



Children at Pray

Inspiring Children to Daven

Source Materials
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REASONS FOR NOT PRAYING

OR

WHY ISN'T MY PRAYER SO MEANINGFUL

1. God really doesn't listen (or maybe His answers are always "No").
2. I'm quite happy the way I am.
3. It takes too much time.
4. I don't understand the Hebrew language.
5. I don't believe in God (or at least I'm not sure I do).
6. It's boring.
7. I'm angry with the way God has messed up: my life, the world, etc.
8. Why should he listen to me with everybody else to worry about?
9. I don't like my synagogue (or its rabbi, cantor).
10. I don't know enough about prayer to feel comfortable.
11. I'm just not interested.
12. I'm afraid of what it might do to me (ie. make me more religious, perhaps).
13. None of my friends are into it.
14. It's old fashioned.
15. I like to be spontaneous, not told what to do or say.
16. I was turned off by Hebrew school.
17. The prayers don't seem to meet my needs.

For each reason that you agree with, ask yourself the following questions.

1. Is this a real reason for not praying or a convenient excuse ?
2. Do I really believe this is a problem, or am I just afraid that if I give prayer a real chance it might become important to me ?
3. Do I truly believe this or is it what most of my friends seem to believe ?
4. What could I do to change this particular negative feeling ?
5. What would be the first steps I could take if I really wanted to change this particular negative reaction to prayer ?

① ETHICS OF OUR FATHERS (1:2)

[ב] שָׁמְעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק הָיָה מִשְׁפָּרֵי כְּנֻסַת הַגְּדוּלָּה. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר: עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד: עַל הַתּוֹרָה, וְעַל הָעֲבוּדָה, וְעַל גְּמִילוּת חַסְדִּים.

[2] *Shimon the Righteous was among the survivors of the Great Assembly. He used to say: The world depends on three things – on Torah study, on the service [of God], and on kind deeds.*

② TALMUD (TA'AMIS 2a)

The Gemara gives the source for the inclusion of the mention of rain in the Shemoneh Esrei:

– And from where do we know that rain must be mentioned in the *Shemoneh Esrei* prayer? – *For it was taught in a Baraisa:* „לאֲהַבִּיחַ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וּלְעַבְדוֹ” – Scripture states: *TO LOVE HASHEM YOUR GOD AND TO SERVE HIM WITH ALL YOUR HEART.*^[22] אִיזוֹ הִיא עֲבוּדָה שֶׁהִיא בְּלֵב – Now WHICH SERVICE of God IS performed IN THE HEART? הֵנִי – YOU MUST SAY that THIS IS a reference to PRAYER.^[23] – AND immediately AFTER [THAT VERSE] IT IS WRITTEN: „וְנָתַתִּי מִטֶּר־אֲרָצְכֶם בְּעִתּוֹ יוֹרֵה וּמִלְקוֹשׁ” – AND I WILL PROVIDE RAIN FOR YOUR LAND IN ITS PROPER TIME –

THE EARLY AND THE LATE RAINS. By the juxtaposition of one to the other, rain is associated with prayer.^[24]

③ TALMUD (RUSH HASHANA 16b)

שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים מְזַכְּרִין – *And R' Yitzchak said:* – *Three things cause a person's sins to be recalled by the Heavenly court.*^[10] – *These are:* קִיר נֹטוּי – expecting one's prayer to be fulfilled^[11] – and submitting judgment of one's fellow to Heaven.^[12] – *Whoever submits judgment of his fellow to Heaven, he is punished for his own sins first,* וְנִתְּנָה שְׂרֵי אֵל־אֲבָרָם חֲמִסִּי – *as it is stated:*^[14] *“My injustice is upon you! . . . Let Hashem judge between me and you.”* וְכָתוּב – *And it is written afterwards:* *“And Abraham came to eulogize Sarah and to bewail her.”*^[15]

④ PSALMS (145)

קרוב יהוה לכל קראיו, לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת.

ק HASHEM is close to all who call upon Him –
to all who call upon Him sincerely.

⑤ TALMUD (TA'ANIS 15a)

מורידין לפני התיבה – they send down before the Ark⁽¹⁰⁾ to lead the prayers, זקן ורגיל – an elder, well versed in prayer,⁽¹¹⁾ ויש לו בנים – who has children, וביתו ריקם – and whose house is empty, כדי שיהא לבו שלם בתפלה – so that his heart should be completely devoted in prayer.⁽¹²⁾

⑥ PSALMS (130)

שיר המעלות, ממצמקים קראתיך יהוה. אדני שמעה בקולי, תהינה אזניך קשבות, לקול תחנוני. אם עונות תשמר זה, אדני מי יעמד. כי עמך הסליחה, למען תנרא. קייתי יהוה קנתה נפשי, ולדברו הוקלתי. נפשי לאדני, משמרים לבקר, שמרים לבקר. יחל ישראל אל יהוה, כי עם יהוה החסד, והרבה עמו פדות. והוא יפדה את ישראל, מכל עונותיו.

שיר המעלות A song of ascents: From the depths I called You, HASHEM. My Lord, hear my voice, may Your ears be attentive to the sound of my pleas. If You preserve iniquities, O God, my Lord, who could survive? For with You is forgiveness, that You may be feared. I put confidence in HASHEM, my soul put confidence, and I hoped for His word. I yearn for my Lord, among those longing for the dawn, those longing for the dawn: Let Israel hope for HASHEM, for with HASHEM is kindness, and with Him is abundant redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

