

THE PIRCHEI SHOSHANIM ROADMAP TO PRAYER PROJECT

# **The Roadmap to Prayer**

## **Lesson 16**

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# The Roadmap To Prayer

Lesson

# 16

השם שפתי תפתח ופי יגיד תהלתך

**Hashem, (please) open my mouth, and Let my mouth speak Your praise.**

*According to the four levels of prayer delineated earlier in these lessons, the Shemoneh Esrei prayer corresponds to the world of Atzilus (next to Hashem)*

## The Amidah: *Shemoneh Esrei*

The central theme of our daily prayers is the *Amidah Shemoneh Esrei* prayer. It is this *Tefilla* that is considered as if we are standing directly with *Hashem* in a discussion and entreaty. We do not hesitate to ask, beg and implore *Hashem* to grant us all our physical and spiritual needs both on a personal level as well as a national level. What can be a more assuring and

fulfilling sentiment than having *Hashem* to turn to in any situation that we face in our lives? Whether in times of security, prosperity and joy to times of despair, tragedy and terror (May *Hashem* protect us). In any situation we are expected to turn to *Hashem*; discuss, explain and plead with *Him* to grant us good, happy, healthy and productive lives.

*The epitome of Goodness is to bestow Good*

מתכלית הטוב להטיב<sup>1</sup>

It is really irrelevant how *Hashem* responds to our prayers, in comparison to just how important it is that we realize that *Hashem* **does in fact** respond to our prayers. That is, we must at least be praying. If we pray with devotion and sincerity then *Hashem* must react to our prayers. His reaction will always be in the manner that is best for us; not necessarily in the way we think is best. After all, it is He Who is the source of all existence and wisdom and knowledge and anything that it takes to know what is best for each individual in his situation in life.

<sup>1</sup> See *Sefer Hachinuch Mitzvah* 452

Having said this, let's examine the content and the format of this prayer and familiarize ourselves with the slight and the more noticeable variations of this prayer (*Tefilla*) that we recite at least three times a day throughout our lifetime without exception.

## **The Men of the Great Assembly**

The Gemora relates that the *Anshei Knesses Hagedolah*<sup>2</sup> - 120 wise and learned men, many of them who were Prophets (*Nevi'im*) participated in instituting what today is known as the *Amidah*, the *Shemoneh Esrei*. When we think a little about this great convention of so many Torah Sages (*Talmidei chachamim*), *Tzaddikim* (pious individuals) and even *Nevi'im* (prophets) for the holy purpose of selecting a uniform format and wording for the daily prayers, one cannot imagine the magnanimity of this endeavor. It is not for naught that tradition has it that these sages were able to incorporate in the words of the *Shemoneh Esrei* expression for all prayers, from all types of Jews, in all kinds of situations, with all their personal insights and intents. It is just an unbelievable feat if we just think about how often prayer we pray and how different each prayer can be.

## **Shemoneh Esrei: 18 Blessings plus 1**

The Sages tell us in the Gemora in Berachos<sup>3</sup> 28b as well as in Megillah<sup>4</sup> 17b that the *Shemoneh Esrei* consists of 18 blessings with the first three and the last three *brochos* constant in every *Shemoneh Esrei* while the middle section containing the 12 remaining *brochos* as the portion of the *Tefilla* that changes from time to time on Shabbos and other festival days. The Gemora also relates how an additional *bracha* was added to the 18 *brochos* bringing it to a total of 19 *brochos* on a regular weekday. Likewise the Gemora teaches that on certain fast days they even extended the *Tefilla* to 24 *brochos*. The first and last three *brochos* are unique in that nothing extraneous is permitted to be added while in the middle section prayers of similar nature may be added into the text of any *bracha*.

## **Avodah She'be'lev : Labor of the Heart**

*U'le'ovdo be'chol levavchem* (and to serve Him with all your heart). This verse (*pasuk*) is the source for the *mitzvah* of prayer (davening). Davening is the *labor of the heart*.

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<sup>2</sup> The Men of the Great Assembly

<sup>3</sup> *Daf*28b

<sup>4</sup> *Daf*17b

Although this source connotes that prayer is in the heart - *be'chol levavchem* - with all your heart - the Gemora teaches us that prayer must be verbalized in a whisper as we find by the prayer of Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel (*Shmuel*). However, it remains true that the definition of prayer is in the heart, insomuch that prayer should be heartfelt; well established in the heart and mind of the individual who beseeches *Hashem*. Along these lines, a wise Torah scholar taught an important principle in prayer. In order to gain more sincerity and emotional connection in our prayers (*tefilos*) one should add in one's mind a personal prayer, when davening about something. For example, if one is reciting the blessing (*bracha*) of *Bareich Aleinu etc.* the text simple translation of the text is: "Bless for us, this year and all its produce etc." If one were to add to this some personal intent, for example, "Bless me that I will have enough financial means so that I could fulfill my obligation to provide for my family with both physical and spiritual support etc." one would have elevated his prayer (*Tefilla*) by connecting with *Hashem* on an more individual and personal level that brings out one's emotion of love and trust in *Hashem*.

