

In the first of this week's two *Parashot*, we read of the *Avodah* / service that the *Kohen Gadol* performed in the *Kodesh Ha'kadashim* / Holy of Holies on *Yom Kippur*. The *Gemara* (*Yoma* 53b) relates that, upon exiting the *Kodesh Ha'kadashim*, the *Kohen Gadol* would recite a prayer that included the words: "May this year be rainy . . . and may the prayers of travelers not come before You." *Rashi z"l* explains that the *Kohen Gadol* was praying: "Do not accept the prayers of travelers who ask that it not rain."

R' Ben Zion Neshet *shlita* (one of the senior rabbis in Tel Aviv, Israel) asks: During the winter, all of the Jewish People--especially the farmers and other inhabitants of *Eretz Yisrael* who are dependent on rain for food and drinking water--pray that it will rain. Why would the competing prayer of an individual traveler have a chance of being answered such that the *Kohen Gadol* had to ask *Hashem* that the traveler's prayer be rejected?

R' Neshet answers: This teaches us the power of a sincere prayer. While the farmers are praying for rain, they are, at the same time, making contingency plans in the backs of their minds in case it doesn't rain. Such a prayer is less accepted by G-d, because the one person saying it is not placing himself completely in G-d's hands. Not so the prayer of a person walking along a lonely country road when storm clouds are forming. He knows that he has nowhere to turn but to *Hashem*, and he prays with a sincerity born of desperation that gives his prayer special power. – *Continued in box inside* –

Tefilah

This year, we will *iy"H* devote this space to discussing various aspects of our prayers.

R' Eliezer Ginsburg *z"l* (1949-2017; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, Israel) writes: We read (*Devarim* 4:7), "For which is a great nation that has an *Elokim* Who is close to it, as is *Hashem*, our *Elokim*, whenever we call to Him?" The clear message of this verse is that having a relationship with the Creator in which we know He is close to us and we can, and do, pray to Him is a particular distinction of the Jewish People. Commitment to prayer is an identifying characteristic of a member of the Jewish People. This obligates us to take this amazing thing--prayer--very seriously, to strengthen it, and to practice it in the most honorable and appropriate manner.

When a person prays, he declares, in effect: "I believe in *Hashem*." This is the overarching meaning of all prayer. Prayer is a Jew's foundation because it makes a statement: "I believe in the Creator." It follows that one who does not value prayer appropriately is missing a foundational element of what it means to be Jewish.

Prayer is at our nation's foundation, for our root is the Patriarchs, and they established prayer: Avraham established *Shacharit*, Yitzchak--*Mincha*, and Yaakov--*Ma'ariv* (*Berachot* 26b). [Ed. note: Implied in this is that we should take note that the founders of our nation considered establishing prayers to be part of their mission as founders, so central is prayer to who we are.] One who prays declares: My roots come from the Patriarchs; I am a child of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. One who does not have the proper respect for prayer is, G-d forbid, declaring the opposite.

(*Mesilot Chochmah U'mussar: Michtevai Hadrachah* p.121)

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring

10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-593-2272

Send e-mail to: TheTorahSpring@gmail.com

Back issues at: www.TheTorahSpring.org

Donations to *Hamaayan* are tax deductible.



Sponsored by
Judy and David Marwick

in memory of
Bervin and Swolsky family members a"h

“You shall not take revenge and you shall not bear a grudge against the members of your people . . .” (19:18)

Rashi z”l explains: What is “bearing a grudge”? If Reuven says to Shimon [both illustrative names], “Lend me your hatchet,” and Shimon refuses, and on the next day, Shimon says to Reuven, “Lend me your sickle,” and Reuven replies, “Here it is! I am not like you, who would not lend to me”--that is called “bearing a grudge,” because Reuven retains enmity in his heart, even if he does not actually avenge himself. [Until here from *Rashi*]

In the days of King David, there was a famine for three years. King David inquired of *Hashem* why this was occurring, and *Hashem* responded (*Shmuel II* 21:1), “It is for Shaul and for the House of Blood.” The *Gemara* (*Yevamot* 78b) explains: “For Shaul”--who was not eulogized properly, “and for the House of Blood”--because Shaul killed the *Givonim*. The *Gemara* asks: At the same time, *Hashem* stood up for Shaul’s honor and mentioned his sin?! Yes! the *Gemara* answers. When a person is judged, his good deeds are mentioned along with the bad. [Until here from the *Gemara*]

