AMIDA Elokai Netsor, praying for your own good behavior

The ‘Amida technically ends with the nineteenth and final blessing, Sim Shalom. However, before concluding the ‘Amida, we recite the “Elo-hay, netsor…” prayer, which is different from every other prayer. First, unlike every other berakha in the ‘Amida, this prayer is written in the first person singular. Why? Because this berakha, “Elo-hay, netsor…” was not originally part of the ‘Amida, but a personal prayer composed by Mor bareh deRabina, a Rabbi from around 500 of the common era. Since then, it has been adopted by all the Jewish people to conclude the ‘Amida.

The content of this prayer is also unique. In it, Mor bareh deRabina asked God to save his tongue from evil and his lips from falsehood. He recognized the huge challenge of keeping our mouths under control and asked for God’s assistance in preventing him from speaking lashon hara (negative speech) and deception, which are often the sources of conflicts between people.

In this prayer, the Rabbi also requested God’s help in behaving with humbleness, patience, composure, and calm, especially in moments of tension when one is provoked by others or hurt by others and instinctively wants to respond and hurt the aggressor back. We ask for God’s assistance to grant us the patience and restraint we need to react appropriately in these difficult situations.

This prayer is unique because it requests God’s help in refining our character and improving our behavior, unlike the other berakhot in the ‘Amida, in which we request material things such as health and a good livelihood. In this last prayer, we ask God to inspire us to do good and help us to keep away from doing evil, but we should also recognize that our behavior depends on our freedom of choice and our responsibility to make moral decisions. When we recite this prayer, we must remember that we are not asking God to control our lives and decisions but to help and inspire us to reach our potential and behave with integrity.