In such a manner, the true labor of the heart (*Avodah she'be'leiv*) is developed by adding some thought to one's prayers. Instead of falling into the inevitable trap of praying by rote, one engages prayer (*Tefilla*) with more enthusiasm and passion.

The *Mabit*<sup>5</sup> in his classic work *Beis Elokim* writes that the primary focus of the *Shemoneh Esrei* is the very first blessing (*bracha*) which relate to the Patriarchs (*Avos*). In this *bracha*, we mention *Hashem's* special relationship with the *Avos* as being the G-d of *Avraham*, *Yitzchok*, and *Yaakov*. This *bracha* is considered the most important part of *Shemoneh Esrei*, to the point that if one only concentrated in praying this portion and no other portion; one is considered to have fulfilled one's obligation of prayer. This demonstrates that the main objective of *Tefilla* is to recognize and verbalize G-d's praises as this *bracha* speaks the praises of *Hashem*. Accordingly, the middle section of prayer, where we address our personal needs and desires, will be answered by *Hashem* when our main focus in our prayer (*Tefilla*) is *Hashem's* praise. In fact, the *Pri Tzaddik* writes that even the middle section of *Shemoneh Esrei* is not considered a self-centered list of needs and wants; rather it is primarily praise of *Hashem* in the aspects of those areas where we humans find ourselves deficient and wanting. This explains the opening prefatory verse to *Shemoneh Esrei* where we ask *Hashem* for His help in **ויניח תהלתך** (and let my mouth speak Your **praise**). At first thought this phrase seems inaccurate as the bulk of the weekday *Shemoneh Esrei* deals with our own personal needs and desires. How does this fit with the preface to *Shemoneh Esrei* that we are about to engage in praising *Hashem*? However, according to this interpretation we indeed are only singing the praise of *Hashem* that He is the One and Only that empowers the human mind with wisdom. Our recognition of this truth helps us

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<sup>5</sup>**R' Moshe Ben Yosef of Trani - The Mabit - Born:** Salonika, Turkey, 1505. **Died:** Tzfat, Israel, 1580. **Notes:** **Rabbi** and Author of *Kiryat Sefer*, an extensive commentary on Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* as well as commentaries on the Bible and Talmud. His students include the **Maharitzatz**.

acquire wisdom as well. Hence, the *bracha* of “You, Who grants wisdom” (*Atta chonein* אתה חונן). When we recognize *Hashem* as the Healer of all sickness, we then can merit healing for ourselves as well. Hence, the *bracha* of *Refa’einu Hashem ve’neirafei* רפאינו השם (וארפא). Thus, we rightfully say ופי יגיד תהלתך - let my mouth speak Your praise!

## The Format of a Bracha

A *bracha* begins with an opening of Blessed are You *Hashem*, our G-d, King of the universe (*Baruch atta Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha’olam* ברוך אתה השם אלקינו מלך העולם). This format has in it the necessary Name of G-d and His kingship (*Sheim u’Malchus* שם ומלכות).

The first *bracha* of *Shemoneh Esrei* begins with the regular opening of *Baruch atta Hashem Elokeinu* but it does not include the usual *Melech ha’olam* that is necessary for a *bracha* to be valid. The commentaries explain that since the *bracha* continues with *Elokei Avoseinu, Elokei Avraham, Elokei Yitzchak Ve’ Elokei Yaakov*; who were those who taught *Hashem’s* existence to the people of the world, it is equal to *Melech ha’olam*.

The subsequent *brochos* of *Shemoneh Esrei* do not begin with any opening of *Baruch atta Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha’olam* and they just end with *Baruch atta Hashem Mechayei ha’mesimim* etc. Why is this so? Doesn’t a *bracha* require an opening of *Baruch atta Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha’olam*?

The answer to this question is that indeed every *bracha* requires such an opening without exception. Those *brochos* which we find that do not have such an opening are because they are considered *Brochos Hasemuchos le’chaverta* (a blessing which comes right after another blessing). In such a case, the opening *Baruch atta Hashem* is omitted. This rule follows through with few exceptions. One such an exception is where a *bracha* happens to follow another *bracha*, but it doesn’t necessarily have to be that way. Then, since the *bracha* may be said separately without it being said in conjunction with another *bracha*, then it must have its own *Baruch atta Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha’olam* opening.

