

Three Approaches to Prayer

II. Prayer in the thought of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook

1. *Olat Re'iyah*

The constant prayer of the soul strives continually to move from hidden to revealed, to spread over all the forces of life of the spirit and of the vital soul, and all the powers of embodied life. She yearns as well to reveal her essence and the power of her actions over all her surroundings, over all the world and life, and toward this end we require the accounting of the world, which comes through Torah and wisdom. And so we find that the whole work of the Torah and all its wisdom is the constant revelation of the hidden prayer of the soul. "Let the breath of all life bless Your name, oh LORD our God..."

Prayer comes in its perfected form only with the consciousness that the soul is always praying. ... It is only that, in the time of active prayer, the soul's ceaseless prayer is revealed in actuality. This is her fineness and her pleasure, the glory and beauty of prayer, which is like a rose that opens its fair petals to greet the dew or the sun's rays which appear on her in her radiance; therefore, "Oh, that one would pray all day long!" (*Ber.* 21a)

1. ספר עולת ראייה

התפלה המתמדת של הנשמה מתאמצת היא תמיד לצאת מן ההעלם אל הגלוי, להתפשט על כל כחות החיים של כל הרוח והנפש וכל כחות חיי הגויה כלה, והיא משתוקקת ג"כ לגלות את מהותה וכח פעולתה על כל הסביבה, על כל העולם והחיים, ולשם כך צריכים אנו להשבנו-של-עולם שפא ע"י תורה וחקמה. ונמצא מתוך כך, שעבודת התורה כלה וכל חקמתה היא התגלותה המתמידה של תפלתה הכמוסה של הנשמה. נשמת כל חי תברך את שמך ד' אלקינו.

אין התפלה באה בתקונה כ"אם מתוך המחשבה שבאמת הנשמה היא תמיד מתפללת. ... אלא שבשעת התפלה המעשית הרי התפלה הנשמתית התדירית היא מתגלה בפעל. וזהו עדונה וענוגה, הדרה ותפארתה, של התפלה, שהיא מתדמה לשושנה הפותחת את עליה הנאים לקראת הטל או נכח קרני השמש המופיעים עליה באורה, ולכן "הלואי שיתפלל אדם כל היום כלו".

Prayer is the ideal of all worlds. All being yearns for the source of its life – every sprout and every bush, every grain of sand and clod of earth, everything in which life is revealed and all in which it is hidden, all that is little in creation and all that is great, the heavens above and the fiery holy angels, all particularity in existence, and all its universality – everything moans, longs, yearns and thirsts toward the cherished wholeness of its transcendent source, the living, the holy, the pure, the mighty. And man absorbs these yearnings at all times and in every moment, and is lifted up and elevated through his holy pining. The time for the revelation of these longings toward the Divine loftiness comes in prayer, which strikes waves of light and emerges with vigorous freedom through her holy meditative musings into the Divine expanses. Man lifts up the entire creation through his prayer, and through it unifies with himself all that is, elevating everything, lifting all to the Source of blessing and the Source of life.

2. *Berakhot 6a*

It was taught that Abba Binyamin said: One's prayer is only fully heard in a synagogue, as it is stated, "to listen to the song and the prayer" (I Kgs. 8:28). It a place of song – there must one pray.

3. *Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook, Ein Ayah, Berakhot*

The explanation of this is: The essence of prayer involves two things, corresponding to which the Amida prayer is divided into two parts, namely, song and prayer, that is to say, praise and petition. The first is that God established a law in His world that if a person prays, his needs will be fulfilled. "The prayer of the upright is His delight" (Prov. 15:8); "He also will hear their cry, and will save them" (Ps. 145:19).

