

Talmud Tour
Berachot 16a-16b

Using the Sefaria text with translation of the elucidation by Rabbi Adin Even Yisrael (Steinsaltz) and also comments drawn from Chassidic teachings
Colour code: blue, Mishnah/Talmud text from this page of Berachot; Black, Chassidic comments; purple, quotations from other Talmudic or classical texts; dark red, general editorial comments; bright red, halachic statements.

Link to Standard Talmud edition Berachot 16a
HebrewBooks.org - בבלי - מסכת ברכות דף טז עמוד א

Link to the Davidoff Rambam Project where you can see the Rambam's halachic comments relating to any page of Talmud. At this point they are mainly in Hebrew, but there are brief English summaries. <https://rambampress.com/rambam-on-gemara/>

What might prevent a person from saying the Shema?

חזון פטור מקריאת שמע. תנו רבנן: "בשבתה בביתה" — פרט לעוסק במצוה. "ויבלקתה בדרך" — פרט לחתון. מכאן אמרו: הפונים את הבתולה — פטור, ואת האלמנה — חייב.

We learned in the mishna that **a groom is exempt from the recitation of *Shema*** on the first night of his marriage. **The Sages taught** the source of this *halakha* in a *baraita* based on the verse: "When you sit in your home, and when you walk along the way."
When you sit in your home, to the exclusion of one who is engaged in performance of a mitzva, who is exempt from the recitation of *Shema*; and when you walk along the way, to the exclusion of a groom, who is also exempt from the recitation of *Shema*. The *baraita* adds that **from here**, from this interpretation of the verses, **they said: One who marries a virgin is exempt** from the recitation of *Shema* on his wedding night, **but one who marries a widow is obligated.**

מאי משמע? אמר רב פפא: כי דרף. מה דרף רשות, אף הכא נמי רשות.

The Gemara clarifies the meaning of this *baraita*, and asks: **From where is it inferred** that the verse: "When you walk along the way," enables us to derive that a groom is exempt from the obligation to recite *Shema*? **Rav Pappa said** that it is derived: **Like the way; just as** the journey along a specific way described in the verse **is voluntary** and involves no mitzva, **so too all** of those who are obligated to recite *Shema* are engaged in **voluntary activities**. However, one engaged in performance of a mitzva is exempt from the obligation to recite *Shema*.

מי לא עסקינן דקאזיל לדבר מצוה, ואפילו הכי אמר רחמנא: ליתרי.

The Gemara asks: **Are we not dealing with** a case where one is walking along **on his way to perform a mitzva; nevertheless, the Torah said to recite *Shema***, indicating that he is obligated even if he set out to perform a mitzva.

אם כן, לימא קרא "בלכת", מאי "בלכתה" — שמע מינה: בלכת דידך הוא דמחויבת, הא דמצוה — פטירי.

The Gemara explains: **If so**, that the intention was to obligate in all cases, **let the Torah say: When walking** along the way. **What is** the meaning of: **When you walk** along the way? **Conclude from this: It is** in a case of **your walking**, meaning that when you do

this for your own purposes and of your own volition, **you are obligated** to recite *Shema*, **but** when you go with the objective of performing a **mitzva**, **you are exempt**.

16b

אי הכי מאי איריא הכונים את הבתולה? אפילו כונים את האלמנה נמי.

The Gemara questions this: **If so, why discuss** a case of **one who is marrying a virgin** in particular? **Even one who is marrying a widow** is performing a mitzva and should **also** be exempt.

הכא — טריד, והכא — לא טריד.

The Gemara responds that nevertheless, there is a distinction between one marrying a virgin and one marrying a widow. **Here**, in the case of one who marries a virgin, the groom is **preoccupied** by his thoughts, **while here**, in the case of one who marries a widow, **he is not preoccupied**.

אי משום טרדא, אפילו טבעה ספינתו בים נמי, אלמה אמר רבי אבא בר זבדא אמר רב: אכל חייב בכל מצות האמורות בתורה, חוץ מן התפילין שהרי נאמר בהן "פאר", שנאמר "פארך תבוש עליה וגו'!"

The Gemara challenges: **If** a groom is exempt from the recitation of *Shema* simply **due to preoccupation**, then **even** one who is preoccupied because **his ship sank at sea** should be exempt. **If so, why then did Rabbi Abba bar Zavda say that Rav said: A mourner is obligated in all the mitzvot mentioned in the Torah except for the mitzva to don phylacteries, as the term splendor is stated with regard to phylacteries, as it is stated that the prophet Ezekiel was prohibited to mourn and was told: "Bind your splendour upon yourself" (Ezekiel 24:17).** If even a mourner, who is pained and preoccupied, is obligated to recite *Shema*, clearly preoccupation has no bearing upon one's obligation.

