

# Two Paths to Hashem: Torah and Tefilla

S. Smiles

## 2 The Art of Jewish Prayer - R. Kirzner

Death was first decreed upon Adam after he sinned in the Garden of Eden. After Adam ate of the fruit that God forbade him to eat, God told him that he would no longer be able to live forever but would have to die. On the surface, this might appear as God's way of slapping Adam in the face. In reality, this was not the case.

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Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto explains why death became necessary at that time.<sup>14</sup> He says that God's intention in creating man and woman with a body and soul was so that the soul should elevate itself, as well as the body, during their joint sojourn on earth. Through this process, the body would receive soul-like properties. This meant that just as the soul has no physical limitations and cannot die, so would the body become immortal. This would happen only if the person allowed the soul to control the body.

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We can create a wall between the body and soul and see them as two different entities, with our soul being for spiritual pursuits and our bodies for physical ones. If we do this, we prevent the soul from totally infusing the body with its spiritual qualities. If the body is deprived of soul-like properties, it succumbs to its physical limitations. When a body is not elevated above its physical limitations, death becomes an eventuality.

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The punishment of death that Adam received was not externally imposed by God. Rather, it was a necessary consequence of what Adam did to himself. He legitimized eating as a physical activity separate from what was good for his soul by eating something God commanded him not to eat. In so doing, Adam made a statement that separated his body from his soul, making it subject to mortal limitations.

Luzzatto explains that the wall between body and soul does not make the body incapable of being affected by the soul. The body can still be elevated, but no longer to the point where it won't die.

## 6 The Juggler & The King - R. Feldman

Besides his body, man is composed of three elements called nefesh, ruach, and neshamah. The nefesh, or life force, is the externally oriented part of man, the senses and drives which connect him with the world about him. The survival drives for food, sex, shelter, and the like, which sustain the human race, have their origin in the nefesh.

12 נתיבות שמים

בגמ' סנהדרין (קה): איתא, א"ר יוחנן מברכתו של אותו רשע אתה למד מה היה בלבו, ביקש לומר שלא יהו להם בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות וכו'. וברש"י, דכתיב ויהפוך ה' אלקיך לך את הקללה לברכה, הוא היה רוצה לקללם בכך שלא יהיו בתי כנסיות ולא נתן רשות ואמר מה טובו אהליך. ובהמשך הגמ', אמר רבי אבא בר כהנא כולם חוזר לקללה חוץ מבתי כנסיות ומבתי מדרשות, שנאמר ויהפוך ה' אלקיך לך את הקללה לברכה כי אהבך ה' אלקיך, קללה ולא קללות. וברש"י, אחת מן הקללות הפך לברכה שלא חזרה לעולם, ולא כל הקללות לברכות שחזרו. ולכאורה יש להבין במאחז"ל הזה, איך אפשר לפרש ויהפוך ה' אלקיך לך את הקללה לברכה כי אהבך ה' אלקיך על ברכה אחת, דא"כ מה המשמעות המיוחדת בזה של גילוי האהבה כי אהבך ה' אלקיך, אם כל שאר הברכות חוזרו. וכן צ"כ מהו המיוחד בברכה זו של בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות שרק בזה ויהפוך ה' אלקיך לך את הקללה לברכה.

16 דברים 23

Beor\* from Pethor\* in Aram Naharaim\* to curse you. \* Of course, God did not consent to listen to Balaam, and God your Lord transformed the curse into a blessing for you, since God your Lord loves you.

The ruach, or spirit, is the internally oriented part of man, which enables him to think and feel, and gives rise to his sense of self. It is the origin of all intellectual, emotional, and social activity.

The neshamah, or supernal soul,<sup>3</sup> is man's link with the trans-physical realms of the Creation, with the spiritual world and with God; it is the source of man's craving for a relationship with God. Everyone is cognizant of his nefesh and his ruach, but not everyone is cognizant in the same natural way of his neshamah. One's awareness of his neshamah depends upon how great is his sensitivity to spiritual matters; and this sensitivity is a reflection of how much one has sanctified his life by removing materialistic strivings from it.

