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[Home](#) > Bilvavi Part 7 - 002 Emunah and Tefillah

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Tefillah and Emunah

There is a *mitzvah* to *daven* (pray) to Hashem. In a time of distress, all agree that this is a Torah-ordained commandment – that when one is suffering, he must *daven* to Hashem to change the situation. So we have a *mitzvah* of *Tefillah*.^[1]

Yet, although we must perfect our power of *Tefillah*, it is a higher level if we perfect our *Emunah*.

We find times in which Hashem preferred that we have pure faith in Him, rather than *daven* to Him. We also find times in which we should *daven* rather than have *Emunah*. What is the reason of this?

We Daven When We Don't Feel Strong Emunah

(First, we will explain when it is preferred that he *daven* rather than rely on his *Emunah*.)

When a person is in a dire situation, he desires to come out of it, and this desire in ourselves is essentially our power of *Tefillah*.

This really reflects a lack of total *Emunah* in Hashem, because if he would really believe, he would believe that everything that Hashem does is for the best. So when a person is on the level of *Tefillah*, that essentially translates into not being on the level of *Emunah*.

Tefillah and Emunah - Two Forces in Creation

There are two places in our soul: one ability in the soul is *Emunah*, and the other ability in our soul is *Tefillah*. We need to make use of both.

On one hand, Hashem fills the entire universe, and this represents *Emunah*. On the other hand, Hashem had to remove some of His light in order to create a space and make way for the creation of the universe; this represents *Tefillah*, when something is “missing” which we are trying to get. Thus, both *emunah* and *tefillah* have their time and place.

When Should We Daven?

When should we *daven*, and when should we rely on our *Emunah* that everything is for the best?

There are times in which are *Emunah* is a bit weak, and this indeed is the will of Hashem that this

should happen to us sometimes. There is nothing wrong with us that we are like this; it is the way Hashem made us. In these situations, when we feel our *Emunah* weaken, our job is to increase our *Tefillah*.

We live with both *Emunah* and *Tefillah*, and the two concepts seemingly contradict each other, but really they are not a contradiction. On one hand, we are attached to the state that was after Hashem made a space in the world – which was the state of *emunah*. At the same time, we are also attached to the state that was before Creation, which represents *Tefillah*.

The understanding of this matter is limited to our human point of view, however, and we are only at the “receiving end” of the information, so we cannot fully understand it.

Hashem wants us to desire to leave our dire situations, and this is the role of *Tefillah*. *Tefillah* utilizes our willpower. Our willpower is actually our very soul, and our will is expressed through our mouth.

The Disadvantage To Tefillah

However, that is only true when our soul indeed feels a desire to leave the current situation, and thus we *daven*. But if the soul doesn't feel a desire to leave the current situation, then the person doesn't *daven* because he feels such a strong need to *daven*, and his whole *davening* is merely a lip service – “*In their lips they honor me, but in their hearts they are far from me.*”

A Tefillah Emanating From Emunah

There is a higher kind of *Tefillah*, however, and that is when we *daven* not out of personal reasons, but because it is the will of Hashem that we *daven*.

Then there is an even more subtle kind of *Tefillah*: when we *daven* even though we don't know why we are *davening*. (This comes from a deep power in our soul called “*lo yeda*” – to “not know.” It is the essence of our soul that is above knowledge – it is pure faith, beyond any logic.)

In these two higher levels, our *Tefillah* is not coming from a need for *Tefillah*, but it is rather stemming from our *Emunah*; and because we have *Emunah*, we aren't obligated to *daven*, because we don't feel the stress of the situation. We are *davening*, but not because we feel scared. Such *Tefillah* isn't *Tefillah* per se, because it is a *Tefillah* which from *Emunah*.

From the Viewpoint of Emunah, There Is No Need for Tefillah

When we don't feel strong *Emunah*, we are scared, and that obligates us to *daven*, because *Tefillah* is an obligation whenever we are in a time of stress. If we wouldn't feel scared in the first place, we wouldn't have to *daven*.

Maybe you will ask: if we don't feel stressed by the situation (and thus we aren't obligated to *daven* because of “*Tefillah*”, and we are only *davening* from our *Emunah*), how can *Emunah* come and take away our *mitzvah* to *daven* in a time of stress?

There are two answers to this.

Emunah - There Is No Danger Here

One answer is that a stressful situation, which is called *tzarah*, comes from the word *tzar* – “narrow.” When a person is in a narrow spot, he wants to come out of it. But if a person accepts his situation lovingly and willingly, he doesn't feel constricted by the situation, and for such a person, it's not

considered a stressful situation!

Emunah Is The Inner Layer of Our Soul, Tefillah Is The Outer Layer of the Soul

A second answer is that there are two layers in our soul – an outer layer and an inner layer. Although the inner layer of our soul has *Emunah* and is happy with the situation, the outer layer of our soul is still uneasy. The outer layer of our soul, which resembles the body, feels pain at the situation, and thus we find ultimately find ourselves scared, due to the pain that the external layer of our soul is experiencing. Thus, in the end, we are obligated to daven. Since our inner layer and our outer layer are intertwined, we must pacify the outer layer and calm it by *davening*.

How To Daven Shemoneh Esrei

Until now we only spoke about davening for private reasons, but *Shemoneh Esrei* was enacted by Chazal for the public, and there are actually two ways to daven *Shemoneh Esrei*.

One way is through understanding the words – either the simple meaning of the words, or the hidden, esoteric meaning of them.

There is a higher way to *daven Shemoneh Esrei*. does not involve our mind at all; it is to be connected in our thoughts throughout to the *Ein Sof* of Hashem.^[2]

^[1] *There is a well-known dispute between the Rambam and the Ramban if tefillah is a Biblically ordained commandment. The Rambam maintains that tefillah is always a mitzvah, while Ramban maintains that tefillah is only a mitzvah in a time of distress.*

^[2] This is written as well as in *sefer Sheairis Yisrael: shaar hiskashrus, derush 5, maamar 1*.