

RECITING TEHILLIM (I)

The Value of Tehillim

Once, in the time of the holy Baal Shem Tov, it was decreed in Heaven that a certain Jewish settlement should be destroyed, R"l. The Baal Shem Tov called upon his friends, the hidden *tzaddikim*, Reb Mordechai and Reb Kehos, to join him to form a *beis din* and find a way to nullify the decree.

The *beis din* convened, and the *neschama* of the Baal Shem Tov ascended to the heavenly worlds. There he saw that the decree had already been sealed and could not be annulled. However, as he passed through the heavenly spheres while descending back to the physical world, he saw a magnificent light created by the words of *Tehillim* that were being recited by a simple villager. This Yid would complete the entire *Sefer Tehillim* five times every day, but since he was quite ignorant, he sometimes said *Tehillim* in unclean places. Nevertheless, *HaShem* valued his *Tehillim* so much, that a privileged share in *Olam HaBa* awaited him.

The Baal Shem Tov immediately traveled to see this man and asked him, "Would you be willing to sacrifice your share in *Olam HaBa* in order to save an entire Jewish community?"

The simple Yid responded, "If I have a share in *Olam HaBa*, I am ready to forfeit it for such a cause."

And the decree was annulled.

(שמח"ת תרצ"ז - קובץ מכתבים ע' 201)

On the *pasuk* "*Yiheyu leratzon imrei fi*" (may the words of my mouth find favor before you), the *Medrash* teaches that Dovid HaMelech requested that his words of praise be written and engraved for all future generations. Furthermore, he asked *HaShem* that the recitation of *Tehillim* be considered just as worthy as the study of the most complex *halachos* of the Torah.

(מדרש תהלים א, ח)

The Frieddiker Rebbe related: "When I was a little boy I once wondered whether *malochim* are able to calculate numbers. When I asked my father, he replied, 'That's a good question! But I am certain that Malach Michael counts all the *Tehillim* that one says, and with it he creates a chandelier that lights up, Above and below, for that person and for his children.'

"Following this, my father would often ask me, 'How is your chandelier doing?'"

(סה"ש תש"ט ע' 336)

The Rebbe explains that even when *Tehillim* is said without particular *kavonos* and at a quick pace, as many do on *Shabbos Mevarchim*, this nevertheless has a tremendous effect. In fact, in the *Yehi Ratzon*, we ask that our reading be considered as if it came from the mouth of Dovid HaMelech himself.

The Frieddiker Rebbe emphasized that the *kedusha* of the words, even when they are not understood, is as precious in the eyes of *HaShem* as a *korbon*. One should learn the translation of the words, but not recite that instead of the original.

(התועודיות תשמ"ז ח"ג ע' 814, אגרות קודש מוהרי"צ ח"ד ע' תנט)

Great Powers

About 650 years ago, in a village in Germany, there lived a simple pious Yid who was able to study Torah only at its simplest level. Every day, year after year, he would recite the entire *Sefer Tehillim*.

Less than thirty days after he passed away, he appeared in a dream to a *chochom* from the nearby city of Worms. In the dream he stood holding a little *Tehillim*, and he cautioned the *chochom*, "Warn the people in my village to escape immediately to the surrounding towns. During my life I protected them with my recitation of *Tehillim*, but now they are in grave danger."

Early the next morning, the *chochom* sent a messenger with an urgent letter telling the villagers of the looming danger. The people heeded his words, and they were saved.

(מנהגי וורמייזא סדר תהלים)

The Baal Shem Tov would say that reciting the entire *Sefer Tehillim* is a *segula* for crushing any verdict on a person.

The *Tzemach Tzedek* once told his chassidim, "If only you knew the power of *pesukim* of *Tehillim* and their effect in Heaven, you would recite them at all times. The *kapitlach* of *Tehillim* break through all barriers as they soar aloft, higher and higher, uninterrupted. They prostrate themselves before the Master of the Universe,

bringing results with kindness and mercy."

(הוספות לכש"ט סי' נז, היום יום כ"ד שבט)

The Frieddiker Rebbe related how in all generations, whenever a decree was issued against Yidden, they would run to *shul* to recite *Tehillim*. The *melamdim* would recite *Tehillim* with their young *talmidim*, for "their breath is sinless." The Frieddiker Rebbe added that the numerous Hamans in every generation are eliminated by the heartfelt *Tehillim* of a simple Yid – "not by sword or spear, but only by a heartfelt *kapitel* of *Tehillim*."

In the year תר"ג (1843), the interior minister of Russia summoned the *Tzemach Tzedek*, along with three other leaders representing the Yidden of Russia, in order to pass new decrees upon the Yidden. When they arrived in Petersburg and heard of the *gezeira*, they immediately ordered three *kapitlach* of *Tehillim* to be recited in all *shuls* and *chadorim* (כ, כב, טט). This required *mesirus nefesh*, for the czar was likely to punish them for supposedly assuming control over Russian citizens. Shortly after, that evil minister fell ill and died, and was replaced by a neutral minister who canceled the decrees.

In the year תרמ"ב (1882), which became known as "a year of bloody pogroms," the Yiddische leaders led by the Rebbe Maharash revealed a secret plot against the Yidden. They likewise called upon the Yidden to recite the above-mentioned *kapitlach*, and within one month the evil plan fell through.

In the year תרס"ו (1906), pogroms began to erupt throughout Russia. The Yiddische leaders, lead by the Rebbe Rashab and Reb Chaim of Brisk, gathered in Petersburg, where they heard of the czarist government's secret plan to instigate pogroms in 116 Yiddische communities. At that time, too, they requested that the three *kapitlach* be recited by Yidden everywhere, and shortly afterwards the plan failed.