אמרי התם טרדא דרשות הכא טרדא דמצוה.

The Gemara responds: Nevertheless, there is a distinction between the cases. **There**, it is a case of **preoccupation with a voluntary** act, as there is no mitzva to be preoccupied with his mourning, but **here**, in the case of a groom, the cause of **the preoccupation is the mitzva** itself.

Rabban Gamliel's unusual Behaviour

מתני' רחץ לילה הראשון שמטה אשתו. אמרו לו תלמידיו: למדתנו רבינו שאכל אסור לרחוץ? אמר להם איני כשאר בני אדם, אסטגיס אני.

MISHNA: The mishna relates another episode portraying unusual conduct by Rabban Gamliel. **He bathed on the first night after his wife died. His students said to him: Have you not taught us, our teacher, that a mourner is prohibited to bathe?** He answered them: **I am not like other people, I am delicate [istenis].** For me, not bathing causes actual physical distress, and even a mourner need not suffer physical distress as part of his mourning.

וכשמת טבי עבדו קבל עליו תנחומין. אמרו לו תלמידיו: למדתנו רבינו שאין מקבלין תנחומין על העבדים? אמר להם: אין טבי עבדי כשאר כל העבדים, כשר היה.

Another exceptional incident is related: **And when his slave, Tavi, died, Rabban Gamliel accepted condolences for his death** as one would for a close family member. **His students said to him: Have you not taught us, our teacher, that one does not accept condolences for the death of slaves?** Rabban Gamliel said to his students: **My slave, Tavi, is not like all the rest of the slaves, he was virtuous** and it is appropriate to accord him the same respect accorded to a family member.

תמן אם רוֹצֵה לְקַרֹּת קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע לַיְלָה הַרְאִשׁוֹן — קוֹרֵא, רַבֵּן שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אוֹמֵר: לֹא כָּל הַרוֹצֵה לִיטוֹל אֶת הַשֵּׁם, יִטוֹל.

With regard to the recitation of *Shema* on one's wedding night, the Sages said that **if**, despite his exemption, **a groom wishes to recite *Shema* on the first night**, he may do so. **Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: Not everyone who wishes to assume the reputation** of a G-d-fearing person **may assume** it, and consequently, not everyone who wishes to recite *Shema* on his wedding night may do so.

גַּמְי' מַאי טַעְמָא דְרַבֵּן (שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן) גַּמְלִיאֵל? קְסָבֵר: אֲנִינוּת לַיְלָה — דְרַבָּנֵן, דְּכַתִּיב: "וְאֶחָרִיתָהּ כְּיוֹם מוֹר". וּבְמָקוֹם אִי־סְטָנִים לֹא גִזְרוּ בֵּיהּ רַבָּנֵן.

GEMARA: With regard to Rabban Gamliel's bathing on the first night after the death of his wife, the Gemara asks: **What is the reason** that **Rabban Gamliel** did not practice the customs of mourning after his wife died? The Gemara answers: **He holds that** acute mourning [*aninut*] is in effect only on the day of the death itself, but **acute mourning at night is only by rabbinic law, as it is written:** "And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentations; I will bring sackcloth upon your loins and baldness upon every head; and I will make you like a mourner for an only child, **and the end will be like a bitter day**" (Amos 8:10). Therefore, by Torah law one's acute mourning is only during the day, like a bitter day, while the acute mourning at night that follows is only rabbinic. **And in the case of a delicate person, the Sages did not issue a decree** that one should afflict himself during the period of acute mourning....

The Relationship of Patriarchs and Matriarchs to each Jew

תַּנּוּ רַבָּנֵן: אֵין קוֹרִין "אֲבוֹת" אֶלָּא לְשִׁלְשָׁה, וְאֵין קוֹרִין "אִמָּהוֹת" אֶלָּא לְאַרְבַּע.

The Sages taught in a *baraita*: **One may only call three people patriarchs**, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but not Jacob's children. **And one may only call four people matriarchs**, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah.

Each of the Patriarchs and of the different Tribes manifests a certain spiritual quality.

Any individual today may have certain qualities from this source, but not others.

However every Jew has within him or her the three qualities of the Patriarchs: Abraham - Kindness, Isaac - Severity, Jacob - Mercy.

