

Our *Parashah* opens: "Vayikra / He called to Moshe . . ." *Rashi z"l* comments: Every prophecy that Moshe received was preceded by an affectionate call."

R' Nosson Yehuda Leib Mintzberg z"l (1943-2018; rabbi and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Yerushalayim and Bet Shemesh, Israel) explains: By interpreting *Hashem's* call to Moshe as a sign of affection, rather than as a call to prepare to receive the prophecy, our Sages are pointing out that Moshe had no need for such preparation. This indicates Moshe Rabbeinu's special stature compare to other prophets: he had no need to prepare. Rather, *Hashem* spoke to him (in the words of *Shmot* 33:11), "As a man would speak with his fellow." Even Moshe's brother, Aharon, did not attain this level; about him the Torah says (*Vayikra* 16:2), "He shall not come at all times into the 'Holy'!" In the words of R' Moshe ben Maimon z"l (*Rambam*; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt): All of the prophets--except Moshe--could not prophecy whenever they wanted. Rather, they had to meditate, focusing their minds, with joy and in good spirits. When they would prophecy, they would collapse in fear and awe. In contrast, Moshe, the teacher and master of all prophets, would be cloaked with *Ruach Ha'kodesh* / the Divine Spirit whenever he chose, and then he would prophecy. He did not need to prepare, for he was always prepared and standing before *Hashem*, like an angel. [Until here from *Rambam*]

Unlike other prophets, Moshe could ask questions of *Hashem* at any time and be assured of being answered. According to some opinions, Moshe also could enter the Holy of Holies whenever he wished. (*Ben Melech Al Ha'Torah*)

Tefilah

This year, we will *iy"H* devote this space to discussing various aspects of our prayers. In his work, *Derech Chaim*, R' Menachem di Lonzano z"l (late 16th century; Italy, Turkey, and Eretz Yisrael) identifies ten factors that affect one's concentration during prayer. (Numbers 1-3 were presented last week.) He continues:

The fourth: Language. When a person prays in a language to which he is accustomed--*i.e.*, the language he uses all day for all his needs--it is easier to concentrate. When one prays in another language, even if he understands what he is saying, it is harder to concentrate. Thus, for example, it is difficult even for fluent Hebrew speakers to concentrate on the *Kinnot* on *Tisha B'Av*, and a person may be moved by the translation of one *Kinnah* more than by ten *Kinnot* recited in Hebrew. The solution, for one who is able, is to accustom himself to speak to his friends in Hebrew on a regular basis.

The fifth: Movement. One who sways when praying *Shemoneh Esrei* damages his concentration, while one who stands very still aids his concentration. As for the verse (*Tehilim* 35:10), "All my bones will say . . ." [*i.e.*, that one's whole body should participate in praying--frequently cited as a source for "Shuckling" / swaying during *Davening*--R' di Lonzano maintains that] that is referring to swaying during *Pesukei D'Zimra*, the blessings of *Shema*, and Torah study, but not during *Shemoneh Esrei*. . . If one were presenting his requests to a human king, [R' di Lonzano asks,] would he sway back and forth like a tree branch in the wind?! [Ed. note: "Shuckling" will be revisited in a future issue.]

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Yuta bat Yosef a"h

“When a person will sin unintentionally from among all the commandments of Hashem that may not be done, and he commits one of them.” (4:2)

R' David Tevel Rubin z"l (1792-1861; rabbi of Minsk, Belarus) asks: Why is a *Chatat* / sin offering brought only for an unintentional sin, not for an intentional sin?

He explains: Intelligent man has within himself aspects of the mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms. And, our Sages speak of three levels of the soul --“*Nefesh*,” “*Ruach*,” and “*Neshamah*”--paralleling the three kingdoms of living things--plant, animal, and intelligent man. When a person sins unintentionally, his intelligence is not involved, only his lower “soul”; therefore, he can find atonement through a sacrifice brought from the animal kingdom, *i.e.*, the sacrifice itself (animal); the wood for the altar and the meal offering that accompany the animal offering (plant); and the salt that is thrown on every sacrifice (mineral). This does not suffice, however, when one sins intentionally, misusing his intelligence. (*Derashot Bet David* 3:14-15)

“If the anointed Kohen will sin, to the guilt of the people . . .” (4:3)

R' Eliezer Dan Ralbag z"l (1832-1895; Yerushalayim) writes: At face value, the verse means that when the *Kohen Gadol* sins inadvertently, he causes a *Chillul Hashem* / desecration of G-d's Name, which causes the general populace to sin intentionally.

