

Prayer In Purity  
Brachos 22b  
Rabbi Mendy Rosner

Tefillah is something which is such an essential part of our daily lives. While we can recognize and value the special opportunity given to us to have an audience with Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the frequency of our davening can also cause a measure of flatness and monotony to creep in. Our appreciation is dulled and our enthusiasm wanes. Yet if we look to the words of Chazal and see how they view the tefillah experience, perhaps this will help open our own eyes to the loftiness of what we are doing.

One such insight can be found on this week's Amud. Rabba presents the halacha that if one is in middle of davening and belatedly realizes that the place where he is davening is unclean due to tzoa (excrement) [it was a place that is known to often have tzoa, yet he didn't check - Tosafos], he is considered a sinner, but his tefillah is still accepted. Rava challenges Rabba's statement based on the posuk of "V'zevach reshaim to'eiva" - the sacrifice of an evildoer is an abomination [in the eyes of Hashem]. Rather, says Rava, such a tefillah is considered an abomination. If we analyze what Rava is saying, we can learn something amazing. There is no specific allusion in the posuk to indicate that it is talking about tefillah at all; in fact, this posuk is used to teach us the halacha that the korban of a rasha cannot be brought on the Mizbe'ach. What makes Rava so confident that the posuk can be a source to invalidate the tefillah of this person, and even to consider it a to'eiva?

It seems that the connection between tefillah and the korbanos is even stronger than we realize. It's not only that the framework of tefillah was drawn from the korbanos ("tefillah b'makom korbanos tiknum"), but the very essence of tefillah shares the same level of purity and holiness as the korbanos. When one devalues and denigrates his tefillah by davening in such a repulsive area, it is the equivalent of the holy Bais Hamikdash being defiled by an unworthy korban. Such a korban is not only not accepted by Hakadosh Baruch Hu, but the very act of bringing it is repulsive to Him. A tefillah offered in this degrading manner is just as repulsive, and one can easily learn that from the source by korbanos.

It follows that when we set ourselves up to daven properly, with both an appropriate setting and an appropriate mindset, we can tap into the wonder, awe, and holiness of one who is bringing a korban in the Bais Hamikdash. Let us use this insight to reinvigorate our davening and truly make it into the transcendent experience it is meant to be.