

INCREASING KAVANNAH

It would be unthinkable for a person who is pleading for his life to speak without full concentration and attention to the matter at hand. This is because he hopes for his plea to be heard and accepted. As we have previously noted, this same dynamic holds true for one who, through everyday prayer, is making his plea before the Almighty. His concentration – **kavannah** – is an essential factor in the successful transfer of his prayers from his lips to the Heavenly Throne. Without this element, the prayers do not even begin to take flight.

No prayer is ordinary. All prayer bears witness to the power of one individual heartfelt prayer. So potent are our prayers – because they are real and heartfelt – that they could ascend straight to Heaven and reach the throne of our Heavenly Father.

In the words of one sage: “The eminence of prayer does not depend on the measure with which one calls out to the Almighty with his lips, but rather on the quality of the heart’s “screams’ to the Almighty.

At the end of the daily *Shemoneh Esrei* or *Amidah*, one declares his own recognition that it is not just the words, but the thoughts that also count: May the expressions of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart find favor before You, Almighty, my Rock and my Redeemer.”

For anyone who wishes to have his prayers accepted, increasing *kavannah* is the essential starting point. According to the level of *kavannah* will prayer be accepted. For some people, the way to have *kavannah* is to think of the word’s meanings before uttering them. For others, *kavannah* is most effective when it is connected directly to the recitation of the words.

Prayer, with *kavannah*, is satisfied by speaking these words with attention to their simple meaning. One sage teaches: “Since no human can possibly fathom the awesome depth of each word of prayer, one should rather pray with pure and simple intent.” The power of *kavannah* also lies in the conviction of the person saying the prayer that he is actually addressing the Almighty and asking Him for a specific blessing.

One rabbi used to stress that the main requirement for *kavannah* is twofold: We must bear in mind what we are saying and to Whom we are saying it.

Ultimately, in order for one’s prayer to be accepted, one’s heart and inner self must participate in the *tefillah* (prayer) process.

POINTS TO PONDER

Kavannah – intent – is an essential element of prayer.

Kavannah is enhanced by : (a) understanding the words of the prayers, especially the Amidah, and (b) realizing that one is addressing the Almighty.

2 Chronicles 6:38 if they repent with all their mind and with all their heart in the land of their captivity to which they were carried captive, and pray toward their land, which you gave to their fathers, the city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name, ³⁹ then hear from heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their pleas, and maintain their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you. (ESV)