

Let Go of the Tissues - Your Talking to Hashem

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Prayer is one of the most integral parts of our daily lives. Three times a day we ask *Hashem* for health, wealth, and so much more. How amazing it is to be able to speak directly to the One Above on a constant basis, asking for all of our many needs!

In this week's *Amud* (23b), the *Gemara* explains a *halacha* that details the way a person should act during the daily *amida*, the *shemoneh esrei*. The *Gemara* says in the name of Shmuel, that during prayer a person may not hold a knife, money, a plate, or a loaf of bread. *Rashi* explains that holding these items can cause a person to lose concentration in the middle of prayer. One will be afraid of a falling knife, money scattering, a plate breaking, and bread falling to the dirty floor.

The implication from the words of *Rashi* is that specifically these items one may not hold, but any other object that doesn't detract from one's concentration would be permitted. However, the *Taz* (Rabbi Dovid Segal 1586-1667) in his commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch* argues on *Rashi*'s opinion. He explains that the items mentioned in the *Gemara* are just examples and really one would be forbidden to hold any object, even a tissue or the once popular fidget spinner.

This seems rather perplexing! What is the problem with holding a tissue if it will not prevent one's concentration even the smallest iota? The *Pri Megadim* (Rav Yosef Teumim 1727-1793) explains that when someone prays, one is standing directly in front of the King of all Kings. Talking to a king requires the utmost respect, and holding something shows a lack of respect. Imagine holding onto a bag of chips while talking to the Queen of England - it is completely disrespectful. Certainly while asking Hashem for our daily needs, one should show this proper respect and not hold any objects.

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, a great Rabbi and *tzaddik* from Jerusalem, would leave his house ten minutes before the start of every prayer service for a two minute walk to the shul. When asked about this practice, Rabbi Auerbach explained that prayer is talking directly to *Hashem* and when one goes before a king begging for his life, one makes sure to arrive early to prepare exactly what to say. Talking to *Hashem* is talking to the King of all kings and therefore definitely requires preparation.

To sum up, we see that besides for proper concentration during prayer, one also needs to recognize with whom one is praying. This recognition requires one to be careful not to hold anything, even a tissue, which can show a small level of disrespect to the King of all kings.