

# TEFILLAH TIPS

## TEFILLAT SHACHARIT—SHABBAT

*Al Harishonim Vea'l Haachronim*

The middle (2<sup>nd</sup>) passage between *Shema* and the silent *Amida* is *Al Harishonim Vea'l Haachronim* – The Truth of G-d and His Torah are accepted and affirmed by both the *Earlier and Later Generations*.

I would like to focus on the opening words of this *Tefillah*: “The Truth of G-d and His Torah are accepted and affirmed by both the **Earlier** and **Later** Generations.” Why don’t we simply say: “The truth of G-d and Torah are accepted by the People of Israel **forever**”? What is the reason and the deeper meaning behind “...accepted by both the **Earlier** and **Later** Generations”?

The *Siddur HaGra* (pp121) in the commentary *Siach Yitzchak* explains the significance of this specific language “*Al Harishonim Vea'l Haachronim*” - “accepted by both the **Earlier** and **Later** Generations”. He writes that both **earlier** and **later** generations of the People of Israel experience challenges of faith **BUT** the challenges are very different.

*The Earlier Generations*: Many Torah commentaries write about the pure and unadulterated faith of the generation of the Exodus (**let’s call them Generation E**). Generation E witnessed the year long manifestation of the Ten Plagues. They watched the mighty Egyptians drown at the Reed Sea. They participated in the transcendence of the Divine at Mt. Sinai. They saw Moshe descend with the First and then Second set of Tablets/Commandments. Faith was not a challenge, but implementation of that faith was a mighty challenge indeed.

The morning after Sinai, Generation E was required to alter their lifestyles immediately i.e., eating habit and relationships. No more Meat and Milk delicacies, no more fine dining on exotic non kosher animals or even kosher ones without ritual slaughter. Perhaps the most difficult was the immediate requirement for Biblically prohibited marriages to be dissolved. Husbands and wives, parents and children that survived the servitude and persecution in Egypt now needed to separate immediately and forever. Not easy at all!

*The Later Generations*: The generations after the first century of national Jewish life did not face the challenges of extreme and immediate lifestyle change. They (and we) face a different set of challenges, i.e. the challenge of clear and unwavering faith and belief in what took place generations earlier that they did not see with their own eyes. Because of this, they also experienced the challenges of lethargy and spiritual fatigue. It is a constant challenge to maintain a freshness and exuberance in daily and weekly rituals we perform (hence the need for Tefillah Tips).

The remainder of this Tefillah expresses our affirmation that no matter what generation we live in we have always and will always affirm the truth of G-d as our King, Creator and Redeemer – *Chok VeLo Yaavor* – *As an inalienable statute*. Rabbi Schwab *zt”l* in *On Prayer* (pp 384) writes that during the Holocaust when Nazis were leading Jews to be slaughtered, they were instructed to recite **this** prayer as their final words on earth.

Take Home Tip: We all have our own unique challenges, but the same faith in G-d and Torah is the antidote to them all.

Shabbat Shalom.

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