Further, when speaking to Jewish women and girls, the Rebbe would often stress that each one is descendant of Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah.

אֲבוֹת מַאי טַעְמָא? אֵילִימָא מְשׁוּם דְּלֹא יְדַעִין אֵי מְרַאוּבֵן קַא אֲתִינֵן אֵי מְשַׁמְעוֹן קַא אֲתִינֵן, אֵי הֲכִי אִמָּהוֹת נְמִי לֹא יְדַעִין אֵי מְרַחֵל קַא אֲתִינֵן אֵי מְלֵאָה קַא אֲתִינֵן! אֶלָּא, עַד הֲכָא חֲשִׁיבִי, טְפִי לֹא חֲשִׁיבִי.

The Gemara asks: **What is the reason** for this exclusivity with regard to the **Patriarchs? If you say that it is because we do not know whether we descend from Reuben or from Simon**, so we cannot accurately say our father Reuben, for example, **if so**, with regard to the Matriarchs as well, **we do not know whether we descend from Rachel or from Leah**, and we should not call Rachel and Leah matriarchs either.

Instead, the reason the sons of Jacob are not called patriarchs is not for that reason, but because **until** Jacob **they are significant** enough to be referred to as patriarchs, but **beyond** Jacob, **they are not significant** enough to be referred to as patriarchs....

On the Shema and the Amida

Psalm 63:5-6

Then I shall bless You in my lifetime; in Your name I shall lift my hands.

הַכֵּן אֲבָרְכֶךָ בְּחַיֵּי רַשְׁמִיךָ
אִשָּׁא כַפָּי:

6[As] with choice foods and fat, my soul will be sated,
when my mouth praises with expressions of song.

וּכְמוֹ חֵלֶב וְדָשֵׁן תִּשְׂבַּע נַפְשִׁי
וְשִׁפְתַי רִנְנוֹת יְהִלְלֶיךָ:

אמר רבי אלעזר: מאי דכתיב, "כִּן אֲבָרְכָה בְּחַיִּי בְּשִׁמְךָ אֲשָׂא כַּפִּי" — "כִּן אֲבָרְכָה בְּחַיִּי" — זו קריאת שמע. "בְּשִׁמְךָ אֲשָׂא כַּפִּי" — זו תפלה. ואם עושה כן — עליו הכתוב אומר: "כְּמוֹ חֵלֶב וְדָשֵׁן תִּשְׂבַּע נַפְשִׁי". ולא עוד אלא שנוחל שני עולמים — העולם הזה והעולם הבא, שצאמר: "וְשִׁפְתַי רִנְנוֹת יְהִלְלֶיךָ".

The Gemara cites an aggadic statement concerning prayer and the recitation of *Shema*. **Rabbi Elazar said: What is the meaning of that which is written: "So I will bless You as I live, to Your name I will raise my hands" (Psalms 63:5)? So I will bless You as I live, refers to the recitation of *Shema*, and to Your name I will raise my hands, refers to the *Amida* prayer, which is characterized as lifting one's hands to G-d. And if one does so, recites *Shema* and prays, the verse says about him: "As with fat and marrow, my soul will be satisfied" (Psalms 63:6). And not only does he receive this reward, but he inherits two worlds, this world and the World-to-Come, as it is stated: "With lips of joys [*renanot*], my mouth praises You" (Psalms 63:6).** The plural, joys, refers to two joys, that of this world and that of the World-to-Come. Here we see Rabbi Elazar explaining two verses of Psalms in terms of saying the *Shema* and the *Amidah*. Can anyone invent such explanations? In traditional life, if one can find a source for one's explanation – in the Talmud, Midrash or Chassidic teachings – that is the sign of authenticity. Otherwise, if one simply 'made it up oneself', it might not be true to the real meaning of the verse. The Rebbe often cited the idea that all authentic interpretations of the same verse are linked by an inner Torah logic. Despite these reservations, many people in daily life whether Chassidim or not, discover personal ways of understanding another level of meaning of a Biblical verse, or of a quote from the Talmud. Many such interpretations feed into Jewish humour.

רבי אלעזר בתר דמסיים צלותיה אמר הכי: "יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו, שתשכן בפנינו אהבה ואהבה ושלוה וריעות. ומרבה גבולנו בתלמידים ומצליח סופנו אחרית ותקוה. ותשים חלקנו בגן עדן, ומקננו בחבר טוב ויצר טוב בעולמך. ונשפים ונמצא יחול לכבנו ליראה את שמך, ותבא לפניך קורת נפשנו לטובה".

