

THE PIRCHEI SHOSHANIM ROADMAP TO PRAYER PROJECT

# **The Roadmap to Prayer**

## **Lesson 17**

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# The Roadmap to Prayer

Lesson

17

## Shemoneh Esrei (continued)

### The Tenth Bracha: Teka Beshofar Gadol (Sound the great Shofar) תקע בשופר גדול

Until this point, the *Shemoneh Esrei* focused on our personal needs. At this juncture at the Tenth Bracha the *Shemoneh Esrei* turns its focus to communal needs. We beseech *Hashem* to bring about the final redemption. The era of *Mashiach* will be heralded in by Shofar blasts as the *pasuk* (verse) in *Yeshayah* states *Ve'haya bayome habu yitoka bashofar gadol* תקע בשופר גדול והיה ביום ההוא יתקע בשופר גדול (and it will be on that day a great Shofar will be sounded).

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch ז"ל tells us that we can only attain the level of life of the era of *Mashiach* after the nation as a whole returns to *Hashem's* laws and become faithful in their service of G-d. At that time we will have a true perspective of things; then and only then will we become deserving of forgiveness and pardon. In order to move ourselves forward towards this endeavor we must find ways to improve our *Avodas Hashem* in a serious way. We must become more punctual in our prayers (*davening*), we must raise our awareness and vigilance in Kashrus, we must overcome our greedy tendencies which lead us to act improperly in business practices, sometimes forcing our competitors unjustly out of business, disregarding both the financial and personal injury we are causing. We must stop justifying our practice of selecting certain *Mitzvos* while at the same time ignoring others. Transgressions in the area of family purity, charging interest (*Ribis*) improperly, or going to secular courts must be rooted out from our communities.

We hope and we pray that *Hashem* will gather all Jewry from around the world to unite them as one people to serve *Hashem* in totality, regardless of how far they have strayed. If we focus on perfecting ourselves in these areas as well as well as in other

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<sup>1</sup> 27:13

similar issues we could then sincerely hope to hear the Great Shofar blasts heralding an era of perfect Service of G-d, true *Avodas Hashem*.

**The Eleventh Bracha: Hashiva Shofteinu Kevarishona—**  
(Restore our Judges as they were in Previous Times)  
**השיבה שופטינו כבראשונה**

Once we reach the era of the final redemption, the next phase of the redemption process will be, to mete out justice to all the people who sinned as the verse (*pasuk*) states in *Yeshayah* And I will bring My hand back over you and I will refine your dross as with hye I will remove all your base metal.

World leaders who today are immersed in an imagery of their own temporary position of power will also come to the recognition that G-d is the One and Only true Power and that all other power are really nothing at all.

**From the Book of Ezra Chapter 1**

1. And in the first year of Cyrus, the king of Persia, at the completion of the word of *Hashem* from the mouth of Jeremiah, *Hashem* aroused the Spirit of Cyrus, the king of Persia, and he issued a proclamation throughout his kingdom, and also in writing, saying:

2. "So said Cyrus, the king of Persia, 'All the kingdoms of the earth *Hashem* G-d of the heavens delivered to me, and He commanded me to build Him a House in Jerusalem, which is in Judea.

**So said Cyrus, the king of Persia... delivered to me** that I am the king and ruler over all the kingdoms. **and He commanded me** He commanded me through Isaiah the prophet to build for Him the Temple in Jerusalem, as it says in the Book of Isaiah (44:28): "Who says to Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, and all My desire he shall fulfill,' and to say to Jerusalem, 'It shall be built, and the Temple shall be founded.'" (ibid. 45:1): "So said *Hashem* to His anointed one, to Cyrus, whose right hand I held..." And this prophecy was already stated by Isaiah. **(Rashi)**

3. Who is among you of all His people, may his G-d be with him, and he may ascend to Jerusalem, which is in Judea, and let him build the House of *Hashem*, G-d of Israel; He is the G-d Who is in Jerusalem.

**Who is among you** He announced and wrote to all the kingdoms, "Who is among you of all His people," i.e. of the Holy One, blessed be He. May the Holy One, blessed be He, be at his assistance, and let him ascend to build His house that is in Jerusalem. **(Rashi)**

4. And whoever remains from all the places where he sojourns, the people of his place shall help him with silver and with gold and with possessions and with cattle, with the donation to the House of G-d, which is in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

**And whoever remains and every Jew who remains in his place, who cannot ascend because he has no money.**

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<sup>2</sup> 1:25

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shall help him I command the people of his place to provide him and help him with silver, gold, possessions and cattle, in order that he be able to ascend to Jerusalem with the donation that the people of his place will donate for the building of the Temple, for also among the nations there were some who contributed donations to the building of the Temple. **to the House of G-d, which is in Jerusalem** From “So said Cyrus” until here is the proclamation and the message of the written notice. (Rashi)

One of the greatest sanctification of G-d’s Name (*Kiddush Hashem*) in history by a world renowned leader is described in *sefer Ezra* 1. Koresh the Persian King (Cyrus, the king of Persia was succeeded by Ahasuerus, who was King at the time of the Purim story) became at that time the undisputed most powerful person in the world, after conquering the Babylonian Empire. He issued an astounding decree to rebuild the Holy Temple (the *Beis Hamikdash*). Koresh’s actions were precipitated by a prophecy of Isaiah (*Yeshaya*)<sup>3</sup> who declared two hundred years earlier that Koresh would be the one who would start rebuilding the Holy Temple (*Beis Hamikdash*)<sup>4</sup>.

