

TEFILLAH TIPS

TEFILLAT SHACHARIT—SHABBAT

Yismach Moshe

Yismach Moshe Bimatnat Chelko Ki Eved Neeman Karahta lo. Kelil Tiferet Birosho Natata Lo Beamdo Lifanecha Al Har Sinai – Moshe rejoiced in the gift of his portion; that You called him a faithful servant. A crown of splendor You placed on/in his head when he stood before You at Mt Sinai.

Ushnei Luchot Avanim Horeed Beyado Vechatuv Bahem Shemirat Shabbat - And he brought down two stone Tablets upon which were written the *Mitzvah* of *Shabbat* observance.

Yismach Moshe is the opening prayer in the body of the *Shabbat* morning *Shacharit Amidah*. Let's explore the opening phrases in order to derive a deeper meaning and understanding of our *tefillah*:

1. Why do we start with Moshe and the covenant at Sinai?
 2. What is meant by a crown **on/in** his head?
 3. Why are we glorifying a moment that was overshadowed and crushed by the worshipping of the Golden Calf?
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1. The *Talmud* teaches that the Ten Commandments were transmitted **on Shabbat** morning. Therefore, we begin our *Shabbat* morning *Amidah* reflecting on the covenant at Sinai. The commentaries also teach that long before *Shabbat* was commanded at Sinai, Moshe orchestrated a *Shabbat* day of rest in Egypt for the Israelites by advising Pharaoh that all the slaves needed a day off to reenergize themselves. Moshe chose *Shabbat*.
 2. A crown on/**IN** his head – The sages explain that the crown of Moshe was the radiance on his face after his encounter with G-d at Sinai. Exodus 34:19-35 states: when Moshe descended from the mountain his face was radiating. When Moshe was not communicating with G-d or teaching *Torah* to Israel, he would keep his radiance covered with a *masveh* / mask . Rav Chaim Voloshiner zt"l explains that the reason the crown was **BI**rosho – **IN** his head, and not **AI** Rosho – **ON** his head is because the crown was spiritual and not physical. A physical acquisition remains external, but a spiritual acquisition is inculcated in the core of the soul – hence **BI**rosho – **IN** his head.
 3. Finally, we are not glorifying a moment that was overshadowed by the debacle of the Golden Calf i.e. the receiving of the first set of Tablets; rather, we are invoking the receiving of the second set of Tablets carved out by Moshe himself. Moshe descended from the mountain the third and final time on *Yom Kippur* in the year 2449 with the second set of *Luchot* – Tablets which the Israelites carried with them all forty years through the desert.

Take Home Tip – Every *Shabbat* morning during the *Shacharit Amidah* we revisit the great *Shabbat* at Sinai. It was on that Day of Revelation that we became an Eternal Nation, a nation of Royal Priests charged with the vital task to bring light, truth, and goodness to the world forever.

Shabbat Shalom.

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