

PRAYING with Fire

PRAYER POINTS

EMUNAH: THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLE OF TEFILLAH

We are told that *tefillah*/prayer is “among those things that stand at the pinnacle of the world,” and then the observation is made that “people nonetheless treat it lightly.” We cannot help but wonder, if *tefillah* is indeed so exalted, why is there a tendency to treat every day prayer lightly?

This paradox is all the more remarkable because almost every individual can testify that prayer produces astounding results. The very existence of Israel, past and present, is a result of prayer. “The Holy One desires the prayers of the righteous.” Our destiny, too, depends upon *tefillah*, for it is prayer – along with repentance – that will help bring the Final Redemption. Even if everything is prepared and ready for the Redemption, unless we open the Gates of *Tefillah*, nothing will be accomplished.

Not only as a “people,” but as individuals as well, *tefillah* is key. Indeed, every difficulty is structured in such a way that *tefillah* can overcome it. Why, then, do we pray as though it were an act of little consequence? The answer lies in the fact that on a daily basis we do not perceive that there is an urgent need to call upon *the Holy One* for our success.

The more we believe we are the source of our success in curing illnesses, developing technology, etc., we can more easily than ever lull ourselves into believing that we have it “all under control” without the need to seek His help.

One sage wrote: “We all know that it is not the medicine that heals us; it is the Holy One. It is not the medications that have an effect. It is the *tefillah* that accom-

pany the medicines that produce the effect.” The recognition of the Holy One’s involvement even in the daily “small stuff” of life is a higher level of *emunah*.

While prayer and *emunah* may be two separate concepts, the fact is that prayer is one of the ultimate expressions of *emunah*. If we do not recognize His presence and power, then we have no reason to pray. Being aware of to Whom we are praying – which requires a vibrant belief in His presence – is the “operating system” that energizes all prayer. A sage wrote: “An exalted aspect of *tefillah* is the vivid picturing of how the Holy One hears our lips’ utterances and takes heed of our heart’s meditations.”

By approaching the Holy One for everything, one comes to acknowledge that on his own, he has nothing. This brings us to the point of understanding that the Holy One is our *Abba* who desires His people to come to Him in all circumstances and situations.

If we desire sustenance, we must pray and resolve in our souls that without *tefillah* we will not have sustenance. This will result in our placing our trust in Him...[and] because of that [the Holy One] will help us.”

POINTS TO PONDER

Our very existence testifies that our prayer is effective.

We must internalize that the Holy One is in charge of every minute aspect of our lives.

1 Chronicles 5:20 They prevailed against them; the Hagrites and all who were with them were delivered into their hands, for they cried to God in the battle, and He responded to their entreaty because they trusted in Him. (TNK)