1. So said *Hashem* to His anointed one, to Cyrus, whose right hand I held, to flatten nations before him and the loins of kings I will loosen, to open portals before him, and gates shall not be closed.

**to His anointed one** Every title of greatness is called anointing. (Compare Bamidbar 18:8) “To you I have given them for greatness (לְמִשְׁחָה).” Our Sages, however, said: To the King Messiah, the Holy One, blessed be He, says, “I complain to you about Cyrus,” as it is stated in Tractate Megillah 12a (that Cyrus should have rebuilt the Temple himself instead of issuing a decree for others to rebuild it).

**to flatten nations before him** Heb. לָרַד, to spread out and to flatten nations before him. לָרַד is equivalent to לָרַד, to spread out.

**and the loins of kings I will loosen** This is an expression of weakness and breaking strength, for girding the loins constitutes arming with strength. Comp. (*Iyon* 38: 3) “Gird up your loins like a mighty man”; (*Yirmiyahu* 1:17) “And you gird up your loins”; (*Iyon* 12:21) “And the belt of the mighty He loosens”; an expression of breaking strength.

**to open... before him** the portals of the gates of Babylon. Gates are the space of the opening of the gate; portals are those with which they open and lock the gate. (Rashi)

2. I will go before you, and I will straighten out crooked paths; I will break portals of copper and cut off bars of iron.

**and I will straighten out crooked paths** Heb. וְהִדְרִימ אֶיִשָּׁר. Jonathan renders: I will level the walls. Comp. (*Shabbos daf* 77b) “the surrounding area (הַדֶּרֶךְ הַדְרִימָה),” since the wall surrounds the city. The word may also be explained as: I will straighten out crooked paths before him. (Rashi)

3. And I will give you treasures of darkness, and riches hidden in secret places, in order that you know that I am *Hashem* Who calls [you] by your name-the Holy One of Israel.

**Who calls [you] by your name** You are not yet born, and I call you by the name Cyrus. (Rashi)

4. For the sake of My servant Jacob, and Israel My chosen one, and I called to you by your name; I surnamed you, yet you have not known Me.

**For the sake of My servant Jacob** that you take him out of Babylonian exile.

**yet you have not known Me** You did not do My will, for I said, (infra v. 13) “He shall build My city,” but when he assumed the throne he said, “Whoever among you is from all His people, may ascend.” He gave them permission to go, but he cast off all the trouble from upon his own neck.

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<sup>3</sup> *Yeshaya* 45:1

<sup>4</sup> I.e. both the destruction and the subsequent rebuilding were foretold detailing specifically which non-Jewish king would be involved

5. I am *Hashem*, and there is no other; besides Me there is no G-d: I will strengthen you although you have not known Me.

Koresh (Cyrus) openly declared to the entire world at that time that he was now going to fulfill that prophecy of *Hashem* to rebuild the *Beis Hamikdash* and that no one would get in his way to prevent him from carrying out this Heavenly decree. Unfortunately, despite this great recognition of the Jewish nation and *Hashem* their G-d, the second Temple era did not bring about the final redemption. Thus, we pray daily that *Hashem* should bring back all our leaders as well as the leaders of the world to recognize and acknowledge the greatness of *Hashem* and his people.

### **מלך אוהב צדקה ומשפט** (a king who loves righteousness and justice)

The closing of the *bracha* of *Hashiva Shofteinu* is *Baruch atta Hashem Melech ohev tzedakah u'mishpat* **ברוך אתה השם מלך אוהב צדקה ומשפט** (Blessed are You *Hashem* a king who loves righteousness and justice).

We ask *Hashem* to return to us judges and leaders that are nation will listen too. The Holocaust was an historical event that recently decimated Jewish leadership. We are unfortunately far from the point of having regained a unified leadership that could pass decrees that would be accepted by all. Without having leaders that we all revere and fear, it is difficult to even begin to understand what it means that the entire world, both Jews and non-Jews will have a fear of G-d and follow His ways.

### **Melech - The King**

*Rabbeinu Yechiel*, the brother of the Tur is quoted by the Tur as wondering why in this particular *bracha* we have *malchus* (kingship) since by all the rest of the *brochos* this general requirement is waived because the blessings of *Shemoneh Esrei* are considered *brochos hasemuchos le'chaverta* (blessings that are juxtaposed to other blessings). He mentions that indeed there are other versions of this *bracha* which do not include *malchus* such as the version of *Hakeil HaMishpat*. Otherwise, the only reason it is said in this particular *bracha* is because with regard to justice we always associate it with kings as the *pasuk* in *Mishlei*<sup>5</sup> writes, *Melech bemishpat ya'amid eretz* **מלך במשפט יעמיד ארץ** (A king establishes a country by way of justice).

