

R' Shlomo Wolbe z"l (1914-2005) teaches that most *Parashot* of the Torah have a theme. For example, the theme of last week's *Parashah* was "*Kedushah*" / "holiness." The theme of this week's *Parashah*, says R' Wolbe, is "*Kavod*" / "honor"-- honor of the *Kohanim* [21:1-9], honor of the *Kohen Gadol* [21:10-15], honor of the *Bet Hamikdash* and the *Avodah* / Temple service [21:16-22:31; 24:1-9], honor of *Hashem's* Name [22:32-33; 24:10-22], and honor of *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov* [Ch.23].

R' Wolbe elaborates: The Creator is beyond our understanding. G-d is "*Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh,*" as we say in the first sentence of the *Kedushah* prayer--holier that we can comprehend. But, says the second sentence of *Kedushah*, "The earth is full of His *Kavod* / honor." Whatever *Hashem* chooses to reveal of Himself in our world, in order that we may revere Him, we call His "Honor." Giving honor is, therefore, how we can connect to Him, and this week's *Parashah* focuses on defining "honor" as the Torah views it.

R' Wolbe continues: A person who does not give honor to other people demonstrates that he does not appreciate the greatness of man in general. The same is true of a person who does not honor himself, who lacks self-esteem, or who is overly self-deprecating; it is true even of a person who does not dress respectably. Thus, the *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 113b-114a) refers to clothing as "that which gives me honor," and says that a Torah scholar who has a stain on his clothing is deserving of the death penalty. However, our Sages are not telling us to seek superficial displays of honor, like a seat at the eastern wall of the *Shul*. Rather, we should seek honor that reflects the holiness of G-d and of man's soul. (*Shiurei Chumash*)

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 in a letter to a student: Perhaps one may say, "I do pray, but I want to feel sweetness in prayer. I feel the sweetness of Torah study and of observing *Shabbat*. I know that prayer is holy and is obligatory, but it does not give me any pleasure!"

The solution, writes R' Ginsburg, is to study the prayers as you study Torah. Then, you will begin to feel the "taste" of the prayers.

He continues: When it comes to Torah, we begin to teach it to children when they are young, and from there, progress onward. To appreciate prayer, however, one must study it as an adult.

What does it mean to study prayer? Patiently, take one paragraph at a time and listen to what it is saying.

We say in *Berachot* that *Hashem* is "*Melech Ha'olam*" / "King of the universe." Think about it: What is a king? In one of the blessings on food we say, "*She'ha'kol . . .*" / "That everything was created by His word." Think about that: Everything was created by an utterance from G-d. We say that He makes the heavens and earth. Stop and picture the universe and everything in it. Little-by-little, absorb the simple meaning of the words. That is the first step in developing a taste for prayer.

Next, pay attention to phrases in the prayers that express our closeness to *Hashem*, for example: "*Avinu, Ha'Av Ha'Rachaman*" / "Our Father, the compassionate Father," and [in *Birkat Ha'mazon*], "Who feeds the whole world in His goodness, with grace, kindness, and compassion," and others.

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Elsewhere in the Torah . . .

When Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son Rabbi Elazar exited the cave where they had hidden for twelve years, they saw people plowing and planting, and they exclaimed, “They are setting aside eternal life and engaging in temporal life!” Wherever the two Sages looked, their eyes set fire to the fields. A *Bat Kol* / Heavenly voice declared, “Have you come out of the cave to destroy My world? Return to your cave!” They returned to the cave for twelve months. When they came out, whatever Rabbi Elazar would damage, Rabbi Shimon would repair.

On *Erev Shabbat* just before nightfall, they saw a man carrying two *Hadassim* / myrtle branches, and they asked him their purpose. He replied: “One parallels ‘*Zachor*’ [the affirmative commandments of *Shabbat*] and the other--‘*Shamor*’ [the negative commandments of *Shabbat*].” Rabbi Shimon said to his son, “See how beloved the *Mitzvot* are to the Jewish People!” (*Shabbat* 33b)

R’ Yerachmiel Shulman *z”l Hy”d* (*Menahel Ruchani* of the *Bet Yosef*-Novardok Yeshiva in Pinsk, Poland; killed in the Holocaust) explains: Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son worked on themselves for twelve years to negate their attachment to our present, physical world, in keeping with the teaching of R’ Moshe ben Maimon *z”l* (*Rambam*; 1135-1204; Spain and Egypt): “The first step in building the intellect is to recognize that building the physical body destroys the soul.” As a result, Rabbi Shimon and his son could not fathom how anyone could waste his time plowing and planting. Indeed, they had attained a very high level, but *Hashem* sent them back to the cave to attain an even higher level--seeing good in everything, as *Hashem* Himself does when He looks at us. After an additional year in the cave, they saw the beautiful uses to which the physical year can be put, as exemplified by the man who picked two *Hadassim* in honor of *Shabbat*.

