



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד מרדכי מלכא שליט"א נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
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Parashat Masei

The Power of Prayer

Bamidbar (35:25-28) states, "The assembly shall rescue the killer from the hand of the avenger of the blood, and the assembly shall return him to his city of refuge where he had fled; he shall dwell in it until the death of the *kohen gadol*, whom one had anointed with the sacred oil. But if the killer will ever leave the border of this city of refuge in which he had fled, and the avenger of the blood shall find him outside of the border of his city of refuge, and the avenger of the blood will kill the killer - he is not guilty for killing him."

Questions:

- 1- Why did the Torah make the length of the killer's exile dependent on the death of the *Kohen Gadol*?
- 2- After the Torah stated that the killer goes free with the death of the *Kohen Gadol*, won't murderers now pray for the death of the *Kohen Gadol*?

World's Perspective

The general perspective amongst society is that only a tzaddik or kabbalist can pray effectively to bring salvation and nullify decrees. They cite a proof from our Sages as well, who state, "A tzaddik decrees and Hashem fulfills." While it is true that the *tzaddikim* of the generation have the ability to bring about salvation with their prayers, yet our Torah teaches us that heartfelt prayer from the depths of one's heart can be offered by even the simplest Jew. It is all dependent on our Sages dictum, "Hashem wants the heart." This is because prayer is "service of the heart." Therefore, if he prays but his heart is not in it, indeed, his prayer will not be effective, as will be explained.

The Reason the Murderer's Exile is Dependent on the *Kohen Gadol's* Death; The Reason the *Kohen Gadol's* Mother Brings the Murderers Food:

The *Mishnah* in *Masechot Makot* (11a) says that the mother of the *Kohen Gadol* would bring the murderers' food and clothing so that they would not pray for the death of her son. The *Gemara* quotes the *pesukim* in this week's *parasha* which state that the killer goes free upon the death of the *Kohen Gadol*. The *Gemara* then asks: The mother of the *Kohen Gadol* gives the murderers food and clothing so that they shouldn't pray for her son's death. This indicates that if they were to pray for his death, their prayers would be effective and he would die. But the *pasuk* says that a baseless curse will not come true. The *Gemara* quotes the *Saba* as saying that the *Kohen Gadol* should have prayed for Hashem to have mercy on his generation (and that there should be no misfortunes like accidental killings) and he



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didn't. The *Gemara* is clear - since the *Kohen Gadol* did not pray for his generation, the murderers have a claim against him and a cause for complaint. Their claim is so powerful, that if they were to pray for the *Kohen Gadol's* death, he would die. *Rashi* in *Makkot* also explains the *gemara* in this manner. The *Targum Yonatan* also explains the *pesukim* in this way, stating that it is the responsibility of the *Kohen Gadol* on *Yom Kippur* when he enters the Holiest of Holies, to pray that there should be no sins of bloodshed, adultery, or *avodah zara* found amongst the Jewish people. The *Maharsha* in *Makot* adds: "This matter is dependant on the *Kohen Gadol*, since his prayer on *Yom Kippur* is to atone for the Jewish People and to nullify any evil decrees against them. He is also to pray that any decrees against the wicked should be nullified, so that they will have an opportunity to turn back from their evil ways."

True Story - One Must Fear the Prayers of Another:

In the *sefer Derech Sicha* of the *Gaon*, Rav Chaim Kanievsky *Shlita* (Volume 1 *Parashat Chayei Sarah*) the following story is recorded: A girl, who lived with her widowed father, got engaged. The wedding date was set for the 15th of Av. Soon after the engagement, the father was diagnosed with a serious illness. He asked his daughter if she could delay the wedding - if she moved out, he didn't think he'd be able to manage by himself. The *chatan* said that they should ask the Rav and whatever the Rav decided, he would do. The question got to Rav Chaim, and his ruling was based on the aforementioned *Gemara* in *Makot*: Just like we're afraid that the murderers will pray for the death of the *Kohen Gadol*, so too, in this case, if they were to delay the wedding, we must fear that the *chatan* will pray for the death of the father in the secret recesses of his heart. Some challenged Rav Chaim's ruling: In *Makot*, we assume the murderers' prayers would be effective, since they had a valid complaint against the *Kohen Gadol*. But here, what cause of complaint was there for the *Chatan*. Rav Chaim answered that the *Chatan* had a valid claim against the father because the father should not delay the wedding.

When Someone has a Complaint Against You, Their Prayer or Curse May be Fulfilled

I saw written in the Responsa *Asei Lecha Rav* from the *Gaon* R' Chaim Dov HaLevi *zt"l*, the Rav of Tel Aviv (3:54) that he was asked whether one should be concerned about one who is angry with him and curses him, or if an enemy prays against him. He cites proof from the aforementioned *gemara* in *Makot* that if the murderers, who were regular simple people, could kill the *Kohen Gadol*, even if he was a big *tzaddik*, then certainly if the person getting cursed is a sinner who had done sins that obligate him in death by Divine decree, the curses can kill him. From the words of the *Zohar* (that were mentioned earlier in the responsa) we can learn another reason to be concerned with a curse: even if a curse would be ineffective at normal times, in moments of danger, the curse could take effect. We find a similar idea in the *Gemara Shabbot* (32a). The *Gemara* says that because of three sins women die in childbirth. The *Gemara* asks why specifically during childbirth, aren't there sins for which one is punished even not at



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the time of childbirth? The *Gemara* answers that once a person enters a difficult predicament, he is more likely to be harmed in the future as well.