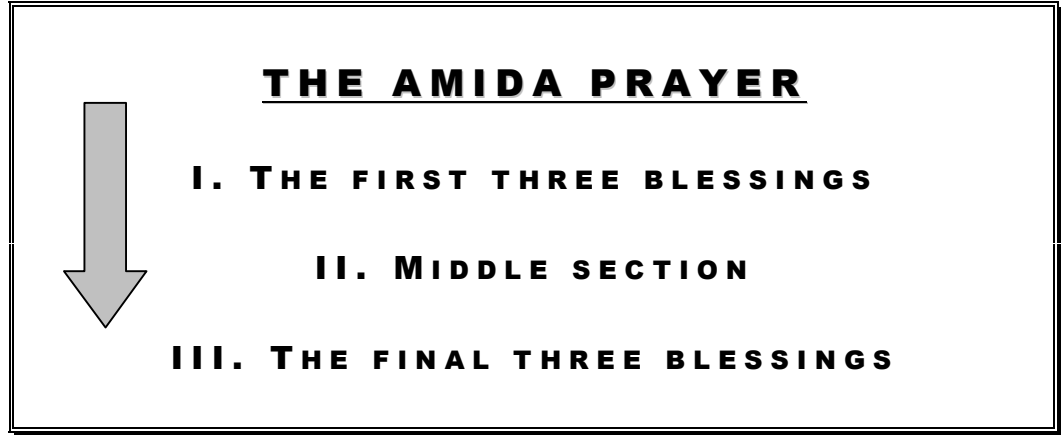
## The Format of Shemoneh Esrei

The first three *brochos* of *Shemoneh Esrei* are a set of Praises of G-d, the middle are requests for necessities which we need for our daily existence. The last three thank and praise *Hashem* for all that He does for us.

The Gemora<sup>6</sup> states that one may not add prayers into the first or the last three *brochos*.

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<sup>6</sup> Berachos 34a



### **The First Bracha: Avos (the Patriarchs)**

#### **אבות**

This *bracha* has 42 words. The Tur writes that he does not know from tradition what this number corresponds to. However he suggests that it corresponds with a few verses relating to *Avraham Avinu* that is the subject of this blessing.

The *pasuk* *Ve'escha oscha le'goye Gadol*<sup>7</sup> (and I shall make you into a great nation) has 8 words. This verse is the source for the words "*Hakeil HaGadol*".

The *pasuk* *Vayevorcheihu va'yomar Baruch Avram leKeil elyon konei shomayim va'aretz*<sup>8</sup> has 9 words. This is the basis for the words *Keil elyon* and *ve'konei hakol*.

Finally, there are 25 words in the *pasuk* *Ki yeda'ativ eis asher yetzaveh es beiso ve'es banav acharov*<sup>9</sup> (his children after him). This forms the basis for *Umaivee Go'al livnei ve'neihem* (future children).

These three *Pesukim* altogether total 42 words corresponding to the 42 words of the first *bracha*.

Also there is a special combination of 42 letters that represent G-d's Name, which in this *bracha* we mention how G-d is known as the "G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Isaac and the G-d of Jacob.

Encoded in the first letter and the last letter of this *bracha* are the letters *Mem מ* and the letter *Beis ב* (**ברוך אתה...מגן אברהם**) which has a numerical value of 42.

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<sup>7</sup> Bereishis 12:2

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 14:19

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 18:19

In the first *bracha* we introduce *Hashem* as the G-d of the patriarchs and our G-d with Whom we have a personal relationship. We mention that G-d has many attributes such as greatness strength and kindness etc. Because of our special relationship, G-d is our Redeemer and Protector throughout the entire history.

## **The Second Bracha: *Atta Gibbor* (You are the Mighty one) אתה גבור**

The Tur elaborates that this *bracha* has 51 words that correspond to the number of words in four *Pesukim* that serve as the basis for this *bracha*. They are the four verses that speak of the four special keys that G-d controls directly without delegating it to administering angels. They are the processes of Birthing, Techiyas Hameisim (resurrection of the dead), Parnassah (Livelihood), and Rain.

There is a Hebrew acronym for these four processes is the word Maftai'ach – which means Key in Hebrew - מ' פ' ת' ח'

מ'טר Rain

פ'רנסה Livelihood

ת'חייה Resurrection

ח'יה Birthing

The verses (*Pesukim*) state the following:

*G-d will open for you His wonderful warehouse, the heavens to give rain ... 23 words. Bereishis 28:12*

*Open Your hands and give sustenance to all that live and desire ... 7 words. Tehilim 145:17*

*And G-d remembered Rachel and opened her womb ... 10 words. Bereishis 30:22*

*And you shall know that I am G-d when I open your graves and when I raise you out from your graves ... 11 words. Yechezkel 37:13*

It is interesting to note that not only does man not control the weather patterns, it is also the most difficult to predict with accuracy. Likewise, the natural birthing process is an area where modern medicine can intervene, but it does not do it with reliable predictability. The key to success in earning a livelihood is an age-old quest for mankind. Although sometimes medical science may be successful in resuscitating an individual, resurrection of the dead remains beyond human grasps. Even resuscitation remains

unpredictable. Apparently, as much as modern science advances, it still cannot reliably reproduce these processes that remain in the hands of G-d.

