

# DAVENING

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

And HASHEM said to Moshe: 'Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aaron, and you shall say to them: "To a (dead) person he shall not become impure among his people..."' (Vayikra 21:1)

Say to the Kohanim...and you shall say to them: The Torah uses the double expression of "say" followed by "and you shall say" to caution the adults with regard to the minors. (Rashi)

The Kohanim have a strong measure of obligation ensure that their children preserve their inherent holiness. They are therefore told to say to the children. Perhaps more important than the words spoken to the children is being a living example, as it states in Avos 1:15 "Say little and do much." Or Actions speak louder than words!

Whenever a statement in Pirke' Avos is introduced with the words, "He used to say"- "Hu Haya Omer" the Rav Bartenura, explains it to mean that he said it frequently and repeatedly. It was not a one-time statement, a quotable moment at an inaugural address. Another explanation can be gleaned from the opposite of the following bizarre example: A young doctor gave an amazingly clear presentation about the dangers associated with cigarette smoking.

Everyone left the auditorium so inspired, informed, and impressed that it would be hard to imagine that anyone who witnessed the talk could ever touch one of those tobacco sticks. Yet the very next day that same doctor was spotted in the street dragging shamelessly on a cigarette.

In contradistinction, the Mishne says, "Hu Haya Omer-He used to say" it may be read more literally, "He was what he spoke!"

One of my teachers was happily skipping home on Simchas Torah with his then young family. They were singing a lively tune to the words, "Olam Haba is a gute zach...Learning Torah is a better zach..." (The next world is a good thing...Learning Torah is a better thing...) His four- year old daughter interrupted the parade and asked her father in all earnest, "Abba, what's Olam Haba-The Next World?"

He knew he had to address her question on a level she could comprehend. He asked her what the most delicious thing in the world was, thinking that if she said chocolate, then he would tell her it's tons of chocolate and if she said marshmallows then he'd tell her how many marshmallows. She gave a most surprising answer, though. "Davening-Praying!" He asked her where she had learned that. She was not yet in school and all she said was, "Mommy!"

He was then able to piece the puzzle together. Where and how had she been taught such a noble notion? After the morning rush, when all the older brothers and sisters are sent off to the bus, the mother sits with her daughter to eat some breakfast. The mother has her coffee and a honey bun and the daughter- her chocolate milk and a raisin muffin. This is a scrumptious moment.

Afterward, the mother approaches a blank wall, siddur in hand and prays. The child notices the looks of excruciatingly sublime joy on her face as she turns her heart to The Creator. The child measures, intuitively, remembering the sweetness of the breakfast goodies comparing the facial expressions when it was only honey nut cheerios and not prayerful words in her mom's mouth. Naturally she concludes one experience must be far sweeter than the other; **"Davening"**