There is a Gemara in *Mesechta Sanhedrin* that explains the meaning of Charity (*Tzedakah*) and Judgment (*Mishpat*). Charity was characterized by *Aharon HaKohen* (Aaron the High Priest), who would always seek compromise (*peshara*) so that the litigants can find common ground and settle their disputes peacefully. Conversely,

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<sup>5</sup> 29: 4

litigants who went in front of Moshe for judgment received decisive decision from Moshe based on strict justice, usually leaving one of the litigants unhappy. When Aharon passed away the nation mourned for a longer period than after Moshe's death because they associated with Aharon as a peacemaker. Hence, in our own personal dealings with others we should judge them favorably, always giving them the benefit of the doubt. This way, when we are judged by *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* (G-d), He too will judge and deal with us in a similar fashion as we dealt with others. We will then be given a chance of surviving the strict judgment of the World to Come, since as we too gave others the benefit of doubt when we were alive.

### ***Asseres Yemei Teshuva* (The Ten days of Repentance)**

During the *Asseres Yemei Teshuva* (the Ten days of Penitence) we change the ending of this *bracha* from *Melech ohev tzedakah u'mishpat* מלך אוהב צדקה ומשפט to *Hamelech HaMishpat* המלך המשפט, as we do by the end of the third *bracha* where we switch *Hakeil Hakadosh* הקל הקדוש to *Hamelech Hakadosh* המלך הקדוש. The *Taz* notes that there is a basic difference between the two endings of this *bracha*. *Melech ohev tzedakah u'mishpat* מלך אוהב צדקה ומשפט means that G-d loves to judge those seek His judgment but He does not necessarily always initiate it. On the other hand, *Hamelech HaMishpat* המלך המשפט implies that He is a King that judges even those who do not seek a judgment, which is more apropos to The Ten Days of Repentance. In this case the Rama<sup>6</sup> rules if one were to recite the standard ending of *Melech ohev tzedakah u'mishpat* one would not repeat *Shemoneh Esrei* since it includes the word *melech*, unlike there where saying *Hakeil Hakadosh* doesn't contain the word *melech* and one would be required to repeat it with *Hamelech Hakadosh*. According to the opinion of the Mechaber<sup>7</sup>, one would repeat the *bracha* even in this instance. In general, *Sephardim* follow the opinion of the Mechaber and *Ashkenazim* follow the Rama.

### **The Twelfth Bracha: *Ve'lamalshinim al tehi sikvah***

(And for those - heretics - who slander, let there be no hope)

ולמלשינים אל תהי תקוה

#### **מקורות Background**

This *bracha* consists of 29 words. In the Hebrew alphabet there are a total of 27 letters. 22 distinctly different letters plus another 5 letters that are specifically shaped for the end of a word (i.e. the regular *Mem* מ and the

<sup>6</sup> *Simon* 118: 1

<sup>7</sup> *Simon* 582: 1

*Final Mem ם*). This 27 words in this *bracha* hints that the heretic is a denier of the Torah which is written using the 27 letters. The additional 2 words represent 2 more fundamentals that the heretic denies; the Written Torah (*Torah she'biksav*) and the Oral Tradition (*Torah she'ba'al peh*).

*Shemoneh Esrei* consists of 18 *brochos* which can be divided into two parts with 9 *brochos* in each. With the addition of the 19<sup>th</sup> *bracha* of *Ve'lamalshinim* we can divide *Shemoneh Esrei* into 10 *brochos* until the end of *Al Hatzaddikim*, completing the cycle of 10 *Sefiros* (spiritual realms) going upward from 1 - 10 and from *Al Hatzaddikim* until the end of *Shemoneh Esrei* back down from 10 - 1. This is hinted to in the verse in *Parshas No'ach*, *u'mikol hachai tavi'u* (and from all the living you shall bring) which the *Zohar* ties in with the 18 blessings of *Shemoneh Esrei*. *Chai* consists of a numerical value of 18.<sup>8</sup>

The *bracha* was not part of the original eighteen blessings of *Shemoneh Esrei*. It was added a little after the destruction of the second *Beis Hamikdash* at the behest of Rabban Gamliel II. It was composed by Shmuel “Hakatan” (Samuel the “Small One”<sup>9</sup>) who the Gemora lauds as a man of stature worthy of being graced by the Divine Presence like *Moshe Rabbeinu* (Moses our teacher). He composed this special prayer to fight the ills of the students of the House of *Tzadok* (Sadducees), and *Baysos* (Boethusians) and other similar sects that were bent on destroying the religious infrastructure of Jewish life. They used their political power and influence to persuade the foreign rule in the Land of Israel to oppress religious Jews to prevent them from practicing their religion freely. The prayer was composed and added to *Shemoneh Esrei* in order to raise the awareness of the Jews to be wary of these individuals who tried to lure the general Jewish populace away from a Torah observant Jewish lifestyle.

*Rav Yonason Eibshutz זצ"ל* in his *sefer Ya'aros Devash* writes that although the original sect of *Tzedukim* and *Baysusim* no longer exist, the *bracha* is still relevant as there are always unfaithful Jews who try to harm us. Therefore, one must always stand guard against such ideologies and beliefs and pray to G-d that we shall prevail.

