

WAS THAT A PRAYER?

By Ozer Bergman

“Every person is obligated to say, ‘The entire world was created for me’” (*Sanhedrin* 37a). “Consequently...I must constantly look into and consider ways to make the world better; to provide what is missing and to pray on [the world’s] behalf” (*Likutey Moharan* I, 5:1).

The freedom that we attained and celebrate on Pesach is not a freedom from being subservient to other people’s desires so we can be subservient to our own. The freedom of Pesach is the freedom to fulfill our mission in the world. It is our responsibility, individually and collectively, to be sensitive to the world’s needs and try to set things right. Each of us has to act in a way that he can be most effective in improving the world.

Being human beings, though, there is a limit to what we can do and how many places we can get to. With *tefilah* (prayer), though, we can touch the lives of many more people. (“Pray globally, act locally,” as it were. Nonetheless, what the world needs, or doesn’t need, has to be thought about carefully. Don’t spend pity and compassion on situations that don’t warrant it.)

While every prayer helps, how effective a particular prayer is depends on factors like concentration and sincerity. Rebbe Nachman teaches that there are two modes of prayer. The ordinary one is addressing God directly, asking Him to provide in the best possible way what is needed. The other is to tell a story. The ordinary mode works before a decree has been sealed, before Heaven decides that a particular situation must remain in effect. However, after the decree has been sealed, ordinary, undisguised prayer is blocked by destroying angels. A prayer of the second mode, cloaked in a story, may make its way past those angels and arouse God’s mercy.

A prerequisite for knowing if a decree has already been sealed or not is the *simchah* (joy) born from doing mitzvahs. By cheerfully using the various parts of your body in mitzvah-performance, every part of you can be happy. An unhappy person fails to notice the world’s “unwellness.” He won’t notice that something is out of order, so he won’t pray for the world to get better.

The happiness in performing mitzvahs comes from our faith in the mitzvahs. This is developed by praying in such a way that the words of the prayer make a solid impact on us, in a way that we hear them loud and clear. Then, when we do

a mitzvah, there is a space in our heart for the joy that goes on to radiate throughout our bodies. But prayer can only have this power and this effect if we keep our minds free of *chametz* (leaven)—free of preoccupying thoughts of how to fulfill and perpetuate our desires, free of ideas that we don’t need to know.

Our Pesach preparations begin when we remove *chametz* from our homes. No cakes, cookies or sourdough pretzels in the cupboard, and no sour thoughts in the brain. Using our legs to go from room to room, we get down on our knees and use our eyes to inspect for *chametz*. What we find, we remove with our hands. The *simchah* begins to fill us.

When we arrive at the Seder, we come to a table full of mitzvahs and *tefilah*. (Try to be well-rested for the Seder. You’ll get a lot more out of it.) Pouring the wine for the person next to you, washing your hands, eating the vegetables, sitting comfortably—these and the other mitzvahs make use of almost the entire body. We begin to be filled with elation.

The Seder is filled with prayer. Kiddush, the blessings we make before eating and drinking at various points in the Seder, the Hallel that precedes the meal and the Hallel that follows it, are all undisguised prayer. The second mode of *tefilah* comes from the part of the Seder that makes this night different from all other Festival nights—the stories of the Exodus. For example:

“We were slaves to Pharaoh...”—may we never be slaves again.

“Rebbe Elazar ben Azarya said, ‘I was like a man of seventy...’”—“Do not cast me to old age” (*Psalms* 71:9).

“The Torah speaks about four sons...”—“God! Please make each of my children like the Wise Son!”

“Initially our ancestors worshiped idols...”—“God! I’ve made some pretty horrendous mistakes in my past—help me overcome them!”

The Seder’s concluding songs come in both varieties. (See Reb Noson’s interpretation of *Chad Gadya* at http://www.breslov.org/dvar/zmanim/pesach3_5758.htm.) Stories shared by family and friends during the meal and throughout the Seder are disguised prayer.

*a gutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!*

(Based on *Likutey Moharan* I, 5)

SIDEPATH

Rebbe Nachman teaches:

Truth is performing a mitzvah when you’re alone in the same way you would perform it when among people: with the same care, with the same devotion. Such is the way of a man of truth (LM I, 251).

A person once spoke to Rebbe Nachman about becoming a rebbe. Rebbe Nachman warned against this. “You won’t even be able to recite the Grace After Meals properly! All your thoughts will be concerned with acting in a manner acceptable to your followers” (*Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom* #47).

