

Prayer 3: How Can I Represent Cows? I Eat Them!

So far, we have seen that prayer is part of our way of communicating with the Creator. In addition, we have begun to understand the significance of our encounter with Him. Our link to the Creator, the One who created everything and who gives life to everything, connects me to the source of the energy of life, it gives me positive energies, and it enhances my life here in this world.

And now we come to the next question. Fine, great – we, human beings, have been privileged to have the wonderful power of speech, we are able to express our thoughts and our emotions to everybody else. It is clear that we are also able to "speak" (that is, pray) to the Creator.

However: What about all the other parts of the world, those which have not been granted the wonderful ability to define concepts and express their thoughts? Do they have a need for prayer? Do they have any way to "speak" to the Creator? What about the animals? Or the plants? What about the fish in the sea? The rocks and the earth itself? Do any of these entities have a need for this thing called prayer? Are they involved in prayer in any way? Is there any reason for them to need the ability to speak to their Creator?

Well, the answer is that the same principle applies to them and to humanity. Since we understand that the world was created out of nothing, it is perfectly clear that if the Creator ever decides to retake possession of what He placed into the creatures which allows them to exist, the creatures will once again return to being "nothing." Thus, every single creature must at all times maintain close contact with the Creator. Otherwise, if there is no contact, where will it get the energy to continue to exist!?

But this idea presents us with a very serious problem.

None of the other creatures can speak. Exactly how can they maintain contact with the One who Created them? We humans can pick up our "smartphones" whenever we want to (we can start to pray) and speak to the Creator whenever we have a need to do so. But what about the rest of the world? What can it do?

And now I must share with you yet another secret which the nation of Israel has closely guarded throughout all history. Let me start with a very important note. Prof. Albert Einstein, who developed the theory of relativity, was asked how he can be sure that all the physical laws which exist here on earth remain valid and precise on other planets beyond the earth. (The ancient philosophers indeed thought that there are two different sets of physical rules.) Prof. Einstein replied that his answer to this is based on a belief in a single God.

In the same way, based on our faith in one God who created the entire universe and everything that we see in our world, we can begin to understand the link between the various parts of the world. Here is a remarkable passage from the works of Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook that describes his approach:

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Man stands and asks himself what need there is for the many different types of activity in the world and for the huge variety of creatures.

The dormant lifestyle of the mineral realm (no stone will ever display life or awareness...) represents the most rudimentary level of the spark of light which begins to shine in the world of vegetation, where it is divided into hundreds of thousands of different lines, each one unique. These lines form the "temple" of life, where we encounter life full of joy, reaching all the way up to the epitome of the creatures of the world – mankind! However, the very essence of man's life is merely a part of huge waves in the sea, which move back and forth based on the forces of the reality of life... If you want to ask how you can speak, smell, feel, see, understand, and have emotions – know that all life, including all the lower forms of creation which preceded mankind, provides you with an abundance that comprises your existence.

No single tiny point is superfluous – every intermediate level is necessary, and it all has a role to play. This includes you and everything at a lower level than you. You are linked to and rise up with everything that is beyond your understanding and is at a higher level than you are."

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The entire world, with all of its components and subsystems, is a "single living system," as Prof. Einstein implied. Every element receives something from the levels below it and passes it on to the higher levels.

Since "there is no soul which is disconnected and alone in creation, but everything is weaved into one huge tapestry," the prayers of mankind are not only an expression of an inner thirst for contact between the individual and the Creator. Rather, prayer gathers within it the yearning of the entire creation to return to its source. While for most of the world the need and the desire for a link to the Divine is expressed by silence, we, human beings who can talk, act as messengers for the cow, the fish, the stones, and the water. Some of these elements are literally incorporated into our bodies and provide us with our life force. And we express the natural desires of all the other things, even those which we do not eat.

One question remains to be answered: Why is there such suffering in the world? Why is so much lacking, such that prayers are necessary?

More on this in our next session.