



בְּשִׁיטְחָא

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BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT

It's the Thought that Counts

The end of *Parshas Nasso* brings us to one of the more curious sections of the Torah. The Torah describes, in detail, what the *Nasi* of each *Shevet* brought as a gift for the *Mishkan*. The text is unusual in that it is extremely repetitious. Each *Nasi* brought the same gift – the same animals, the same weights of silver, and so on. Yet, the Torah precisely describes each gift as if it were the only one given. This raises the question, what purpose is there in the reiteration of each donation? Why not simply state the items that were brought, and that each *Nasi* brought the same gift?

The *Ramban*¹ explains how each *Nasi* arrived at determining what gift to bring. And although each gift was exactly the same, they differed in the reasoning that caused each *Nasi* to decide what to offer. As such, the Torah chronicles the episode as if each *Nasi* brought a totally separate and distinct gift. Though, to our eyes, it would appear that the *Nesi'im* could be lumped together, to Hashem each gift was precious and special in its own right.

It's clear that though something may appear to be repetitious, Hashem's focus is on the thoughts and feelings behind the scenes. Today we no longer have *Karbanos*, but in its place, we are able to daven to Hashem. Yet, it may appear that *Tefillah* is tedious, simply repeating that which was said earlier in the day, the week, and the year. However, what makes each *Tefillah* unique are the thoughts and feelings behind the words. Every *Tefillah* is special, but what makes it special is what we put into it.

¹ *Ramban Parshas Naso* 7:13

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Tefillah is one of those things that “stands in the very top of the Heavens,”¹ yet, paradoxically, also needs constant strengthening.² We may *know* that we stand before the King of Kings, yet we don't *feel* that way. And in determining how we act, our feelings usually win over our knowledge. How does one strengthen the feeling of standing before Hashem? How can we strengthen our *Kavana* during *Tefillah*?

Practically, it is best to arrive at least 5 minutes early before davening. During those 5 minutes, focus on the ‘upcoming meeting.’ Visualize the meeting – how every word is carefully counted and measured. How the effectiveness of our davening is intertwined with the thoughts surrounding our *Tefillos*. And how much Hashem wants to hear our *Tefillos*, how important the words that we say are to Him.

¹ *Berachos* 6b

² *Berachos* 32b

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ILLUMINATING THE MIND

A practical and easy way to enhance one's *Kavannah* is to make sure to read the words of *Tefillah* from a siddur. Though many of us already know the words by heart, reading the printed word will help us focus on the words, and on what we are doing.¹

Reb Simcha Zissel Ziv (1824-1898), known as the Alter of Kelm, was once observed standing up in middle of davening, and heading to the bookshelf in the back. He pulled a siddur off the shelf, glanced inside, and headed back to his seat. After davening, some *Talmidim* asked him what had occurred – why had he interrupted his davening to head to the back bookshelf, and what was he looking for? He responded that he had always tried to daven from a siddur. However, the siddur he was using was slightly ripped, and a word was missing. Instead of reciting the word by heart, though, he made sure to find the word printed in another siddur.

¹ However, see *Aruch Hashulchan* O'C 93:8. His conclusion is that some have greater *Kavannah* when closing their eyes.

“ Instead of reciting the word by heart, though, he made sure to find the word printed in another siddur. ”



DID YOU KNOW?

- Humans are termed “*Maveh*” – seekers – because we naturally seek out Hashem in time of need.¹
- Though *Tefilla* is expressed with words, it is primarily a service of the heart.²
- Each time we daven we create letters which go up to *Shamayim* and make a tangible impact on the entire universe.³
- Each and every *Tefillah* that we daven has not and will never be replicated again.⁴

¹ *Bava Kamma* 3b, *Maharsha* ibid.

² *Taanis* 2a

³ *Nefesh HaChaim* 2:13

⁴ ibid.