

Aseret Yemei Teshuvah: In Addition

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The 40 days between *Rosh Chodesh Elul* and Yom Kippur are referred to as *Yemei Ratzon* when Hashem is even more approachable than usual and ready and willing to accept our *tefillot*. We know that *tefillah* is such a central part of the *Yamim Nora'im* season. As we navigate through *Chodesh Elul*, Rosh Hashanah, the *Aseret Yemei Teshuvah*, and reach a climax with Yom Kippur, our *tefillot* assume increased levels of intensity. We see this phenomenon with the saying of *Selichot* leading up to Rosh Hashanah, and the many changes and additions to the Rosh Hashanah davening, several of which spill over into the rest of the *Aseret Yemei Teshuvah*. While our fate for the upcoming year is being determined and in limbo, we turn to Hashem as the all-powerful One who can ensure us our future. On day ten, within the emotionally laden *tefillot* of Yom Kippur, the intensity and desperation increase towards the end as we transition from asking to be **written** in the *Sefer Hachaim* to the dramatic finality in *Ne'ilah* of beseeching Hashem to **seal** us, hopefully in the *Sefer Hachaim*. Let us take a closer look at some of the pleas and declarations we make that are unique to this time of year.

There are six *hosafot*, or additions, to the *amidah* (silent Shmoneh Esrei prayer) to discuss. These six can be split into two categories. We will start by exploring the background and history behind these additions and changes. The *Gemara Brachot* 12b mentions two out of the six, or what we can call “group one”- the two different endings to everyday *brachot*:

Rabba bar Chinena Sava said in the name of Rav, for the whole year a person prays saying the words “מלך” and “הקל הקדוש” אוהב צדקה ומשפט” except for the ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur when one prays “המלך הקדוש” and “המלך המשפט” instead.

ואמר רבא בר חנינא סבא משמיה דרב כל השנה כולה אדם מתפלל “האל הקדוש”, “מלך” אוהב צדקה ומשפט”, חוץ מעשרה ימים שבין ראש השנה ויום הכפורים, שמתפלל “המלך הקדוש”, ו”המלך המשפט”.

In both of these cases from the *amidah*, the usual words that end each of these *brachot* are modified. The Gemara records a *machloket*, disagreement, about whether one needs to repeat the *amidah* if these textual changes are not made. The Gemara and Tosfot side with Rava’s opinion that the changes to the endings of these two *brachot* need to be articulated or else one needs to go back to the beginning of the *amidah* and start over. The *Beit Yosef*, on the *Tur* in *Hilchot Rosh Hashanah*, however, brings down this *machloket* and concludes with the opinion of the *Ri*, that *b’dieved* (basic level of performance of the mitzvah) one does not need to go back to recite the *bracha* of “*hamelech hamishpat*” since the word *melech* is still being referenced, although one still does need to go back for neglecting to switch to the words “*hamelech hakadosh*”. The *Rama* follows this opinion in *Siman* 118 in the *Shulchan Aruch*.

It is not until the time of the Geonim that the other four additions, or “group two”, make an appearance. The *Tur* mentions the opinion of the *Ri* that one would need to repeat the *amidah* if these four were omitted, but then seemingly sides with the opinion of his father, the *Rash*,

who said it does not make sense for the *halacha* to consider these four additions similar to “*hamelech hakadosh*” and “*hamelech hamishpat*” - - “כיון שאינו מוזכר בתלמוד” because these did not originate and are not mentioned in the Gemara like those in “group one” and therefore we do not share the same *halachic* concerns. The Ramban seemingly agrees with this opinion too.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch points out that the two main themes and focuses of the liturgy of Rosh Hashanah are about Hashem’s *malchut*, kingship, and about praying for *chaim*, life. We see how these are woven nicely into both groups of changes to the *amidah*. The two changed endings, mentioned in the Gemara, focus mainly on the *malchut* component - referencing Hashem *melech*, whereas the four additions in the beginning and ending *brachot* of the *amidah* emphasize the word *chaim*:

- (a) זכרינו לחיים...
 (b) מי כמוך אב הרחמים זוכר יצוריו לחיים
 ברחמים
 (c) וכתוב לחיים טובים
 (d) בספר חיים...

The other significant halachic discussion regarding these additions was brought up by the Geonim who questioned whether one is allowed to make requests in the beginning three *brachot* of the *amidah* and in the ending three *brachot* as it says on *Brachot* 34a:

Rav Yehuda says a person should not ask for his needs in the first three and last three blessings.