The Gemara describes how **after Rabbi Elazar concluded his prayer, he said the following** additional prayer:

**May it be Your will, Lord our G-d,
to cause to dwell in our lot love and brotherhood, peace and friendship.
And may You make our borders rich in disciples
and cause us to ultimately succeed, that we will have a good end and hope.
And may You set our portion in the Garden of Eden,
and may You establish for us a good companion and a good inclination in Your world.
And may we rise early and find the aspiration of our hearts to fear Your name,
and may the satisfaction of our souls come before You, i.e., may You hear our prayers that we may have spiritual contentment in this world for the best.**

רבי יוחנן בתר דמסיים צלותיה אמר הכי: "יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו, שתציץ בקשטנו, ותביט ברעמנו, ותתלבש ברמיה, ותתפסה בעצה, ותתעטר בחסידותך, ותתאזר בחנינותך, ותבא לפניך מדת טובה וענותנותך".

Similarly, the Gemara recounts that **after Rabbi Yohanan concluded his prayer, he said the following** additional prayer:

**May it be Your will, Lord our G-d,
that You look upon our shame and behold our plight,
that You clothe Yourself in Your mercy,**

**and cover Yourself with Your might,
that You wrap Yourself in Your loving-kindness,
and gird Yourself with Your grace,
and may Your attributes of goodness and humility come before You.**

רבי זיגרא בַּתֵּר דְּמַסִּיִּים צְלוֹתֵיהּ אָמַר הֵכִי: "יְהִי רַצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, שְׁלֵא נַחֲטָא וְלֹא נִבּוֹשׁ וְלֹא נִפְלֵם מֵאַבּוֹתֵינוּ."
Similarly, after Rabbi Zeira concluded his prayers he said the following additional prayer:

**May it be Your will, Lord our G-d,
that we not sin or shame ourselves,
and that we not disgrace ourselves before our forefathers,**
in the sense that our actions should not disgrace the actions of our forefathers.

רבי חייה בַּתֵּר דְּמַצְלֵי אָמַר הֵכִי: "יְהִי רַצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, שְׁתֵּהא תוֹרַתְךָ אוּמְנֵנוּתֵנוּ, וְאַל יִדְוֶה לְבַנּוּ, וְאַל יִחָשְׁכוּ עֵינֵינוּ."
עֵינֵינוּ."

After Rabbi Hiyya prayed he said the following:

**May it be Your will, Lord our G-d,
that Your Torah should be our vocation,
and may our heart not become faint nor our eyes dim.**

רב בַּתֵּר צְלוֹתֵיהּ אָמַר הֵכִי: "יְהִי רַצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁתֵּתֵנוּ לְנוּ חַיִּים אַרְוָפִים, חַיִּים שְׁלֵשׁ שְׁלוֹם, חַיִּים שְׁלֵשׁ טוֹבָה, חַיִּים שְׁלֵשׁ בְּרָכָה, חַיִּים שְׁלֵשׁ פְּרָגְסָה, חַיִּים שְׁלֵשׁ חֲלוּץ עֲצָמוֹת, חַיִּים שְׁלֵשׁ בְּהֵם יִרְאַת חֲטָא, חַיִּים שְׁלֵשׁ אֵינן בְּהֵם בּוֹשָׁה וְכִלְיָמָה, חַיִּים שְׁלֵשׁ עוֹשֵׁר וְכָבוֹד, חַיִּים שְׁתֵּהא בְּנוּ אֶהְבֵּת תוֹרָה וְיִרְאַת שְׁמַיִם, חַיִּים שְׁתֵּמְלֵא לְנוּ אֵת כָּל מְשָׁאֵלוֹת לְבַנּוּ לְטוֹבָה."
עֵינֵינוּ."

After his prayer, Rav said the following:

**May it be Your will, Lord our G-d,
that You grant us long life, a life of peace,
a life of goodness, a life of blessing,
a life of sustenance, a life of freedom of movement from place to place, where we
are not tied to one place,
a life of dread of sin, a life without shame and disgrace,
a life of wealth and honor,
a life in which we have love of Torah and reverence for Heaven,
a life in which You fulfill all the desires of our heart for good.**

רבי בַּתֵּר צְלוֹתֵיהּ אָמַר הֵכִי: "יְהִי רַצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלֵּהֵי אַבּוֹתֵינוּ, שְׁתֵּמְלֵנוּ מֵעַזֵּי פָּנִים וּמֵעֲזוֹת פָּנִים, מֵאֲדָם רַע, וּמִפְּגַע רַע, מִחָבֵר רַע, מִשְׂכֵּן רַע, מִשְׁטָן מְשֻׁחָת, וּמִדִּין קָשָׁה וּמִבְּעַל דִּין קָשָׁה, בֵּין שְׁהוּא בֶן בְּרִית בֵּין שְׁאִינוּ בֶן בְּרִית."
עֵינֵינוּ."

