

TEFILLAH TIPS

TEFILLAT SHACHARIT—SHABBAT

Ezrat Avoteinu

The Final *Tefillah* before engaging in the *Shacharit Amidah* / Silent Meditative Prayer is *Ezrat Avoteinu Atoh Hu Meolam – Hashem, You have been the support and salvation for our forefathers since the beginning.....* The subject of this *Tefillah* is *Geulah* –Redemption, and it concludes with *Baruch Atoh Hashem Ga'al Yisrael* – Blessed are You *Hashem*, the Redeemer of Israel. This is in consonance with the Talmudic passage in *Brachot* 9B that instructs us to juxtapose the blessing of redemption to our silent *Amidah* i.e. *Semichat Geulah LeTefillah*.

Rav Schwab *zt"l* in *On Prayer* pp 393 quotes the *Siddur* of Rav Pinchas ben R' Yehudah Palatchik who writes that our Sages modeled our *Tefillot* in the style of the prayers of our forefathers at the crossing of the Reed Sea. The Israelites praised God in song and in jubilation at the Reed Sea, so too we at our moment of longing for redemption express song, praise and jubilation.

Rav Pinchas demonstrates that embedded in this prayer is an abbreviated summary of our entire *Shacharit* service.

Venatenu Yedidim – Our Sages instituted:

1. *Zemirot* – refers to *Pesukei Dezimra*
2. *Shirot* – refers to *Az Yashir*
3. *Vetishbachot* – refers to *Yishtabach*
4. *Berachot* – refers to *Birkas Yotzair Ohr*
5. *Vehodaot* – refers to *Ahavah Rabbah*
6. *Lamelech Kel Chay Vekayam* – refers to *Shema* and the *Amidah*

After studying and analyzing the *Shacharit* service, we can see a strong and repetitive focus on our Exodus from Egypt. We say *Az Yashir*, we review the Exodus in *Ezrat Avoteinu*, in *Vayomer*, and *Emet Veyatziv....* Why is it that we place such a large emphasis on the Exodus each and every day in the morning and the evening?

The simple answer is because the genesis of our nation originates at the Exodus from Egypt. At that time, God willed unprecedented open miracles and led us to Mt. Sinai in order that we should become a holy nation and receive His Torah. We therefore are able to approach G-d each day **because** of the Exodus itself. In our *tefillot*, we review the Exodus and express prayers of gratitude and pride about the Exodus because it served as our passport to Torah, *Mitzvoth*, and prayer as well.

A deeper answer is that before we approach God in prayer, we contemplate and somewhat relive the fear, anxiety and eventual euphoria that our forefathers experienced in Egypt and at the Reed Sea. With the Egyptians closing in on our backs and the roaring Reed Sea in front of us, we launched powerful outbursts of prayer and soon advanced onto the dry floor of the miraculously split sea. Our Sages intended that we approach our daily prayers with the backdrop of our salvation from Egypt and the Egyptians, and recognize that our lives and all of our challenges are similarly supported and guided from G-d in heaven, as the sea split for our ancestors, so too God can and will help us navigate through our sea of life experiences as well.

Take Home Tip: While reciting the words of our prayers, have in mind how many millions of Jews throughout the millennia have recited the exact same words towards *Hashem*. These *tefillot* are *tried and true*- provided that we express them with all of our hearts and souls.

Shabbat Shalom
Rabbi Ephraim Epstein
Congregation Sons of Israel
Cherry Hill New Jersey