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה: לְעוֹלָם
 אַל יִשְׁאַל אָדָם צְרָכָיו לֹא
 בְּשֵׁלֶשׁ רֵאשׁוֹנוֹת, וְלֹא
 בְּשֵׁלֶשׁ אַחֲרוֹנוֹת, אֶלָּא
 בְּאֶמְצָעֵיּוֹת.

Requests are usually reserved for the middle section of the *amidah* exclusively and are framed by words of praise beforehand and of thanking Hashem afterwards. Requests are also limited on Shabbat and the *chagim*. So why were these additions, requests for life, specifically inserted into the beginning and ending sections? We can

resolve this question in a few different ways. Massechet Sofrim draws a distinction between the *tefillot* of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur versus the other *chagim*. Just as the endings of the *brachot* in the *amidah* are specialized for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and not the usual generic ending for holidays, so too are the rules for *tefillot* on these days distinct. Rav Hai Gaon resolves this differently and says that the types of requests that are generally withheld from these *brachot* are those of the individual, but requests made for the congregation are welcomed. We can see the communal nature of these four additions to the *amidah* being that they are all said in the plural. We could also suggest that asking for requests for material items may be what is restricted but a request for life itself is acceptable in any part of the *amidah*. The Tosfot Harash mentions a beautiful idea and resolves this *halachic* issue by saying there is no issue because these additions are not really requests after all, but are actually words of praise, and therefore well-suited in the locations where they are found. How so? When the *tzibbur*, congregation, directs its attention and requests something from Hashem and indicates that the entire *tzibbur* is totally dependent on Him for their needs, it manifests the ultimate praise one could give to Hashem.

There are a lot of interesting ideas to note about “group two”, the four *hosafot*, grouped together and referred to as “*zichronot*” in Massechet Sofrim. We know the term *zichronot* as one of the three major themes of Rosh Hashanah, and reflected in one of the names of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Hazikaron (Day of Remembrance). זכרינו לחיים is mentioned right before the *amidah*’s first *bracha* of מגן אברהם. In the second *bracha* of מי מחיה המתים we have the second addition of מי וכתוב לחיים. The third, כמוך אב הרחמים זוכר יצוריו הטוב comes in the second to last *bracha* of טוב בספר חיים - שמך ולך נאה להודות, שים שלום comes in the last *bracha* of שים שלום. Each of these indicates in some way that Hashem is the one who remembers us, thereby judging us and outlining the fate of our year ahead. Most of these have formulations of the root *zachor*

(remember) in them. **Zochreinu l'chaim, zocher yitzurav l'chaim b'rachamim, b'sefer chaim bracha v'shalom...nizacher v'nechatev.** The one that seems out of place is the third addition that simply says *u'chtov l'chaim tovim kol bnei britecha* without any mention of the *shoresh: zachor*. Have no fear- earlier texts such as in Rambam's *hilchot tefillah* include the phrase **zechor rachamecha u'kvosh ka'ascha** which preceded the words *uchtov l'chaim tovim* but later on this line was shortened by the Achronim to be just the six words found in our machzor today.

I mentioned above that all four *hosafot* mention the word *chaim*. The last *hosafa* in the *bracha* of *Sim Shalom* talks about the **ספר החיים**. The Gemara Erchin 10b, in addressing why we do not say Hallel on Rosh Hashanah, depicts Hashem as a king sitting on a throne judging:

the books of life and of death are open in front of Him.	וספרי חיים וספרי מתים פתוחין לפניו
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How can we ensure that we end up in the book of life? The Ba'al Shem Tov says we can accomplish this through *kabbalat ol malchut shamayim*, accepting the yoke of Hashem upon us, and turning to and putting our trust in Hashem, the source of life. When we examine the first *hosafa*, **זכרינו לחיים**, we notice it is strategically placed in the *bracha* about the *avot*. They are the ones who lived life the way it was intended and merited to be written in the *sefer hachaim*. We beseech Hashem to remember the deeds of the *avot* when evaluating us. And how do we end this first addition? We ask to be written in the *sefer chaim*- **למען אלקים חיים**- for Your sake Hashem. We acknowledge that we desire life for Hashem's sake, so that we can continue to connect to Hashem through doing *ma'asim tovim*, good deeds, and not for our own benefit. In the second *hosafa* we articulate how there is no one as merciful as Hashem, who is **זוכר יצוריו לחיים ברחמים**- He remembers His creations with mercy. It is our way of acknowledging that we are not deserving of life

and we are flawed, but ask to be spared solely because we are Hashem's creations. We ask Hashem therefore to employ the *middah* of *rachamim* (attribute of mercy) because that is our only chance of survival. We see this concept in the first two *perakim* of *Sefer Bereishit*. Hashem is referred to solely as *elokim*, judge, in the first *perek* when He creates man. In the second *perek* when the story of creation is repeated, He is termed *Hashem Elokim*, indicating the fusion of *rachamim* (mercy) and *din* (judgment) together, which is the persona He adopts going forward in His interactions with man.