After his prayer, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi said the following:

**May it be Your will, Lord our G-d, and G-d of our forefathers,
that You save us from the arrogant and from arrogance in general,
from a bad man, from a bad mishap,
from an evil instinct, from a bad companion,
from a bad neighbor, from the destructive Satan,
from a harsh trial and from a harsh opponent,
whether he is a member of the covenant, a Jew,
or whether he is not a member of the covenant.**

וְאַף עַל גַּב דְּקִנְיָמֵי קְצוּצֵי עֲלִיָּה דְּרַבִּי.

And the Gemara notes that Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi would recite this prayer every day despite the fact that royal officers stood watch over Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi for his

protection; nevertheless, he prayed to avoid conflict or hindrance resulting from arrogance.

רב ספרא בְּתַר צְלוּתִיהָ אָמַר הַכִּי: "יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, שְׁתַּשִּׁים שְׁלוֹם

After his prayer, Rav Safra said the following:

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d, that You establish peace

Folio 17a

בְּפַמְלָנֵי שָׁל מַעְלָה. וּבְפַמְלָנֵי שָׁל מַטָּה, וּבֵין הַתְּלַמִּידִים הַעוֹסְקִים בְּתוֹרַתְךָ בֵּין עוֹסְקִין לְשִׁמָּה בֵּין עוֹסְקִין שְׁלֵא לְשִׁמָּה. וְכָל הַעוֹסְקִין שְׁלֵא לְשִׁמָּה יְהִי רְצוֹן שִׁיְהוּ עוֹסְקִין לְשִׁמָּה".

in the heavenly entourage [pamalia] of angels each of whom ministers to a specific nation (see Daniel 10), and whose infighting causes war on earth;

and in the earthly entourage, the Sages,

and among the disciples engaged in the study of Your Torah,

whether they engage in its study for its own sake or not for its own sake.

And all those engaged in Torah study not for its own sake,

may it be Your will that they will come to engage in its study for its own sake.

רַבִּי אֶלְפִסְנָדְרִי בְּתַר צְלוּתִיהָ אָמַר הַכִּי: "יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, שְׁתַּעֲמִידֵנוּ בְּקֶרֶן אֲוֶרָה, וְאֵל תַּעֲמִידֵנוּ בְּקֶרֶן חֹשֶׁכָה, וְאֵל יִדְוָה לְבַנּוּ, וְאֵל יִחַשְׁכוּ עֵינֵינוּ". אֵיפֹא דְאָמְרִי, הָא רַב הַמְּנוּנָא מְצַלִּי לֵהּ. וְרַבִּי אֶלְפִסְנָדְרִי בְּתַר דְּמַצְלִי אָמַר הַכִּי: "רַבּוֹן הַעוֹלָמִים, גְּלוּי וְיָדוּעַ לְפָנֶיךָ שְׂרָצוֹנֵנוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹנְךָ, וּמִי מַעֲבָב? — שְׂאוּר שְׁבַעֲיָסָה וְשַׁעֲבוּד מִלְּכִיּוֹת. יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ שְׁתַּצִּילֵנוּ מִיָּדָם, וְנָשׁוּב לַעֲשׂוֹת חוֹקֵי רְצוֹנְךָ בְּלִבְךָ שְׁלָם".

After his prayer, Rabbi Alexandri said the following:

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d,

that You station us in a lighted corner and not in a darkened corner,

and do not let our hearts become faint nor our eyes dim.

Some say that this was the prayer that Rav Hamnuna would recite, and that after Rabbi Alexandri prayed, he would say the following:

Master of the Universe, it is revealed and known before You

that our will is to perform Your will, and what prevents us?

On the one hand, **the yeast in the dough**, the evil inclination that is within every person;

and the subjugation to the kingdoms on the other.

May it be Your will

that You will deliver us from their hands, of both the evil inclination and the foreign kingdoms,

so that we may return to perform the edicts of Your will with a perfect heart.