9 Man's free choice can be used to direct his ruach and nefesh either towards the service of God or egotistically, towards supplying himself with gratification. In the first case his ruach and nefesh will serve to express the yearnings of his neshamah. In the latter case the ruach will be reduced to satisfying the demands of self-worship — power, possession, and prestige — and the nefesh will be directed to supplying pleasurable neural stimulations, such as food, sex, and warmth.

10 אדם סובייקטיבי - ר. יוסף סובייקטיבי

The following lies at the root. Man is a finite being. He is burdened with finiteness and he is aware of it. He is simply burdened with finiteness awareness for he himself experiences his finiteness. He does not have to be told that he is a finite, restricted being. He experiences existentially and metaphysically his incompleteness and imperfection, his closeness to nothingness. He knows that his power is restricted, his knowledge nil, his veins ebbing with age. His years are numbered, successes few, frustrations many and in general his existential prospects are bleak.

It is a metaphysical and not a psychological awareness. It is a part of the greater awareness of the I-exist awareness. I exist as a living being. I exist as a finite creature. I exist as an imperfect and incomplete being.

This knowledge, even though it is metaphysical, finds its expression also in psychological experiences. It results in man being dissatisfied with himself, disenchanting with the world, in being angry with everyone including himself. It expresses itself in the old-fashioned restlessness of youth, in their disapproving of their parents and in their hating and demonstrating against authority. This knowledge of finiteness finds its expression in the loneliness and desolation of the elderly and also in the fear of the middle-age who are about to become old.

12 When you investigate all of these moods, and they are passing moods but nonetheless real, you would not discover their causal background. They go much deeper. They go back to the I-exist awareness which is both affirming and negating man. I exist, yes, affirming. At the same time, I exist as an imperfect being, as an incomplete being. All those moods, we call them psychological experiences, reflect a fundamental awareness of man of being infinitely finite. He therefore considers his existence unwarranted and unjustified.

13 דוד המלך spoke about the finite awareness, the awareness of incompleteness, of imperfection. What name did he give for that awareness? The תהלים speaks of ממעמקים קראתי ה', depth profundis. He also speaks of מן המצר קראתי יי'. What are those ממעמקים? What is המצר? What kind of straits are they? Of course, what are those depths or those straits if not the experience of finiteness or metaphysical distress which abides in man.

14 Modern man hates defeat. Particularly he hates and is horrified by the prospect of meeting with defeat in death. He hates death. This welter of frustration feelings, anxieties and fears all revolve around finiteness of man in terms of time, about his frail destiny, about the absurdity of living, about the knowledge that he is headed for the grave which puts an end to all human inspirations and visions of commitment.

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There are two paths open to frightened man, and man is a frightened being. Modern man is more frightened than man of old. Interesting is that the point of departure is the same. Yet, the paths lead to opposite objectives. The point of departure is a simple one. The finiteness awareness or as the תהלים calls ממעמקים is inextricably intertwined with the I-awareness. One has to pass through the light of the existential awareness, of the I-exist awareness in order to get to the chilling darkness of non-being. If one can stay forever in the beneficent twilight of a non-reflective matter-of-fact being without soul-searching, without meditating, without trying to equate being with knowing and without subscribing to the old idea that real is only one who knows himself to be real, if one could suspend or at least obscure the I-exist awareness, he would not have to face the fear of death of the finiteness awareness.

16 The answer is at first by avoiding the moral norm which is implied in the finite I-exist awareness. In the finite I-exist awareness there is a moral norm. My span of life is limited. I am burdened with a task which I have to accomplish during that time. I exist and I am duty-bound to utilize or take advantage of my existence to make my contribution. There is a moral norm which is intuitively implied in the I-exist awareness. I cross this world only once, and while I am on my journey through this world I should leave my mark and I should leave traces. I should accomplish something.

