

## Aharon raised his hands towards the people and blessed them; then he descended from having performed the sin-offering. (9:22)

Negativity can destroy the most auspicious objective. It can undermine the most hopeful prayers. It can impugn the integrity of the most promising career. Some people thrive on negativity, because they cannot handle success. They know that as long as they are negative, they are safe. This is, of course, not the Torah way. Indeed, this is the method employed by the *yetzer hora*, evil-inclination, to undermine the individual's efforts at prayer. One should not ignore his own shortcomings, but, when he is speaking with Hashem, he should focus on the positive.

Concerning the above *pasuk*, the **Tiferes Shlomo** says that when Aharon *HaKohen* blessed the nation, he no longer remembered their sins. This is the meaning of, "He descended from having prepared the sin-offering." The blessing did not expunge the sins of the people; it transcended them. When *Klal Yisrael* stood before Aharon, they had no recollection of their past faults. Likewise, when we supplicate Hashem, we should not allow our shortcomings to deter us from voicing our heartfelt prayer. The *yetzer hora* very clearly degrades us, "Who are you, to *daven* to Hashem? With your long list of sins, you have the gall to stand before the King of Kings and pray? How dare you?" We must ignore his malignant inferences and move on with a positive outlook, knowing that our compassionate Father in Heaven listens to our prayers – regardless of our past shortcomings.

*Horav Shlomo Levinstein, Shlita*, demonstrates how the prayer of a simple Jew can penetrate the Heavens and reach the Heavenly Tribunal. *Horav Nachman, zl, m'Horodanka*, was a *tzaddik*, righteous person, and one of the preeminent disciples of the *Baal Shem Tov*. Soon after his marriage, he left his young wife as he went to live in seclusion in another city. This was strange behavior and extremely unsettling for his new wife. While she was fully aware that she was marrying a holy person, this was clearly much more than she had bargained for. She went to visit her husband's *rebbe* to elicit his help in resolving the issue threatening her marriage. The *Baal Shem* listened to her story and promised to take care of things.

The *rebbe* summoned *Rav Nachman* and asked him to explain his strange behavior. *Rav Nachman* explained, "*Rebbe*, I had a Heavenly vision which told me my wife will die soon after giving birth. Not wanting her to die in the bloom of life, I left home. This was so that she would continue living unimpeded. The *Baal Shem* agreed that while it was definitely an issue, he was compelled to share the contents of his vision with his wife. They quickly summoned the young woman and related to her the sad news. Her response was unequivocal, "I want to have a child – even if it means that I will die!" The consequences of her decision were of no concern to her. "But what about me?" *Rav Nachman* asked. "I am unable to raise a child alone." The *Baal Shem* countered, "Do not worry. I will raise the child."

*Rav Nachman* returned home to his wife and, later that year, they were blessed with a healthy son. As soon as the young mother held her son in her tender embrace, she cried out to Hashem, "Please Almighty G-d, let me be around, at least until the child has teeth and is ready to eat on his own." Hashem listened to her plea, and she lived until the infant's second birthday. The *Baal Shem Tov* was true to his word and raised the child, who was called Simchah, until he became a young man, after which he entered into matrimony to the *Baal Shem's* granddaughter. The young couple soon became parents to a little boy, whom they named Nachman, after his grandfather. This child grew up to become the saintly *Rav Nachman Breslover*.

When *Rav Nachman Horodanka* heard that his wife had only asked for two more years of life, he lamented, "When she prayed, it was an *eis ratzon*, a moment of good will. She could have asked for seventy years. Had she asked, Hashem would have listened!"

*Horav Moshe Shochet, Shlita*, quotes the *Talmud Berachos* 10b, where *Chazal* list six things which *Chizkiyahu Hamelech* had done. Among those for which he was praised was the *genizah* of the *Sefer HaRefuos*, concealing the Book of Remedies for all time. *Rashi* explains that people were no longer turning to Hashem in prayer when someone became ill. They would consult the *Sefer HaRefuos* and follow "directions." Hashem was not part of the equation.

Now, let us imagine the following scenario: A young child becomes ill with a dread disease. The doctors say that medical science can do nothing for the child. He will soon die. The parents, grandparents and siblings are all at a loss. What can they do? Suddenly, one of the family members recalls that King *Chizkiyahu* has in his possession a book that contains the remedy to every illness. The family wastes no time in running to the King's palace and throwing themselves at his feet, "Please, please save our child! It is a matter of life and death!"

*Chizkiyahu* listens to them and says, "I am truly sorry. I would like to help, but the Book has been concealed. It is no longer accessible." The family looks at the king incredulously. "How can you say that? Our child will die! Please give us the Book!"

The king refuses to budge. "This is specifically the reason why I concealed it. People no longer pray to Hashem." End of the story. The family leaves, heartbroken. They have no other "recourse" but to pray to Hashem.

This entire story is difficult to accept. *Chizkiyahu Hamelech* has the ability to save a child's life – and he refuses to give over the Book of Remedies? Is this the proper thing to do? **Horav Mordechai Druk, zl**, derives from here an important principle. Prayer has exactly the same effect as the *Sefer HaRefuos*. *Davening* is not taking a chance. It is a certainty. If we would only *daven* as if our lives depended on it – we would be successful.

Perhaps the following vignette, quoted from *Impact* by Rabbi Dovid Kaplan, will give us added perspective. A young intern came on the night shift in a large metropolitan hospital. The resident in

charge told him that, since it was the night shift, the staff had been reduced. “If you ever feel overwhelmed, call, and we will send in reinforcements. There are various patient conditions which you must address: injections, medicine, painkillers, and x-rays. There is much to do. We are only a phone call away. Do not try to be a hero.”

All young people want to show their independence. They can do it on their own. This young doctor was no different. He was not going to call anyone unless it was absolutely necessary. He ran from one patient to another, doing everything that was necessary. When one accepts too much upon himself – more than he can handle – something has to give. One of the elderly patients died that night. The intern had done nothing wrong – other than refusing to call for help when it was very hectic. The family sued him for malpractice.

Towards the conclusion of the court case, the judge asked the young doctor if he had anything to say in his own defense. He responded, “Yes, I do. I did everything humanly possible that night. I ran from patient to patient addressing their medical issues. I exerted myself to the fullest. Yet, rather than gratitude, I receive abuse and a court case!”

The judge began to chuckle. “Young man,” he said, “you are a fool. Who told you to run around? You were told that as soon as you needed assistance to call for it, and reinforcements would arrive. All you had to do was pick up the phone and call. You did not. You are a fool. All of this is your own doing.”

Hashem looks down at us in much the same way. Someone becomes ill; we need salvation, be it financial, physical, or emotional. We run around, foolishly taking life’s challenges into our own hands, upon our own shoulders – when all we should do is pick up the “phone,” take out our *Tehillim* and *daven* to Hashem. He can, and will, help. Yet, we turn to Him last – often after the situation has deteriorated to the miracle stage. Then, it quite possibly might be too late.