In this *bracha* we mention that *Hashem* is mighty in that he created and continues to control the forces of the weather and its patterns.

It is in this *bracha* that we mention the attribute of G-d's might to make it rain, *Mashiv haru'ach u'morid hagashem* - משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם - literally (He causes the wind to blow and the rain to fall). This is recited from the *Mussaf* of *Shemini Atzeres* [which is the eighth day of the holiday of Succos and in Israel is the last day of Succos and is combined with Simchas Torah] and is said until the morning (*Shacharis*) of the first day Passover (*Pesach*). If it was omitted, then the entire *Shemoneh Esrei* must be repeated. After Passover (*Pesach*), some people have the custom of just omitting that phrase while others have the custom to replace it with *Morid Hatal* מוריד הטל (Who makes the dew come down).

If one forgot to say *Mashiv haru'ach u'morid hagashem* משיב הרוח ומוריד הגשם then he would have to go back to the beginning of *Shemoneh Esrei* to correct his mistake if he advanced to the next *bracha* already. However, anyone who at least said *Morid Hatal* מוריד הטל instead does not have to repeat the *Shemoneh Esrei*.

### **The Third Bracha: *Atta Kadosh* (You are Holy) אתה קדוש**

In this *bracha* we speak of the holiness of the angels in Heaven and how we ourselves resemble the Angels (*Malachim*) in Heaven.

#### **Asseres Yemei Teshuvah - The Ten Days of Repentance**

During the days of the *Asseres Yemei Teshuva*, we change the regular way we close this *bracha* which is with *Hakeil Hakadosh* (the Holy G-d), instead we say The King who is the holier than everything - (*Hamelech Hakadosh*) - המלך הקדוש at the closing of this *bracha*.

Since the Gemora<sup>10</sup> concludes that one must say it particularly this way, deviating from this closing invalidates the *bracha*. This is because it ruins the format instituted by the Sages of the Talmudic era. Thus, if one did not correct his error immediately as quick as *toch kedei dibbur*<sup>11</sup> one must repeat *Shemoneh Esrei*.

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<sup>10</sup> *Daf* 12b

<sup>11</sup> The amount of time it takes to say the Greeting: *Shalom aleichu moree vo'rabbe*

### Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are exceptions to the rules as well as the intermediate days between the two. These ten days are called the *Ten days of Penitence* (*Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*). During this period of time, the focus of every Jew is to introspect and better himself. The ten days conclude with Yom Kippur which is the day that every Jew is given the opportunity to wipe away all past sins and start again with a clean slate.

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we add additional text to the first three blessings (*brochos*) and also to the last three blessings (*brochos*). They are the verses of *Zochreinu le'chaim* זכרנו לחיים (Remember us to merit life) and *Mi Chamocha av HaRachamim* מי כמוך אב הרחמים (Who is like You a merciful father). During the intermediate days, the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* (The ten days of penitence) we say some of these additions as well. In the third *bracha* of *Atta kadosh* we add the ending of *Hamelech Hakadosh* (the Holy King) instead of the regular *Hakeil Hakadosh* (the Holy G-d). In addition, on Rosh Hashanah we add a few more paragraphs to this *bracha*. The middle section of the *Mussaf Shemoneh Esrei* grows to three *brochos* instead of just one. They are the three additions of *Malchuyos* (verses of Hashem's reign), *Zichronos* (verses of Hashem's total recall) and *Shofros* (verses of *sounding the Shofar*, the trumpet blasts).

The Tur<sup>12</sup> writes that there are opinions amongst the *Ge'onim* not to make these or any other additions into the first or last three *brochos* of *Shemoneh Esrei*. This is because the Gemora in Berachos<sup>13</sup> states that no requests are allowed to be added into the first three *brochos* or the last three *brochos*. The other opinions argue that the prohibition is specifically regarding personal prayers. However, the *brochos* of *Zochreinu lechaim* or *Mi Chamocha* are said as prayers on behalf of the nation of Israel and they are not merely personal requests.

The Rosh maintains that one should add these additions to the first and last three *brochos* of *Shemoneh Esrei*. Nevertheless, if one forgot to say any or all of them, he does not repeat the *Shemoneh Esrei*. Unlike the addition of *Hamelech Hakadosh*, where one is required to repeat the entire *Shemoneh Esrei* for omitting it, these are different. The reason is because the custom (*minhag*) for saying them is not mentioned by the Talmud. Rather, it was originated in the era of the *Ge'onim*, so if one missed saying them he has not deviated from a specific format of the *bracha* that was instituted by our Sages. Thus the integrity of the *bracha* remains intact.