17

If one abandons the moral norm implied in the I-exist awareness, the awareness will be eclipsed. It will not be as overpowering. How does one abandon the moral norm? Simply by intoxication, by drunkenness? Not intoxication by alcohol or drunkenness with whiskey, but actually by intoxicating oneself by the rapturous hypnotic hedonic experience. This overpowers man and takes him out of the world of time, of introspection and anticipation. For hedonic man, time is reduced to one dimension, the present moment. It results in the loss of rationality. Hedonic man joins the hedonic society whose prime objective is to enjoy and not to be overwhelmed either by being or non-being. The hedonic society is non-reflective, non-meditating, non-introspective, non-self-appraising or self-searching. Hedonic society is more or less a democratic society in pursuit of pleasure and happiness. This democratic society invests in minimal

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There is another society because there is another path which human beings take in order to escape from the finiteness awareness, to engage in illusion and in delusion. The second path leads in the opposite direction. Instead of dimming the I-exist awareness as hedonistic man does and surrendering to sensuous rapture of living, man attempts to enhance and exalt his I-exist awareness. Man travelling along the second path tries to overcome the fear of finiteness through a big lie.

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In short, man who climbs along the second path wants to defeat his anxiety concerning death and his finiteness through setting himself up as a deity, powerful, wise and creative. The I-exist awareness expands to a larger awareness. I exist as creator, as mighty ruler, legislator and final authority. This method has been employed by all humanists, those humanists who would like to replace transcendental morality with man-made morality. It is certainly true of the marxist world outlook. To say that marxism has taken an optimistic approach to man does not suffice. They not only admire but adore man. They not only idealize man but they idolize man. By setting him up as a deity a certain idolatrous code develops there from time to time, like the cult of Lenin or Stalin or Mao Tse Tung. Basically, they try to overcome human finiteness and imperfection by idolizing themselves.

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Of course, if arrogant man wants to erase his finiteness experience through self-idolization he must shift his attention from the individual to the society, from the single person to the group, to mankind. To idolize the individual is non-sensical.

21 This arrogant society is not pleasure seeking. Not at all. On the contrary, an ascetic streak runs through this society. In the name of some doctrine or code, man-made of course, they appeal for sacrifice.

22

Now we shall examine the Jewish approach to the finiteness awareness. How do we handle it? We saw modern man use two different paths, an arrogant one and a hedonic one. יהדות objected to both solutions. יהדות asserts that the l-awareness can never be cast off, suppressed or changed by man. Man must abandon the hedonae as a big lie. He must reconcile with the finiteness awareness and abolish all traces of spiritual gluttony.

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Bamidbar - ch. 25

<sup>1</sup> Israel was staying in Shittim<sup>2</sup> when the people began to<sup>3</sup> behave immorally with the Moabite<sup>4</sup> girls. <sup>2</sup> [The girls] invited the people to their religious sacrifices, and the people ate and worshiped the [Moabite] gods. <sup>3</sup> Israel thus became involved<sup>5</sup> with Baal Peor,<sup>6</sup> and God displayed anger against Israel.<sup>7</sup>

וביאור הדברים הוא, שמהות ע"ז של פעור היה בפריצת כל הגדרים, שהרי אף עובדי ע"ז גדורים הם, וחייבים הם לכבד את אלילם ולעבודו, לעומת זאת עובדי בעל פעור אינו להם שום גדרים, אף את אלילים ביזו עד לעפר, אין לדעתם שום ערך שחיבים לכבדו ולהעריכו, ויותר מכך, המציאו אליל שכל עבודתו בכיזונו, וכל כנה שמבזין אותו יותר, יותר עובדים את הע"ז בכך, וזה שקנה בחוטמו והגיע לשיא בזוי הע"ז, הוא השיג השיא של ע"ז ז.  
ומובן היטב כח משיכתה של ע"ז זו, שהרי ענינה שהכל הפקר לאדם, ואיננו גורר בשום גדר, וודאי שיש בזה כח משיכה גדול מאד, כמו שאנו רואים שאף כזה"ז קיימת השקפת עולם כזו, ואף שביטלו יצרא דע"ז, הנה השקפה זו קיימת גם בימינו, ועוד מוסיפה כח, וכושבת לב צעירי האומות, לפרוץ כל גדרי עולם, אין שום איסור ואין שום מעצור למה שרוצים לעשות.

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והנה אומות העולם גדרו עצמן לאחר המבול מעריות ותורתו של בעלם היה בפריצת גדרי העריות, וזו היתה עצתו להכשיל ישראל בכנות מואב, וכיון שפרצו גדר עריות הביאם הדבר לפריצת כל הגדרים שבעולם ובצמדו לבעל פעור.