רַבָּא בְּתַר צְלוּתִיהָ אָמַר הַכִּי: "אֱלֹהֵי, עַד שְׁלֵא נּוֹצַרְתִּי אֵינִי כְּדָאִי, וְעַכְשָׁיו שְׁנוֹצַרְתִּי כְּאֵלוּ לֹא נּוֹצַרְתִּי. עָפֵר אֲנִי בְּחַיִּי, קַל וְחוֹמֶר בְּמִיתַתִּי, הָרִי אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ כְּכֵלִי מְלֵא בּוֹשָׁה וּבְלִימָה. יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵי, שְׁלֵא אַחְטָא עוֹד, וּמָה שְׁחַטָּאתִי לְפָנֶיךָ מְרַק בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים, אֲבָל לֹא עַל יְדֵי יִסּוּרֵיךָ וְחֻלְאִים רַעִים". וְהֵינּוּ וַיְדוּי דְרַב הַמְּנוּנָא זֹוטִי בְּיוֹמָא דְכַפּוּרֵי.

After his prayer, Rava said the following:

My G-d, before I was created I was worthless,

and now that I have been created it is as if I had not been created, I am no more significant.

I am dust in life, all the more so in my death.

I am before You as a vessel filled with shame and humiliation.

Therefore, may it be Your will, Lord my G-d, that I will sin no more,

and that those transgressions that I have committed,

cleanse in Your abundant mercy;

but may this cleansing **not be by means of suffering and serious illness**, but rather in a manner I will be able to easily endure.

And this is the confession of Rav Hamnuna Zuti on Yom Kippur.

מר בריה דרביןא פי הוה מסיים צלותיה אמר הכי: "אלהי, נצור לשוני מרע ושפתותי מדבר מרמה, ולמקללי נפשי תדום, ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה. פתח לבי בתורתך, ובמצותיך תרדוף נפשי. ותצילני מפגע רע, מיצר הרע, ומאשה רעה, ומכל רעות המתרגשות לבא בעולם. וכל החושבים עלי רעה מהרה הפך עצתם וקלקל מחשבותם. יהיו לרצון אמרי פי והגיון לבי לפניך ה' צורי וגואלי".

When Mar, son of Ravina, would conclude his prayer, he said the following:

My G-d, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceit.

To those who curse me let my soul be silent

and may my soul be like dust to all.

Open my heart to Your Torah,

and may my soul pursue your mitzvot.

And save me from a bad mishap, from the evil inclination,

from a bad woman, and from all evils that suddenly come upon the world.

And all who plan evil against me,

swiftly thwart their counsel, and frustrate their plans.

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart find favor before

You,

Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

'May my soul be as dust to all – open my heart to Your Torah'. The Rebbe comments on this. When the person's approach to Torah is only with the effort of the mind and the intellect, without achieving 'my soul should be as dust', it is very hard to truly open one's heart to Your Torah, meaning G-d's Torah. For the Torah is the Wisdom of the Divine, infinitely higher than the limited intellect of a human being. A person with only his own intellectual power can grasp only a tiny aspect of it.

But if the person feels *bitul*, self-abnegation, and feels that he is like the dust on which everyone treads – then this is a preparation to receive the Torah of the Holy One, blessed be He. Indeed, then he can grasp Hashem's Torah with intellect and understanding. Even more, he can ask G-d to 'open my heart to Your Torah' meaning that his heart should be truly open, with 'breadth' and openness, to receive G-d's boundless Torah.

Another point on this passage, from the Previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzhak Schneersohn (1880-1950). On the words 'Open my heart to Your Torah and let my Soul pursue Your Mitzvot' נפשי – פתח לבי לתורתך ובמצותיך תרדוף נפשי – one can ask: surely, Torah is wisdom, which relates to the mind, not the heart? And Mitzvot are carried out with the body, not the soul? So, what is the significance of the wording?

The Previous Rebbe answers: Although we learn Torah with our head, our intellect, it is the desire in the heart which prompts us to do that. Hence we need the input from our heart, in order that we should learn Torah with our head. Similarly with carrying out Mitzvot. The dedication of the soul helps us perform the Mitzvot with our bodies. Nefesh, soul, has also another meaning: Will. When our Will is focused on carrying out the Mitzvot, we do so in a dedicated way.

Concluding Personal Prayer from the Chabad Prayerbook:

My Gd, guard my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking deceitfully. Let my soul be silent to those who curse me; let my soul be as dust to all. Open my heart to Your Torah, and let my soul eagerly pursue Your commandments. As for all those who plot evil against me, hasten to annul their counsel and frustrate their design. Let them be as chaff before the wind; let the angel of the L-rd thrust them away. That Your beloved ones may be delivered, help with Your right hand and answer me. Do it for the sake of Your Name; do it for the sake of Your right hand; do it for the sake of Your Torah; do it for the sake of Your holiness. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable before You, L-rd, my Strength and my Redeemer.