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

6:2 This is the law of the burnt-offering

Our Prayers Help Build The Heavenly And Earthly Temples

OLaH (burnt-offering) literally means “ascend.” This brings to mind the phrase *Mi zot OLaH* (Who is this that ascends?) (*Song of Songs* 3:6). This phrase may also be read as “Who ascends with this” (*Tikkuney Zohar* #21, p. 55b). In the latter reading, “who” refers to the *sefirah* of Binah (Understanding), which is intangible and beyond comprehension, and “this” refers to the *sefirah* of Malkhut (Kingship), a concept that is within the grasp of our understanding: God’s sovereignty. The Ari explains that “who” and “this” also correspond to the upper, Heavenly Temple and the lower, earthly Temple. The transcendental “who” and the immanent “this” ascend together.

Every individual can effect these ascents through prayer and repentance (LM I, 49:4). Through his prayers, a person rectifies the blemishes in Malkhut—sins that he committed by failing to accept God’s sovereignty. Through repentance, he rectifies any blemishes associated with Binah. One

who brings an *olah*-sacrifice elevates both Malkhut and Binah, and thereby contributes to the rebuilding of the Heavenly and earthly Temples.

7:12 If it is brought as a thanksgiving-offering

Being Thankful Draws Us Close To God

In the Future, all of the sacrifices will be suspended except for the thanksgiving-offering (*Vayikra Rabbah* 9:7).

At that time, when there will be no sin, it will only be necessary to offer thanks to God (LM II, 2:1). Then we will draw ever closer to God and, as we do, our understanding of God's greatness will increase; thus, our thanks will increase, too. The opposite also applies: giving thanks to God helps us draw close to Him. And that is something that we can do in this present world.

7:23 Do not eat any of the fats of an ox, sheep or goat

This-Worldly Desires Block Clear Thinking

The kidneys advise (*Berachot* 61a).

The fats lie adjacent to, and conceal, the kidneys. The fats represent the enticements and materialistic desires of this world, which negatively affect one's ability to determine the correct path in life. Therefore the fats are forbidden. However, the fats are permitted—indeed, required—to be placed upon the Altar when a sacrifice is brought. This action rectifies wrong advice and elevates it to the realm of holiness (LH IV, p. 15a).

7:26 Do not eat any blood

One Can Protect Himself From Animalistic Desires By Guarding His Covenant

The blood of an animal contains its animalistic soul. A person who eats that blood will bring the animalistic soul into his own body. Therefore one must first remove the blood by salting the meat. "Salt" corresponds to the tzaddik and a guarded covenant. When a person guards his covenant in purity, he cleanses his blood system from animalistic tendencies (LH IV, p. 78).

7:37 This is the Torah of the burnt-offering, the meal-offering, the sin-

offering, the guilt-offering, the inauguration-offering and the peace-offering

Torah Study Yields The Same Result As Repentance

The Torah is compared to fire (cf. Jeremiah 23:29). Just as the fire of the Altar burns the fats, so too, the Torah "burns" the materialism to which a person has attached himself. One who wishes to repent should fast, which reduces the amount of "fats" in his body. But one who studies Torah does not need to fast, since the fire of Torah purges those materialistic desires for him (LH IV, p. 64).

7:38 On the day that He commanded the Jewish people to bring their sacrifices to God

The Light Of God Clears Up Confusion And Illusion

Yom (יום, day) corresponds to the clarity of God's manifestation, as opposed to *EReV* (ערב, night), which represents *IRVuv* (ערבוב, confusion). The *EiReV rav* (ערוב רב, mixed multitude) darkened and confused the Jews' vision of spirituality with imaginary ideas. When one finds himself surrounded by darkness and confusion, he must patiently await the daylight—the light of God—to illuminate his situation and clear his intellect of distorted illusions (LH III, p. 376).

KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

11 — "I am God, that is My Name"
(Isaiah 42:8) (continued)

4. Pride is tantamount to idolatry. As a result of pride, a person lacks the faculties of speech with which to speak words that enlighten, and he cannot open his mouth at all. When the Torah comes into his mouth, not only do the words of Torah fail to illuminate the way for him to return to good, but the Torah itself becomes physical and darkened as it comes from his mouth, may God save us.

5. Pride and sexual immorality go hand in hand. Thus, when a person guards his sexual purity, he is saved from pride and merits the light that illuminates the way for him to

repentance, until he attains profound levels of understanding in the Torah.

6. The bitterness experienced in the struggle to make a living primarily results from blemishing one's sexual purity. For a person who guards himself in this area—even though he engages in the thirty-nine types of forbidden labor and in trade—his labor is on the level of the thirty-nine types of labor performed in the construction of the Tabernacle, and it is like "a dew of lights" (Isaiah 26:19). [The Hebrew word for dew, *tal*, has the numerical value of thirty-nine. Dew also connotes the idea of livelihood, since the sustenance of the Jews in the desert came in the form of Manna which fell in the morning with the dew, as in Numbers 11:9.] On the other hand, one who blemishes his sexual purity is pursued by poverty. He draws upon himself the yoke of earning a living with great struggle and bitterness, and his livelihood is like the thirty-nine lashes (*Makkot* 22a), may God save us.



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