



19. **Mesirus nefesh.** Another idea mentioned in the Zohar is that there is a concept of mesirus nefesh in putting the face down. After one davened Shemoneh Esrei, he must show Hashem he is willing to give up his life for Hashem. One shows this by putting his face down, as if he had passed away, and by saying the paragraph from Tehillim (תהילים כ"ה) "אליך ה' נפשי אשא" (תהילים כ"ה).

### Warning of the Zohar

20. The Zohar goes on to warn that according to the reason he gives, the paragraph must be said with the proper kavana and the feeling that one is truly prepared to give up his life for Hashem; then Hashem will have mercy on him and provide atonement. If one only says it outwardly but does not feel it in his heart, he endangers himself, as he is speaking falsehoods (זה"ק במדבר ח"ג) (ק"כ, ב', הובא בב"י ד"ה כתוב בספר ובמג"א סק"ה). It turns out that his display of mesirus nefesh is a worthless display; in fact, it is a mockery, and one can ח"ו get a serious punishment for this.

21. **Changes due to the severity of the Zohar's warning.** Because of the severity of the Zohar's warning about one who does not have proper kavana when putting the face down (above, 20), the minhag is to make some changes to how it is done in practice so that it is not done in the exact form the Zohar says. This way, one will not be caught ח"ו in the severe punishments described by the Zohar, as will be explained א"ה.

### The Perek Said When Putting the Face Down

22. **לדוד, אליך ה' נפשי אשא וכו'.** The original nusach is "לדוד, אליך ה' נפשי אשא וכו'" (תהילים כ"ה), arranged according to the alef beis. The Beis Yosef cites it (סי קל"א) from the Zohar (above, 19). Its content fits with the reason that one is showing mesirus nefesh for Hashem. This is the accepted nusach of Eidot Mizrach.

23. **Not putting the face down.** The minhag in Eidot Mizrach is not to put the face down when saying "לדוד, אליך ה' נפשי אשא וכו'" so that it does not resemble the primary form of Tachanun. Instead, they say it sitting with the face up so that it does not resemble the way or intent the Zohar describes. This way, one is not in trouble (כך החיים סקל"ד). In contrast, Ashkenazim put their faces down but change the nusach they say (see 24 below).

24. **"רחום וחנון וכו' אל באפך תוכיחני."** There is another nusach taken from Tehillim (פרק ו') "ה' אל באפך תוכיחני" – (פרק ו') without the first posuk, which is a posuk of song. Instead, the line "רחום וחנון וכו'" is said at the beginning. This is the minhag of Ashkenazim and many Chassidim (לבוש, מ"ב סי קל"א סק"ה). [Those who daven Nusach Ari say "רחום וחנון וכו'" and also put the face down.]

25. The reason for the minhag not to say "לדוד אליך וכו'" is to differentiate it from what the Zohar describes, as it is dangerous to say the perek לדוד אליך וכו' without the proper kavanos. Thus, Ashkenazim say the other nusach (מג"א סי קל"א סק"ה). Still, this should also be said with kavana and patience, as it is still related to the concept of putting the face down (אשכול השור סי"א).

### How to Put the Face Down

#### Tilting the Head

26. When putting the face down today, one should not lay his head straight down on his arm. He should put his elbow on the table with his arm in the air diagonally and then rest his head on his arm such that his face is facing to the side, not completely downward, and covered by his arm.

27. The reason is that back when they used to actually prostrate themselves on the floor, they had to lean their bodies to the side to avoid the issur of bowing on a stone floor (ש"ע סי"ח). Even though today we put our faces down without actually bowing, we still fulfill this aspect – that the head should be tilted to the side – to remember the concept (ביאור ד"ה להטות). Some hold this is halachically required (מג"א סק"כ).

#### Covering with a Garment

28. When putting the face down on the arm, the face must be covered by a garment, not the arm itself. This is because the arm and face are part of the same body, and a body cannot cover itself [because במינו אינו חוצץ] (מ"ב סק"ג). [If one davens with short sleeves ... and has no garment on his arm as a barrier, he should find some cloth, tissue, or tallis to cover his arm when putting his face down.]

#### Right Arm or Left Arm?

29. Most poskim hold it is better to put the face down on the left side. This way, the head tilts to the right, and the Shechina is on a person's

right side when he davens, as the posuk says, "ה' צלך על יד ימינך" (ש"ע סי קל"א ס"א, ומ"ב סק"ד, הגר"א).