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<sup>8</sup> *Zohar Pinchas* page 256 (זהר רעיא מהימנא פנחס עמוד רנז)

<sup>9</sup> *Yerushalmi Sotah* 9:13 explains that he was called the *Small One* because he was so humble or because he was almost as elevated in stature as *Shmuel HaNavi* (Samuel the prophet)

### The Most Elevated Bracha

In the realm of *Kabbalah* there are attributes that we refer to as the 10 *Sefiros* (spiritual realms). These attributes include *Chochma* (wisdom) *Bina* (understanding) and *Da'as* (knowledge). They are a way with which *Hashem* interacts with us in this world. For example, when referring to *Hashem* the *Kind One*, we mean to praise the way *Hashem* interacts with us and bestows us with His kindness. His attribute of kindness is not just quantitatively greater than our kind deeds, but they are qualitatively greater in a way that we cannot even grasp. In the subject of *Sefiros*, the highest level is the level of *Kesser* (crown). The example of a crown in *kabalistic* terms is describing something which is not an intrinsic part of a king but it identifies for us that the one wearing it, is a king. A crown represents something that is at the highest level like a crown that is placed upon the king's head. In *kabalistic* writings, the *brochos* of *Shemoneh Esrei* have the name of *Hashem* vowelized differently for each *bracha*. The vowel *Komat* (קוֹמַתִּי)<sup>10</sup> represents the attribute of crown (*Kesser*), yet it is not used for any *bracha* of *Shemoneh Esrei* except for the *bracha* of *Ve'lamalshinim*. The Rambam<sup>11</sup> writes that this *bracha* is so great, that they added it into *Shemoneh Esrei* so that its message not to follow the heretics in thought or deed should be widespread and known to all. Apparently, this added *bracha* has greater significance than all other *brochos*.

Rav Shimshon Pinkus זצ"ל notes that in all the blessings of *Shemoneh Esrei* we pray to *Hashem* to increase each attribute that is invoked by our prayers which in turn will benefit us. For example, we invoke that *Hashem* should grant us wisdom and knowledge. We pray to Him for forgiveness and health. All these attributes exist already except that we beseech *Hashem* to increase His heavenly influence in these areas so that we too can benefit from them. However, with regard to the subject of heresy and heretics, we are dealing with people that distort what was always *common knowledge* and *accepted truths* to all of mankind that G-d is the One and Only Creator. Even those who erroneously thought that G-d's desire was for us to worship His powerful creations such as the sun and the moon, everyone believed in G-d.. Today's atheists have created a totally new breach in faith and religion, unparalleled in any other area of sin and iniquity. Therefore, the rectification of this matter takes on such great proportions that it requires the ultimate redemption and revelation of G-d's glory to realize this truth. In a sense, heresy has removed the crown from the king, by blurring everything as being His equal. As a result, this *bracha* is the most fundamental one of the entire *Shemoneh Esrei*. In fact, in the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur prayers we pray with great hope for *Hashem* to reveal Himself to all of

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<sup>10</sup> See the Dik Duk Buk – Lesson One page 10

<sup>11</sup> Hilchos Tefila 2:1

mankind so that every human being can recognize *Hashem's* supremacy and pay homage to Him. The special prayer, *Ve'yesayu kol le'andecha* (and all Mankind will come to worship You) ends with the following words: *Ve'yitnu lecha Kesser Melucha* (and they will give you a crown of a kingship). This symbolizes that the crown (*Kesser*); which rests at the highest level on the king, will once again be revealed when all inhabitants of the world will recognize *Hashem's* sovereignty.

According to this, although we generally pray for the welfare of sinners that they repent and mend their ways, here our prayers are focused on uprooting such philosophies completely so that the breach caused by this way of thinking is completely closed and fully repaired. If it carries with it the cost of the heretics themselves being punished<sup>12</sup>, so be it, as long as it will no longer ensnare people by obscuring and blurring the veritable existence of G-d. Alternatively, this prayer as well is only that the cause of such philosophies should be banished from existence but the sinners themselves should not; rather they should merit changing their ways and do *Teshuva*.

### **The Thirteenth Bracha: *Al Hatzaddikim* (For the Righteous)** על הצדיקים

#### מקורות Background

This *bracha* comes right after the prayer to eradicate the wicked and the heretics from amongst us, as we find a verse in Psalms (*Tehillim*) 75:11 linking the two as it says *And I shall cut down all the pride of the wicked; the pride of the righteous shall be exalted.*

In this *bracha* we include the *righteous converts* as well. This follows the order of the verses in *Vayikra* 19:32, 33. The first verse states *In the presence of an old person you shall rise and you shall honor the presence of a sage etc.* The next verse reads *when a proselyte dwells with you in the land etc.*

The first verse consists of 7 Hebrew words while the latter two have a total of 35, which together total 42. This is equal to the amount of words in this blessing.

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<sup>12</sup> The *Nachlas Ya'akov* writes that sometimes it is impossible for the sinner to pull himself away from sin. (*Shirus David*, Weekday *Tefilla* page 239). However, the Ohr Hachaim's opinion is that through Torah study even the most agnostic individual can be rehabilitated through the sanctity of Torah. See Rav Schwab on Prayer who discusses this *bracha* detailing different kind of sinners and their appropriate retributions.

