

**Translation:**

**Rabbi Shimon says: Be very careful in the reciting of the Shema and the Prayer. When you pray do not make your Prayer a set/fixed thing, rather compassion and mercy/supplications before the Place, blessed be God, as it says (Joel 2:13): "For [God] is gracious/merciful and compassionate, slow to anger, great in kindness and renounces the evil/punishment." Do not consider yourself wicked/guilty.**

**Maimonides**

When a man considers himself deficient and base, a deficient act which he might perform will not be magnified in his sight. We have explained that the meaning of fixed regimen is that prayer will be burdensome to him, and he will consider it as if he were commanded to occupy himself with a certain affair and that he may rest from it.

רְבִי שִׁמְעוֹן אוֹמֵר, הָיִי זָהִיר  
בְּקִרְיַת שְׁמַע וּבְתַפְלָה.  
וּכְשֶׁאַתָּה מְתַפְלֵל, אַל תַּעַשׂ  
תְּפִלָּתְךָ קִבֵּעַ, אֶלָּא רַחֲמִים  
וְתַחֲנוּנִים לְפָנֵי הַמָּקוֹם בְּרוּךְ  
הוּא, שְׁנֹאמַר כִּי חַנוּן וְרַחוּם  
הוּא אֶרְךָ אַפַּיִם וְרַב חֶסֶד  
וְנָחַם עַל הָרָעָה. וְאַל תְּהִי רָשָׁע  
בְּפָנֶי עַצְמְךָ:

**Rav Chaim of Volozhin**

(As Read by Chanoch Levi in "Ruach Chaim")

*When you pray, do not make your prayer a set thing. Make sure that you pray: that your very essence is involved in the prayer and that it is not simply a mechanical act of mouthing words and bowing without even realizing what you are doing. Nevertheless, it should not be a "set thing." That is, your main focus should not be on prayer, for everything pales in significance to Torah study. Before the Omnipresent. Hashem is called MAKOM*

because He is the place of the universe (*Bereishis Rabba* 68). Just as a place supports whatever object it contains, so too Hashem supports the entire universe. Recognize that you are praying to the Being that supports everything and you will surely put all your heart into your prayer. Otherwise, man's prayer is not accepted (*Ta'anis* 8a). *Do not consider yourself wicked.* The prayer of an individual is only accepted if he prays wholeheartedly, but communal prayer is much more readily accepted (*Ta'anis* 8a). "He turns to the prayer of the devastated one and

does not despise their prayer." Hashem carefully examines the prayer of the devastated one, the individual, but never despises their prayer, the prayer of those who pray with a congregation (*Zohar on Tehillim* 102:18). Be careful to recite the Shema and the prayers with a congregation so that you will not be

considered wicked: so that your prayers will not have to undergo careful scrutiny and perhaps suffer rejection. By the same token, do not be wicked to yourself. Do not disguise yourself as a pious individual, hypocritically wrapping yourself in tallis and tefillin, when your inner thoughts are filled with evil plots. Alternatively, the evil inclination may attempt to convince a person that he is so steeped in sin that it is impossible to repent: "Why waste your time trying to repent? At least get the most out of this world!" Do not view yourself as a totally wicked person, for it is never too late to repent.