(אג"ק הרי"צ ח"י"ב ע' קלא, סה"ש תש"ט ע' 308)

CONSIDER THIS!

- What about *Tehillim* is so effective: the *kavonos* that one has or the intrinsic *kedusha* of the words?

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OUR HEROES



Reb Meir Refoel's

Reb Meir Refoel's was a community leader in Vilna. In the peak of the sharp opposition against chassidim, he became a chossid of the Alter Rebbe through two personal *mofsim*.



Once, during a business trip, Reb Meir noticed that one of his *tzitzis* became *possul*. He immediately told his driver to stop, so as not to carry on four *amos* without kosher *tzitzis*. For several hours, they waited on the side of the road, hoping that someone will pass by with an extra pair of *tzitzis* strings. Just before dusk, they noticed somebody. Reb Meir called for the man but his calling went unheard. He called louder until he was shouting. Finally the man turned towards him. "Do you have any *tzitzis* strings?" asked Reb Meir. "And if I would have," said the man, "do you think I am going to undo my entire bag just for a few strings?" Reb Meir bargained with the reluctant man until he offered all the money he was carrying. The man finally accepted and Reb Meir got the *tzitzis*.

Quite some time later, Reb Meir took a trip to visit the Alter Rebbe. As Reb Meir entered the *shul*, the Alter Rebbe stood up and handed Reb Meir a sum of money in the exact amount that he paid for the *tzitzis*. The Alter Rebbe explained that it was none other than *Eliyahu Hanavi* who had come to test him.



The home of Reb Meir was always full of chassidim who would come to discuss *Chassidus* and *farbreng*. The *chassidishe minyan* was in his house and any chossid who came to Vilna knew that he could find lodging in the home of Reb Meir.

Reb Meir hired and housed a *melamed* in his home to teach his children. The classroom and *shetible* were separated by only a thin wall. The *melamed*, though not a *chossid*, could not help himself from listening to the *Chassidus* that was being discussed on the other side of the wall. Reb Meir admonished him, "Why did you stop the teaching the children?!"

Try as he may, the *melamed* could not resist listening to the *Chassidus*. After a while he approached Reb Meir, "I beg you! Let me join your group. What is being spoken here is *mechayeh nefashos mamash* (it literally brings life)!"

Bashfulness

When should I assert myself and when should I retreat?

- Chazal expound that the *posuk*, "So that the awe of Hashem will be on your face," refers to bashfulness (*busha*), which prevents a person from sinning because he would otherwise feel ashamed of Hashem.¹ In fact, Yerushalayim was destroyed only after people stopped being embarrassed before one another.²
- Being ashamed of wrongdoing will atone for sins and encourage one to do *teshuva*.³ Even after *teshuva*, one should feel ashamed and express regret every year on Yom Kippur.⁴ As Chassidus explains, the advancement in *avodas Hashem* necessitates a deeper *teshuva*.
- Chazal add that bashfulness is one of the distinct signs of a Jew. A person who does not have any shame proclaims that his forefathers didn't stand at Har Sinai, for at that time Bnei Yisroel were granted their sense of *busha*. One who is exceptionally brazen is suspected of not being from Jewish descent.⁵
- However, regarding Torah study one should not be bashful, and he should persistently present all of his questions until he understands the matter well. Likewise, one should not be ashamed to perform a *mitzva*, and one should "be brazen like a leopard to fulfil Hashem's will."⁶ However, one should not speak impudently to those who mock his religious practices, so that he will not acquire a habit of being brazen.⁷
- One should fight for a non-obligatory *mitzvah* (such as being *chazzan* or receiving an *aliya*) when there are other candidates. Chazal relate that when some *kohanim* pushed for the *lechem hapanim* the modest *kohanim* would stand back and not quarrel.⁸

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| 5. ראה יבמות ע"ט ע"א. קידושין דף ע' ע"א. | 1. נדרים כ ע"א. |
| 6. אבות פ"ה מ"ב, טור או"ח סי' א', שוע"ר סי' א' ס"א. | 2. שבת קי"ט ע"ב. |
| 7. קיצשו"ע סי' כ"ט ס"ח. | 3. ברכות יב ע"ב. |
| 8. קיצשו"ע סי' כ"ט ס"ט. | 4. ראה ב"י או"ח סי' תר"ז, שוע"ר סי' תר"ז ס"ט. |

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

The Prerequisite for Davening

During the 770 visit of the renowned Toldos Aharon Rebbe of Yerushalayim in 5721 (1961), a heated discussion ensued between the Rebbe and his guest. The Rebbe insisted that a *Yid* must prepare for *davening* by learning *Chassidus*, while the Toldos Aharon Rebbe maintained that having the simple *kavana* suffices.

During the course of the conversation the Rebbe expounded, "*Davening* must be with all of one's limbs. This obviously does not only refer to the physical limbs, but also to the various facets of the person's character: his intellect and emotions.

"Now," continued the Rebbe, "if a person does not understand the depth of his *tefilla*, he is utilizing only a shallow part of his mind, thereby relinquishing its depth. *Davening* must be with every facet of a *Yid's* being, including that depth.

"The only way to achieve this would be by learning and contemplating the inner meaning of the *tefilla*, through the study of *Chassidus*.

"It does not have to be Chabad *Chassidus*," the Rebbe concluded, "but *Chassidus* it must be."

(*Toras Menachem*, vol. 30, page 319)

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