There is an interesting question to ask on addition #3. It is the one that really seems to be out of context. It is in the section dealing with thanking Hashem, right after the *bracha* of **מודים**, and the content of the addition seems to change course and make a request to be inscribed for a good life. How does this fit? I think this connects with the overall message of life which is inherently connected to words of praise. As we say in Hallel - **לא המתים יהללו יה** - we can only praise Hashem when we are alive. Not that Hashem needs our praise, but He does want us to recognize the need we have to praise Him. So, we request to keep living in order to continue our mission of praising Hashem. A lot of the Rishonim comment on the tally of words in each of these *hosafot* and what each number represents. While we do not have the time to look at most of those in this forum, I would like to mention one example with the first of the *hosafot* that is 11 words long. We ask Hashem to remember us with life because Hashem is *chafetz bachaim*- He wants us to live. These 11 words correspond to another 11 words from a *pasuk* in Yechezkel (18:23) that expresses this idea beautifully:

Hashem's desire is not for us to die but to allow us to repent and improve, when there is a need to, in order to continue living.	הֲפֹץ אֲחַפֵּץ מוֹת רָשָׁע וְאִם אֲדַנֶּי-יְהוָה-הִיא הַלּוֹא בְּשׁוּבוֹ מִדְרָכָיו יִחְיֶה
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This could be exactly what we are referencing and reminding Hashem about during this time - for the ability to do *teshuvah* and for the gift of Hashem's acceptance of our *teshuvah*.

Although although all four additions mention the word *chaim*, the first two *hosafot* simply say *chaim - zochreinu l'chaim* and *zocher yitzurav l'chaim berachamim*, but the remaining *hosafot* ask not just for life but for *chaim tovim*- as seen in *u'chtov l'chaim tovim*, and the ending of the fourth, *l'chaim tovim u-leshalom*. The Ramchal points out that the life we are really asking for and referring to is that of eternal life, *olam habah* and that is what *chaim* refers to. Our stated goal is to be granted this life. But, it is also often desirable to experience good in this world too. That is an extra added plus when we can avoid suffering in this world and still merit the next. But, he says, this does not work for everyone. Some people, when they experience a good *olam hazeh*, lose focus and no longer work towards *olam habah*, and instead forget about Hashem. Some people need the challenges in *olam hazeh* to orient them on turning to Hashem. So we start off in the *amidah* with asking for the most essential goal - *olam habah*, and only after we commit to working towards that goal in life, we ask Hashem, in the third and fourth additions, to reward us with a good life in this year as well, the *chaim tovim*.

I wanted to end with a kabbalistic insight from Rav Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin who comments on a pattern noticeable in these four additions. Each of them mentions *zechira* (remembrance,) *k'tiva* (inscribing) or both. The first addition mentions both. **Zochreinu l'chaim...v'katvenu b'sefer hachaim** and the last one mentions both - in *B'sefer chaim* we say **nizacher v'nichatev**. The middle two additions each mention only one of these. *Mi kamocha*, addition #2 mentions **zocher yitzurav** and the third addition starts off with **U'chtov l'chaim** with *k'tiva*. We have a pattern among the additions - the bookends mention both actions and the two middle additions each emphasize one of the two actions. When we talk about remembering, it is

abstract and connected to the more spiritual realm or the *neshamah*. Writing, on the other hand, is the opposite and is about taking abstract ideas and concretizing them and giving them physical form and shape through writing them down. The realm of *zichronot* is that of the *shamayim* (heavens), and the realm of the writing is in the *aretz* (earth). As such, the actions of Hashem are portrayed by the use of *zachor* and when it says *u'chtov* it is referring to the human actions on earth, such as praising Hashem. In *hosafa* #2 we talk about Hashem reviving the dead - that is solely His domain and is why we employ only the word **zocher**. In *hosafa* #3 when the context is about praising Hashem, the focus is on the human element and contribution and the additional words mention only **u'chtov**. By mentioning both *zechira* and *ketiva* in the first and last of the *hosafot*, we are alluding to the notion and life goal of intertwining our physical lives and actions on the *aretz* with the spiritual godliness of *shamayim*, of nurturing both our *guf* and our *neshama* and devoting them to Hashem in the upcoming year. With these ideas in mind, I want to share my hopes that the year 5781, תשפ"א should be a year of not only *chaim* but *chaim tovim u'leshalom* for us all.