Additionally, all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are used in this blessing, denoting the merit of the righteous that adhere to the Torah which is comprised of all these letters, *Hashem* should grant them kindness etc.

### **Al Hatzaddikim על הצדיקים**

The blessing of *Al Hatzaddikim* asks *Hashem* to grant favor and mercy in the merit of the righteous individuals of the Jewish nation so that we will all appreciate our *Avodas Hashem* (service of G-d) and consider it something to be proud of. By elevating the Torah way of life in the eyes of mankind, people would be attracted to it, counteracting the effect that is brought about through heretical teachings and philosophies.

In a similar vein, *Rabbeinu Yonah* in his classic *sefer Sha'arei Tesbuna* writes that one should always praise *Tzaddikim* (righteous people) and never praise *Resha'im* (wicked people). This is in order to elevate the esteem of those who follow *Hashem's* Torah so that others will follow their example. Anyone doing the opposite is desecrating *Hashem's* Name *as if to say that the ways of the wicked are successful and proper*.

One who is careful to praise the *Tzaddikim* and righteous servants of *Hashem* will be rewarded great reward without even expending much toil and effort, just by his thoughts and words!

The verse (*pasuk*) in *Mishlei*<sup>13</sup> reveals to us a great secret about people's personalities.

21. The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, and a man according to his praise.

*Rabbeinu Yonah* explains *a man according to his praise* means that one who constantly praises good people and good deeds is himself such an individual. Conversely, one who praises those who do not follow the laws of the Torah is himself such an individual, a true *Rasha* (wicked person).

### **Ve'al Geirei Hatzeddek (and unto the Righteous Converts)** **ועל גירי הצדק**

It is quite noteworthy that there is no distinction made regarding the prominence of a *righteous convert* and that of a sage, when both heed the laws of the Torah. The Talmud is replete with sages who were converts. They are afforded the full honor of

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<sup>13</sup> 27: 21

any Torah sage. That is why we find *Tzadikim* and righteous *converts* mentioned in the same context.

*Rav Yonason Eibshutz zt"l once noted that we Jews are truly unique in our unbiased and sincere attitude toward Gentiles. Even in the countries that oppressed Jews and caused Jews untold amounts of suffering, we always welcomed sincere and righteous converts who made Torah Judaism their new way of life. That was about 200 years ago. Recently, I opened a book to a random page, where I read how the Chafetz Chaim zt"l was very involved in the 1920's with the different world-crisis that adversely affected the Jews in Europe and in Russia. Despite the heavy communal burden regarding the plight of Jewry that weighed heavily on him, he took time to inquire of someone who just returned from a trip to Africa about the fate of the black population there. The man was surprised by the interest the Chafetz Chaim displayed and asked him what interest he had in them. The Chafetz Chaim answered, that he was concerned about the oppression they suffered for they too are human beings, the handiwork of Hashem. Additionally, we pray every Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur that all the nations of the world should one day recognize the majesty and glory of Hashem and pay Him homage. Hence, there was plenty reason to be concerned about their fate too.*

*After reading this account about the Chafetz Chaim, I spent some time contemplating the famous story of the Ger Tzedek (righteous convert) who lived in the time of the Great Gaon of Vilna. I then "happened" to chance upon a recently-published book about an African-American who recently converted to Judaism. Then, the following morning I found myself at a funeral of such an individual, a member of the Jewish community for over 30 years. Therefore, I would like to briefly comment on these very unique individuals.*

*During the life of the Vilna Gaon lived a gentile by the name of Count Walenty Potocki, a Polish gentile who converted to Judaism. He eventually became very close with the Vilna Gaon and led a very pious Jewish life. He was known as the famous "Ger Tzedek" - Avraham ben Avraham. One day, the government sent a warrant for the arrest and subsequent execution of Avraham ben Avraham for converting to Judaism, which they considered an unforgivable crime. Despite the Vilna Gaon's personal offer to free him from execution through kabalistic powers, Avraham ben Avraham refused and chose to die by being burned at the stake Al Kiddush Hashem (to Sanctify the Almighty's Glorious Name). The Ger Tzedek prepared himself for this precious opportunity to glorify Hashem and had prepared himself to recite the blessing of Baruch atta Hashem, hamekadeish es shimcha be'rabbim<sup>14</sup> (Blessed are You Hashem Who causes Your name to be sanctified in public). Interesting enough, the author of the famous work Yesode Ve'shoresh Ha'avodah, an extremely pious and distinguished Rabbi, disguised himself like a gentile so that he could get close to the scene of the execution to listen to this blessing and answer Amen. After Avraham ben Avraham's execution, the Vilna Gaon asked that they bury his remains next to his own designated burial spot. That was approximately 250 years ago.*

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<sup>14</sup> That blessing, *Baruch atta Hashem hamekadeish es shimcha be'rabbim*, is the same blessing said in the morning just after *She'ma* which is before *Pesukei De'Zimra*

*Then I found myself at a funeral of another righteous convert, Rav Aryeh ben Avraham Avinu, an emergency-room doctor who lived in the Detroit Jewish community and passed away suddenly at the age of 58. I didn't know him well, but I used to exchange hellos and a smile when I would meet him in the local Kollel studying with the dean of our Kollel. Unbeknownst to me that he was a Ger Tzedek, I felt that I should attend his funeral that morning.*

