

ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם", "And you shall build a Temple for Me and I will dwell in them". The Jewish People were given three commandments to fulfill upon entry to the Land of Israel: 1) build a Temple, בית הבחירה 2) to appoint a king and 3) to eradicate Amalek. The Temple had a two-fold purpose, as noted by the Rambam (Hilchos Bais Habechira 1:1): 1) as the place where sacrifices were to be brought; 2) as the destination for the triennial pilgrimages at each of the 3 festivals. Both these roles are part of the identity of the Temple. These attributes applied to each Temple regardless if it was a temporary one (e.g. the Tabernacle in the desert, Nov, Shiloh, Givon) or a permanent one (Jerusalem).

Part of the obligation to build a Temple was to erect a בית הבחירה, a permanent house in a selected place, which can never be substituted for and whose location can never be changed. After Jerusalem was selected, it became the sole place where the Temple could be erected (see Rambam, *ibid*). The basis for this special status of Jerusalem is the verse לשכנו תדרשו ובאת שמה. The Tabernacle, on the other hand, was by definition a temporary, transient dwelling. The Torah did not specify when the transition from Tabernacle to Temple, temporary to permanent status was to take place. No prophet ever spoke about this changeover.

The notion of a Temple, either as a temporary dwelling or a permanent building at a specific site, is inherently difficult to understand. How can Gd, the very definition of perfect sanctity, coexist with our material, flawed universe? How can Infinity coexist with the finite? There is no good answer to this question, yet the fact remains that Gd commanded us to build a Tabernacle and eventually a Temple for Him. The Midrash notes that Moshe raised this very question when presented with the command to build the Tabernacle in the desert. Moshe was startled! How can Gd, Infinity, coexist with man, especially in the small confines of the Holy of Holies where the Divine Countenance, כביכול, rested within a square cubit of space? The heavens cannot contain the infinite glory of Hashem, how will the limited spaces of the Tabernacle contain Him? The Midrash says that Gd answered Moses telling him that just as Gd carries the world, and not the reverse, Gd is capable of contraction, צמצום, and can rest quite comfortably even in the small space above the כפורת. Moses requested that Gd teach him how infinity can exist in a finite space (הראני נא את כבודיך). Gd tells Moses that while He will grant him gift him great wisdom and show him things that no other human will ever see or know,

Moses, you must understand that there can be no answer to your question. Moses realized that when Gd commanded him *ועשו לי מקדש*, He essentially said even though you will always have the question of infinity coexisting with the finite, suspend your judgement and accept that this is the will of Gd.

King Solomon was troubled by the same quandary that bothered Moses. He incorporated his dilemma into the dedication prayer he offered at the consecration of the first Temple. Solomon asked is it possible to build a house for Gd in this finite world (Kings I Chapter 8)? After raising the question, he changes the topic, asking Gd to accept all sorts of prayers that will be offered through the Temple. Solomon did not seek an answer to the question he raised nor did he offer one. Rather he enumerated a series of circumstances that precipitated a need for man to pray. If your nation Israel will be face defeat in war, they shall run to the Temple and offer prayer and You shall hearken to their prayer and reverse their fortunes. In the case of drought, we know from the *משניות* in *מסכת תענית* how they would offer special prayers. Solomon said You shall hearken to their prayers and send the rain. He mentions other types of natural catastrophes that would cause great harm to a Middle Eastern country that receives limited rainfall. Essentially, Solomon asked that Gd accept any prayer offered in time of need.

Solomon asked Gd to accept the prayer of the plain Jew as well as the prayer of the non-Jew. He asked Gd to listen to the people's prayer when they go to war. If they should be in exile, hear their prayers so they may return to You through *תשובה*, repentance, and You shall respond to their prayer and return them to their land. Prayer over disease or affliction should be heard. With the theme of *ואתה תשמע מן השמים מקום מושבך*, "And you shall hear them from heaven, the place of Your throne", Solomon established the foundation that man should never be embarrassed to pray when he feels a need, even for the seemingly trivial. It may not be granted, but he will not be faulted for the request.

Solomon, the wisest of men, who finally admitted that he too could not understand the paradoxical law of the *פרה אדומה*, the red heifer,, did not attempt to answer the question that perplexed Moses. He also accepted that the commandment to create a house for Hashem is beyond man's capacity to comprehend. Man must accept that

this is the divine plan, רצון ה. As Solomon says in Song of Songs, דודי ירד לגני, Gd, כביכול, has descended from His infinite abode to the finite garden to be with His beloved Jewish People..

[The Rav related a story told to him by Reb Simcha Zelig, the Dayan of Brisk and close confidante of Reb Chaim Brisker. Reb Simcha Zelig accompanied Reb Chaim on a visit to a cousin of Reb Chaim who was a "Chabbadnik". While waiting for the man to return home, they perused some of the books written by the Magen Avos that were in this individual's library. In one of the prefaces they read about the disagreement among Chazal as to the divine purpose for creating the world. The two major opinions were: 1) Gd created the world so that it may offer praise to His glory; 2) Gd created the world as a manifestation of His great attribute of kindness.

Though he admitted that both ideas might be correct, Reb Chaim disagreed with both opinions. He said that there is no need to look for external reasons for creation. Creation, as all that occurs in the world, was and is the will of Gd. As we say in Kaddish, בעלמא דיברא כרעותי-ה, let the name of Hashem be glorified in the world that He created to fulfill His will. Infinity residing in a finite world, is the will of Gd and should simply be accepted as such.]

