

ASSURING POSITIVE RESPONSE FROM ABOVE

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

A Chasidic interpretation of a phrase, meant only as a homiletic "DERHER" (interesting thought, though not the real intent) can sometimes touch upon basic fundamentals of Yahadus. It can even become regarded as a central theme of the whole Sidrah.

As an example of the above, one may consider a comment of the Sefas Emes (Ger) on the edict about one who made a vow, (a verbal commitment using the language of a vow). He is obligated to honor that vow. "Lo Yachail Devoro..." He shall not desecrate his word (Bamidbar 30:3). A Jew's word contains sanctity; when unfulfilled the word is desecrated. The passage continues "Kechol Hayotzei M'piv Yaaseh", as he uttered with his mouth, so he shall do. The second phrase seems somewhat redundant. Advances the Sefas Emes a homiletic interpretation: When a person will honor his word, his promise, then whatever he utters in prayer, the **Almighty** will do (will fulfill).

This statement requires contemplation. What is the reaction of a worshipper who pleads for Heavenly assistance, and he sees no positive response? If he is sincere and humble he'll realize that to gain a definite positive response, one must first meet certain conditions. He'll humbly conclude that he did not merit that craved positive response; he will blame himself. (See Talmud Rosh Hashanah 4a distinguishing between the Jew who blames himself when a positive Heavenly response is not forthcoming, and Darius who would not.)

Thrice a day Jews recite the Shemona Esra (silent prayer), its conclusion is thought-provoking: "My G-d, guard my tongue from evil, and my lips from speaking deceitfully... (concluding) May the expressions of my mouth.... find favor before You..."

Any mindful worshipper realizes that the concluding prayer is connected to the very acceptance Above of the Shemona Esra supplication. A tongue that is extra cautious to speak only the truth stands more of a chance his prayers to the Al-mighty will "come true." Thus we fervently plead for divine assistance to keep our speech in the realm of truth.

The Nishmas of Shabbos conveys this thought in its own phraseology. At its conclusion we are assured that "Hashem saves the poor man from one stronger than he, the poor and destitute from one who would rob him. Shavas Aniyim... You Almighty hear the screaming of the poor". However, leading into the assurance one finds an extensive list of conditions. Based on the passage "all my bones shall say 'Hashem, who is like You" (Tehilim 35:10). The paragraph elaborates: "every mouth (meaning complete mouth) shall vow allegiance... all hearts (meaning the complete heart) shall fear You ... all my bones, etc."

A six year old girl was standing in the synagogue praying for a certain gift. Hours later she complained to her father: "I prayed so seriously to Hashem. How come He didn't answer me?" The father replied, "He DID answer you, He said "No!".

This may have been the right answer to the young child. To an adult, however, it is not. He does not take "No" for an answer. Instead, he makes a thorough research into himself, perhaps some of the conditions for a positive response have not been met.

The need for a quorum of ten to say Kedusha is based on the word "Toch". I shall be sanctified "b'Toch", among, the children of Israel (Vayikro 22:32). The real meaning of the word "Toch" is inside of the inside, the heart of the heart, the Kodshei Kodoshim of the Neshomo. When one prays to Hashem in a way that all these conditions are met, "No" is no answer.

Later in the Parsha, remarkably, when the tribes Reuben and Gad wished to settle in the east bank of Jordan, an almost identical phrase is used: "Vehayotzai Mipichem Taasu", what has come from your mouth you shall do (32:24).

When Moshe beseeched Hashem to allow him to enter the Land of Israel, he did not give up, in his prolonged supplications, until Hashem told him " Do not continue to speak to Me further about this matter" (Devorim 3:26). Hashem did not say "No". If Moshe would have continued unrelentingly to pray to be allowed to enter, Hashem would have changed the decree and allowed him to enter. For this is the power of prayer when conditions are met as was the case with Moshe. The only way to block Moshe's entrance was to order him not to pray for entrance.

Moreover, not only the uttered word but even the thoughts connected to the words are fulfilled when serious and truthful. As the Talmud cites Rav Safra (Chulin 94b) who was in the middle of prayers, and thus not permitted to speak. He was offered a price for something he wished to sell. Rav Safra did not respond (in the middle of his prayer). The buyer, thinking the lack of response was his wish to charge more money, kept raising his bid. When Rav Safra finished his prayers, he insisted on accepting no more than the first offer, because in his heart he had intended to sell for that price.

Thus, Shachris in the beginning lauds the person who is honest not only in his speech, but also in his thought "Dover Emes B'Levovo", speaks the truth in his heart.

How befitting the conclusion of the Shemona Esra "May (both) the expressions of my mouth, and the thoughts of my heart find favor before You", and come true.

