

Rav Kook on T'hilim

from an unpublished work
by **Rabbi Chanan Morrison**

T'hilim 10 - You Prepare Their Heart

TAAVAT ANAVIM... “God, You have heard the entreaty of the lowly. You prepare their hearts; may Your ear be attentive” (10:17).

The psalm speaks of God hearing the prayer of the downtrodden. Yet the expression TACHIN LIBAM – “You prepare their heart” – is puzzling. Is it not the supplicant who collects his thoughts and focuses his mind before beginning to pray? Why does the verse appear to assign the task of preparing the heart to God?

The Sages taught (B'rachot 31), “One who prays should direct his heart to Heaven.” They based the requirement for directing the heart on this phrase, “You prepare their heart.” Again, it is not clear: who exactly is preparing the heart and mind?

Awareness of God's Presence

There are two levels of kavana (intention) in prayer. The first level is when we pay attention to the meaning of the words and the overall intention of our prayers. This is the

basic level of kavana.

A more advanced kavana is attained when we are able to sense God's universal presence. The Talmudic guidance to “direct our heart to Heaven” refers to this higher kavana. We should contemplate upwards, elevating our thoughts to reflect on the sublimity of God's Name.

This is how the Sages interpreted the verse: “You” – when we are conscious of You and Your infinite grandeur – this awareness “will prepare their hearts” – will help direct our hearts and minds in prayer.

This explanation sheds light on the conclusion of the verse. By meditating on God's Name, we uplift the soul and fulfill the goal of prayer. A powerful prayer infused with such profound kavana is more likely to be accepted.

Thus, “You” – when we focus on You and Your holy Name, this helps us “prepare the heart” to truly pray – and, as a result, “Your ear will be attentive” to answer our heartfelt prayers.

*Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 131
on B'rachot 8b (1:11)*