

PRAYER POINTS

THE KING AND I

A person's relationship with Hashem operates on two different tracks, which seem to be mutually exclusive. On one hand, we must recognize that Hashem is the Master of all, Who, with mere utterances, brought the universe into existence. A raging fire, a surging sea, a fierce hurricane wind that rips trees up by their roots – these displays of awesome might are only the smallest sensory measure of His absolute power.

On the other side of that dynamic – that Hashem is Awesome – is the fact that he is also the epitome of benevolence. Every moment of life, and every element that sustains and enriches life, is an invaluable gift from Hashem. Since nothing is more precious to us than life, Hashem is the ultimate personal benefactor. Everything He does stems from His pure goodness and desire for a connection with each of His children.

This sense of being close to Hashem, however, highlights the dual nature of one's connection to Him. If one were standing directly before an absolute ruler who decided anew each day whether one deserves to live, certainly the overwhelming emotion involved would be one of fear and awe. One of the rabbinic texts says: "Serve Hashem with awe, which, according to one rabbi, refers to prayer. One should approach praying with awe.

However another rabbinic teaching teaches that one should approach praying amidst a feeling of *simchah*, joy. Once again, another rabbinic text says: "One should rise to pray with a feeling of happiness."

Awe arises from one's appreciation of Hashem's greatness and mastery, whereas joy arises from the opportunity to pray to God, ensuring that by doing so one will receive the personal, loving care of his father, the Master and Creator of life.

POINTS TO PONDER

The *tefillah/prayer of Adon Olam/Master of the Universe* teaches that the awesome God is also our "personal" God.

The rabbinic texts teach that one should pray with both awe and joy.

Awe comes from recognition of Hashem's greatness, and joy comes from our knowledge that so great a Master wants to draw us near and care for us.

Psalm 66:5 Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man. (ESV)