

For crying out loud

That **HURTS!**

Tuning into the pain of others and asking for help **BY ROBERT SUSSMAN**



IF WE LOOK AT THE DAVENING THAT WE DO each day, we'll notice something interesting – it's almost entirely in the plural, in particular the focal point of our davening, where we ask for the many things that we need – *shemoneh esrei* [lit: eighteen, referring to the number of blessings in that prayer, to which one blessing was later added making for a total of nineteen blessings (while the name eighteen was preserved) and which is also known as the Amidah – lit: standing, because the prayer is meant to be said while one stands with his feet together]: “endow us...with wisdom”; “bring us back”; “forgive us”; “redeem us”; “heal us”; and on and on.

When we stand before G-d, in that most intimate of moments with our

Creator where it's almost like we're whispering in His ear (and I remember when I davened at the kotel how it truly felt that way), we don't just daven for ourselves and our own needs, but for those of the entire Jewish people generally. Davening for others isn't just a nice thing to do, it's an essential part of what we do and of what davening is. But it goes further than this. Much further. In fact, it's almost scary how much we have to think about, take note of, care about, and daven for others.

HEARING THE CRIES OF OTHERS

Our Sages learn a fundamental lesson about davening from the case of the *metzora*, the person who was afflicted

with the spiritual malady known as *tzara'as* (often mistranslated as ‘leprosy’ despite the fact that it bears almost no resemblance whatsoever to it and that it could even affect things like walls and clothing!) which required that the person afflicted with it go outside of the *machanei Yehudah* (the camp) because of the spiritual impurity that resulted from it. The Torah says¹ that whenever anyone would come near the *metzora*, “*Tamei* (impure), *Tamei*” he [ie the *metzora*] shall call out.” Why does the *metzora* need to cry out like this? The gemara² explains that the purpose of the *metzora's* crying out is in order to inform the *rabim* (masses) about his pain, so that the *rabim* will ask for *rachamim* (mercy) for him.

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From here, we clearly see the obligation that is imposed upon each and every one of us to daven for our fellow who is in a situation of pain or difficulty.

And this shouldn't be surprising to us because when we see someone else in pain, and it's in our power to help that person – who wouldn't rush to that person's assistance and do whatever he could to help? For example, there's hardly anyone in the world who would see someone fall in the street, injured, and who wouldn't hurry to that person's aid and call for medical assistance for him.

And so too, when we see someone in financial distress, if we had in our possession sufficient money to assist that person – we would help him as much as possible in order to rescue him from his distress. Or, if one of our friends was extremely wealthy and able to give such assistance to anyone in need, we would be quick to ask him for help for this

person who had fallen on hard times.

What we need to recognise is that, the truth is, we all have just such a friend, and even better than a friend, because each and every one of us has a loving, merciful, all-powerful Father in Heaven capable of providing any assistance that we need, and it's in our hands to call out to Him on behalf of our friends in order that He will help them with whatever they need.

A LACK OF FAITH OR JUST PLAIN CRUELTY?

So important is recognising the plight of others that our Sages teach³, "Anyone who has the ability to ask for *rachamim* for his fellow and doesn't ask on his behalf, he is called *chotei* (a sinner), [as Shmuel HaNavi (Samuel the Prophet)] said⁴ [to the Jewish people], "As for me, G-d forbid that I should sin to Hashem and refrain from davening for you." Our Sages don't limit the respon-

sibility to daven for others to Prophets, or to the leaders of the generation, or to shul rabbis, or to tzaddikim. They say anyone! Each and every one of us has the ability to cry out to our Father and, more importantly, we all must do so.

But why does the gemara classify a person who fails to ask for *rachamim* for his fellow as a sinner? What sin has the person committed? Because if one doesn't daven for someone when he knows that the person is in pain, it could only be for one of two possible reasons: either he lacks *emunah* (faith) in Hashem and in the power of *tefillah* (prayer), or he is cruel because he knows that it's within his power to help and, instead, he turns a blind eye and chooses not to do so. In either case, the person is called "*chotei*" (a sinner). We can see just how important davening for others is – literally a matter of life and death for the one responsible for doing the davening – from another case that's brought in the gemara.

AFRIKA TIKKUN TEACHES KIDS THE VALUE OF HARD WORK AND MONEY



Young people in Afrika Tikkun's Child and Youth Development (CYD) Programme learn, from an early age, that money, objects, and hard work all have value. As an organisation committed to helping young people become economically empowered, children are taught the basics of money, including earning it, saving it, spending it and investing it.

Afrika Tikkun's CYD Programm is a 5 pillar-based strategy, built on a Resilience and Positive Youth Development theoretical framework that builds the competence, character, and compassion of young people. One component of the programme explores issues of money, career development, entrepreneurship and work skills.

Within this module, younger children are taught the basics of money such as the difference between needs and wants, while the older kids are taught about equal pay, personal debt, investments, credits, budgeting and savings. This is

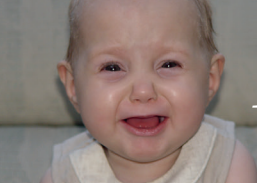
all in an effort to ensure young people have the necessary information to make sensible financial decisions and a plan for a career and a stable future.