הַתְּפִלָּה הַיְחָדָּה שֶׁל כָּל עוֹלָמִים. כָּל הַהוֹיָה כְּלָה לְמִקְוֵה חַיִּיהָ הִיא עוֹרָגָת, כָּל צָמַח וְכָל שֵׁיחַ, כָּל גֶּרֶגֶר חוֹל וְכָל רֶגֶב אֲדָמָה, כָּל אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ חַיִּים נִגְלִים וְכָל אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ חַיִּים כְּמוֹסִים, כָּל קִטְנֵי הַיְצִירָה וְכָל גְּדוּלֵיהָ, שֶׁחָקִי מֵעַל וְשֶׁרָפִי קָדָשׁ, כָּל הַפְּרָטִיּוֹת שֶׁבְּכָל יֵשׁ, וְכָל כְּלָלוּתוֹ, הַכֹּל הוֹמָה, שׂוֹאֵף, עוֹרָג וְשׂוֹקֵק לְחֻמְדַּת שְׁלֵמוֹת מִקּוּרוֹ הָעֲלִיוֹן, הַחַי, הַקְּדוֹשׁ, הַטְּהוֹר וְהַכְּבִיר. וְהָאָדָם סוֹפֵג אֶת כָּל הַשְּׂקִיקוֹת הַלְלוֹ בְּכָל עֵת. וּבְכָל שְׁעָה, וְהוּא מִתְרוֹמֵם וּמִתְעַלֶּה בְּתִשׁוּבוֹת קְדָשׁוֹ, וּבֵא תוֹר הַגְּלוּי לְתִשׁוּבוֹת רִמְמוֹת־אֶל אֱלֹהֵי בְּתִפְלָה, הַמְּכַה גְּלוֹי אוֹרָה, הַיּוֹצֵאת בְּחֶפְזָה עֲזָה בְּהִגְיוֹן שֵׁיחַ קְדָשָׁה לְמִרְחָבֵי אֵל. מְרוֹמֵם הוּא הָאָדָם בְּתִפְלָה אֶת כָּל הַיְצוּר, מֵאֲחָד הוּא עִמּוֹ אֶת כָּל הַיֵּשׁ, מֵעֲלָה אֶת הַכֹּל, מְרוֹמֵם אֶת הַכֹּל לְמִקְוֵה הַבְּרָכָה וּמִקְוֵה הַחַיִּים.

2. תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף ו' עמוד א'

תְּנִינָא, אָבָא בְּנִימִין אוֹמֵר: אֵין תְּפִלָּה שֶׁל אָדָם נִשְׁמַעַת אֱלֹהֵי בְּבֵית הַכְּנֶסֶת, שְׁנֵאָמַר: "לְשִׁמְעַ אֶל הַרְנָה וְאֶל הַתְּפִלָּה". בְּמִקּוּם רְנָה – שָׁם תְּהֵא תְּפִלָּה.

And the second is that a person should actualize his potential perfection, by arranging his thoughts to recount the greatness of God and to accustom his thoughts and all the faculties of his soul to behold the graciousness of God, which is the fruit of life and the ultimate perfection. Included in this type is the principle of proclaiming God's glory in His world and His closeness to man, especially to those who cleave to His ways. It is appropriate that it be engraved in the heart that even the petition part of prayer is in the world so that through this the person will reach more of his true perfection, which follows from his recognition of the glory of God. For the more elevated a person's prayer, and the closer he is to God's perfection, through his good deeds and his knowledge and traits, the more likely it is that his prayer will be effective and his words will make an impression, to "say a decree and it will be fulfilled for him" [cf. Job 22:28]. This brings the human race closer to God, and therefore God established this law in His world in order to prime a person for his perfection. And the enlightened will understand with this the root of the reality of prayer, without need for the many considerations of philosophers. Therefore, among the conditions of the petition part of prayer is that it always be subordinated to the higher part of prayer, i.e., proclaiming His glory.

4. *Berakhot* 34b

Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba said that Rabbi Yoḥanan said: One may only pray in a house with windows, as it is stated, "In his attic there were open windows facing Jerusalem" (Dan. 6:11).

4. תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף ל"ד עמוד ב'

וְאָמַר רַבִּי חֵיִיא בַר אַבָּא אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: אֵל יִתְפַּלֵּל אָדָם
אֶלָּא בְּבַיִת שֵׁישׁ שָׁם חֲלוֹנוֹת. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְכֹוֹן פְּתִיחוֹן לִיה
בְּעֲלִיתָהּ נֶגֶד יְרוּשָׁלַם".