

TEFILLAH TIPS



Birchot Hashachar VI

The next two blessings we recite are **עוטר ישראל בתפארה** -G-d girds Israel with strength and **אזור בגבורה** -G-d crowns Israel with splendor. Simply understood these two blessings correspond to different stages of our getting dressed in the morning. The Talmud teaches that the aforementioned Bracha is said regarding the wearing of a belt separating upper and lower body parts and the latter blessing refers to the covering of one's head.

The Anaf Yosef points out that the subject matter mentioned in these two Brachot are apparently redundant and already dealt with under the rubric of an earlier blessing, **מלביש ערמים** -G-d clothes the naked. He therefore explains that there is an additional layer of meaning within these blessings. This deeper meaning is evident by the inclusion of the word **ישראל** in both of them. These two brachot focus on the uniqueness and individuality of the Jewish people and the vital role that they play in G-d's world.

The blessing of **אזור בגבורה** is based on a specific Halacha regarding davening Namely, one may not pray without a separation between ones heart and lower body. This is the halachik reasoning why many Jews wear a gartel, a special prayer belt. Rabbi Schwab explains that separating the upper and lower parts of the body manifests the aim to control the animal instincts of the person with his/her distinctly human and spiritual intellect.

The blessing of **עוטר ישראל בתפארה** -G-d crowns Israel with splendor, as mentioned earlier refers to the head coverings of Jewish men and women. It also refers to the wearing of Tefillin Shel Rosh-on the head. Therefore many have the custom to not recite this blessing on Tisha Bav morning when we do not don our Tefillin. Instead it is said in the afternoon when Tefillin is again worn during the prayers.

The Eitz Yosef shares an insight regarding this Bracha. He comments that while the rest of the world wears headgear for warmth, fashion, and protection the Jewish people wear Kippot and other head coverings to achieve closeness and a sense of awe of G-d. Therefore we cover our heads in all temperatures outside and inside no matter what color or style is in this year.

In this light, our Kippah, hat, and/or wig serve as a crown of grandeur and splendor. It reminds us of our unique relationship with G-d and our role as his ambassadors of the Torah and its teachings.

Take Home Tip: Humanity is a symphony of body and soul, physical and spiritual. Our task in life is that our minds and souls lead our bodies and not that our bodies lead our souls.

Shabbat Shalom,

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