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<sup>12</sup> *Simon* 582

<sup>13</sup> *Daf* 34a

## The Festivals

During the festivals of Passover (*Pesach*) *Shavuos* and *Succos* as well, the custom of many congregations was to include a *Krovitz*<sup>14</sup> that was recited during the first part of *Shemoneh Esrei* during *chazaras hashatz* (the *chazzan's* repetition of *Shemoneh Esrei*). The (Piyutim) *Krovitz* prayers are printed in the *Machzorim* for each Yom Tov. They consist of poetic prose of themes and laws pertaining to each Yom Tov. The same issue discussed above is raised regarding the permissibility of reciting extraneous matter during the first three *brochos* of *Shemoneh Esrei*.

## The Fourth Bracha: **Atta Chonein Le'adam Da'as** אתה חונן לאדם דעת

This *bracha* consists of 17 words corresponding to the 17 words in the Verse (*pasuk*) (verse) *and you shall speak to all wise of heart* (*Shemos 28:3*)

*The first bracha of the middle section of Shemoneh Esrei is the bracha for knowledge. The Gemora Yerushalmi (Jerusalem Talmud) explains that this is the first of all the middle brochos, for if one has no knowledge, how can one pray. The Tur adds that this is the quality that distinguishes between mankind and the animal kingdom.*

On *Motzei Shabbos* (Saturday night) we recite *Havdallah* which distinguishes between Shabbos and weekdays, light and darkness etc. In order to appreciate these differences, one must possess the quality of *knowledge*. Therefore, in this prayer of *Atta Chonein Le'adam Da'as*, where we beseech *Hashem* to grant us wisdom and understanding, we insert on *Motzei Shabbos* - the prayer *Atta chonantanu*, (you have endowed us with intelligence) since *Havdallah* requires this quality.

In the case of *Havdallah* (where one declares the separation between Shabbos and the weekday so one may now be permitted to do previously forbidden work) by *Atta Chonein*, if one omits it, he does not repeat the *Shemoneh Esrei* as generally one will recite *Havdallah* separately later over a cup of wine. However, one would have to repeat the *Shemoneh Esrei* to recite *Atta chonantanu* (you have endowed us with intelligence) if by mistake one ate some food before reciting *Havdallah* over wine<sup>15</sup>.

If one knows that he will not have wine for *Havdallah* even on Sunday, then he should repeat *Shemoneh Esrei*. If one reminds himself in such a case by the *bracha* of *She'ma Koleinu*, then he should recite it there before the closing of *Ki atta Shome'ah Tefillas etc.*

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<sup>14</sup> Otherwise known as *Piyutim*

<sup>15</sup> Orach Chaim 295: 1

however, when one will be making *Havdallah* on wine then he should not say *Atta chonantanu* by *She'ma Koleinu*<sup>6</sup>.

**Important:** One may not perform any *Melacha* (work) before reciting *Atta chonantanu* or *Baruch Hamavdil bein Kodesh le'chol* ברוך המבדיל בין קודש לחול (Blessed is He Who separates between the holy Shabbos day and the weekdays).

On Yom Tov one adds *Vatodi'einu* ותודיעינו into the middle portion of the Yom Tov *Shemoneh Esrei*. One who didn't say *Vatodi'einu* ותודיעינו should say *Baruch Hamavdil bein Kodesh le'Kodesh* ברוך המבדיל בין קודש לקודש (Blessed is He Who separates between the holy (Shabbos day) and the holy (Yom Tov day)).

These laws are especially important for women who do not commonly daven *Ma'ariv*<sup>7</sup>.

### **The Fifth Bracha: Hashiveinu (Return us to Your Torah)**

#### **השיבינו אבינו לתורתך**

This *bracha* consists of 15 words corresponding to the 15 words in the Verse (*pasuk*) (verse) (*Yeshayah 55:7*) (*Yechezkel 18:27*) (*Yeshayah 6:13*)

### **How great is Teshuva (Repentance) that it reaches the Throne of Glory of G-d.**

*Between Heaven and Earth there is a span of seven distinct levels of Heaven that the Gemora describes as having a distance of 500 years of travel between each level. The seven Heavens along with the space between each Heaven, plus the space between Earth and the first level along with the space after the highest level until the Throne of Glory are altogether 15 represented by the 15 words of this bracha.*

After one acquires the gift of *knowledge*, one has the wisdom to understand his own shortcomings and proceeds to beseech *Hashem* to grant him the ability to do a perfect *Teshuvah* (Penitence) and return to the path of the Torah.

There are no specific additions that we add into this *bracha*.

*The Chazon Ish recommended inserting a special prayer for children to grow up following the Torah and to protect them from being drawn away from Torah by the lures of society.*

*He also suggested that it is appropriate to pray for wayward children to return to the path of the Torah and to merit to do proper Teshuva.*

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<sup>16</sup> Mishna Berura 294: 6

<sup>17</sup> Orach Chaim 299:10, Mishna Berura 294: 3

## **The Sixth Bracha: Se'lach lanu Avinu (Forgive us, Father)** **סלח לנו אבינו כי חטאנו**

The next *bracha Se'lach lanu* (Forgive us) is where we actually regret our deeds and we now beg *Hashem* to pardon us and forgive us.

