

CHAPTER 5: PRAYER □ PARAGRAPH 3

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Try to imagine *not* being able to reach out to G-d in prayer -- Heaven forbid! Just think of the sheer grief; of the dismal pitch-black, dreary loneliness, hopelessness, and earthiness of such a life!

But ever the Ultimate Benefactor that He is (see 1:2:1), G-d has indeed granted us the ability to approach Him in prayer, and to not only ask Him for spiritual fulfillment (which few of us take advantage of) but for all the worldly things we need, too.

Yet just consider the irony of prayer. For we stand in the shadows and the mire, addressing G-d Himself by name, when we engage in it. So it's important for us to recall that then; and also to understand that somehow, on a deep mystical level, we're actually being hoisted above our circumstances for a while and being allowed to have our say before Him (before being lowered down again for the tasks at hand).

In fact, these moments of rapport with G-d are reflected in some of the practical halachot (rules and rituals) of formal prayer. For we're specifically bidden not to interrupt our recitation of the Sh'mone Esrei prayer, which is the most important and potent one of them all, *because* we're standing in G-d's Presence then, and it would be "rude" to walk off (other than for dire reasons).

And that same reality explains why we're bidden to take three steps back when we complete the Sh'mone Esrei. For we're leaving G-d's presence then and are on our way "back to earth".

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