30. Others say one should always put his head down on the right side (מ"ב סק"ה) since the Shechina is opposite the person, and this way, the Shechina's left is opposite the person's right (מ"ב סק"ה).
31. **Without tefillin.** Since most poskim hold it is better to do it on the left side, we do so when there is no reason to do otherwise. This is what we do when one is not wearing tefillin, e.g., at Mincha or if one is not wearing tefillin at Shacharis.
32. **With tefillin.** However, when one is wearing tefillin, he should not do it on his left arm out of respect for his tefillin. He should put his face down on his right arm as a sort of compromise since some say to always do it on the right (מג"א ס"א, ט"ז, מ"א). This is the prevalent minhag (מ"ב ס"ם).
33. However, some hold one should always put his face down on the left, even when wearing tefillin, since the Shulchan Aruch's opinion is the main one (הג"א הוזהר במ"ב סק"ו, וע"פ ספרי קבלה כ"ה החיים סק"ל).
34. Some put the face down on both arms simultaneously to satisfy both opinions. Since it is clear he is doing it to satisfy both opinions, it is not degrading to his tefillin (ש"ת י"ט, אות י"ט). When wearing tefillin at Shacharis, one should put his right arm over his left; at Mincha, he should put his left arm over his right (א"א בוטשאטש סוף הסי').
35. **Lefty.** At Shacharis, a lefty should put his face down on his left arm, as it does not have tefillin (מ"ב סק"ב). He should do the same at Mincha (ש"ת באר משה ח"ב סי' ג').

### Sitting or Standing?

36. Vidui and the 13 Middos are specifically said standing; the same is true for אג"מ א"ח סי' כ' אות י"ט, ש"ת). Some say not standing for these is called a breach ("פורץ גדר") unless one is unwell.
37. **Putting the head down standing.** Some say one may say the part of Tachanun with his face down while standing (ריב"ש הובא במ"ב סק"י).
38. **Sitting.** However, the Shulchan Aruch rules it should be specifically said sitting, not standing (ש"ע סי' ב) based on Kabbala (ב"י).
39. **No other choice.** Thus, with no other choice one may rely on the opinion that allows it to be said standing. E.g., if one has nowhere to sit or someone is davening Shemoneh Esrei behind him so that he cannot take his three steps back or to the side, he should say this part of Tachanun standing (מ"ב סק"י).
40. **Leaning.** I once heard a suggestion that if one has nowhere to sit, he can lean on something heavily enough that if it were removed, he would fall, as that is also considered like sitting. Thus, if one is next to a wall, he can lean with his back on the wall. One can also lean on a shtender or table with his hands heavily enough that if it were removed, he would fall.

### Davening Somewhere with a Different Minhag

#### 13 Middos, Vidui

41. **Minhag not to say.** Someone with the minhag not to say the 13 Middos and Vidui who is davening in a shul that says them should not deviate from their minhag; he should say them with the tzibbur (ש"ת אגרות משה א"ח ח"ג סי' פ"ט).
42. **Minhag to say.** Someone with the minhag to say them who is davening in a shul that does not say them should say Vidui in an inconspicuous way without tapping the heart (לד, ש"ת אור לציון ח"ס פ"ט תשובה א, הגר"י קניבסקי ארחות רבינו ח"א עמ' סח). He should not say the 13 Middos, as they may not be said without a minyan (אג"מ שם). Some say them with their trop (אג"מ שם).

#### Putting the Face Down

43. An Ashkenazi davening with an Eidot Mizrach tzibbur, where they do not put the face down, should follow their minhag and not put his face down (הגרש"א, ס' ועלהו לא יבול סי' קל"א).

#### Changing the Order

44. On Monday and Thursday, Nusach Sefard first puts the face down, then says שער תשובה סק"א) והוא רחום (ש"ע). Nusach Ashkenaz first says שער תשובה, then puts the face down.
45. If one is in a shul that says Tachanun before רחום, e.g., a Nusach Sefard shul, and that is not his minhag, or vice versa, there is no issue of differing minhagim everywhere (הגרש"א, אשי ישראל פכ"ה הע' כ"א, הגר"י א"ת תפילה כהלכתה (פ"ד הע' כ"ו). Additionally, people daven at different speeds, so he is not clearly acting differently than the minhag of the place.



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יה"ר שיוכר לגדלה  
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ולמעש"ט ולראות  
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נתרם ע"י הר"ר יוסף שדרך י"ז  
לע"נ אביו מנוצ"ר מנשה ב"ר יוסף – מ"ז תמוז תשנ"ט  
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