

Prayer 1: How can we Recharge our Batteries?

Any relationship with another person must be based on reciprocity. It is not possible to have one side always give while the other always is on the receiving end. When that happens, it is exploitation and not a mutual relationship. For example, when we want to build up a healthy relationship with our mate, it must be based on mutual actions. Both sides give and receive something in return.

The same is true of our relationship with the Master of the World, it must be built up in the same way.

In the past, we saw that Noah brought sacrifices to God as soon as he left the ark. Why did he do this? It was an expression of thanksgiving for the fact that he and his family were rescued from the Deluge. "I was saved from the Deluge, my family was not destroyed," Noah thought. "I will therefore thank the Creator by offering Him sacrifices."

Today, ever since the Temple of Israel was destroyed 2,000 years ago, sacrifices are no longer brought to God. Instead of that, we have something similar that replaces them – the prayers that people recite. This is how people can turn to the Creator of the World.

This can be viewed in a "small-minded" approach. I am missing something, so I will pray to the One who can fulfill the need. Will my prayers be answered? Will I receive what I am asking for? It all depends – if I listen to the "boss," perhaps he will listen to me.

However, if this is the way we look at prayer, we should immediately take into account a verse written by King Solomon: "If one turns his ear away from listening to the Torah, then his prayer is also an abomination" [Proverbs 38:9]. The simple explanation of this is according to the traditions of the nation of Israel (as taught by Rav Saadia Gaon): "If a slave doesn't listen to his master, the master will also not listen to the slave." This shows a desire to exploit a mutual relationship. Compare it to an ATM – If you put in the right magnetic card (prayer), you get out money (whatever you asked for in your prayer)...

The problem is that things don't quite work that way. But this can be viewed in a positive light. It is worthwhile to pay attention to the demands of the Creator in order that He will answer your requests. When you look at the world in such a limited way, it can lead to an outlook of sadness, even though this approach is real and true. These concepts leave us with "obligations" to the Master of the World.

On the other hand, there is a much deeper way to look at the matter of prayer. We can approach it with a feeling of the joy of creation, as something which will fulfill our desire as human beings to rise up to ever greater heights, to fill up with positive energy, to feel a lightening of the spirit and great satisfaction.

How can we do this? What is the secret?

More on this topic in our next message.