*The funeral chapel was filled with friends, colleagues, rabbis and most noticeably young Yeshiva students from the local Yeshiva. I was soon to learn that he was a righteous convert in every sense of the word. He was a man who was a doctor by profession, and a caring and sensitive individual in spirit. He was a man who spent his time outside his long hospital shifts studying Torah with Rabbis and even young Yeshiva students who were barely even a quarter of his age. He was an individual who was always growing in his learning and acts of Chesed (loving-kindness). He merited having children who themselves studied in Yeshiva and Beis Yaakov establishments who all excelled in their studies and their extremely kind nature. Even after all his children were out of the house, he used to host 7-8 Yeshiva students to grace his Shabbos table. The crowd attending his funeral was very moved by the major accomplishments and selflessness of this very religious, caring and sensitive, righteous convert. I felt at that moment that in a sense, such individuals bring out the pure and holy sanctity of the Torah better than anyone. I felt privileged to be a witness to such a Kiddush Hashem (sanctification of G-d's Holy Name). All that was missing was to hear the bracha and answer Amen.*

### **The Fourteenth Bracha: *Ve'liYerushalayim ircha be'rachamim tashuv***

(And to Jerusalem Your city, with mercy You should return)

**ולירושלם עירך ברחמים תשוב**

The Sages of the Great Assembly started this *bracha* with the word “and” which tells us that it has a connection with the previous *bracha* for the Righteous. The *Levush* explains that once the Righteous are given proper honor and respect much hidden light will come to the world. Their influence will have a dramatic effect on the conduct of mankind as people come to recognize and appreciate the greatness of *Hashem*. At this point *Yerushalayim* will be restored to its former glory. *Yerushalayim* will then stand as a monument to the Glory of *Hashem*. Thus we see the connection between the *bracha* for restoring the Righteous to be amongst our midst and the rebuilding of *Yerushalayim*.

When King Solomon (*Shlomo Hamelech*) built the first Temple (*Beis Hamikdash*) the Angels (*Melachim*) cried out “Blessed are YOU, *Hashem*, who builds *Yerushalayim*.” The Temple in its time was viewed as the **Meeting Place** between **Man** and the

**Divine.** *All the peoples of the world came to Yerushalayim as it was viewed as the one place in the world where one could make a spiritual rectification.* The Angels marveled at the idea that mankind through their efforts could bring about that *Hashem's* presence should be sensed more in one place (*Yerushalayim*) than another. Rabbi Yitzchok Kirzner זצ"ל points out that *Shlomo Hamelech* made the presence of *Hashem* true-life and concrete to people by causing the First *Beis Hamikdash* to be built. The Angels then thanked *Hashem* for allowing a place to be built where people could experience and literally sense *Hashem's* existence.

The *Sefas Emmes* reveals to us that when the first temple was being built the Angels recited a blessing to *Hashem* in the present tense of “who builds *Yerushalayim*” as opposed to the past tense which would read “built *Yerushalayim*”. This is despite the fact that the Temple has already been destroyed we still conclude this *bracha* with the same language ‘Blessed is *Hashem* Who builds *Yerushalayim*’. At the time of the construction of the Temple it was a request for *Hashem* to allow the Temple's continued existence. This was because the Jews didn't take for granted as a fact that the Temple would always exist. The Jews of that time understood well that having a physical Temple for *Hashem's Divine Presence* a totally spiritual entity was a gift that had to be constantly appreciated. We continue saying these blessings now after its destruction as a request for it to be rebuilt.

## Laws דינים

### Addition on Tish'a B' Av

By the **Mincha** prayer of the Fast of the Ninth day of the month of Av (*Tish'a B'Av* - the calendar day we mourn the destruction of both the first and second *Beis Hamikdash*) we add here the *bracha* of *Nacheim Hashem Elokeinu es aveilei Tzzyone eve's aveilei Yerushalayim etc.* (*Hashem* our G-d, please comfort the mourners of Zion and the mourners of Jerusalem etc.) When *Nacheim* is recited properly by this *bracha*, the closing of the *bracha* is changed to reflect the context of *Nacheim*. Thus, the closing of the *bracha* is *Baruch Atta Hashem, Menacheim Tzzyone u'vonei Yerushalayim* (Blessed are You *Hashem*, Who consoles Zion and rebuilds Jerusalem).

### Forgot to Recite Nacheim

If one forgets to recite *Nacheim* by the *bracha* of *Ve'liYerushalayim ircha* then one should insert after saying *Retzei* before the closing of the *bracha* *Hamachzir Shechinasso le'Tzzyone*<sup>16</sup>. It is more fitting to say it here than in the *bracha* of *She'ma Koleinu*, since

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<sup>16</sup> This is the usual place where *Ya'aleh Veyavoh* is inserted on *Rosh Chodesh* and the Intermediary Festival Days

this *bracha* is about the Divine Presence returning to *Tziyone*. If one did recite it by the *bracha* of *She'ma Koleinu*, it is alright and one does not have to recite again after *Retzei*. In both these instances, *Nacheim* assumes the regular ending of the *bracha* where it is inserted and not its own ending of *Menacheim Tziyone u'vonei Yerushalayim*. If one forgot to recite it by the *bracha* *Retzei*, then it is not recited at all and the *Shemoneh Esrei* is still valid.