R’ Shulman concludes: It is a mistake, however, to skip the step of negating one’s attachment to this world. One who jumps to focusing on the positive uses to which the physical world can be put will end up too attached to it.

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

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To summarize: One absorbs the taste of his food when he eats slowly, each food by itself. When one rushes frantically through his meal, it has almost no taste. Likewise, the taste of prayer comes from listening to each sentence or phrase separately, and only then combining them into a paragraph.

This, concludes R’ Ginsburg, is the beginning of the process of enjoying prayer. When one progresses and learns the meanings of the prayers, one gets more and more of a good “taste.” To truly get a feeling for prayer, one should set aside time to study books on the subject.

(*Mesilot Chochmah U’mussar: Michtevai Hadrachah* p.125)

“You shall take for yourselves on the first day *Pri Etz Hadar* / the fruit of a citron tree, the branches of date palms, twigs of a plaited tree, and brook willows . . .” (23:40)

We read (*Tehilim* 104:1), “*Hashem*, my *Elokim*, You are very great; You are clothed in *Hod* and *Hadar*.” R’ Yechezkel Heller *z”l* (1814-1861; prominent *Halachic* authority in Lithuania) writes: “*Hod*” refers to a thing’s inherent beauty, whereas “*Hadar*” refers to a thing that beautifies something else. Thus, for example, an *Etrog* is called a “*Hadar*” because it beautifies the tree on which it grows. (R’ Heller notes that all fruits beautify their trees when they are in season. However, the *Gemara* (*Sukkah* 35a) explains that *Etrogim* remain fresh on the tree as long as they are not picked, unlike other fruits that rot. Thus, the *Etrog* beautifies its tree more than other fruits do.)

R’ Heller continues: The quoted verse teaches that *Hashem* is “clothed in *Hod* and *Hadar*.” This refers to the Torah, which is *Hashem*’s clothing, so-to-speak. We understand nothing of *Hashem*’s essence, and only through the Torah can we know anything about Him--just as one sees another person’s clothing, not his essence. “*Hod*” refers to the Torah’s inherent beauty. One might have expected that *Hashem* would keep that beauty in heaven, hidden, but He did not. Instead, he made it “*Hadar*”--something that beautifies our world. (*Oteh Ohr*: Introduction)

“*Vy’daber* / Moshe spoke about the appointed festivals of *Hashem* to *Bnei Yisrael*.” (23:44)

Usually, “*Vy’daber*” connotes harsher speech than “*Va’yomer*” / “He said.” Why is this word use here?

R’ Akiva Yosef Schlesinger *z”l* (1837-1922; Hungary and Yerushalayim) answers: Observing the festivals, especially *Pesach* and *Sukkot*, may require extra encouragement because of the expense involved. Also, people need to be reminded not to engage in excessive or frivolous pleasures during the holidays. Indeed, it is because of such overindulgence that our Sages established the custom of fasting on Monday, Thursday, and Monday after *Pesach* and *Sukkot*. [These days are known as “*BeHaB*”--acronym of “*Bet*,” “*Heh*,” and “*Bet*,” for the second, fifth, and second days of the week.]

(*Torat Yechezkel*)

From the same work:

“Command *Bnei Yisrael* that they take to you clear olive oil, pressed for lighting, to kindle a continual lamp.” (24:2)

The *Gemara* (*Menachot* 53b) teaches: “Just as an olive’s destiny is its end, so *Yisrael*’s destiny is its end.” R’ Schlesinger explains: Raw olives are useless; they must be soaked to be eaten or squeezed for oil. So, too, a Jew’s reward for his *Mitzvot* comes only later, in the World-to-Come.