



Sicha Summary

Chelek 18 | Pinchas | Sichah 4

The Zohar:

The Talmud says that whoever says the psalm *Tehillah LeDavid* (known as *Ashrei*) three times daily is assured of a place in the World to Come. (*Berachos* 4b) The Zohar on *parshas Pinchas* elaborates: Two of those recitations are required in order to request sustenance, and the third recitation is solely for the sake of praising G-d. (*Zohar* II:226a)

Rashi (*Berachos, ibid*) comments that the three recitations correspond to the three daily prayers.

The Tzemach Tzedek's Explanation:

The Tzemach Tzedek explains that the Talmud's statement only aligns with the opinion that views the evening prayer as mandatory. According to this opinion, *Tehillah LeDavid* is indeed recited three times daily, once during each prayer.

The accepted *halacha*, however, is that the evening prayer is discretionary. According to this opinion, *Tehillah LeDavid* is not recited during the evening prayer. And because the recitation of *Tehillah LeDavid* is meant to correspond to the daily obligatory prayers, a twice-daily recitation is enough to earn a place in the World to Come.

The Tzemach Tzedek concludes that what *Tehillah LeDavid* accomplishes during the two daytime prayers is accomplished automatically during the evening prayer. (*Yahel Or*, p. 672)

The Question:

The evening prayer is optional because its intended effects are drawn down automatically, without human initiation. Yet, if a person desires, they can still recite the evening prayer. Why, then, is the recitation of *Tehillah LeDavid* not optional at night as well?

The Explanation:

The Tzemach Tzedek explains that *Tehillah LeDavid* is the catalyst for a supernal union that generates sustenance for, and benefits, humankind. Therefore, there is no purpose in a human being participating in this process, because it begins in a place that is removed from the realm of human influence. The evening prayer bestows blessings that are also beyond our ability to generate. These blessings, however, have already been formed, and a person's optional prayer can ensure that the blessings are channeled in the optimal manner. Therefore, the prayer can be said.

Reb Levik's Explanation:

The Rebbe's father, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, explains that even according to the *halacha* that the evening prayer is optional, a person still merits the World to Come by reciting the psalm three times. But just as the evening prayer is optional, so is the third recitation optional.

This stems from a mystical perspective that even though a human being cannot actively participate in generating a supernal union, there is still value in his being connected to the process through his voluntary recitation of the psalm.

To allude to the fact that this recitation is only praise of G-d and does not actively bring about sthi union, the psalm is recited twice during the morning prayer instead of during the evening prayer itself.