### **The Fifteenth Bracha: *Es Tzemach David avdecha me'heira tatzmi'ach***

(The offshoot of the Davidic dynasty should speedily sprout forth)

את צמח דוד עבדך מהרה תצמיח

#### *Background* מקורות

There are 20 words in this blessing corresponding to the 20 words of the verse in *Yeshaya*<sup>17</sup> *For Hashem will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her ruins; He will make her wilderness like Eden and her wasteland like a garden of Hashem; joy and gladness can be found there, thanksgiving and the sound of music.*

### **Es Tzemach David** את צמח דוד

In this the Fifteenth *bracha* we ask *Hashem* for the ultimate redemption through *Mashiach* a descendant from the *Davidic dynasty*. The word *Tzemach* denotes sprouting also alludes to *Mashiach* who is called *Tzemach* by the prophet *Zechariah*; *Behold a man by the name of Tzemach will come and from him will sprout forth and rebuild the temple.*

In this *bracha* we refer to the glory of Jewish kings with the word *Keren* (lit. horn) and *Karno* (lit. his horn). Thus we say raise his glory by using the word *karno* - horn. Indeed on Rosh Hashanah we sound the *Shofar* (Ram's horn) to proclaim the glory of G-d's dominion. The horn is not only symbolic by the sound it produces but it was also used as the vessel from which the anointing oil was used to coronate new Jewish kings.

Furthermore, Rav Hutner ז"ל notes that the noise produced by the *Shofar* proclaiming the new king is produced by blowing through its narrow opening. When G-d created the first Man (*Adam Harishon*), He did so by blowing a *breath of life* into his nostrils. It is at this point *Adam Harishon* came to life and recognized G-d as his

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<sup>17</sup> 51:3

sole king. When we blow the *Shofar* with our breath, it is as if to say that our very own *breath of life* is a sign of *Hashem's* royalty as it is mirrored in human life. Thus, glory is signified by a horn. When we sound the *Shofar* horn, we do it with a part of ourselves that is G-dly that beckons that *Hashem* reinstitutes His true glory upon mankind and the entire world<sup>18</sup>.

**The Sixteenth Bracha: (Av HaRachaman) She'ma Koleinu**  
([Merciful Father.] listen to our voices)  
שבח הרחמן (שמע קולינו)<sup>19</sup>

**Background מקורות**

The Gemora in *Megillah*<sup>20</sup> explains that once *Dovid Hamelech* is returned to his reign we once again have the ability to pray. *Dovid* was the one who is the *sweet singer of Israel*, the one who wrote the book on prayer with his sefer *Tehillim*, the voice of prayer for all generations.

**Inserting Personal Prayers**

This blessing is a general prayer that *Hashem* should accept all our prayers to Him. During this blessing it is customary to insert prayers for livelihood (*Parnassah*) and for healing (*refuah*) as well as forgiveness for sins. Unlike the rest of the middle section of *Shemoneh Esrei* one may add any type of prayer at the end of this *bracha* before the words *Ki atta Shome'ah tefilas etc.* כי אתה שומע תפלת וכו', since this blessing is “non-descript”.

On public fast days, each individual inserts the special prayer of *Aneinu* (Answer us) before the words *Ki atta Shome'ah tefilas etc.* כי אתה שומע תפלת וכו'. The *Chazzan* is supposed to recite the prayer of *Aneinu* on public fast days as a separate *bracha* after the *bracha* of *Re'ei nah be'anyeinu* ראה נא בענינו (Please see our affliction). If he forgot to recite it there, he should insert it here as part of the *bracha* of *She'ma Koleinu*.

The source of this prayer according to *Shibalei Haleket* is a reference to the sounds of the Jewish people crying from the hard work they were forced to do, and *Hashem* responding to it, by redeeming them from their exile in Egypt (*Mitzrayim*). The verse

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<sup>18</sup> See *The Art of Jewish Prayer*, Rabbi Y.Kirzner, Judaica Press, pages 239 - 241

<sup>19</sup> These are not recited by *Nusach Ashkenaz*. Other customs have it in reverse, *She'ma koleinu Av HaRachamim etc.*

<sup>20</sup> *Daf*18a

states<sup>21</sup> *And the Jews moaned from their work and they cried out. Their outcry because of the work went up to G-d. G-d heard their moaning and G-d remembered the covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.*

We see from this that even when we just direct our moans, our non-verbal communication to G-d, He listens and responds as if it were a regular prayer. It is the mere fact that we are connecting with *Hashem* to sort out our troubles and to settle our difficulties that is significant. If we can develop a relationship with G-d throughout all the mundane aspects of life, we would be worthy of becoming close with *Hashem*. Thus, a prayer that is just for the sake of prayer is the true essence of prayer. Like a child who seeks the attention of his affectionate parents, who may fabricate a request for something that he doesn't really need just for the sake of having a relationship with his parents. So too, we relish praying to G-d just for the sake of communicating with the Al-mighty, our Creator<sup>22</sup>.

