

# PURSUE THE MOMENT

*by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch*

Immediately prior to his meeting Rivka (Rebecca), "Yitzchak (Isaac) went out to converse in the field toward evening." (Beraishis/Genesis 24:63) Rashi notes that this conversing is a reference to prayer. The Talmud (Brachos 26b) explains that the morning, afternoon, and evening prayers that we recite daily were instituted by Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov; that Yitzchak instituted the afternoon prayers is derived from this occurrence. Maharsha (1) notes that the Talmud teaches elsewhere (Yuma 28b) that Avraham prayed three times daily, as we do today. Thus, he concludes that when the Talmud stated that Yitzchak "instituted" the afternoon prayers it does not mean that he originated them; rather, he was the most zealous regarding them since the afternoon prayers correspond to his attributes. The Talmud is thereby directing us: through understanding the attributes of Yitzchak we can develop a greater appreciation of the uniqueness of the afternoon prayers and how they are supposed to impact our daily lives.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (2) explains that Yitzchak faced a challenge in life, which in some ways was more difficult than the challenges his father faced. Avraham discovered G-d through his own industry. His Divine service, flowing forth from this epiphany, was inevitably genuine. Yitzchak, however, from his youth was instructed how to properly approach G-d. His challenge was to transform the good habits he acquired in his childhood, mere external actions mimicking his righteous parents, and elevating them to sincere devotion, service of the Divine infused with his unique spirit and soul.

Afternoon is often the most difficult time to pray - the morning service can be recited before we get involved in our hectic, complicated lives and the evening prayers can wait until we are finished with our daily activities. Further frustrating the meaningfulness of the service is the reality that the weekday afternoon prayers are repetitions of those we already said in the morning. But the afternoon prayers compel us to break from our routine and remember that G-d is caring for us, attending to us, genuinely with us throughout the day. We do this by repeating words recited earlier in the day: we do not have to be the first to perform an act for it to be special; it is as special as the dedication, spirituality and meaning with which we infuse it. Indeed, even our day filled with mundane activities has great spiritual potential. Holiness can be found in everything we do. Our challenge is to be like Yitzchak: to pursue the moments of undeveloped potential and turn those activities into true acts of Divine service.

*Have a Good Shabbos!*

(1) acronym for Moreinu Harav [our teacher, the Rabbi] Shlomo Eidels of Ostroh, Poland; 1555-1632; Rosh Yeshiva/Dean and Rabbi in a number of leading communities of Poland; author of monumental commentaries on the Babylonian Talmud

(2) 1891-1954; in Michtav Me'Eliyahu, his collected writings and discourses; from England and, later, B'nai Brak, he was one of the outstanding personalities and thinkers of the Mussar movement

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