אלהי, נצור לשוני מרע, ושפתי מדבר מרמה, ולמקללי נפשי תדום, ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה. פתח לבי בתורתך ובמצותיך תרדוף נפשי, וכל־החושבים עלי רעה, מהרה הפך עצתם וקלקל מחשבתם: יהיו כמץ לפני רוח ומלאך יי דוחה. למען יתלצון ידידיך, הושיעה ימינה וענני: עשה למען שמך, עשה למען ימינה, עשה למען תורתך, עשה למען קדשך. יהיו לרצון אמרי פי והגיון לבי לפניך, יי צורי וגואלי:

He who makes peace (During the Ten Days of Penitence say: the peace) in His heavens, may He make peace for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

עשה שלום (בעשיית השלום) במרומי הוא יעשה שלום עלינו ועל כל־ישראל, ואמרו אמן:

May it be Your will, L-rd our Gd and Gd of our fathers, that the Bet Hamikdash be speedily rebuilt in our days, and grant us our portion in Your Torah.

יהי רצון מלפניך, יי אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שיבנה בית המקדש במהרה בימינו, ותן חלקנו בתורתך:

Composing Original Personal Prayers and Finding Personal Meaning in the Prayer texts in the Prayer Book

We see that several Sages composed original prayers with which to conclude the Amidah, and a text based on that of Mar, son of Ravina, is incorporated into our Prayerbook. Additional prayers can be inserted by anyone into the blessing 'Hear our Voice' (see text of this below). But a constant aspect of Prayer is finding oneself in the text printed in the Prayerbook. A personal thoughtful approach to prayer helps one achieve this.

Text of Hear our Voice: Hear our voice, L-rd our Gd; merciful Father, have compassion upon us and accept our prayers in mercy and favour, for You are Gd who hears prayers and supplications; do not turn us away empty-handed from You, our King, for You hear the prayer of everyone. ***INSERT PERSONAL PRAYER HERE*** Blessed are You L-rd, who hears prayer.

שמע קולנו יי אלהינו, אב הרחמן רחם עלינו, וקבל ברחמים ובִרְצוֹן את־תפלתנו, כי אל שומע תפלות ותחנונים אתה, ומלפניך מלפנו יקום אלה־תשיבנו. כי אתה שומע תפלת כל־פה. ברוך אתה יי, שומע תפלה:

From the Talmud: Berachot 17a - Personal Prayer after the Amidah when Fasting

רב שישת כי הנה יתיב בתעניתא, בתר דמצלי אמר הכי: "רבון העולמים, גלוי לפניך בזמן שביית המקדש קנים, אדם חוטא — ומקריב קרבן. ואין מקריבין ממנו, אלא חלב ודמו, ומתפפר לו. ועכשיו שבתתי בתענית ונתמעט חלבי ודמי, יהי רצון מלפניך שיהא חלבי ודמי שנתמעט כאילו הקרבתי לפניך על גבי המזבח, ותרצני".

The Gemara recounts that **when Rav Sheshet would sit in observance of a fast, after he prayed he said as follows:**

Master of the Universe, it is revealed before You

that when the Temple is standing, one sins and offers a sacrifice.

And although only its fat and blood were offered from that sacrifice on the altar, his

transgression is atoned for him.

And now, I sat in observance of a fast and my fat and blood diminished.

May it be Your will that my fat and blood that diminished be considered as if I offered a sacrifice before You on the altar, and may I find favor in Your eyes.

Having cited statements that various Sages would recite after their prayers, the Gemara cites additional passages recited by the Sages on different occasions.

רבי יוחנן פי הגוה מסיים ספרא דאיוב, אמר הכי: "סוף אדם למות וסוף בהמה לשחיטה, והכל למיתה הם עומדים. אשרי מי שגדל בתורה ועמלו בתורה, ועושה נחת רוח ליוצרו, וגדל בשם טוב ונפטר בשם טוב מן העולם, ועליו אמר שלמה: 'טוב שם משמן טוב ויום המות מיום הנלדו'."

When Rabbi Yoḥanan would conclude study of the book of Job, he said the following:

A person will ultimately die and an animal will ultimately be slaughtered, and all are destined for death. Therefore, death itself is not a cause for great anguish.

