

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ואתחנן אל ה' בעת ההיא לאמר וכו' (ג-כג)

Rashi cites the Sifri that the word "ואתחנן" is one of ten expressions the *Torah* employs to refer to *Tefillah* - Prayer. The **Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh** writes that in order for one's *tefillas* to be accepted, it must meet four important conditions. Firstly, his supplication should be with a broken heart, like a poor person collecting alms. Secondly, he should pray that his request be accepted with the Divine attribute of mercy (מדת הרחמים). Thirdly, the time should be fitting for acceptance of his prayers, as we say during *minchah* on *Shabbos*: “*As for me, may my prayers to you, Hashem, be at an opportune time*” (תהליסט:יד). Fourthly, the supplicant should express his prayer as specifically and clearly as possible.

These four attributes are found in the above *posuk*. The word "ואתחנן"- “*And I implored,*” suggests that Moshe used a language of supplication. “אל ה'” - “*To Hashem,*” refers to מדת הרחמים, the Name of *Hashem* associated with the characteristic of mercy. “בעת ההיא” - “*At that time,*” refers to the fact that it was a particularly favorable time. Finally, the word “לאמר” - “*saying,*” informs us that the prayer of *Moshe Rabbeinu* was loud, clear and specific.

There was once a Karlin/Stoliner *chasid* who went on a business trip to Vienna, Austria. His business affairs took him quite some time and he realized that he would be required to remain in Vienna over the weekend. Being the *chasid* that he was, his main concern was where he would find a suitable place to daven in his inimitable style and with the proper enthusiasm and gusto that he was used to. After brief inquiries, he decided that he would attend the *Shabbos tefillos* at the *Beis Medrash* of the great **Chortkover Rebbe, R' Yisroel Friedman ZT”L**, who had relocated the Chassidic Court of Chortkov from the Ukraine, to the vast and unchassidic-like metropolis of Vienna, due to the travails of the first world war. There, the Karlin/Stoliner *chasid* hoped to find the spark of pure *tefillah* that he maintained back home.

Two days before *Shabbos*, he went with great respect and trepidation to request that the *Chortkover Rebbe* give him a blessing, and to ask the *Rebbe* the following question: Since it is the custom of Karlin/Stolin to raise their voices to a loud pitch during their prayers, would the *Rebbe* mind if he prayed this way in the *Chortkover Beis Medrash*?

The *Rebbe* responded very critically. “What kind of way is that, to shout the prayers? Why, you are standing before the King of Kings, and you should pray quietly and with awe! That is our custom and it shall not be changed!”

The Karlin/Stoliner *chasid* was disappointed. “Well, I guess I won’t be able to daven there!” he said to himself. But when *Shabbos* came and he had not found a better place to daven, he attended the Chortkover synagogue, doing his best to damp down his boisterous enthusiasm and to control his feelings. However, when he reached the words “נשמת כל חי” during the *Shachris tefillah*, he was no longer able to control himself and he cried out with all his might.

Of course, people turned to look at him and he became self-conscious of what he had done. After davening, he was mortified that he had defied the *Chortkover Rebbe*’s express wish. He immediately approached the *Rebbe* to apologize.

But R’ Yisroel was puzzled. “Why are you apologizing?” he asked. “Quite the contrary; crying out is one of the ten forms of prayer, and crying out while praying is preferable to a ‘cold’ prayer.”

The *chasid* was speechless. “But ... but ... didn’t the *Rebbe* say that I should not raise my voice?” he stammered.

The *Rebbe* smiled and explained, “What don’t you understand? When a Jew comes on Wednesday and says that he intends to cry out on *Shabbos*, it is incumbent upon me to notify him that this is not the normal way of prayer, nor is this its desired form. But when *Shabbos* comes and in the midst of his prayers his heart bursts forth with a cry, why, there can be nothing more wonderful and praiseworthy!”

משל' למה הדבר דומה

והשבת אל לבבך כי ה' הוא האלקים בשמים ממעל ועל הארץ מתחת וכו' (ד-לט)

משל' R' Shlomo Freifeld ZT”L was once standing in line with a companion at the bank, and as they approached the teller, she took one look at his imposing stature and blurted out, “My, you’re the tallest rabbi I’ve ever met!”

R’ Shlomo smiled and thanked her for the compliment and began handing her his paperwork. After a moment, the teller looked up and confidentially informed him that there was a notation on his account from the bank manager asking Rabbi Freifeld to please come upstairs to speak with him.

When R’ Shlomo completed his transactions with the teller, he took the stairs one flight up where the bank manager greeted him cordially.

After a moment of pleasantries, the manager got down to business. “Rabbi Freifeld,” he began in a businesslike tone, “I was reviewing your account the other day and I noticed that you appear to be a bit short.”

R’ Shlomo turned to his companion and shook his head, “Do you hear? Downstairs they think I’m so tall, but upstairs ... they know that I’m short!”

ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם
חיים כולכם היום וגו' (ד-ה)

“אלתאמין: The well-known *Mishna* in *Avos* (ב-ה) teaches: “*Do not believe in yourself until the day of your death.*” The **Medrash Shochar Tov** echoes this sentiment of *Chazal*: “*The Holy One, blessed be He, does not call a tzaddik a saint until he has been put into the grave. Why? Because all the days of his life he is beset by the evil inclination and Hashem does not trust him in this world till the day of his death.*”

The **Rambam** comments on this *Mishna* and explains: “*Even when some virtue has become second nature to a man, let him not neglect the opportunity for doing good again and again in order to fix the virtue more firmly in his soul. Let him not be overconfident and say, ‘This virtue I have already mastered successfully, it can never leave me.’ There is always the possibility that it may leave.*”

Based on all of the above, expounds the holy *Rebbe, R' Elimelech of Lizhensk ZT”L (Noam Elimelech)*, we now have a clear understanding of the *posuk* in our *parsha*: “ואתם הדבקים בה' אלקיכם חיים כולכם היום” - “*You are cleaving unto Hashem, your Lord, and you are all living this day.*” What is the significance of the word “היום” - “*this day*”? Of course, each and every day one must strive to cling to *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* and when *Klal Yisroel* does follow in the ways of *Hashem* and performs the *mitzvos* and learns His *Torah*, they will continue to go on living for many days to come! Rather, it is to teach us that although we may believe that we have lived properly today, and we feel that we are doing everything that we must, it is of utmost importance to remember that we must never become overconfident in our ability to continue to do so tomorrow. Each day has its own challenges. We must renew our efforts to live right - “היום” - even this very day!

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS
ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF ...

נחמה

This is the *Shabbos* we’ve all been waiting for! *Shabbos Nachamu*, when *Hashem* so lovingly comforts His people after three long weeks of mourning. But the amount of comfort we feel truly depends on us! This month, the saddest month of the year is called “*Menachem Av*” which literally means “Comfort the Father” signifying quite clearly the *avodah* of this period. We, the beloved children of *Hashem* must comfort our Father, Who is in terrible pain over the *Churban*. WE must look for every opportunity to console *Hashem* and ease His pain. How do we do this? Firstly, we comfort others by FEELING their pain. But there is another great way to be *menachem* our Av, and that is by bringing Him *nachas*!!! Now think to yourself as a parent, what brings you *nachas*? The answer is clear: when your kids get along!!!

The *Bais Hamikdash* was destroyed because of *Kamtza* and *Bar Kamtza*. Isn’t this puzzling? We can understand that *Bar Kamtza*, who was thrown out of the party, had a hand in the *churban*, but what did *Kamtza* do? His good friend made a big party and he wasn’t even invited! One answer is that if *Kamtza* was such a close friend of the host, he should never have allowed his friend to have such an enemy!! We should all stop at this time and think: Is there anyone I know that has an enemy? Do I, in fact, have an enemy? What can I do to make peace, since this is truly a *nachas* and comfort to *Hashem*.

On *Shabbos Nachamu*, *Hashem* comforts us. But let’s remember that *Hashem* is our shadow - “ה' צלך” - and He treats us the way we treat Him. Let us maximize this *nechama* by truly and continuously striving to be “Menachem our Av”!!

TORAH GEMS

ושמרתם ועשיתם כי היא חכמתכם
ובינתכם לעיני העמים וכו' (ד-ו)

The reason that we observe the *Torah* is to fulfill the Divine Will. *Hashem* offered the *Torah* - His most cherished possession - to His most beloved nation and we willingly accepted it, unlike the other nations of the world. If so, why does the *posuk* suggest that the purpose of *Mitzvah* observance is to be “*wise in the eyes of the nations*”?

The **Alter of Kelm, R' Simcha Zissel Ziv ZT”L** explains that in order for a person to fulfill the *Torah* in its most perfect manner, he must acquire wisdom of spiritual matters, as well as, worldly matters. In fact, the **Vilna Gaon ZT”L**, in his commentary to *Mishlei*, teaches that in order for a judge to render correct rulings when a civil case is brought before him, he must be an expert in human nature, insightful of the various personality types, deceptive tactics of dishonest people, and the schemes of thieves. If he is unaware of the machinations of the human mind and refuses to look beneath the surface, there is no way he will render a just verdict. Furthermore, *Chazal* teach us that “דרך ארץ קדמה לתורה” - human decency and etiquette precedes the study of *Torah*. Thus, how can one learn *Torah*, if he is not properly attuned to the ways of the world and the actions of human beings?

The aforementioned *posuk* teaches us that the *Torah* itself is a complete resource of worldly wisdom. Through *Torah* study, one can achieve a perfect knowledge of both religious, as well as, secular wisdom. Hence, we interpret the *posuk* as follows: “כי היא חכמתכם ובינתכם לעיני העמים” - “*For it is your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of the nations*” - meaning, that the truth of the *Torah* is consistent with the highest levels of wisdom, even amongst other nations. *Torah* scholarship is accomplished by mastery of both the spiritual and material realms of *Torah* knowledge.

דרגה יתירה

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

נחמו נחמו עמי ואמר אלקיכם וגו' (ישעיהו-א)