To support the learnt concepts around money and to demonstrate how they manifest in real life, each of Afrika Tikkun's community centres also conducts a CYD Career Day. This informs young people about post-secondary school options and opportunities, and also connects them with inspiring professionals and entrepreneurs.

To help realise Afrika Tikkun's vision of youth economic empowerment, visit www.afrikatikkun.org



Afrika Tikkun
Developing Young People
from Cradle to Career



DROPPING THE BALL

The gemara in masechta Makkos discusses the case of a person who killed someone accidentally, and who must run to one of the *irei miklat* (cities of refuge) in order to escape from the relatives of the deceased, who are permitted to kill him if they find him outside of the boundary of one of these cities. Regarding such a person, the Torah teaches⁵, "... in the *ir miklat* he must dwell until the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) dies." Our Sages teach⁶ that the mothers of the Kohanim Gedolim (High Priests) would supply food and clothing to those exiled to the *ir miklat* in order to make them very comfortable in the strange surroundings so that these people should daven that their sons, the Kohanim Gedolim, should not die, because it was the responsibility of the Kohanim Gedolim to ask for *rachamim* for their generation, and they didn't ask for it. It seems to be that the only way for an accidental death such as this to take place was if the Kohen Gadol wasn't doing what he was supposed to be doing: davening for the generation to prevent any misfortunes from taking place.

The Levush comments on the above cited verse and elaborates on it: Because he [the Kohen Gadol] did not daven that there should not occur this accident (ie the one that resulted in someone dying) in Israel in his lifetime, therefore, this mishap came about, and so the Torah obligates this person (who caused the accidental death) to dwell in the *ir miklat* until the death of the Kohen Gadol. This person who must dwell in the *ir miklat* is pained because he is not able to return to dwell in his own home the entire time that the Kohen Gadol is alive, and, as a result of this, he will (naturally) daven that the Kohen Gadol should die (as the Kohen Gadol's death will allow him to return home), and (rather amazingly) this person's prayer will be accepted, with the result being that the Kohen Gadol will be punished *middah keneged middah* (measure for measure; ie in kind): because he did not daven (for *rachamim* for the generation – that there should be no acciden-

tal deaths), he will die *shelo b'zmano* (not at the time he was supposed to) as a result of the tefilla of this one (the man dwelling in the *ir miklat*), and another person will be appointed in his place (to serve as the Kohen Gadol), someone who will daven for *rachamim* for the generation as the Kohen Gadol is meant to do.

From this explanation, we see something truly astounding: that there not only exists a concern that this person who accidentally killed someone will daven that the Kohen Gadol will die, but that the Torah actually wants for this to happen, and even causes it to happen (ie by putting this person, who killed someone by accident, in a difficult and unpleasant situation from which he will want to get out of) in order to remove the Kohen Gadol from his position and have appointed in his place another, more suitable person, who will feel the pain of the generation and daven for them and, as a consequence, there will not be any such misfortunes in Israel.

MAKING IT HABIT

It's implicit from our Sages that recognising the plight of others and davening for them was something that the Jewish people were accustomed to doing from the earliest of times, which they derive from the following teaching of our Sages⁷: It was taught regarding a tree that sheds its fruits (ie a sick tree), dye it with red paint. What sort of remedy is this? How will staining the tree with red paint manage to heal it from whatever ails it? They did this so that men who passed by that tree would be sure to see it, take note of the fact that the tree was sick, and ask for *rachamim* on its behalf, that it should be healed. And this is learned from none other than: the *metzora*, who, as we previously described, needs to announce his pain to the masses in order that they will ask for *rachamim* for him. So we see that if it was the ordinary habit by the Jewish people that someone should see a sick tree and ask for *rachamim* for it, then they certainly would have done so

when they became aware of a person who was in pain!

So we have to take a moment to consider whether we are doing everything that we can in this regard. When we hear about someone who is having a difficult time, whatever it may be, do we take a moment to daven for him? When we travel in the street and we see a person sitting in a wheelchair or some other such situation of a person living in pain, we should accustom ourselves that there should immediately pour forth from us a short *tefillah* on behalf of this person.

When we hear about someone who is sick, do we pay any attention to it? Do we make note of the name so that we can daven for that person? When *tehillim* are said after davening, do we make the time to stay or do we run out because we have to get to work or someplace else that's "more important"? Who knows how many souls will claim against us in Heaven for failing to daven for them?

We need to open our eyes and become better at recognising sources of pain for others. For example, when we pass children in the street who are clearly behaving inappropriately, in a way that doesn't bring *nachas* to their Creator, do we recognise how much pain that there must be for their parents, how much pain that there must be for their Creator? We need to take a moment, pause, and daven a short *tefillah* that they will change their behaviour. We need to become accustomed to doing so – to being aware of and taking note of the people and circumstances around us, their troubles and pains, and to calling out constantly to Hashem, Who is always close to us, ready, willing, and able to help, and pouring out heartfelt words of *tefillah* to Him. **■**

¹Vayikra 13:45

²Moed Kattan 5a; Shabbos 67a

³Brachos 12b

⁴I Shmuel 12:23

⁵Bamidbar 35:28

⁶Makkos 11a

⁷Shabbos 67a

Adapted from Tiferes Shimshon al HaTorah, Parshas Tazria