R’ Yerachmiel Shulman z”l *Hy”d* (*Menahel Ruchani* of the *Bet Yosef-Novardok Yeshiva* in Pinsk, Poland; killed in the Holocaust) writes in the name of R’ Yisrael Lipkin z”l (1810-1883; “R’ Yisrael Salanter”; founder of the *Mussar* movement): Human nature is exactly the opposite. When Reuven asks Shimon for a favor, Shimon reminds Reuven how Reuven hurt him, and then refuses to do the favor. In contrast, *Hashem* “remembers” a person’s good deeds specifically when He is recalling that person’s mistakes. We are supposed to emulate *Hashem*. Specifically when we are rebuking a person for his offense, we must show him extra honor because of whatever Torah learning he has done or the good deeds he has performed.

Strengthening the message, R’ Shulman notes that the failure to eulogize Shaul properly happened chronologically after he killed the *Givonim*. Nevertheless, *Hashem* mentioned Shaul’s honor before mentioning his sin.

(*Peninei Ha’shlaimut: Sha’ar Ha’savlanut* 1:8)

- Continued from front page -

R’ Neshet continues: This is what King David meant when he said (*Tehilim* 118:5), “From the straits I called upon G-d; G-d answered me with expansiveness.” Because I was in dire straits, He answered me. This also is why we read (*Shmot* 2:23), “During those many days, the king of Egypt died, and *Bnei Yisrael* groaned because of the work, and they cried out. Their outcry because of the work went up to the *Elokim*.” The repetition of the phrase “because of the work” emphasizes that their prayer was answered because it originated from desperation.

(*Haggadah Shel Pesach Shir Tziyon* p.69)

“Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of Aharon’s two sons, when they approached before Hashem, and they died.” (16:1)

Midrash Tanchuma relates that Aharon’s sons, Nadav and Avihu, died because they said, “When will those old men [Moshe and Aharon] die so that we can lead the nation?” [Until here from the *Midrash*]

How can this be? Even the most crass person does not speak that way about his father and uncle, and Nadav and Avihu were not crass people; they were among the greatest *Tzaddikim* of the generation (see *Rashi* to *Vayikra* 10:3)!

R’ Noach Weinberg z”l (1930-2009; founder and *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Aish Ha’Torah*) explains: Nadav and Avihu’s comment reflected their eagerness for their turn to lead because they wanted to serve *Hashem* and the Jewish People. But, precisely that was their sin! Why did they need to wait until their elders died to begin using their talents? They should have found ways to start using their G-d-given talents immediately!

(Quoted in *48 Derachim L’Chochmah* p.2)

The Torah reading for *Yom Kippur* begins with the above verse, which is the beginning of the Torah’s description of the *Yom Kippur Avodah* / Temple service. However, the reference to the sons of Aharon is not coincidental. R’ Yisrael Meir Kagan z”l (the *Chafetz Chaim*; died 1933) explains:

The *Zohar* teaches: “If one feels pain over the deaths of the sons of Aharon, or cries for them, all of his sins will be forgiven.” The point, writes the *Chafetz Chaim*, is that these feelings will inspire a person to repent. “If the cedars have caught fire, what will the hyssops that grow out of the wall say?” [This quote is a proverb originating from the eulogy given for one of the Talmudic Sages (see *Mo’ed Kattan* 25b), meaning: If even great people cannot escape judgment for their sins, what can ordinary people expect? Therefore, repent!] (Mishnah *Berurah* 621:2)

R’ Eliezer Papo z”l (1785-1827; rabbi in Sarajevo) writes: One is obligated to feel pain for the passing of *Tzaddikim*--even those who passed away generations ago [as stated in the above-quoted *Zohar*. In addition to the reason given above,] one who mourns the loss of *Tzaddikim* participates in the “pain of the *Shechinah*,” so-to-speak. G-d wants to share His limitless bounty with the world and is, so-to-speak, disappointed when our sins do not allow that. Therefore, He “misses” the righteous who have passed away.

(*Peleh Yo’etz: Tza’ar*)