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וכבר ביארנו במק"א, כי עיקר שמירתו של האדם מלהתדרדר לעמקי התהום הוא במה שהוא גדור, וברגע שהוא פורץ הגדר, הרי הוא מסוכן ביותר, וזו דרכו של יצה"ר, היום אומר לו עשה כך, פורץ הוא את הגדר בדבר קטן, עד שכסוף אומר לו לך עבוד ע"ז, וזה ענין מצות בל תגרע, שגדרה תורה את האדם בתרי"ג מצות, וכשהוא גורע מן המצות, מלבד שחסרה לו מצוה זו, הנה הוא מתחיל לפרוץ הגדר, וגדר פרוץ לאו שמי גדר, וכולו כבר אינו מונע את האדם מלעוברו. וכשם ששדה גדור שנפרץ בו פרצה, חשדה כולו אינו שמור, ולא רק כנגד הפרצה, כך האדם שפרץ בגדיו, כולו אינו שמור, והוא בסכנה להתדרדר לגמרי.

27

This cult symbolized the gentile nations' entire philosophy: "You live in order to satisfy your animalistic desires. You have no reason to feel inhibited, not even before your gods!" Their doctrine of absolute shamelessness is diametrically opposed to the Torah concept of tzeniut, which derives from the constant awareness of the presence of G-d, Who created man to serve Him at all times.<sup>216\*</sup>

28

ספר הפסיקתא א. כ"ט

בעל פעור הוא המשוקץ ביותר מכל תועבות הגויים. מי עם ומי אדם שאינו מצניע דרכו בשעה שהוא עושה צרכיו? עמון ומנאב לפי שהם בושים באמותיהם והכל מוגים אותם על שעשו תועבה עם לוט אביהם רצו לכסות על בשתם עמדו והטבו קלון לכבוד אמרו הכל מותר, הכל יפה, ולא עוד אלא שאין לך פולחן גדול מזה שאדם מוער עצמו ברכים וכלפי אלהיו ועושה צרכיו, משליך צואתו מטיל מימיו ושופך דערו!  
מתוך בשתם באו עמון ומואב למולחנם, ומתוך פולחנם חוררים ובאים אל בשתם. לא מתוך בולמוס של עריות, אלא מתוך שמבקשים לכסות על ערוותם.

Avoth d'R. Nathan (B45) supplies a personal motive for this craving to lay a spell on a people he barely knew: "As long as the Israelites had not left Egypt, the various nations would consult him [as sage, seer and wizard]. Once they left Egypt, even a Hebrew serving-girl was wiser than he [having seen Divinity in action at the Red Sea]. So he began to cast a hostile evil eye on the people Israel." For this reason he repeated Balak's words when he sought the Almighty's permission for the curse: Behold the people that is come out of Egypt, and has covered the eye of the land.<sup>524</sup> The land about no longer saw him with the same admiring eye as before. He could not forgive the Hebrews for that.

30

And his was certainly a haughty temperament. As Avoth d'R. Nathan continues, when Balak's first emissaries came to Balaam, and during the night the Almighty refused him permission to curse the people Israel, in the morning he could not admit that he had been forbidden like some schoolboy. "Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak: Go to your own land, for the Lord has refused to let me go with you"<sup>525</sup>—implying, "Would I then go with you? Only with greater men would I go." Balak caught the implication: "And Balak sent once again princes, greater in number and more honorable than these."<sup>526</sup>

31

Man's external self (his body and the nefesh that animates it) has the ability to express perfectly the workings of his inner being (his ruach). His happiness is expressed by a smile, his sadness with tears, his love and awe for God by the performance of His commandments. This meshing of body and spirit is one of the inexplicable miracles of Creation. When we praise God as מפליא לעשות, "He who does wonders,"<sup>527</sup> it is in appreciation of His binding the physical with the spiritual and causing them to operate in unison.