Rather, **happy is he who grew up in Torah, whose labor is in Torah,**

who gives pleasure to his Creator,

who grew up with a good name and who took leave of the world with a good name.

Such a person lived his life fully, **and about him, Solomon said:**

"A good name is better than fine oil, and the day of death than the day of one's birth" (Ecclesiastes 7:1); one who was faultless in life reaches the day of his death on a higher level than he was at the outset.

Prayers on finishing Study of the Book of Job

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Selected Sayings of the Sages

מרגלא בפומיה דרבי מאיר: "גמור בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך לדעת את דרכי, ולשקוד על דלתי תורתך. נצור תורתך בלבבך, ונגד עיניך תהיה יראתי. שמור פיה מכל חטא, וטהר וקדש עצמך מכל אשמה ועון. ואני אהיה עמך בכל מקום."

Rabbi Meir was wont to say the following idiom:

Study with all your heart and with all your soul to know My ways

and to be diligent at the doors of My Torah.

Keep My Torah in your heart,

and fear of Me should be before your eyes.

Guard your mouth from all transgression,

and purify and sanctify yourself from all fault and iniquity.

And if you do so, I, G-d, will be with you everywhere.

מְרַגְלָא בְּפּוֹמִיָּהוּ דְרַבְּנָן דִּיבְנֵיהּ: "אֲנִי בְרִיָּה, וְחֻבְרֵי בְרִיָּה. אֲנִי מְלַאכְתִּי בְּעִיר וְהוּא מְלַאכְתּוּ בְּשָׂדֵה. אֲנִי מְשַׁכֵּים לְמְלַאכְתִּי, וְהוּא מְשַׁכֵּים לְמְלַאכְתּוּ. כְּשֵׁם שֶׁהוּא אֵינּוּ מְתַגְדֵּר בְּמְלַאכְתִּי, כֹּד אֲנִי אֵינִי מְתַגְדֵּר בְּמְלַאכְתּוּ. וְשָׂמָא תֵּאמְר: אֲנִי מְרַבָּה, וְהוּא מִמְעִיט — שְׁנִינּוּ: אֶחָד הַמְרַבָּה וְאֶחָד הַמִּמְעִיט וּבְלִבְד שְׂיִכְוִיו לְבוּ לְשָׁמַיִם."

The Sages in Yavne were wont to say:

I who learn Torah am G-d's creature and my counterpart who engages in other labor is G-d's creature.

My work is in the city and his work is in the field.

I rise early for my work and he rises early for his work.

And just as he does not presume to perform my work, so I do not presume to perform his work.

Lest you say: I engage in Torah study a lot, while he only engages in Torah study a little, so I am better than he,

it has already been taught:

One who brings a substantial sacrifice and one who brings a meager sacrifice have equal merit,

as long as he directs his heart towards Heaven (Rav Hai Gaon, *Arukh*).

מְרַגְלָא בְּפּוֹמִיָּה דְאֲבָיִי: לְעוֹלָם יְהֵא אָדָם עָרוּם בְּיָרְאָה. "מִעֲנָה רַךְ מְשִׁיב חַמָּה". וּמְרַבָּה שְׁלוֹם עִם אֶתְיוּ וְעִם קְרוֹבָיו וְעִם כָּל אָדָם וְאֶפְיָלוּ עִם גּוֹי בְּשׂוּק, כִּדִּי שְׂיֵהָא אֶהוּב לְמַעְלָה וְנִחְמָד לְמַטָּה, וְיֵהָא מְקוּבָל עַל הַבְּרִיּוֹת.

Abaye was wont to say: One must always be shrewd and utilize every strategy in order to achieve fear of Heaven and performance of mitzvot. One must fulfill the verse: "A soft answer turns away wrath" (Proverbs 15:1) and take steps to increase peace with one's brethren and with one's relatives, and with all people, even with a non-Jew in the marketplace, despite the fact that he is of no importance to him and does not know him at all (*Me'iri*), so that he will be loved above in G-d's eyes, pleasant below in the eyes of the people, and acceptable to all of G-d's creatures.

אָמְרוּ עָלָיו עַל רַבֵּן יוֹחָנָן בֶּן זַכַּי שֶׁלֹּא הִקְדִּימוּ אָדָם שְׁלוֹם מֵעוֹלָם, וְאֶפְיָלוּ גּוֹי בְּשׂוּק.

Tangentially, the Gemara mentions that they said about Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai that no one ever preceded him in issuing a greeting, not even a non-Jew in the marketplace, as Rabban Yoḥanan would always greet him first.