

Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

THAT WE NOT STUMBLE

Tzvi Rumbraun frequented libraries in Eretz Yisrael and often ate lunch in a corner. One day he began to *bentch* quietly. When he finished, the librarian asked what version of *bentching* he used, since he had added two words to the end of Racheim: *Shelo neivosh velo nikaleim velo nikashel l'olam va'ed*—that we not feel shame, be humiliated or stumble forever. She had never heard the phrase *velo nikashel*.

Tzvi had never thought about it; that was how his father *bentched*. He told the librarian he would find the source. One day, he found a *siddur* with his family's version, made a copy, circled the words, and sent them to the library addressed to her.

Some time later, Tzvi received a wedding invitation. He did not recognize the names, but went, wished *mazel tov*, and was about to leave when someone asked if he was Tzvi. The *kallah* wanted to see him.

"Do you remember a librarian asking you about your *vbentching*? That was me. I grew up religious, but stopped keeping *mitzvos* as a teenager. An Arab boy who was kind and very smart came to the library every day, and we began dating. He asked me to marry him. Inter-marriage did not sit well with me, and I told him I needed to think about it. He said I was only uncomfortable because we lived in Israel. In America, no one would think it was strange. He had to know by a certain day if I was willing to move.

"The day I was supposed to give an answer, I received a photocopied page from Birkas Hamazon, with the words circled: *velo nikashel l'olam va'ed*—that we not stumble. What a message! I left my fiancé and saved my family's future, thanks to you."

Adapted from Touched by a Story by Rabbi Spero, with the permission of the copyright holders, Artscroll/Mesorah Publications, Ltd. (Artscroll)



gem

OF THE WEEK

LIVING WITH G-D

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

Following the *halachos* of *korban Pesach*, *matzos*, and *tefillin*, we return to the narrative of the people still being redeemed. We immediately see that they have not yet reached an ideal level; they do not possess the power and courage necessary to free themselves. If it had been up to them, the Torah makes clear, they would have returned to slavery at the first sign of war. The sword was not lacking at their sides, but they lacked a fighting spirit in their hearts. Most importantly, they still lacked trust in Hashem, which gives a person courage and determination no matter what the task.

The goal of establishing a Jewish people was to create a nation fully aware of G-d among the nations of the world who do not know of His guidance. This role requires each Jew to extend himself to the fullest to reach the goals set by G-d, although the success of his efforts should be attributed to G-d's help. But at this early point, *klal Yisrael* were not yet ready for such a way of life. Only extraordinary experiences would bring them to the awareness that Hashem not only saves His people from destruction, but also sustains them day by day. This was the purpose of their wandering in the

continued on reverse side

powerful
PRAYER

HASHEM ELOKEI YISRAEL:
THE NEEDS OF A NATION



Ancient tradition reports that this prayer was composed by Chizkiyahu, king of Yehuda, at an hour of extreme danger: when Sancheirev was advancing on Yerushalayim. Chizkiyahu's name is hidden in the acrostic of the verses—*chusa*, *zarim*, etc. In contrast to the highly personal tone of Tachanun, this prayer focuses on the needs of the entire nation. Its helplessness in a cruel and merciless world is contrasted with its loyal adherence to belief in one G-d. Six times we appeal to His mercy, *Hashem Elokei Yisrael*, "begging forgiveness for disregarding the sixfold warning uttered in the *Tochacha*" (Mateh Moshe, par. 220).

Adapted from World of Prayer by Rabbi Elie Munk

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LONGING FOR PRAYER

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

On the third day of creation, Hashem commanded the trees and plants to sprout forth from the earth. If so, why does the Torah tell us that on the sixth day that they had not yet grown? “All the shrubs of the field were not yet on the earth, and the herbs of the field had not yet sprouted, for Hashem Elokim had not made rain fall, and there was no man to work the field.”

Rashi explains that on the third day, the plants rose to the surface of the earth, but still needed rain to break through the surface. But there was no one to appreciate the rain, because Adam had not yet been created. When Adam came along, he understood that the world needed rain, and davened for it. Only then did the trees and foliage sprout. The Gemara comments that this teaches us that “Hakadosh Baruch Hu longs for the *tefillos* of *tzaddikim*.” *Tefillah* is so important that all of creation had to wait for Adam to daven.

It is impossible to know anything about Hashem except for what He has revealed to us. Hakadosh Baruch Hu lacks nothing; He is not flattered by our prayers or our praise. But He has revealed His intention is in giving us the *mitzvos*.

The Sefer Hachinuch writes, “Know, my son, that all that Hashem derives from people doing His *mitzvos* is that He wants to do good for us. When a person is made ready by doing the *mitzvos* to receive good, then Hashem will grant him good. Therefore, [Hashem] informed them of the good path, which is the way of the Torah, so that they can become good people...That is what is written, ‘Now, Yisrael, what does Hashem want from you...only your good.’ Hashem asks nothing of you in doing His *mitzvos* other than that He wants, in His goodness, to be good to you. As is written, ‘Hashem, your G-d, owns the heavens, the earth and all that is in it. Only in your forefathers did He delight to love them; He chose their descendants after them.’ He does not need your *mitzvos*, but only out of His love for you to give you merit.”

Now we can understand why Hashem longs for the prayers of the *tzaddikim*. He knows how beneficial it is for us to connect with Him through *tefillah*. He wants us to grow and become better and better, to deserve more and more of His goodness.

wilderness. *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and *krias Yam Suf* demonstrated Hashem’s special closeness to them during extraordinary times, but only by their journey through the *midbar* could they learn to place their trust in Him under all circumstances, that even daily, petty human needs are His concern. “The eye of Hashem is upon those who fear Him.”

From the beginning, they were told that a momentous goal lay ahead, even before they reached Eretz Yisrael. As Moshe had been told: *b’hotziacha es ha’am hazeh mi’Mitzrayim, taavdun es ha’Elokim al hahar hazeh*. With the acceptance of the Torah, they would enter the service of Hashem. This Torah requires that every second of our daily lives be spent in the service of Hashem. It requires confidence that Hashem is present at all times, in every place. It requires the certainty that if we do the will of Hashem, He will guide us safely and happily through the most desolate *midbar* of our lives.

This was the introduction to the Torah that *klal Yisrael* had to learn in the wilderness. The first experience was at Marah: for three days they had no water, and what they finally found was bitter. Then Hashem instructed Moshe to throw a piece of wood into the water, and it became sweet. Through these events, they came to realize that even the bitterest of times can become sweet through the commands of Hashem that are associated with them. Through these events, Hashem taught them that His laws and His justice are a remedy for all physical and social ills—*ki ani Hashem rofecha*, “for I, G-d, am your Healer.”

Based on excerpts from the commentary of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.



wonder WORLD

CROCODILE COUSINS



Do reptiles protect their children?

The gharial is one of the rarest animals, with only about 650 left on earth. Gharials resemble crocodiles and are enormous, with males about 20 feet long and up to 400 pounds. They have 110 interlocking teeth that along with long thin jaws make them masters at catching fish. They can move much faster underwater than their larger-jawed cousins, alligators and crocodiles. Gharials are very dedicated parents. The mothers lay eggs in nests and stand guard over them. When they hatch, babies from all the local nests form a “nursery.” At the first sign of danger, they rush to the closest adult. Gharials have been classified as critically endangered; soon there may be none left.

Adapted from the Niflaos HaBoreh Explorer series by Rabbi Yaakov Lubin

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