33

If nefesh has never been subordinated to the desires of the ruach, that was because man's goals were not the correct ones. The culture of the misguided ruach — the culture of self-worship — has a fallacy built into it. The goals set by the ruach can be realized physically only if the nefesh is controlled, prepared to assist in expressing it into real life. However, the nefesh can be kept under control only if man has a valid reason and a genuine desire to do so. Herein lies perverted ruach's self-contradiction. If the goal is self-worship, what reason is there for self-control? Why should the nefesh serve the ruach? The irrefutable logic of this question leads life in the end to become a free-for-all among all the parts of man's being, where each seeks its own gratification. Under these conditions, the drives of the nefesh will of necessity triumph, as surely as Kayin triumphed over Hevel. When this happens life degenerates into chaos, for once the goals of the ruach are not maintained, nefesh causes man to follow the instincts of his body aimlessly. In short, societies which set as their goal the acquiring of wealth, fame, and glory are their own assassins; their envisaged life inevitably degenerates into an unproductive life of sensual gratification.

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The partnership of body and soul is also man's greatest source of satisfaction, for nothing is more satisfying than having one's inner and outer being working in tandem. Man is a physical being, for whom reality means physical experience; the inner experiences of the ruach lack satisfaction until they are expressed by the powers of the nefesh and take on concrete physical existence. Love must be expressed by actions, or at least expressed into words, for it to be a satisfying emotion; ideas and plans are only truly satisfying when they are expressed into the physical world. This is why creative activity — the bringing forth of an intellectual concept into physical being — is such a joy: it is a way of combining nefesh and ruach.

35

The fact that only this partnership can create the full human experience is the reason why God, in directing man how to come closer to Him, gave him mitzvos to perform. The well-directed ruach recognizes that it must subordinate itself to its neshamah and serve God, but only the concrete activity of mitzvos brings His service into the realm of the nefesh. For example, it is not enough to believe in Creation; for one's belief to be meaningful, one must act it out by abstaining from labor on Shabbos. It is not enough to know that the Exodus occurred; one must give expression to this knowledge by holding a Seder service and eating matzah during Pesach. It is not enough to love one's neighbor; one must give that love reality by expressing it by acts of kindness. Closeness to God, if it gets no farther than the neshamah and ruach, has no meaning for man; it must become part of experiential existence, which alone he perceives as real.

34

There is only one solution to this dilemma: the nefesh will co-operate with the ruach only if man ceases to make selfish gratification the goal of his life. This, in turn, can only be accomplished by encouraging the desire to serve God. Only belief in a Being outside the self, who is more worthy of man's worship than his own self, can harness the nefesh to the needs of the ruach.

28 HASHEM opened the mouth of the she-ass and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you that you struck me these three times?"

37 כי הכיתני זה שלש רגלים — That you struck me these three times. Rashi comments that this is a subtle hint to the שלש רגלים, the three pilgrimage festivals.

10 Who has counted the dust of Jacob and the number of the seed of Israel; may my soul die the death of the upright,

Rashi cites the Midrash Tanchuma to offer another explanation of this verse. In this view, the dust of Jacob refers not only to the youth but to the mitzvos which they faithfully perform. Thus, the dust of Jacob refers to all of the mitzvos connected with dust and the earth. There are so many of these that they appear innumerable; for example, the restriction on working the land with an ox and a she-ass together or on sowing the land with mixed seeds; the ashes of the red heifer; and the dust in the water for the sotah.

ומספר את רבע ישראל — And the number of the seed of Israel. The word רבע, seed, actually means copulation and so Rashi explains it: their unions, the seed which issues from their copulations (following Niddah 31a). Based on this verse, R' Abbahu teaches that Hashem tallies the copulations of Israel, awaiting the righteous who are to be born from them. Clearly this concept can only be understood with a high moral sense of the spiritual union between a Jewish man and woman. Such was beyond the capability of Balaam who treated it as an object of derision. In punishment of his disrespect, Balaam lost the sight of one eye. [See Rashi to 24:3.]

במד"ר גדר מזה וגדר מזה, אין אתה יכול לשלוט בהם שבידיהם לוחות כתובים משני עבריהם מזה ומזה הם כתובים: ויש להבין מה ענין זה לזה, ומה תוספת מעלה יש במה שכתובים משני עבריהם מאם היו כתובים רק מעבר אחד לענין זה שלא יהי ביכולת בלעם לשלוט בהם. ונראה דהנה ברש"י ומספר את רובע ישראל שהקבי"ה יושב ומונה רביעיותיהן של ישראל מתי תבוא טפה שנוול הצדיק ממנה אמר בלבו מי שהוא קדוש ומשרתיו קדושים יסתכל בדברים הללו ועל דבר זה נסמית עינו של בלעם.

