

Then Avraham ran to the cattle. (18:7)

The *Baal HaTurim* turns around the letters of the word, *ha'bakar*, so that it becomes *ha'kever*, the grave. The *Yalkut Shemoni* explains that the *bakar*, calf, that Avraham *Avinu* was prepared to slaughter ran away, and Avraham followed it into the *Meoras HaMachpeilah*, which then contained the graves of Adam and Chavah. When Avraham entered the cave, he saw a man and a woman lying there asleep. Next to them candles were burning, from which a pleasant odor permeated outward. This is why Avraham sought to make *Meoras HaMachpeilah* the place where he, too, wished to be buried. Interestingly, as noted by the *Baal HaTurim*, the word *Machpeilah* has the same *gematria*, numerical equivalent, as Avraham's age (175) when he left this world. Avraham chose his burial site. His choice was supported by his son, Yitzchak *Avinu*, and grandson, Yaakov *Avinu*. *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, relates a story in which a distinguished *rav* selected his gravesite due to the *kedushah*, sanctity, which emanated from it.

The following story is recorded in the *pinkas*, diary, of the proceedings of the *Chevra Kaddisha*, Sacred Burial Society, of the town of Polna'ah, Ukraine. When the *rav* of the city felt that his time on this world was slowly coming to a close, he went to the Jewish cemetery, accompanied by members of the *Chevra Kaddisha*, with the intention of picking out a gravesite. Obviously, he had certain criteria concerning next to whom he wanted to be buried. When they arrived at the cemetery, he soon pointed to a specific site, claiming that he had seen an unusual otherworldly light hovering over it.

The members of the *Chevra* searched through their records and discovered that that specific place had already been sold to a certain tailor. After more searching, they discovered that for the last ten years, this tailor had visited the site (where he would be buried) daily in order to recite the entire *Sefer Tehillim*. When the *rav* heard this, he immediately proceeded to the home of the tailor and begged him to sell him the burial site. The tailor was immovable. The spot was not for sale. When the *rav* saw that the tailor was not selling, he instructed the *Chevra Kaddisha* to sell him the spot to the right of the tailor. Ten years later, the elderly *rav* went to his rightful reward in *Gan Eden* and was buried in the spot (which was to the right of the tailor) that he had purchased.

Ten more years elapsed, and the venerable *Horav Leib Mochiach*, one of the *talmidei Baal Shem Tov*, asked the *Chevra Kaddisha* of Polna'ah to help him select a burial site. When he arrived at the cemetery, he, too, noticed the same extraordinary light that the *rav* of the city had observed twenty years earlier. He, too, wanted to purchase this spot (where the tailor had been daily reciting *Tehillim* for the past twenty years). After he was informed that the spot had been sold, he attempted to convince the tailor to sell. His efforts also proved futile. He compromised and purchased the spot to the left of the tailor's site.

The tailor continued reciting *Tehillim* daily for eight more years – a total of (over) twenty eight years, until he, too, was called to his rightful place in the *Yeshivah Shel Maalah*, Heavenly *Yeshivah*. He was buried between the *rav* of the city and *Rav Leib Mochiach*. The entire city was in

awe of this simple (far from simple) tailor, who ended up being buried between these two holy men.

We may derive a powerful lesson concerning how much Heavenly illumination and *kedushah* is created, and from which one may draw and absorb unto himself – all from the recitation of *Sefer Tehillim*. I grew up in a home in which *Tehillim* recitation was a daily staple. My father, a Holocaust survivor who did not have the good fortune of studying in a *yeshivah*, recited the entire *Sefer Tehillim* before *davening* – every day (and he did not *daven* at 9:00 a.m.).

Sefer Tehillim is David *Hamelech*'s song of praise to Hashem. The 150 Divinely inspired *mizmorim* have served as the basis of the *tefillos* of *Klal Yisrael* throughout the millennia. David *Hamelech* originally authored these *mizmorim* to express his personal love and devotion to Hashem, but, ultimately, he structured them in such a manner that they could be employed by any individual as a means of communicating with Hashem. What makes *Sefer Tehillim* so unique is the feeling that it generates within the psyche of the petitioner. An attitude of awareness of the Creator, His Presence throughout every moment of our lives, has made *Sefer Tehillim* the book that accompanies a Jew wherever and whenever throughout his life's journey.

The *mizmorim* convey a powerful point: Hashem is with us through periods of joy, as well as moments of sadness and pain. While we are quick to feel positive when life (seems) is good, as soon as a change in the other direction occurs, we tend to become anxious and depressed. David went through so much. His ups and downs are our ups and downs. He teaches us that it all comes from Hashem, Who is a loving Father. There is a reason for everything. By accepting the will of Hashem, we become strengthened in the knowledge that we are not alone. I conclude with the words of the *Malbim* (preface to his commentary on *Sefer Tehillim*), "Every person will see in it (*Sefer Tehillim*) every prayer, every supplication, every form of gratitude and praise for everything and every subject/issue (whatever it is) to cry out, to ask for salvation, in pain or (moments of) relief and respite, for the individual or the community, throughout our journey on the sea of life" (free translation).

We now have an idea concerning the extraordinary power of reciting *Tehillim*, and how an ordinary Jew, through his passionate recital of *Tehillim*, merited to be buried between two *gedolei Yisrael*.