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AVODAS HALEV

III



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TEFILLAH

ולעבדו בכל לבבכם

“And to serve Him with all your heart.”

What is the service of the heart? It is tefillah (Taanis 2a)

What is the service of the heart? Chazal tell us that it is *tefillah*. Praying comes from the heart, and through it, we serve Hashem.

The Farmer

Yirmiyahu (4:3) says, נירו לכם ניר ואל תזרעו אל קוצים, *plow for yourself a furrow, and do not sow upon thornbushes*. המלו לה' והסרו ערלות לבבכם, *circumcise yourselves unto Hashem*—remove the barriers of your hearts. *Rashi* expounds on these words. Just as the farmer plows to uproot all the unwanted elements that would harm his crop, so too, the *Navi* is telling us to circumcise our hearts—remove the impediments of the heart—thereby completely committing ourselves to Hashem's will.

Before we turn our hearts to serve Hashem, we must free it of all spiritual barriers. By plowing the land, the farmer hopes to cultivate superior produce. The fruits which he reaps are physical. How much more should we endeavor to purify our hearts in order to produce spiritual fruit of the highest quality.

The Siddur, Our Tool

The farmer has tools at his disposal to do the work of preparing the ground for planting. What kind of tool do we possess to prepare our hearts for *tefillah*?

Learning the *halachos* definitely prepares us for *tefillah*. However, knowledge is not enough – just as the farmer’s knowledge is not enough. We must use tools with which to daven. Fortunately, thousands of years ago, the *Anshei Knesses Hagedolah*³ compiled an arrangement of *tefillos* that, when said with proper *kavanah*, purifies the heart. This arrangement (סדור) is our *siddur*.

When one *davens*, one’s heart, like the land, must be free of all impediments. In order to give *tefillah* the respect it deserves, one should cleanse one’s mind of all unrelated thoughts. Concentrate on the words and be inspired. Then the heart will feel the natural desire to serve Hashem as a true servant.

Tefillah

The word תפילה is related to the root word פלא, which means wonder⁴. It can also mean to separate⁵. We find that *tefillah* encompasses both concepts: expressing wonder, and separating ourselves from distractions.

Wonder

Recognizing Hashem’s greatness and infinite capabilities will prove our dependence on Him, and prompt us to beseech Him for all that only He can provide.

3. The Men of the Great Assembly; it was an assembly of 120 great men, among them sages and prophets.

4. See Hakesav Vehakabalah, Devarim 28:59, where he explains how פלא and פלה are related.

5. Ibid, and also see Yeriyos Shlomo, 4:4.