



# The Kavanah Kards Project

JKL MNOP ABC DEFG. What's that? Have you ever tried to *daven* but felt that you were just reading random letters and words? Do you ever have trouble focusing on your *tefillah*? If so, you're really not alone! Today, we're meeting Sara Levine, the creator of Kavanah Kards, who had the same problem having *kavanah* during *davening* — and did something about it.

## HI, SARA, WOULD YOU TELL US YOUR STORY?

Sure. For years, I had trouble focusing during my *davening*, and it bothered me more and more. I tried many different ways to improve it, including warm-up brain exercises, and anything I could do to help my brain function better. It's funny, but I even tried to “force” myself to focus more. Nothing helped.

I was so frustrated one day with my lack of *kavanah* that I decided to start a *davening* “campaign.” Here's what I did: I decided to talk directly to Hashem about my problem. I knew that when we ask Hashem for something, the answer might be “no” or “not now,” but when we ask to come closer to Him, we are always helped. My strategy included telling Hashem that I wanted to serve Him *b'simchah* and wanted to give Him *nachas* from me. And actually, a funny “side effect” of my *davening* campaign is that, in fact, I became a really happy person — for no external reason! Obviously, Hashem really wanted me to fulfill that *mitzvah*.

## WHAT WAS YOUR “DAVENING CAMPAIGN”?

During this time, I was inspired to review the introduction of the *sefer Halachos of Brachos*. My attention was drawn to the statement that it is a *halachah* to focus on the meanings of Hashem's names when we say a *brachah* — specifically

that Hashem is Master of all; always was, always is and always will be, and that, when we say “Elokeinu,” we are to think that Hashem is all-powerful and capable of all.

Hashem gave me a brilliant idea: To write those words on a Post-it note and put it in my *siddur*, sticking up above the pages, so I could look up and see these words when I *davened*. It was a great help, and I thank Hashem for answering my prayer. Not only was I more focused, I began to feel more connected during *davening* and when making *brachos*.

### HOW DID YOU DEVELOP YOUR CAMPAIGN AFTER THAT?

Very quickly I “got the idea” that my sticky note *kavanah* reminders might be able to help others as well. Even though I only have beginner computer skills, I made a bookmark type of card on the computer that people could use just like my Post-it note. Amazingly, it turned out to be beautiful. Not only that, the name Kavanah Kard suddenly flashed into my mind.

### WHAT ARE KAVANAH KARDS?

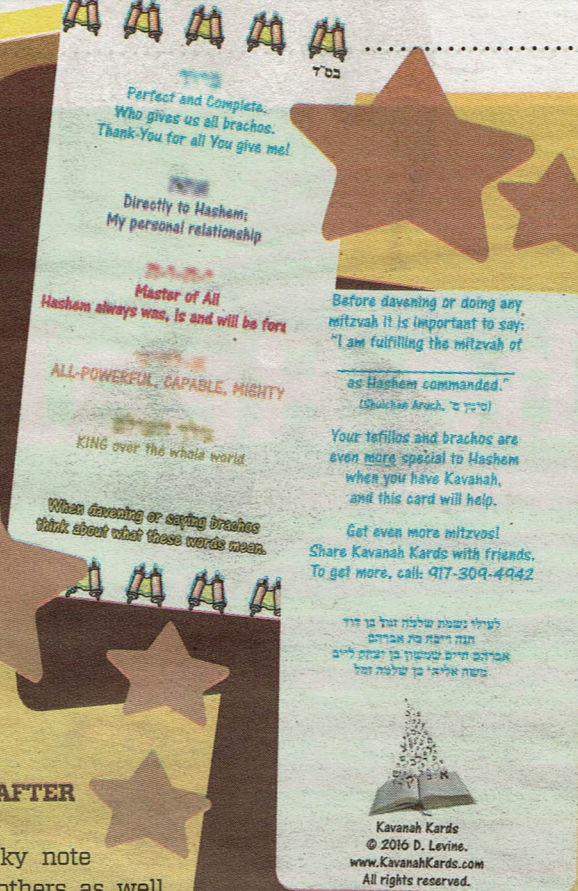
Kavanah Kards are cards that remind us that we are standing before Hashem when we *daven*. They remind us of Hashem’s attributes, so we can feel closer to Him. For example, they remind us that Hashem is all powerful, mighty, that He can do anything, etc. When we have the proper focus, or *kavanah*, our *tefillos* can go straight up to Hashem with the proper power. Also, when we show Hashem how important He is to us by saying the words slowly and thinking about Him, *middah k’negged middah*, He shows us how important we are, too.

### WHAT IS YOUR GOAL WITH THE KAVANAH KARDS?

The goal of the Kavanah Kard project is to promote a closer connection with Hashem so that, again, *middah k’negged middah*, we — and ultimately *Klal Yisrael* — will be blessed by Hashem. Think about it: If we can get more and more Yidden to *daven* with *kavanah*, we can help connect *Klal Yisrael* in a more powerful way to Hashem and on a larger scale. It is like rolling a snowball — it grows bigger faster and faster. That’s exciting.

### HAVE YOU SEEN ANY CLEAR INSTANCES OF HASHGACHAH PRATIS WHILE CREATING THE CARDS?

Yes, Hashem helped me a lot. I knew that printing the card would cost the most money. I was prepared to pay the cost because, of course, I was doing this all for Hashem. But the most amazing thing happened. When I arrived at the print shop to pick up my very first order of cards, the printer lowered the price so that it cost me a lot less than expected. Though the people at the print shop didn’t say so, I realized that it was because they saw what I was doing and they wanted to support it!



### HOW DO YOU PAY NOW FOR YOUR PRINTING AND SHIPPING EXPENSES?

The cards are free of charge, of course. Often, people want to donate to help cover costs or to sponsor printing the cards with a dedication as a *zechus* for someone, or for a *yahrtzeit*, etc. I use my own money to pay for the project, as well.

### ONCE YOU PRINTED THE CARDS, HOW DID YOU LET PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT YOUR PROJECT?

I began speaking to people about the cards. When I traveled to visit friends, I brought cards with me. In fact, on one of my visits, a good friend told me that she would take 400 of them with her to the hotel in Arizona where she was spending Pesach. Many people ended up taking the cards, and the word spread to many cities. There were articles in magazines, and I was even interviewed on a radio program.

### ARE KIDS USING KAVANAH KARDS, TOO?

I’m thrilled to say that, before the Yamim Tovim, I was asked to create a Kavanah Kard for younger readers, to help children have *kavanah* on Yom Kippur. I created two different cards that are now being used in schools by pre-teen and teen *daveners*. One card is personalized by decorating and writing in what the child wants to ask and thank Hashem for. The second card is colorful, with the meanings and descriptions of Hashem’s attributes.

### WHO ELSE IS USING YOUR CARDS?

*Baruch Hashem*, the Kavanah Kards are being used now all over the world. In fact, we have sent cards to many schools, here in the United States as well as in Montreal, Canada, and Manchester, in the United Kingdom. Recently, a 10<sup>th</sup> grader in Deal, New Jersey, ordered more than 100 to give out in her school. They have been used in projects and assemblies about *tefillah* and *kavanah*. Adults and young people are using them in Israel, Australia, England, South Africa, Canada and, of course, here in the United States. The cards are available in English, Hebrew and Yiddish.

### DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS FOR THE FUTURE FOR KAVANAH KARDS?

The goal is to spread the cards to more and more Yidden, and to inspire them to use the cards during *davening*. The more we try to come close to Hashem, the more He will come close to us and bring the *Geulah* soon. ■

To order your free Kavanah Kards, please contact Binyan Magazine.