ונראה שמעלה זאת בישראל שביכולתם להפוך גם את החומרות לרוחניות וטומאה

ולפי"ן מובן שמה שהלוחות כתובים משני עבריהם, היינו שהאותיות נחקקות בתוך תוכיות האבן, זה עצמו מסלק שליטת בלעם, ואם היו כתובים רק מעבר אחד והי מורה על בלתי חקיקה בתוך תוכיות האדם ולא הי נעשה האדם ודברי תורה דבר אחד, הי מקום לשליטת בלעם להפריד כנ"ל, וזה שרמו לו גדר מזה וגדר מזה: ונראה לתת סמך וטעם למנהגנו לקרות את החתן לתורה בשבת שקודם החתונה, היינו לרמוז לו שיתקשר בתורה ובכח זה יעשה מכל הדברים הגשמיים קדושה וטהרה. וד"ל:

לטהרה הכל הוא בכח התורה, מהמת שמציאות כל נברא היא בתורה, וזה הוא הרמו שבלוחות שמה ומזה הם כתובים, שלוחות האבן דומים לגוף וחומר האדם, והכתב שנחקק בהם הם דברי תורה שנחקקו בלב ישראל כמ"ש (ירמ' ל"א) נתתי את תורתו בקרבם ועל לבם אכתבנה, ונעשים הוא והם דבר אחד כמו כתב הנחקק על הלוחות, ולא כמו כתב בדיו שהדיו עם הקלף אינם נעשים דבר אחד, אלא הרכבה שכנית, אלא נעשים לגמרי אחד, וע"כ נשתנה טבעם וחומריהם לעשות הכל בסדר קדושה והבדלה לעשות מהכל רוחניות, וע"כ אי אפשר לבלעם לשלוט בהם להפריד כנ"ל כי נעשה דבר אחד:

ופירשו שכל ענין בלק ובלעם שהיו רוצים להפריד הגשמיות שלא תהא בה שום קדושה, וישראל יטלו חלק ברוחניות לבד אף לישוב תחת ענני כבוד במדבר וליוון מרוחניות המן והבאר או בעולם הגשמות לבד ולא יהי להם חלק בגשמיות, אך הכוונה האלקית היא שישראל יעשו את כל הגשמיות בקדושה, ויהפכו את הכל לקדושה, וע"כ כשראה שהקבי"ה יושב ומונה רביעיותיהן של ישראל הבין מזה שישראל עושים ג"כ מתכלית החומרות קודש עד שהשיי יושב ומסתכל בו, ע"כ כלו ענינו לייחל להשיג עוד את הפצו, וכמו שכלו ענינו מלייחל נסמית נמי עינו בפועל:

וי"ן במה"ן סוף

Principal #1: Man cannot and must not attempt to suspend the finiteness awareness for the latter is intrusion into the texture of the I-exist experience. Hence, man alone is unable to free himself of all the symptoms of that awareness, such as the feeling of loneliness, boredom, frustration, anguish or fear. Science will never solve the metaphysical problem of man. With all respect for psychiatrists, they will never heal man from the experience of מחצו קראתי י-ה. We are not speaking of psychiatric problems but of metaphysical problems that express themselves psychologically. Man is certainly incapable of defeating death. Salvation of man can come only from G-d. His compassion will heal man from the anxiety of being incomplete, finite and transient. Certainly not fear of death nor death itself can ever be eliminated by man.

Man's insecurity lies at the very root of prayer. Without man's insecurity there would be no prayer. (The latter is the response to human insecurity stemming from the ממעמקים awareness. Prayer bears witness to the unalterable fact that man is always in need. תפלה emphasizes the petitionous aspect of יהדות. The prologue and epilogue are only of secondary importance. The act of praying is a religious response to need, to the experience of צרה, of distress, existential straits, narrowness, when man feels pressed and defeated. Many passages in the תורה will confirm that the link of צרה with תפלה.

