

My Soul Thirsts for You

Based on a Naaleh.com class by Dr. Esther Shkop

David Hamelech wrote Tehilim, Chapter 63 when he was on the run from Shaul Hamelch, in the Judean desert. The last place he visited was Nov, a city of refuge populated by *kohanim* bordering the desert. *Kohanim* couldn't inherit arable land or engage in agriculture so they served the people as teachers, religious leaders and advisors. David found refuge in the town of Nov, but knew he was endangering the people, so he left quickly. A band of approximately 400 men gathered around him. Shaul advanced after David. On the way, Shaul stopped off in Nov and murdered every inhabitant because they had offered David food and water. He wanted to make an example of them so that nobody would dare offer David help again. David sends his family away and he too eventually seeks refuge in Moav.

In this particular *mizmor* he feels far away from Hashem and his people. He is in physical and spiritual exile as well. In the very opening he addresses Hashem as *Elokim*, an expression of judgement. "I seek You. My soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You, in an arid and thirsty land, without water." *Ashachareka* comes from the root word *shachar* which is dawn. As the night wanes, he hopes for dawn with a certainty knowing the sun will soon rise in the east. *Ayef* usually means tired. In this case it connotes exhaustion and lacking all resources both physical and spiritual as water is the symbol of Torah. David and his family find temporary shelter in Moav among an immoral nation. He really can't feel safe at all among Israel's age-old

enemies. The dryness of the land he describes is simply symbolic of his arid emotional and spiritual state. He feels empty of Torah, without anything that would give him succor and encouragement.

"*Ken bakadosh chaziticha l'rot uzecha u'kevodecha*- As I saw You in the Sanctuary, [so do I long] to see Your strength and Your glory." I once saw a prophetic vision of You when I was in the *Mishkan* and felt Your presence and saw your strength and glory. Rav Hirsh says, David saw the *aron kodesh*, which represented Hashem's presence in our midst, being carried to battle. He saw the shulchan upon which the 12 loaves were brought every week which represented material satiety. He saw the menorah which symbolized wisdom and all the flames pointing towards the middle which represented the light of Hashem that we can see through the *Torah*. Rav Hirsh explains, David is recalling what it was like to be at the *Mishkan* and to experience that incredible feeling of one's soul departing one's body.

"Your kindness is palpable and better than life itself; my lips will praise you." *Seforno* doesn't interpret this as a memory of a particular event. Instead he says, I once envisioned your existence when things were good, when I experienced victory. When your hopes are fulfilled, you have a sense that someone's behind you holding you up. But at the moment, he feels utterly alone and depleted and begs and yearns for that feeling of closeness again. "Then I shall bless You in my lifetime; in Your

name I shall lift my hands." David intimates, Hashem I'm holding on to you with whatever I can. *Redak* says, David expresses his deep faith- I will hold Your name in my palm as I go out to war against my enemies, not just with supplication, but also as I hold the sword in my hand, so I hold on to my faith that you will be at my side.

"May he be dragged by the sword; they will be the portion of foxes." Rashi explains, the inciters and those that instigate hatred will bring King Shaul down. But David still has empathy for him. He knows he's being exploited by those who know how to play on his weaknesses. They are destroying the kingdom and the king and so David Hamelech curses them that the foxes should consume them.

"And may the king rejoice with Hashem; may all who swear by Him boast, for the mouth of those who speak lies will be closed." Rashi says the king here refers to David Hamelech himself as Shmuel Hanavi had already anointed him years before. David Hamelech curses the libelous people around King Shaul who have brought about this civil war as he tries to escape it, hoping for his salvation. *Seforno*, Ibn Ezra and Rav Hirsh says that it refers to King Shaul. David Hamelech refers to him as the anointed one, the one he will not try to usurp or assassinate. He begs Hashem to expose the instigators around Shaul and allow the king to heal and attain peace.

Soroh Afflicting Hagar and Sending her and Yishmael Away Part I

Based on a Naaleh.com class by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

The story of Sarah sending Hagar and her son away is a complex topic. As we know the home of Avraham and Sarah was one of loving kindness and their essence was *chesed*, so this account seems starkly contradictory. Let's begin exploring this confounding question by going back to the beginning of creation to understand what took place. As we know, before the sin of *eitz hadaat*, good and evil were totally separate.

Adam was completely good. As a result of the sin, good and evil became intertwined. This means that in this world, perfectly good doesn't exist. Corresponding to this, all evil has some good in it, otherwise it would self-destruct and disappear. The mission of mankind is to draw out the good from evil. The first generations after creation failed in this mission and continued to pursue evil. We know that the world cannot exist without the

three pillars that hold it up – *Torah*, *avodah*, and *gemilat chassadim*. And there were righteous individuals in each generation who excelled in this, notably Noach and his children who for an entire year busied themselves with *chesed* in the *teva*, *Shem v'Ever* who were the pillars of *Torah* and the *avot* who learned from them, and Shem who served Hashem as a *kohen* and was the pillar of *avodah*.