*Rebbe Yitzchok Levi of Barditchev was well known for his genuine love of his Jewish brethren to the point where he would always find a way to bring out the best character in their behavior even where their behavior was clearly wrong. Once he even went over to someone smoking on Shabbos, (a major violation), and asked him if he knew that today was Shabbos. The man answered him that he was aware. He then asked him politely that maybe he wasn't aware of the gravity of this major violation of Shabbos. The man said he knew it well but he didn't care. The Rebbe then turned towards heaven and exclaimed how honorable the Jewish people are that they are not willing to lie at any cost, even to save face!*

The Rebbe was once approached by someone in shul who complained about how the people in the congregation would slur the words of davening and mispronounce them. The Rebbe then called over another individual with his two year old son and listened as the son starting rambling half garbled sentences which no one could understand. He then asked the father what his son just said, and he told him. The Rebbe turned to this fellow and said, you see, a father understands what his son says even when his manner of speech is faulty. So too, Hashem loves to listen to the prayers of His children. He understands them even if their speech is garbled Hence we cry out to Hashem in our prayer, Merciful Father, listen to our voices (אב הרחמן<sup>23</sup>) שמע קולינו. We just need to make our voices heard, and Hashem immediately listens!

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<sup>21</sup> *Shemos* 2:23, 24

<sup>22</sup> Based on *The Art of Jewish Prayer* pages 245 - 247

<sup>23</sup> These are not recited by *Nusach Ashkenaz*; Other customs have it in reverse, *She'ma Koleinu Av HaRachaman* etc.

## Questions:

- 1) What change is there in the theme of *Shemoneh Esrei* at the *bracha* of *Teka Beshofar*?
- 2) Why does the *bracha* of *Hashiva Shofeinu* follow the *bracha* of *Teka Beshofar*?
- 3) In general, why do the blessings of *Shemoneh Esrei* not require *Malchus*?
- 4) Why in particular does the *bracha* of *Hashiva Shofeinu* contain *Malchus*?
- 5) What does *Hamelech Hamishpat* connote different than *Melech ohev tzedakah u'mishpat*?
- 6) How many words are there in the *bracha* of *Ve'lamalshinim* and what do they correspond to?
- 7) Why do we pray for the downfall of heretics rather than pray for them to do *Teshuva* (repent)?
- 8) What is significant about the letters in the stanza of *Al Hatzaddikim*?
- 9) Why do we use the present tense *Boney Yerushalayim* (Builder of Jerusalem)?
- 10) On *Tish'a B'Av* when we insert *Nacheim* into the *Shemoneh Esrei* of *Mincha*, when do we end it with its own special closing of *Baruch Atta Hashem Menacheim Tziyone u'vonei Yerushalayim* and when do we not?
- 11) Where is the prayer *Aneinu* inserted on Fast days?

## Answers:

- 1) At the *bracha* of *Teka Beshofar* we start to pray for the general public, our communities. Up until this point the *brochos* were for physical or spiritual needs of individuals.
- 2) After the final redemption occurs there will be judgment passed for those who transgressed *Hashem's* commands as indicated by the verse in *Yeshaya* 1:25.
- 3) The opening of *Shemoneh Esrei* satisfies the requirement of *Sheim u'malchus*. All the following *brochos* do not have the requirement of *Malchus* by virtue of being close to the first *bracha* i.e. *Bracha Ha'semucha Le'chaverta*.
- 4) The *bracha* of *Hashiva Shofeinu* contains *Malchus* not because the format requires it; rather it is there since the blessing refers to G-d passing judgment which is an attribute of Kingship.
- 5) *Hamelech Hamishpat* connotes that *Hashem* brings judgment to those who transgress His *mitzvos* even when they are not seeking a judge. However, *Hamelech Hamishpat* is recited during *Asseres Yemei Teshuva* since at that time *Hashem* sits in judgment.
- 6) The *bracha* of *Ve'lamalshinim* consists of 29 words. It alludes to the sinner who destroys a world created with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. There are another 5 letters of the alphabet which are used at the end of words. The other 2 words of this *bracha* represent the present world we live in and the World to Come which the sinner is forfeiting.
- 7) Since heresy is so detrimental to Torah observance, we wish it to be eradicated in order to emphasize the tremendous danger it poses.
- 8) In the *bracha Al Hatzaddikim* we find every single letter of the Hebrew *Aleph-Beis* is used.
- 9) Since this blessing was said during the time of the Temple as a prayer that it should continue to remain standing. Nowadays, we keep the original version even though it should have read in the future tense that *Hashem* should rebuild Jerusalem
- 10) *Nacheim* is recited with its own special ending *bracha* of *Menacheim Tziyone u'vonei Yerushalayim* when it is recited in its place at the end of the *bracha* of *Veli'Yerushalayim ircha*. Otherwise it can be said elsewhere but without its own closing *bracha*.
- 11) The *Chazzan* inserts *Aneinu* during *Chazoras Hashatz* after the *bracha* of *Re'ei (nah) ve'anyeinu* as a separate *bracha*. If he forgets to recite it at that point, he can say it at the end of *She'ma Koleinu* like everyone else in the congregation.