

First by Night, Then by Day

Before *Esther* went in to *Achashveirosh* to carry out her plan to save *Klal Yisroel*, she asked that *Klal Yisroel* dedicate three days to fasting and *tefillah*, both by night and by day. Since their *tefillas* were successfully answered, it is worth studying the nature of these prayers.

"*Leich kinos es kol haYehudim...vi'al tochlu vi'al tishtu shloshes yamim, layla vayom...*" (*Esther* 4:16). The *Manos Halevi* points out the specific phrasing used by *Esther*. She did not merely instruct them to pray for "three days and three nights" but rather, "for three days – night and day." He explains that this wording possibly alludes to the *Zohar*, which states that the most desired and accepted *tefillah* is one that is preceded by a *tefillah* from the night before.

The *Zohar* brings a verse in *Tehillim* (88:2) that supports this: "*Hashem Elokei yeshu'asi, yom tza'akti, balayla negdecha*" – When do You, Hashem, bring my salvation? When I cry out by day, after having stood before You the previous night. Thus, *Klal Yisroel* first stood in *tefillah* before Hashem at night, followed by their crying out to Him the next day.

How can we understand this concept of *tefillah* by night, followed by another *tefillah* by day?

When one stops a stranger on the street to ask for directions, there's no indication of a relationship between them. It's a common occurrence to ask such an insignificant favor from a stranger. However, if a young boy were to approach a man and ask him to take him to the park, you would assume the man is his father. Such a request implies an existing bond between them. This is the first and most crucial step of *tefillah*: to forge a bond between ourselves and Hashem.

The *posuk* states (*Eicha* 3:41), "*Nisa livaveinu el kapayim...*" – lift up our hearts to our hands... *Chazal* explain (*Taanis* 8a) that one's prayers are listened to after placing one's soul into one's hands. *Rashi* (in *Eicha*) elucidates this: "When we lift up our hands to the heavens [in *tefillah*, we should] also lift up our hearts with them..." This means that *tefillah* is not merely a time to ask for our requests from Hashem. Rather, the first step is to realize the importance of building a genuine connection to Him. Only after we create this mindset, can we strengthen that connection through our supplications for our many needs.

Nighttime represents the closeness that can be established between an individual and Hashem. In the darkness, when distractions are minimized, one can focus solely on Hashem. Once we've built that relationship, we can proceed with the daytime *tefillah*, where we continue to develop our closeness to Hashem by sincerely beseeching Him for all our needs.

Thus, we see that the *tefillas* of *Klal Yisroel* during that period followed this pattern, first by night and then by day. Their supplications were surely heeded by Hashem as a result of their sincere desire to connect to Him through their *tefillas*.

פורים
תשפ"ה

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