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When then is prayer meaningful? When it dawns upon man, and modern man is too foolish and is not conscious of it, that his situation is a tragic one, that he is utterly defeated, that there is no one to help him but G-d. Prayer and crisis are inextricably linked up. Of course, the question arises immediately, if the crisis awareness is indispensable for prayer, how can prayer be recited daily at times of peace and prosperity and success? How can we say רפאנו ה' ונרפא? If just this morning he came from the doctor and he gave him a thorough check-up and gave him a clean bill of health, what meaning does רפאנו have? What meaning does ברוך עלינו have if he has a rich bank account? Does it have meaning or does it not have any meaning?

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Apparently it has meaning. The insecurity of man. Now he is healthy. How he will feel the next morning he does not know. There is future and present linked up. The finiteness awareness of man lies at the root of the idea of prayer, the finiteness awareness of מן המצר and ממעמקים קראתיר ה'.

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However, prayer in יהדות is not just a recital. It is a world outlook and a way of life. The halachic term for תפלה is עבודה שלב. You must work to translate prayer into your daily life, into your being.

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Prayer signifies a consecrated life. יהדות believes that man is not cast into this world in vain. He is burdened with an assignment. Each man, in the opinion of the Almighty to contribute something to redemption, to a great redemption. In other words, a drop of the holy oil, שמן המשיח, was placed on every Jew. He is called to participate in the great march of generations who have been blazing the trail for the dawn of our history. Each Jew is the herald, the harbinger of the מלך המשיח. Each Jew is a מלך המשיח in miniature because he blazes the trail for the great מלך המשיח. Each Jew has a messianic assignment. And each Jew should think I was born for one purpose only, to serve G-d. This is the prayerful way of thinking.

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The hedonistic society as well as the tyrannical arrogant society attempt to overcome human finiteness, the ממעמקים awareness by substituting public memory for metaphysical immortality.

יהדות did not accept it. On the contrary, it considered the quest for having one's name recorded in history as sheer vanity. The individual as such can never become a historical figure. Only the covenantal community is perpetuated by history and has claim on historical immortality. The service rendered to the community is recorded. The private life of the individual is never recorded. The very moment the service is completed, history is not concerned with him anymore.

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G-d requires of man the highest of all sacrifices, genuine anonymity. G-d hates glamour and certainly vain glory. The actor appears on stage for a short while, plays his or her part humbly and disappears immediately without receiving applause. Man stands in the limelight as long as he is the משיח, anointed and consecrated to the covenantal community. The very moment he finishes his job, the light is dimmed or rather extinguished.

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רצה לבטל זאת מהם. והווי וההפוך ה' אלקיך לך את הקללה לברכה כי אהבך ה' אלקיך, היינו שתמיד יהיו להם בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות, שלעולם יהיה לישראל את כח התורה וכח התפלה, ועי"ו יהיו תמיד דבוקים בהשי"ת, אשר זהו מקור הברכה, שאין כבר מציאות שתחול עליהם קללה, שאינה אלא כאשר יהודי מטיח דעתו מהדבקות בה'. והיינו שכל הקללות נתבטלו עי"ו שבטלה הקללה שלא יהיו בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות, כי כאשר יש להם לישראל בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות והריהם דבוקים עי"ו בהשי"ת, שוב אין הקללות יכולות לחול עליהם, והר"ו תיקון לכל הקללות בשרשם ובמקורם, והכח של ויהפוך ה' אלקיך לך את הקללה לברכה כי אהבך ה' אלקיך, כח התורה וכח התפלה, הוא כח נצתי. שלעולם יהיה לישראל את כח התורה והתפלה שלא תשכח מפי זרעו, ועי"ו יהיו דבוקים בהשי"ת ולא יוכלו לחול עליהם קללות. והווי כי אהבך ה' אלקיך, שבאהבתו נתן העצה הזאת המבטלת את כל הקללות מכת הדבקות בה' שהיא מקור הברכה.

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This is exactly what משה said:

הגיד לך אדום מה טוב ומה ה' דורש ממך כי אם עשות משפט ואהבת חסד והצנע לכת עם אלקיך. It is told to you, man, what is good and what does G-d require of you, only to do justice and lovingkindness and to walk humbly with your G-d.

We must underline one word HUMBLY, and this is our answer to the ממעמקים.)