Even Pray for the Supernatural

The Steipler *zt"l* once asked the Chazon Ish *zt"l* if there is a point in praying for an individual who has a severe illness, *rachmana litzlan*. Perhaps a recovery of this sort is classified as a miracle, and we do not pray for miracles. Even if a miracle would be performed for him, said the Steipler, it would be at the expense of deducting from his merits. Therefore, perhaps one should not pray in this case. The Chazon Ish answered that he knows a particular *rav* named R' Datzranigov *zt"l*, whom the doctors once said would live only a short while. He ended up living thirty more years! An unlikely recovery is, indeed, **not** considered a miracle, and sometimes even a seriously ill individual could continue to live for many years. The Steipler added that both R' Moshe Chevroni *zt"l* and R' Baruch Sorotzkin *zt"l* lived with their illnesses for dozens of years. We see therefore, that continuous prayers help in this case as well.

This applies all the more so if one prays from the depths of his heart – certainly his prayer will be answered. This can be seen from the words of our Sages in *Masechet Berachot* (32b). Our Sages relate that one time, the prophet Yeshaya visited the gravely ill, King Chizkiyahu. Yeshaya informed Chizkiyahu that since he had not married, he would die in this world and would not receive a share in the Coming World. Chizkiyahu explained that he had foreseen with Divine Inspiration that he would have sons who were not righteous, and he therefore opted not to have children. He therefore asked Yeshaya if he could marry his daughter; perhaps their combined merits would be able to prevent such an eventuality. Yeshaya said that this was impossible. At that point, Chizkiyahu ordered him to finish his prophecy and leave. He stated that he had received a tradition from his great-grandfather David Hamelech that even if a sharp sword is placed on man's neck or a dream interpreter tells him that he is going to die, he should, nevertheless, not refrain from praying for mercy. Chizkiyahu immediately began to pray with heartfelt prayer and was healed, receiving 15 extra years of life. We see that prayer has the ability to reverse even the most difficult circumstances. This is as our Sages have stated that prayer stands at the very pinnacle of the world yet individuals belittle it.

A Prayer Which Achieved the Supernatural

In the *sefer Aleinu Le'shabeach*, there is a story about a *talmid chacham* who, together with his five year old son, visited the house of R' Chaim Kanievsky. He requested the Torah giant to listen to the story about this boy, who studied in one of the *chedarim* in Bnei Brak. The boy had fallen ill with cancer, *rachmana litzlan*. When it became clear that he would have to start chemotherapy, the parents told the boy that all the hair on his body would fall out. At first, the boy was not alarmed, but a short time later, he burst out into bitter tears. He said to his parents, "I do not care about the hair on my head, but how can I continue to be called a Jewish child without *peyot*?" The father continued to relate to R' Kanievsky that the boy turned his face to the wall and turned to Hashem in heartfelt prayer. "Merciful Father." He prayed, "I am sure that all You do with me is for the best. I trust that there is no one who has mercy on



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me more than You. This is what my father and mother have always told me. Therefore, I accept with complete love the illness that You have brought upon me. I am prepared to endure the difficult treatments with a devoted heart, because I trust that there, too, You will not forsake me. You will always be with me and guard me. I am willing to sacrifice the hair on my head despite the fact that it will be terribly embarrassing for me. But my *peyot*..." Here the boy broke into terrible weeping. "How can I be without *peyot*? This is the appearance of a Jewish child, and I want to continue to be one. I therefore request and plead to You my Father in Heaven, at least leave me with my *peyot*. Please do not let them fall out during the chemotherapy treatments." Then the father continued to relate, "So he prayed for a long while and continued to sob, while we, his parents, stood on the side and cried together with him." The father then pointed to an unbelievable miracle that had occurred to his son. "I have brought the child here so that the *Rav* can see with his own eyes, the unbelievable miracle that Hashem has wrought for him. Like a Father who displays mercy for his son, so too, Hashem listened to the prayers that emanated from a pure heart. All of the boy's hair fell out except for his *peyot*." The father furthermore related how the doctors did not believe what they saw, and exclaimed that such a thing has never transpired in medical history.

Words of Mussar

We have learned how great prayer is when it is offered from the depths of one's heart. Every person can save himself from all harm and can nullify all harsh decrees, Heaven forbid. The *sefer Porat Yosef* quotes the Baal Shem Tov as saying that sometimes a person's prayer can even help other individuals, and others could receive sustenance because of his personal prayer. When that happens, he accrues merit. No prayer is in vain, and each prayer draws down Heavenly bounty; however, how and when that bounty descends is decided by Hashem. It is furthermore said over in the name of the Chazon Ish zt"l that an individual's prayer can be effective for his children or grandchildren, and they receive spiritual or physical bounty because of the prayers of their grandfathers or grandmothers. We therefore turn our hearts in prayer to Hashem during this time of *Bein Hamitzrim* when we lament the exile of the *Shechina*, that all of our enemies should be eradicated, and we should merit the redemption speedily and the revelation of Hashem's Majesty in the world, *amen*.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rav Mordechai Malka