak Blazer, ch. 2.]

21. A human corpse imparts *tumah* to everything under the same roof. Therefore, when R' Yochanan ben Zakkai felt his soul about to depart, he warned his students to remove all the utensils from the house so that they would not become defiled.

22. Chizkiyahu in particular came to escort him because R' Yochanan

ben Zakkai was a descendant of Chizkiyahu (*Rav Saadia Gaon*, cited in *Otzar HaGeonim*). Alternatively, R' Yochanan ben Zakkai was about to join Chizkiyahu's company in Gan Eden (see *Ritva*). Cf. *Tzlach, Ben Yehoyada*.

23. I.e. the eighteen blessings which make up the regular weekday Prayer. [Although this Prayer in fact contains nineteen blessings, this is because, as the Gemara will relate below, an additional blessing was subsequently added in Yavneh. Nevertheless the name given to the prayer when it was originally composed – *Shemoneh Esrei* ("Eighteen") – was retained.]

Rabban Gamliel's opinion is that the full text of these blessings must be recited every day.

24. The Gemara will explain the form which this abridgment takes.

25. The Gemara (29b) will offer various explanations of this phrase.

26. *Mishnah Berurah* 110:13.

27. The Gemara (29b) will explain this term (*Rashi*).

28. He may not pray while seated on the donkey. Rather he must dismount and pray while standing.

29. And he will be unable to concentrate if he holds the donkey himself (*Meiri*).

30. The translation of אֶקְרָא as "stocks" follows *Rashi's* first interpretation. Alternatively (and this is the explanation given by most commentators), אֶקְרָא means a raft.

31. If he cannot stand (*Rambam, Hil. Tefillah* 5:2) or even turn his face toward Jerusalem (*Mishnah Berurah* 94:15; see *Beur Halachah* רמ"ד ד"ה ורכב), he should concentrate his thoughts toward the Holy of Holies.