The first and most important result of Repentance is the Healing from guilt of Sin. Sin is the illness of the Soul and also of the body. If this healing is not achieved now, in this life, it requires the fearsome healing of Gehinnom.<sup>18</sup> . We can understand that we seek forgiveness from *Hashem* in this world rather than the affliction in the next world. Therefore we repent and seek to accomplish forgiveness and that *Hashem* redeem us in this world rather than the next world.

*This bracha specifically refers to G-d as our father because a father is obligated to teach his son the proper path to live. Therefore, we turn to G-d, our father, begging Him to fulfill His fatherly obligation of teaching us the proper path of life.*

In this *bracha* as well no special additions are added.

## **The Seventh Bracha: Re'ei (nah) be'anyeinu (Please see our affliction)** **ראה נא בעינינו**

This *bracha* asks that *Hashem* take revenge for us against our enemies and redeem us from our current state of exile. This redemption does not refer to the final redemption when *Mashiach* (Messiah) will come since that it the intent of the *bracha* of *Teka beshofar*. Rather this *bracha* asks that *Hashem* intervene on our behalf from the troubles that we currently suffer from our enemies and occupiers.

We must keep at the forefront of our minds that we will not rest amongst the nations as long as we continue to violate G-d's Commandments, as it says *"If you will not be careful to perform all the words of this Torah"*<sup>19</sup> In order for us to end our endless afflictions that we suffer daily at the hands of the other nations we must perfect ourselves in BEING EXACTING in the words of the TORAH. That surely will unlock the key for *Hashem* to exact revenge and redeem us from our present state.

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<sup>18</sup> Praise My Soul, by R'Avigdor Miller zt'l pg. 400

<sup>19</sup> Devarim 28:58

Although there is no specific logical connection between this bracha and the previous bracha it is specifically put into seventh place because the order of redemption will be that in the sixth year of the Shemittah-cycle<sup>20</sup> there will be rumblings of troubles laying ahead, on the seventh year there will be war and on the eighth year Mashiach will arrive and save us. Since the war is part of the final redemption, it is considered already to be the herald of redemption. Even though this particular bracha is not recited for the final redemption, nevertheless it is asking for one aspect of Geulah which relates to Ge'ulah in general. So we have Geulah in seventh place because the ultimate Geulah will begin in the seventh year of the Shemittah-cycle. Additionally, our Sages have taught that the world's existence will be 6000 years. On the 7th Hashem will reign alone again without any other existence as before Creation. Afterward will come the final resurrection and ultimate reward which is the World to Come (Olam Haba).

### **The Eighth Bracha: Refa'einu Hashem (Heal us Hashem)** **רפאינו השם ונרפא**

The Gemora<sup>21</sup> explains that the bracha for healing is in eighth place because *Bris Milah* (the *mitzvah* of circumcision) is on the eighth day.

This bracha turns to *Hashem* the ultimate healer to take care of any illnesses that may afflict us and heal us completely in a way that only *Hashem* can assure. A doctor can heal a patient sometimes or even many times, but he cannot assure that the recovery will be a full recovery. He also cannot assure that one will not become afflicted again by the same illness or another one. G-d can do anything because He is our healer and when He heals it can be total and complete if we only so merit.

R' Avigdor Miller zt'l learns out that every illness is a blow inflicted by *Hashem* as a father that chastises his children when they fail to achieve the Perfection of remembering him. In this Bracha we ask for a complete or perfect recovery and that all the symptoms of the illness should disappear so that they will not reappear. When we request the healing of our body, we also request the healing of our sins. Physical illness comes to humble the arrogant and also remind the one who's ill that it is time to change their ways. This Bracha in reality is one of doing Teshuva asking for Repentance and improvement of the Soul. By fixing ones thoughts and habits and character-traits, the illness's of the body comes to repair the flaws of the soul.

The language of this blessing (*bracha*) is taken from a verse in *Yirmeyahu* (17:14) where it is written in the singular *Refa'eini Hashem ve'eirafei וארפא השם ורפאיני* (Heal me *Hashem* and I will be healed).

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<sup>20</sup> According to Torah law, every seventh year in the Land of Israel is *Shemittah*

<sup>21</sup> *Megillah Daf* 17b

The Gemora in Avodah Zarah 8a tells us that if one is not well they can add a brief prayer for either himself or on behalf of someone else he may do so here. The words Betoach shaar Cholei Yisrael and Refuas HaNefesh OOH Refuas Haguf. should be included as we elucidated previously that through the spiritual healing of the Soul a physically healing may as well be granted.