However, R' Ralbag writes, this verse also can be interpreted in the opposite way: How does the holy *Kohen Gadol* come to sin unintentionally? It happens when the people first sin intentionally, thus lowering the nation's overall spiritual level. (*Damesek Eliezer*)

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The sixth: Volume. The more one lowers his voice during *Shemoneh Esrei*, the more he increases his concentration. One who raises his voice does not concentrate. . . The *Zohar* teaches that if one's voice can be heard during *Shemoneh Esrei*, his prayer is not accepted. [Ed. Note: One is required to form the words with his lips, just in an undertone. See *Mishnah Berurah* 101:5-6]

The seventh: Preparation. One should prepare his heart to pray. How does one prepare his heart? Before he prays, he should sit for a time silently and immobile, emptying his mind of all thoughts and, instead, thinking of the greatness of the One who created the world with His Words--of His wonders, His awesomeness, His power, and all the kindness He has done for us. One should think of good things that *Hashem* did for him even when he was undeserving, of the troubles from which He saved him, the illnesses of which He cured him, and of the good that He does even for those who repay Him with bad. **- To be continued -**

“If one's offering is an *Olah* / elevation-offering from the cattle, he shall offer an unblemished male; he shall bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, 'Lir'tzono' before Hashem.” (1:3)

R' Avraham ibn Ezra z"l (1089-1167) explains: “*Lir'tzono*” - He shall bring the offering of his own desire, not under coercion. [See also *Rashi*.]

R' Yaakov Zvi Mecklenburg z"l (1785-1865; rabbi of Koenigsberg, Germany) discusses additional interpretations of “*Lir'tzono*.”

Some interpret: “He should bring the offering with the intention that it will be desirable to *Hashem*.” However, writes R' Mecklenburg, this interpretation would fit better if the verse had said (instead of “*Lir'tzono*”): “*L'ratzon Lo*” / “To be desirable to Him.” As written, the verse seems to be referring to the “*Ratzon*” of the one bringing the offering. In addition, he writes, it would be understandable if the Torah had said that the actual sacrificial service should be performed with the intention that it be desirable to *Hashem*. Our verse, however, is referring only to the initial stage of bringing the sacrifice to the Temple gate.

Others interpret: “He should offer his own desires before *Hashem*.” This means that the one bringing the sacrifice should feel as if he is offering himself--all his powers and abilities--to *Hashem*; that his only desire is to cling to *Hashem*--to ascend on the altar of spirituality as the offering “goes up” on the physical altar. Then *Hashem*, for His part, will favor the one bringing the offering, and the latter will bring pleasure to Him. This is a very meaningful explanation of the purpose of sacrificial offerings, R' Mecklenburg writes, but it does clarify the meaning of “*Lir'tzono*.”

It seems, R' Mecklenburg concludes, that the word “*Lir'tzono*” should be understood as the same root (רצה) is used in the verse (*Vaikra* 26:34), “Then the land ‘*Tirtzeh*’ / will complete its sabbaticals during all the years of its desolation, while you are in the land of your foes; then the land will rest and ‘*Hirtzah*’ / it will complete its sabbaticals.” That verse is teaching that, if the Jewish People do not observe the *Shemittah* year, they will be exiled from *Eretz Yisrael* and the Land will “make-up” or “complete” the missing sabbatical years by remaining desolate. [Our Sages relate that this, in fact, happened during a 52-year period following the destruction of the First Temple, when not a single living creature lived in *Eretz Yisrael*.] When something comes along to complete what is lacking in something else, R' Mecklenburg writes, it brings about a state of “*Ratzon*” / “appeasement” and “desire.” An offering should be “*Lir'tzono*” / “for his completion,” meaning that the one who sinned should understand that whatever is being done to the animal rightfully should be done to him, but *Hashem* allows the sacrifice to stand in for the person in order to atone for him and bring him to completeness. In this way, he will appease *Hashem* for the sin he committed. (*Ha'ketav Ve'hakabbalah*)