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But with Avraham and Sarah a new era began where the good had to be drawn out from the evil and the good had to be perfected. In the first period of their lives, Avraham and Sarah removed themselves from evil, discovering Hashem, and drawing others close to Him. They were also given tests to perfect themselves in *Torah*, *avodah* and *gemilat chasadim*. The first test was *Lecha lecha*, Avraham and Sarah had to leave behind all the converts to whom they had taught *Torah*. And they followed Hashem's will *I'shem shamayim*, because Hashem said so. By doing so, they brought the concept of *Torah* to a different level and perfected it.

When the daughters of Yitro went down to the well to water their flock, they were made to wait until all the shepherds had their turn. Moshe saved them and helped them get water and when they came home early, Yitro asked them why. They told him about the Egyptian and Yitro asked, "*Ayah*" -where is he; wanting to thank him. The *Midrash* says something amazing. Yitro asked- Is he a descendant of the one about whom it's written *ayeh*, referring to Sarah about whom it's written, "*Ayeh Sarah ishtecha*." This indicates an inner connection. If we look at the story of Sarah we find that the angels came to the

tent, Avraham asked Sarah to prepare food which she did and then the angels asked where she was. She prepared for the guests, but she didn't show her face. She wasn't looking for recognition or gratitude. She did what she did because Hashem wants us to do *chesed*. When Yitro sees how Moshe did such an act of *chesed* and although he is a foreigner in a strange land and now has an opportunity to ask for help in return, he doesn't show his face, he realized this must come from Sarah. Sarah perfected the art of kindness. And this makes our original question even greater. How could Sarah send away Hagar?

We know Hashem told Avraham to listen to whatever Sarah told him and when Hagar ran away from Sarah the angels told her to go back and bear her affliction. Hashem approved of what Sarah did. How do we understand it? We need to examine the story closely to discern the apex of kindness hidden within it.

Sarah was married to Avraham for about 60 years. Sixteen years had passed since Hashem promised Avraham he would give him children, but still Sarah was barren. Sarah didn't know if the promised child would be from her so felt she needed to take action. The *Midrash* says, Sarah tells Avraham, Hashem

has held me back from giving birth, we have to go further. Avraham and Sarah were tasked with building a Jewish nation which would bring the world to purpose. Hashem wanted us to deserve the good he would bestow upon us. On a spiritual level, unless we initiate we will not receive. So many years had passed and Sarah was not helped. So, she felt she had to do something. She didn't think about herself and her desire for a child but rather what Hashem wanted from her. She thought that by giving Hagar as a wife to Avraham it would be a merit for her to have children. It's not an easy situation. In fact *Mishlei* tells us, there are three things that cause trembling and there is a fourth thing that is even more unbearable and that is a maidservant that replaces her mistress. Sarah chose Hagar because she was a very great person. She agreed to be a maidservant in the house of Avraham rather than a princess in Egypt. The outcome could go in two ways. If Sarah would be helped through this, Avraham would have more children. If she wouldn't be helped, Rav Hirsh says, she had a plan that Hagar would be the biological mother of the child of Avraham, and Sarah would raise him in a way that he would be a fitting forebear of the Jewish nation.

A Hard Day's Work Part 6E

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Justin Treger

Let's assume a person's fixed income allocated to him on Rosh Hashana is \$100,000 and that he needs to put in 14 hours a day of active work in order to earn that. If we allocate 8 hours for sleeping and two hours of downtime, that leaves another 14 hours which is expected to be productive. We already established that you can't escape hard work. That means all 14 hours must be actively used to earn that \$100,000. Reduced effort results in reduced earnings, so working at 60% capacity will earn you 60 percent of what you were allocated which is \$60,000. However, if we go back to what we learned

from Rav Nechunya ben Hakana, we will note that trust transforms our productive hours. That means that if work hours are replaced with *Torah* hours, Hashem will cause the remaining work hours to be more financially productive. You'll still need 14 hours of productive time. But if you choose to allocate six of those hours to *Torah* learning, then the remaining eight hours will net you the full \$100,000.

Let's go back to the very beginning and address the question we were trying to solve. Should our friend take up the brand in question and should he put in the additional hours

needed to be successful? Or is he completely wasting his time? The answer depends on him. What would he do if he didn't take up the brand? If instead of allocating those additional hours to the brand, he would commit to two hours of fixed *Torah* learning, then there would be no benefit in taking up the brand. All the additional earnings he would've gotten, he could easily receive through the blessings his *Torah* learning would bring. Does he want to spend time running after money or dedicating time to *Torah*? He has to be real with himself and true to his commitment. The choice is in hands.