The aspect of צרה mentioned by King Solomon obligates man to pray. The Rambam and Ramban disagree as to whether the obligation to pray on a regular basis is Biblical or Rabbinic. Both agree that in time of crisis, עת צרה, prayer is a biblical obligation. According to the Ramban, צרה is defined as many people being affected by a crisis of disastrous proportions. An individual who approaches Hashem for his own needs, does not fit the criteria of עת צרה, and his obligation to pray is Rabbinic.

We can derive the importance and central role that prayer plays in Judaism from the fact that Gd wanted us to construct a home for Him. Our daily prayers correspond to the times and purpose behind various daily sacrifices. One can offer a sacrifice even though he may be very distant from Gd and the Temple. He may

send the sacrifice via a messenger and be granted the atonement it brings without appearing before Gd, without leaving the comfort of his home or losing a day of work. Indeed, שלוחו של אדם כמותו, the laws of surrogacy, are derived from the Paschal Sacrifice. However, with prayer there is no concept of שלוחו של אדם כמותו. I cannot appoint someone else to fulfill my obligation to pray. (Even though prayer derives from the obligation to bring a sacrifice, some laws pertaining to sacrifice are not applicable to prayer).

One may ask: did not the אנשי מעמד, who represented all of the Jewish People with their prayers that coincided with the daily sacrifices, act as surrogates? There is a fundamental dichotomy in the relationship between Gd and man. Gd accepts the Jewish People's sacrifice even if we are very far from Him. אהבת עולם אהבתך. The distance between man and Gd (the altar) does not affect the acceptability of the sacrifice, so long as the offering meets the requirements. Man can be working his fields while his sacrifice is offered, there can be a seemingly infinite distance between Gd and man, yet Gd will still accept the sacrifice.

On the other hand prayer requires a closeness to Hashem where you view yourself as standing in front of, and in the embrace of Hashem. Prayer can't be offered if you feel Hashem is distant from you. The essence of prayer is for man to draw closer to Gd. Without כוונה, intent and understanding of the act, there is no prayer. כוונה implies that I exist in Gd. I can express my needs before Him without reservation, as I would to someone who I felt close to and secure with.

Rambam noted that the main reason for building the Temple was the need for a place to offer the required sacrifices. Why weren't the במות, temporary altars, acceptable? Why build a "house" for Gd? The Temple expresses our desire that Gd, כביכול, live near us, be our close neighbor. Proximity between man and Gd was not necessary for sacrifices. Gd accepts sacrifices even when great distances separate Him and man. For prayer, man needs to be close to Gd and Gd to man, next door, לשכנו תדרשו ובאת שמה. The "house" of Gd is unique because it is a nearby house of prayer, כי ביתי בית תפלה.

King Solomon said "and they will admit their sins towards this city and their land". Prayer is a conversation with Gd. Prayer is the connection between man and Gd that represents the strength of their relationship. Man cannot embrace Gd from the distance. He does not feel comfortable unburdening his heart and divulging his foolish dreams by having to shout. King Solomon knew that the Temple was not required for the sacrifice aspect. Gd needs to be close to man so he will feel as comfortable in approaching Gd through prayer as a young child approaching his father, at any time. Man should not feel embarrassed or ashamed when he unburdens himself to Gd, no matter how trivial the request or admission. Gd, כביכול, contracted to reside in the small space of a cubit by cubit, so that man can always feel close to the house of Gd, His house of prayer.

Solomon said והתפללו אליך דרך ארצם, "and they shall pray to Gd via their land". In order to pray, the people must be able to focus and identify where Gd resides relative to where they may be. Through their land, through the city of Jerusalem, through the Holy of Holies. Prayer is an act that can only take place if the one who prays feels close to Gd, דרך ארצם. When one prays he must look towards Gd. Outside of the Land of Israel we pray in the direction of Eretz Yisrael. In Eretz Yisrael we face Jerusalem, in Jerusalem we face the Temple Mount, in the temple we face the Holy of Holies. We cast our gaze in the direction of Gd just as the young child casts his gaze to his father as he curls up in his embrace.

Solomon said that Gd must take up residence in the Temple, in the house built for Him, to be close to the people. Prayer must be פנים אל פנים, face to face. Such prayer should be heard by Gd and accepted, no matter what they pray for, be it repentance or help in times of personal and national crisis. All prayer comes down to a single motive: תשובה, to repenting and come closer to Gd. This requires that Gd be close and approachable, our next door neighbor. Solomon said the success of the Temple can be measured by Gd's accepting the people's prayers. For if Gd did not want to accept their prayers, there would have been no reason to build it in the first place! Indeed, Gd's residing in this house and accepting our prayers shows the connection between Gd and His people. Gd must show that He is interested in our prayers as well as our sacrifices. Unlike sacrifices which can be accepted from a distance, prayer requires proximity. Solomon asked that Gd show that our prayers were accepted by residing close to us, in His house.

חשובה means to return to Gd. In order for us to return, we must know where to return to. Gd has to make Himself available to us so that we can return to Him. We say שומע תפלה עדיך כל בשר יבואו. The word עדיך is used instead of the word אליך (towards You, in Your direction). עדיך implies a collision, we suddenly collided with Hashem, coming close enough to touch. Prayer requires that man come close to Gd, כביכול, to be able to touch each other.

The Temple provided the framework for achieving this closeness. When Moses and Solomon asked how could this finite house contain Gd, they were saying "Gd You don't need this house. You don't need it for sacrifices". Gd does not need a house. The purpose of the house is to make prayer viable for us. It is we who require that Gd be our neighbor, for prayer.

There are so many aspects of creation that we cannot fathom. We learn from Moses and Solomon that we do not have to understand how Gd allows the infinite to coexist with the finite. The fact that Gd resides with us shows that He is interested in us and that stands near us ready to hear our prayers. Gd's proximity to us is a gift we must appreciate.

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