**The Ninth Bracha: *Bareich Aleinu es Hashanah hazose* (Bless for us, this coming year)**

**ברך עלינו את השנה הזאת**

Perhaps the greatest mystery of all time to all of us is how is it that there are very many smart people who no matter how hard they may try they cannot seem to make a living and there are conversely many who although they are not in possession of great intellect and education have become incredibly wealthy!

R' Schwab points us to the Gemara in Beitzah 16a which tells us that the extent of how much one will be allotted this year is determined by HaKadosh Baruch Hu between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. If that is so then why should we repeat this Bracha 3 times a day if our yearly allotment has already been decided upon in the beginning of the year? The answer is obvious that although there has been allotment it can be changed by the amount we spend on Shabbos and the Festivals or how much we choose to invest not only in our own children's Torah Education but also where other children learn. The message should be quite clear to all of us. When one invests more in spreading the Light of the Torah of *Hashem* to others as well as oneself then *Hashem* will have reason to provide one with resources he never dreamed of having.

One must as well be extremely meticulous in learning the Laws of Business (*Choshen Mishpat*), learning and observing all the mitzvos so that what we did earn was done so in a proper manner and honest way according to both the laws of the Torah and the local Government where one resides.

In this *bracha* there is a seasonal insert to the *bracha* of *Bareich Aleinu*. In the rainy season of the winter months we add (Give dew and rain as a blessing) *Ve'sein Tal u'matar livracha* - לברכה-ותן טל ומטר - instead of the usual (and give blessing) *Ve'sein bracha* - ותן ברכה. The addition, as well as the omission of the proper reading can validate or invalidate the entire *Shemoneh Esrei*. One must pay attention to this portion of prayer especially at the interval of change between the summer and winter months since one can easily say the wrong thing out of habit. If one says the wrong thing for this season, and finished the entire *Shemoneh Esrei*, the entire *Shemoneh Esrei* must be repeated. However, if one realizes this sooner, then depending on the mistake, there are other options that one can do to fix the current *Shemoneh Esrei* that he is in.

If for example one said (Give dew and rain as a blessing) *Vesein tal u'matar liv'racha* in the summertime, one would go back to the *bracha* of *Bareich Aleinu* to correct his mistake and continue *Shemoneh Esrei* again from that point forward. This can be done as long as one did not finish *Shemoneh Esrei* all the way to the second and final *yihyu le'ratzone* at the end of *Elokaye netzor*. On the other hand, if one forgot to add *Vesein Tal u'matar liv'racha* in the winter season, then according to all opinions, one could wait until the *bracha* of *She'ma Koleinu* and insert it there before saying *Ki atta Shome'ab Tefillas etc.* If one forgot to say it there as well, then one must go back to *Bareich Aleinu* as in the previous example. However, one cannot fix the previous example by correcting himself in the *bracha* of *She'ma Koleinu* by saying (and give blessing) *Vesein bracha*. This is because the problem is that one added an irrelevant prayer in the summertime when he said (Give dew and rain as a blessing) *Vesein Tal u'matar liv'racha*, since in the summertime rain is not necessary<sup>22</sup>. Therefore it is imperative for him to go back and correct the mistake made in that particular *bracha* (i.e. in *Bareich Aleinu*).

There is an opinion<sup>23</sup> that holds that one can correct an error of not saying (Give dew and rain as a blessing) *Vesein Tal u'matar liv'racha* immediately after the *bracha* of *Bareich Aleinu* as long as he didn't start the following *bracha* of *Teka beshofar*. This is the opinion of the *Chayei Adam*, but the Mishna Berura doesn't agree.

*Nusach Sephard* has a completely different composition for this *bracha* for the both winter and summer months rather than just adding the words (Give dew and rain as a blessing) *Vesein Tal u'matar liv'racha*.

### Sephardic Nusach for Bareich Aleinu - ברכ עלינו - שמונה עשרה - ברכ עלינו

#### In the Summertime - בקיץ

בְּרַכְנוּ הַשֵּׁם אֱלוֹקֵינוּ בְּכֹל מַעֲשֵׂי יְדֵינוּ. וּבְרַחֵם שְׁנַתְנוּ בְּטַלְלֵי רְצוֹן בְּרַכָּה  
וּנְדָבָה. וְתַהֲיֵי אַחֲרֵיתָהּ חַיִּים וְשָׂבַע וְשְׁלוֹם כְּשָׁנִים הַטּוֹבוֹת לְבְרַכָּה. כִּי קָל  
טוֹב וּמְטִיב אֶתְּךָ וּמְבָרַךְ הַשָּׁנִים: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה הַשֵּׁם מְבָרַךְ הַשָּׁנִים:

#### In the wintertime - בחורף

בְּרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ הַשֵּׁם אֱלוֹקֵינוּ אֶת הַשָּׁנָה הַזֹּאת. וְאֶת כָּל מִינֵי תְבוּאָתָהּ לְטוֹבָה.  
וְתֵן טַל וּמָטָר לְבְרַכָּה עַל כָּל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה. וְרוּחַ פְּנֵי תַבַּל וְשָׂבַע אֶת הָעוֹלָם  
כְּלוּ מְטוֹבָךְ. וּמֵלֵא יְדֵינוּ מְבָרַכְתֶּיךָ וּמַעֲשֵׂר מִתְּנוּת יְדֶיךָ. שְׁמְרָה וְהַצִּילָה שָׁנָה  
זוֹ מִכָּל דָּבָר רָע. וּמִכָּל מִינֵי מִשְׁחִית וּמִכָּל מִינֵי פּוֹרְעָנוֹת. וְעֲשֵׂה לָהּ תְּקוּנָה

<sup>22</sup> This is because in Israel it rains in the wintertime only

<sup>23</sup> Tur in the name of *Avi Haetzri Simon* 114

טוֹבָה וְאַחֲרֵית שְׁלוֹם. חוּס וְרַחֵם עָלַיָּהּ וְעַל כָּל תְּבוּאָתָהּ וּפִירוּתֶיהָ. וּבְרָכָה  
בְּגִשְׁמֵי רְצוֹן בְּרָכָה וּנְדָבָה. וְתֵהִי אַחֲרֵיתָהּ חַיִּים וְשָׁבַע וְשְׁלוֹם. כְּשָׁנִים  
הַטּוֹבוֹת לְבְרָכָה. כִּי קֵל טוֹב וּמְטִיב אֶתָּה וּמְבַרְךְ הַשָּׁנִים: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה הַשֵּׁם  
מְבַרְךְ הַשָּׁנִים:

## Questions:

- 1) Why was it necessary for the *Ansbei Knesses Hagedolah* in particular to be the ones involved in composing *Shemoneh Esrei*?
- 2) What is the range of the number of *brochos* in the different *Amidah Shemoneh Esrei* Prayers?
- 3) Explain what *Avodah She'be'lev* refers to and what the meaning of *lev* (heart) means in this context?
- 4) What are the necessary components of a valid *bracha* and when can part of the format be omitted?
- 5) What is the basic make-up of *Shemoneh Esrei*?
- 6) Which things did *Hashem* keep under His personal control without giving it to a *Malach* (heavenly angel)?
- 7) What is the reason to allow the insertions of *Aseres Yemei Teshuva* into the first 3 and the last 3 *brochos* of *Shemoneh Esrei*?
- 8) In which case must one repeat *Shemoneh Esrei* for omitting *Atta Chonantanu* on *Motzei Shabbos* (Saturday night)?
- 9) What redemption is the seventh *bracha* – *Re'ei (nah) be'anyeinu* refer to?
- 10) Explain the way we pray for *Refu'ah* (healing)? (2)
- 11) In the *bracha* of *Bareich Aleinu* we have a seasonal insertion for the rainy season and the rest of the year. Which insertion could be recited in the *bracha* of *She'ma Koleinu* if it was omitted?
- 12) In which way is the *Nusach* of *Sephardim* unique by the *bracha* of *Bareich Aleinu*?

## Answers:

- 1) It was necessary for such eminent Rabbis to compose the *Shemoneh Esrei* to incorporate in *Shemoneh Esrei* the intents of each and every Jew in each and every circumstance in each and every Prayer.
- 2) The number of *brochos* range from 7 (Shabbos and Yom Tov)<sup>24</sup> to 19 (weekdays) to 24 (on fast day for rain).
- 3) *Avodah She'be'lev* refers to the *Amidah Shemoneh Esrei* Prayer. The word *lev* (heart) implies that one should say it with contemplation. However, it must be verbalized and just said in one's mind.
- 4) A *bracha* must have in it *Sheim* (G-d's Name) and *malchus* (a reference to G-d as the King of the entire universe).
- 5) A *Shemoneh Esrei* consists of the opening 3 blessings of praise to G-d and a closing 3 blessing of thanks and praise to G-d. The middle section has in it the rest of the prayers.
- 6) מטר Rain, פרנסה Livelihood, תחייה Resurrection, חיה Birthing.
- 7) Since the prayers are for everyone in general. Only personal prayers may not be inserted.
- 8) If one omitted *Atta Chonantanu* on *Motzei Shabbos* and then ate food before reciting *Havdallah* over wine.
- 9) It is referring to redemption from the troubles that we may have currently and not to the exile of the Jewish Nation in general.
- 10) We pray that a person should be healed both spiritually and physically. We also include all other Jews who are ill in the prayers for this individual.
- 11) *Ve'sein Tal u'matar livracha* can be inserted by the end of *She'mas Koleinu*, not *Ve'sein bracha*.
- 12) The *Nusach* of *Sephardim* consists of 2 distinct *brochos* one for the rainy season and another for the rest of the year.

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<sup>24</sup> *Mussaf* on Rosh Hashanah contains 9 *brochos*