

A Time of Good-Will

ואני תפלתי לך ה' עת רצון אלקים ברוב חסדך ענני באמת ישעך

And I, my prayer to You, Havayah, should be in a time of good-will, Elokim in Your abundant kindness, answer me with the truth of Your salvation. (Pslams 69:14)

Et ratzon, a time of good-will before God, happens every day, when we say this verse before prayer. It also happens at midnight when the gates of heaven are opened, and it happens during the festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot. The highest level of good-will that we know, happens during the time of the Afternoon Prayer on Shabbat. But the time of good will of the future to come (the days of Mashiach) will be even higher. Actually, every moment can be a time of good-will before God, when we connect (*tefillah* (prayer) means to connect) with the Almighty. Prayer is like a ladder set on the earth with its top reaching heaven, creating the connection. As a result of this connection, this time becomes a time of good-will.

We learn in Ecclesiastes that there is a time for everything under the heavens, a time to be born and a time to die, etc. There are 28 times, and the 25th is “there is a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.” Peace in this context is connected with love. If we want to create a moment of peace, it begins with love. Peace between us and God begins with loving our fellow man. If there is love, there is a time of good-will before God.

In another place in the Zohar it says that “there is a time to act for God.” When a Jew feels that it is now the time to act for God, it becomes a time of good-will above. During this time of good-will, the rest of the verse can be fulfilled: “Elokim in Your abundant kindness, answer me with the truth of Your salvation.” Elokim is the Name of God symbolizing judgment, but at a time of good-will, even the judgments are transformed into “abundant loving-kindness”. All the narrowness and contraction within the Name Elokim are annulled by the time of good-will. This is also true about ourselves. Our criticism of someone else transforms into loving-kindness at a time of good-will between us.

The Tzemach Tzedek writes that “I, my prayer to you, Havayah,” is a connection between the I and Havayah, causing Havayah to rise all the way to *Atika*, the supernal Crown, and there it becomes Elokim (in gematria, nature). This is similar to the teaching of the Maggid of Mezritch, who explains the verse “You will return to Havayah, your Elokim” to mean “You will return, until Havayah becomes your Elokim.” Your repentance needs to be so internal, the light of Havayah needs to penetrate so deeply into your soul, that Havayah, which is the Name of God higher than all the worlds, becomes your nature. Giving our “I” (I, my prayer) to God means relinquishing our sense of self-consciousness and giving it back to God. Then, the “time of good-will” that is a result is the natural consciousness to which we are

elevated. The last part of the verse reads: “Answer me with the truth of Your salvation”. Truth is permanent. That is why the Rebbe always added the adjective, the ‘true’ and complete redemption because something that is true does not end. It is eternal and becomes nature, natural consciousness. This is what we should ask of God during the time of the afternoon prayer on Shabbat, and at any time of good-will.