

Rabbi's Article II

Ashrei 3x!

The Zohar (-226a) on our *parsha* states, "Whoever recites the (psalm 145) 'Tehillah L'Dovid (known as 'ashrei' -[Link](#))' is a man of (will merit) the World to Come (-[Link](#))." The Zohar goes on to explain that, "Twice is (obligatory (the obligation of praying for one's needs)) for the food and sustenance of each day," while the third time is, "not obligatory, but only for the sake of praise (giving praise to G-d)." Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneerson (-[Link](#)), father of the Rebbe, in his commentary on the Zohar explains that saying the *Tehillah L'Dovid* three times is like the three daily prayers (*Shacharit* (morning), *Mincha* (afternoon) and *Ma'ariv* (evening) prayers)... and just like two prayers (*Shacharit* and *Mincha*) are obligatory, and the third (*Ma'ariv*) is not obligatory, so too with the three times of *Tehilat L'Dovid*, the first two are obligatory, while the third is only for the sake of giving praise to G-d.

The way we recite trice daily the *ashrei* is twice in *Shacharit* (once in the *Verses of Praise* (-[Link](#)) before the *Amida* (-[Link](#)) and once after the *Amida*), and the third time in opening the *Mincha* services, before the *Amida*. Hence, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch, the *Tzemach Tzedek* (-[Link](#)) asks, being that they are reflecting the *Three Prayers*, why don't we recite one by *Ma'ariv*, instead of twice in *Shacharit*? There are those who answer: (i) "Night is not a time for praises (being that it is a time of Justice and Strictness)," or (ii) *Night is not a time of reciting Kedusha* (sanctifications; -seemingly for the same reason above) and *ashrei* is connected to sanctifications." However, the *Tzemach Tzedek* does not accept these answers, because, if this be the case, then we should have established to say the *ashrei* only twice daily?!

Rather, the *Tzemach Tzedek* sees it as, when the *Talmud* rules (-*Brochos* 4b) that the *ashrei* must be recited three times, it means that all three are obligatory, and this follows the opinion that *Ma'ariv* prayers are obligatory, and this opinion has us reciting the *ashrei* at the opening of *Ma'ariv*, as well. However, we follow the ruling that *Ma'ariv* is not obligatory, and hence, we don't say *ashrei* at *Ma'ariv*. Therefore, according to the opinion that *Ma'ariv* is not obligatory, it suffices to say twice the *ashrei* in order to be a, "man of the World to Come," and the recital of the second *ashrei* at *Shacharit* is not in order to become a, "man of the World to Come," but for the reason of, "not skipping reciting *ashrei* three times." However, according to this, how does the comment of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok --that all three times are for the sake of becoming a "man of the World to Come," only that the third time is one of praise, and not of obligation-- match this teaching of the *Tzemach Tzedek*?

According to the *Tzemach Tzedek* why do we actually say *ashrei* three times? The answer is that the *Tzemach Tzedek* is commenting according to the *Talmud*, which is the *Revealed Teachings* of the Torah, according to which, being that *Ma'ariv* is not obligatory, hence, we only need to say *ashrei* twice. However, according to the Zohar, the *Esoteric Teachings* of the Torah (on which Rabbi Levi Yitzchok is commenting), the *Tzemach Tzedek* holds that (i) we need to say the *ashrei* three times, (ii) the third time is not obligatory, but praise, and (iii) this *ashrei* of praise is to be said (not in *Ma'ariv* but) in *Shacharit*. Hence, the *Tzemach Tzedek* concludes with, "Nevertheless, not to skip the recital of *ashrei* three times... we say it (twice) at *Shacharit*," and he explains the mystical connection between the *Ma'ariv* (Jacob; Attribute of Compassion) with *Shacharit* (Abraham; Attribute of Kindness), and (-*Isaiah* 29:22), "Jacob who redeemed Abraham," because here the *Tzemach Tzedek* is not speaking in accordance with the *Revealed Teachings* (*Talmud*), but in accordance with the *Esoteric Teachings* (Zohar).

We will understand this through understanding the *Tzemach Tzedek's* words when discussing the not saying *ashrei* by *Ma'ariv*, "For definitely it (that which is drawn through *Ma'ariv's* *ashrei*) will be drawn of its own." However, just as the *Ma'ariv* prayer itself is not obligatory, since the "(Divine) unifications," are drawn of its own accord --once we have prayed *Shacharit* and *Mincha*-- and nevertheless, we do pray *Ma'ariv* voluntarily, the same should be with the *ashrei*, that we should nevertheless recite it voluntarily?!

The answer is, that there is that which comes from Above through the work of man, which influences and solicits its flow, and then there are the *Divine Flows* which are beyond the reach of man's service. In the latter itself, there are two levels: (i) That which is completely beyond and service of man (as that of the *Splitting of the Sea*, in which G-d told Moses, "And you shall remain silent"), and (ii) That which cannot be influenced or solicited by the service of man (and hence, is not obligatory), yet nevertheless, man can choose (voluntary) to do something so that this *Gift from Above* should have its fullest impact upon him. And with this, we will understand the difference between *Ma'ariv* and its *ashrei*.

Ma'ariv, being that this *Gift from Above* is beyond the solicitation of man, nevertheless, in order that this *Gift from Above* of a *Divine Unification*, impact us fully as a blessing, we choose to voluntarily pray *Ma'ariv*. However, its *ashrei*, of which the *Tzemach Tzedek* explains its recital as arousing the level of, "From the starting root of arousing the unification," and not the recital is not concerning its *impact upon us*, hence, there is no room for even its voluntary recital (service of man).

This is according to the *Revealed Teachings* (*Talmud*), which is connected to the *External Dimension* of the *Supernal Crown* (still in some way impacted by the service of man) and therefore, there is no point of even a voluntary service of man for such a unification from the *Inner Dimension* of the *Supernal Crown* ("Starting root of arousing the unification"). However, from the aspect (connection and empowerment) of the *Esoteric Teachings*, which is connected to the *Inner Dimension* of the *Supernal Crown*, there is reason for the human recital of this *ashrei*, only that it be as a praise (voluntary) and not as obligatory. And in order to emphasize that this is but a praise, therefore (i) we recite it at *Shacharit* (not at *Ma'ariv*), and (ii) before the *Amida*, during the *Verses of Praise*.