

Kinder Torah

בס"ד

Parashas Bamidbar

An Important Project

"Hi, Abba. I'm home from the *Beis HaKinesses*."

"Good morning Chaim, how are you?"

"I feel okay, Abba, however, I am a bit disappointed."

"Oy vey. What happened, Chaim?"

"I did not pray so well this morning. I came late, I was distracted, and my mind wandered. I was thinking about all sorts of things. I feel like I passed up a wonderful opportunity to speak to Hashem."

"Chaim, you have such a pure *neshama* (soul)! You have a sense for what is right, and a desire to do good! You are on the right track and you will succeed!"

"Thank you Abba, however, I feel that I need help."

"I'll give you whatever I can, Chaim."

"First of all Abba, I would like to know how important *tefillah* really is."

"That is an excellent question, Chaim. The Rambam (*Hilchos Tefillah* and *Bircas Kohanim* 1:1) numbers *tefillah* amongst the 613 mitzvos *d'oraysa*. He bases this on the verse, "You shall serve Hashem your G-d" (*Shemos* 23:25). He then cites the gemora (*Taanis* 2a) which *darshens* the verse, "You shall love Hashem your G-d and you shall serve Him with all of your heart (*Devarim* 10:13)." Which *avadah* (service) do we perform with our hearts? *Tefillah*."

"I see Abba. *Tefillah* has the elevated status of being one of the 613 mitzvos."*

"Yes, Chaim. The next point to contemplate is, when we pray we are speaking directly to Hashem. The Creator of the universe, King of kings, the Holy One Blessed be He is listening to every word we say, and paying attention to every thought that we think. If you had an appointment with a very important person, you would certainly take it very seriously. You would look forward to the time, preparing for it by carefully considering every word that you will say, every action that you will take, and all of their implications. How much more so when you have an appointment with the Almighty! It is an opportunity that should not be taken lightly."

"Yes, Abba. We also learned the gemora (*Brachos* 6b) which states that *tefillah* is one of the things that stand at the pinnacle of the world. Our words of prayer reach the highest heights in heaven."

"So true, Chaim. The words of the formal daily prayers and blessings were authored by the *Anshei Kinesses HaGedola* (Men of the Great Assembly) over two thousand years ago. The three services, when prayed at a relaxed meaningful pace, occupy two hours of the day. Almost no other single mitzvah requires so much time! This alone shows the lofty importance of *tefillah*."

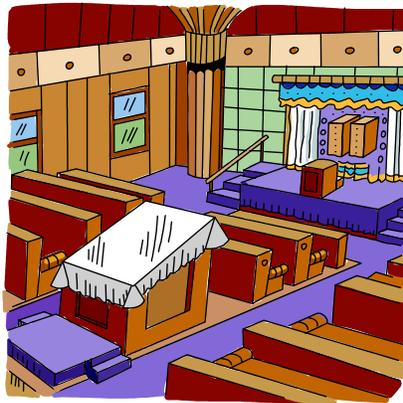
"Abba, I am investing so much time that I surely want to use it productively. To just sink into a repetitive recitation of the words would be a shameful waste of time and effort."

"I agree, Chaim. Therefore, anyone who wants to experience meaningful and elevating prayer must set aside time during the day to work on improving his *tefillas*."

"What must he learn, Abba?"

"He must learn about the importance of *tefillah*, as we are now doing. He should realize the tremendous things that *tefillah* can accomplish. This will motivate him to pray with all of his heart. Then he can learn the *peirush* (explanation) of the words of the prayers. He can also pick up tips that will help him concentrate better. With such preparation, when he comes to *mispallel* (pray), he will be ready to have an inspiring, deep connection with his Creator. He will put forth meaningful requests that will be answered."

"Really, Abba?"



"Absolutely, Chaim. Rav Shimshon Pincus zt"l in his sefer *Shaarim Bi'Tefillah* cites two examples of the power of *tefillah*, both within the framework of nature, and in the miraculous events that transcend nature. The first is in parashas *Beresheis* (2:5). "The trees of the field were not yet on the earth, and all the herb of the field had yet sprouted, for the Hashem G-d had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to work the soil." Rashi explains that before the sixth day the plants of the field were formed and waiting to sprout forth from their openings in the ground. However, they were lacking one thing – rain. Why had it not yet rained? Because man had not yet been created. He needed to work the ground, and in doing so realize the benefit of rain. He would then pray to Hashem for rain, and it would fall, thereby causing the plants and trees to sprout forth. Therefore we see that man's *tefillas* were (and still are) necessary for rain to fall which maintains the entire

cycle of nature and life on this planet. Nothing happens without *tefillah*."

"That is astounding, Abba."

"Indeed, Chaim. We have many *berachos* from Hashem waiting for us. They are standing at the gates (so to speak). We just need to open those gates. How? With *tefillah*. Avraham Avinu was promised that many generations would come from him, yet his only son (from Sara) Yitzchak was childless. Yitzchak pleaded with Hashem opposite his wife, because she was childless. Hashem responded to his pleas and Rivka his wife became pregnant" (*Beresheis* 25:21). Similarly, the redemption from Mitzrayim was promised to us. 'And the Bnei Yisrael groaned because of the hard labor and they cried out. Their outcry from the work went up to G-d. Hashem heard their cry and He recalled His covenant with Avraham, with Yitzchak, and with Yaakov' (*Shemos* 2:23, 24). He did not redeem us, however, until we cried out to Him in prayer. Both the *geulas* Mitzrayim and the birth of children to Avraham Avinu were miracles above the rules of nature. So we see, Chaim, that *tefillah* has the power to over-ride nature."

"That is just awesome, Abba. What a motivation to pray properly!"

"Yes, Chaim. I pray that we all realize just what our *tefillas* are and what they can accomplish. Then we will be motivated to put our best efforts into praying with all of our hearts and souls."

Kinderlach . . .

Tefillah is awesome. We have an appointment three times each day to speak directly to Hashem. We spend those two hours praying words that reach the highest heavens. Our *tefillas* allow all of the blessings of nature to come down to the world. The gemora (*Nidda* 70b) asks, "What should a person do to become wise? Maximize his learning and minimize his involvement in business affairs." The gemora asks, "Many did this and did not become wise." It answers, "Therefore he must ask for mercy from the One Whom wisdom is His, as the verse states, 'For Hashem grants wisdom, from His mouth knowledge and understanding' (*Mishlei* 2:6) . . . one without the other is not sufficient." The gemora continues to explain how our *tefillas* allow us to receive the blessings of wealth and children. Heartfelt prayers can also change the rules of nature and entreat Hashem to perform miracles. What a tremendous opportunity we have *kinderlach!* Take the time to learn about prayer. Then prepare yourselves properly and pray with all of your hearts! Hashem will listen to your words.

* The Ramban disputes this ruling of the Rambam.

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