

Praying with Fire 2

Prayer Points

Love and Prayer

Two elderly women are waiting in a long line at the bank. Each needs a walker for support, and their legs ache. Edith keeps thinking about Rose, standing behind her. When at last the teller calls “next,” Edith turns to Rose and says, “Go ahead of me. I’m in no rush.”

This act, from Hashem’s view, is a masterpiece of *Ahavat Yisrael* (love of one’s fellow). Edith’s needs were as pressing as those of Rose. Yet, Edith’s heart went out to Rose, so much so, she put her before herself.

The ability to look beyond one’s own suffering and feel the suffering of someone else – is the diamond in this treasure. One of the most eloquent expressions of this love is one’s sincere prayers on another person’s behalf.

What is the secret of praying with others if one person’s illness or suffering is decreed in Heaven? How can another person’s prayer alleviate his suffering? While it is true that one can pray for anything, including someone else’s healing, prayer is effective because it brings the one praying to a higher spiritual state – a state which no longer necessitates suffering.

One rabbi explains that the concept of praying for others is based on the fact that we all are part of one body and soul called Israel. Therefore, the affliction of one should make one feel as though one of his own limbs is affected and he is praying on his own behalf.

The empathy is easier to understand between close relatives. For instance, when the mother prays for her child, she is in effect praying for herself as well. There is no gap between the child’s well-being and that of his parents.

We are all connected in a similar manner. The affliction of one should bring prayers that are as personal and urgent as they would be if one were praying on his own behalf. If one prays for mercy on behalf of someone else when he himself is in need of that same thing he is answered first.

These people have overcome the innate tendency to focus solely on their own concerns. They have made their fellows’ plight their own and connected themselves to the body of Israel. When they pray for their friend’s salvation along with their own, the merit of their love-laden prayers likewise affects their own salvation.

In conclusion: Every individual who prays for the whole community...his prayers are a thousand times more valuable in this form than if every individual had merely prayed for

himself. In this way each prayer is purer, because it is devoid of selfish interest, and communal spirit is fostered.”

POINTS TO PONDER

Concerns for another’s plight when one has the same problem is an especially powerful expression of love of Israel.

Ahavat Yisrael is the people’s chest of merit.

Praying for others whose needs are similar to one’s own is an awesome merit for alleviation of one’s own plight.

**Psalm 118:25 Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success!
(ESV)**