

The Gemara (Berachos 26b) says that Avraham established תפלת שחרית and refers to his prayer as עמידה (standing erect). The Gemara says that Yitzchak established תפלת מנחה and refers to his prayer as שיחה (a conversation). Why does the Gemara distinguish between the terms used by each of the patriarchs to indicate prayer? Why didn't the Torah use the word עמידה to describe Yitzchak's prayer?

The Gemara says (Berachos 30b) that one who missed a prayer should compensate by adding an additional שמונה עשרה at the next scheduled prayer service. The Gemara asks how long must he pause between the 2 recitations of שמונה עשרה? The Gemara cites 2 opinions, from Rav Huna and Rav Chisda. One says that he must wait as long as it takes שתתחונן דעתו while the other says as long as it takes שתתחולל דעתו. Both words derive from prayer, the former derives from the same root as ואתחנן אל ד' and the latter from the same root as ויחל משה. Since both words mean to pray, what is the difference between these opinions?

There is a difference between the prayer Moshe offered as ויחל and his prayer as ואתחנן. In פרשת כי תשא Hashem permitted Moshe to continue his ויחל prayer as long as he desired without restriction. Not only did Moshe pray to Hashem, he demanded that He forgive the Jewish People. The Midrash describes that Moshe כביכול grabbed the garment of Hashem and refused to relinquish his hold until the people were forgiven. From here we derive that ויחל means an unbounded prayer where the supplicant demands a positive response to his request.

In פרשת ואתחנן Moshe prays to Hashem from the perspective of a poor person begging for a favor. In this case Hashem told him to cease his prayer, as he had prayed enough. From here we derive that the prayer of ואתחנן must not be relatively short and while the supplicant can request a favor he cannot demand anything.

We can now understand why the Gemara quotes the 2 opinions as to the length of time needed to wait between reciting the two שמונה עשרה prayers. The time required to prepare for a prayer of the ויחל variety is different than the time required to prepare for a prayer of the ואתחנן variety. When one prays from the perspective and approach of ויחל משה, he is praying on behalf of the congregation. Such a prayer is unbounded and unrestricted. A prayer of the ואתחנן variety represents a personal request and has a more restrictive format.

The two opinions in the Gemara regarding how long one must wait before repeating שמונה עשרה disagree as to the kind of prayer one must prepare himself for. According to 1 opinion he must wait long enough to compose his thoughts so

he can pray like a poor person seeking a favor, like ואתחנן. Such a prayer is limited and does not require extremely long preparation. The second opinion holds that one must pause long enough to prepare for a prayer of ויחל. Such a prayer is unlimited in length and tone, like when Moshe spent 40 days and 40 nights praying to Hashem with every fiber of his being that Hashem forgive the Jewish People. Such a prayer takes a longer time to prepare for.

There are 2 aspects to daily תפלה:

1) עבודה שבלב - the obligation upon man to pray each day. [This aspect is captured by the Rambam in הלכות תפלה.]

2) והרעותם - a cry for help in time of crisis and need, based on זעקה בעת צרה. [This aspect is captured by the Rambam in הלכות תענית.]

The עבודה שבלב aspect of תפלה limits man to pray 3 times a day. Why can't man pray all day if he wishes? Because the daily prayer is of the ואתחנן type, a limited prayer 3 times a day. An individual is limited in how far he can push his case. The זעקה aspect allows man to add an additional prayer, בעילה, on a fast day (see the Rambam in הלכות תענית chapter 1). This extra prayer indicates that in time of crisis there is no restriction to how much prayer is allowed. We are obligated to blow the trumpets when the community is in peril, and to pray without limitation or restriction. This is the prayer of ויחל.

Based on the above, we can distinguish between the עמידה of Avraham and the שיח of Yitzchak. Avraham's attribute is kindness towards all, חסד, which is externally focused towards the larger community. Since his prayer was for the community, it is described as עמידה, where Avraham stood tall and straight before Hashem and presented his prayer. Yitzchak's attribute is צמצום, גבורה, hidden inner strength. His prayer was directed inward for himself (though Yitzchak was certainly praying for the greater community as well). This inward focused prayer is the prayer of the poor man, תפלה לעני כי יעטוף ולפני ד' ישפך שיחו. The words כי יעטוף mean that the poor man wraps himself in his prayer shawl. It also means to bend over, as the poor person is often stooped over. The prayer of שיח is the supplication of downtrodden man as he approaches Hashem with great trepidation.

Sometimes man must pray to Hashem from the standpoint of תפלה לעני כי יעטוף ולפני ד' ישפך שיחו. This is a limited prayer that is subject to Hashem telling him רב, like Hashem told Moshe in ואתחנן, לך אל תוסף דבר אלי עוד בדבר הזה.

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