

"And wherever I permit my Name to be mentioned I shall come to you and bless you." (20:21)

It is significant that this *pasuk* follows immediately after the *Har Sinai* experience. No code of law, regardless of man's acquiescence, will be binding - unless he views that law as the direct result of the spiritual foundation of life. *Horav Moshe Swift, zl*, cites the *Talmud Succah 53a* which quotes Hillel's interpretation of this *pasuk*. "If you will come into My House, I will come into yours." Hashem tells *Bnei Yisrael* that My relationship with you is not merely a reward. It is the product of a natural sequence of events. If you will come to Me - I will come to you. If you will mention My Name and make Me the basis of your life, I will reciprocate with reward and blessing.

Horav Swift continues with an exposition on the concept of prayer, indicating the appropriate approach toward reaching Hashem via the medium of prayer. The essence of prayer is not merely supplication. Rather, prayer represents the establishment of a relationship between man and Hashem. It shapes the spiritual basis of life. It is the foundation upon which one builds his day. Prayer used to be a uniquely spiritual experience in which one could pour his heart out to Hashem in praise, in joy and in sorrow. Through the vehicle of prayer, we have brought Hashem into every aspect of our lives. Morning, afternoon, evening, *Shabbos*, *Yom Tov*, the various milestone occasions of the life-cycle, all these are included in our *Siddur*. Our prayer book is our guide in offering praise to Hashem during all the moments of our life.

Regrettably, prayer has taken on a new form. It has become self-centered. We petition Hashem when we are in need. We pray with *kavanah*, proper intention, only when we need something from Hashem. We complete our prayers and wait to see if they have been effective. Jewish prayer means much more than praying for health during moments of illness, peace when we are at war, sustenance when our situation is bleak. Prayer is the communion between man and Hashem. Man offers praise as he proclaims the sovereignty of Hashem. He feels "good" knowing that he has just spoken to his Creator. He has poured out his heart to Him, rendering praise as well as supplication. He has, however, communicated for the primary purpose of relating to his Father in Heaven. Hashem asks that we come to Him, and He will then respond to us. Only after we establish a relationship, can we petition for favors.