

The Four Kavanah Points

The four places where kavana of pirush hamilos is needed to be יוצא

The method

Pause for a second before the line you are working on. Think the meaning of the first word or short phrase, by imagining yourself saying it, so you hear your own voice in your mind saying it in English. No sound comes out. Within three seconds, say that word from inside the siddur. Then think the next meaning, then say the next words. One or two words at a time, sometimes three when the phrase flows as one, never four.

The "then" column is there to remind you that the two steps do not happen at the same time: first think, then say. After a few weeks you can start thinking the meaning while you say each word, and that is the goal. If you said a word without thinking, think its meaning right after, within two or three seconds. That still counts.

1. פותח את ידך — the focal point of Pesukei DeZimra

Think:	then	Say:
You Open	then	פּוֹתֵחַ
Your Hand	then	אֶת יָדְךָ
And satisfy	then	וּמְשַׁבֵּיעַ
To all living things	then	לְכָל חַיִּי
Their desire	then	כְּצוֹן

2. בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם וּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל — the focal point of Krias Shema

Think:	then	Say:	Then think:
Hear Yisrael	then	שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל	I am a Jew, a Yisrael — I need to hear, understand, and accept the following:
that Hashem	then	ה'	Who is the Master of everything forever
who is our G-d	then	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	And I accept Him as my G-d and King, to do whatever He wants
this Hashem	then	ה'	Who is the Master of everything forever
is the One and Only (G-d)	then	אֶחָד	He is the א One and Only G-d and King over the entire universe, the ז ח Heavens and the earth, and ד the four directions, and past, present and future — and I would be willing to do what He wants no matter how difficult, even with mesirus nefesh.
Blessed be the Name	then	בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם	
of His Glorious Kingdom	then	כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ	
Forever and ever	then	לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד	I am happy that Hashem is my King, and I want everyone in the world to accept Hashem as their King forever.

3. אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם — remembering Yetzias Mitzrayim (end of the third parsha)

(Before this line, remember: I am about to fulfill the mitzvah min haTorah of remembering Yetzias Mitzrayim.)

Think:	then	Say:	Then think:
I am Hashem	then	אֲנִי ה'	Who is the Master of everything forever
your G-d	then	אֱלֹהֵיכֶם	

who took you out	then	אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם	
of the land of Mitzrayim	then	מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם	And He takes me out of my own מצרים — my limitations — every single day
to be your G-d	then	לִהְיוֹת לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים	
I am Hashem your G-d —	then	אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם	
TRUE	then	אֱמֶת	All of this is absolutely true, and I know it.

4. בְּרֶכֶת אַבּוֹת (מִגֵּן אַבְרָהָם) — the focal point of Shemoneh Esrei

Think:	then	Say:	Then think:
My Master, open my lips	then	אֲדַנִּי שִׁפְתֵי תִפְתָּח	I am standing before the King — help me be able to speak to You
and my mouth will tell Your praise	then	וְפִי יַגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ	
Blessed are You Hashem	then	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה'	
our G-d and G-d of our fathers	then	אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ	
G-d of Avraham, G-d of Yitzchak, and G-d of Yaakov	then	אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם, אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק, וְאֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב	My connection to Hashem comes down from them — and it is mine
the G-d who is great, mighty, and awesome	then	הָאֱ-לֹהִים הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹכָא	
exalted G-d	then	אֱ-לֹהִים עֲלִיוֹן	Above everything — and in control of everything
who does kindnesses that are truly good	then	גּוֹמֵל חֲסָדִים טוֹבִים	
who owns everything He made	then	קוֹנֵה הַכֹּל	
and remembers the kindness of the Avos	then	וְזוֹכֵר חֲסֵדֵי אַבּוֹת	
and brings a redeemer to their children's children	then	וּמַבִּיא גּוֹאֵל לְבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם	
for the sake of His Name, with love	then	לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה	Deep down — because He simply loves every one of us
King, Helper, Savior, and Shield	then	מֶלֶךְ עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמִגֵּן	He helps me in my struggles, saves me when I'm stuck, and shields me before trouble even comes
Blessed are You Hashem, Shield of Avraham	then	בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' מִגֵּן אַבְרָהָם	And shield of me — Avraham's heir, who continues his mission of revealing Hashem in the world

Practice

Practice each chart out loud ten times, eyes closed if it is hard to concentrate. After a few tries a short piece like פּוֹתַח אֶת יָדֶיךָ should take you less than ten seconds: think, say, think, say. That is the whole skill. The training program builds these four into your davening one week at a time.

If you said one of these four without kavana, say that part again with kavana.