OPEN DOOR POLICY

by Rabbi Naftali Reich

They are among the most stirring words in the Torah. In vermilion verse, Moses calls upon heaven and earth to bear witness to the poetic image he is about to conjure of Hashem's awesome majesty and His special relationship with the Jewish people. The Song of Moses, which we read in this week's portion, is a stunning paean characterized by sharp rebuke but also glorious hope.

Towards the beginning of his Song, Moses inserts an enigmatic cue for the Jewish people. "As I call out the Name of Hashem, declare the greatness of our Lord!" These are very puzzling lines. Since the entire Song is a declaration of Hashem's greatness, what exactly was he asking the people to contribute? Furthermore, why does Moses calling out Hashem's Name trigger the Jewish declaration of Hashem's greatness?

Let look for a moment into the first portion of the Torah, which we will be reading in just a few weeks. After the serpent subverts Adam and Eve and causes then to be expelled from the Garden of Eden, Hashem curses him, "And you shall eat dust all the days of your life."

The commentators wonder: How severe can this curse be if it assures the serpent of a plentiful supply of food at all times? This exactly is the essence of the curse. the commentators explain. Man, who must struggle for his sustenance, is always calling out to the Creator for help and support, and as a result, man's very needs provide him with the transcendent rewards of a relationship with Him. The serpent, however, was given everything he would ever need and cast aside, without any prospect of enjoying a spiritual relationship with Hashem.

This is what Moses was saying to the Jewish people. When they hear him call out the Name of Hashem, when they realize how immensely privileged they are in that they can always call out to Hashem, that they can raise themselves up spiritually by connecting with Him, then they should declare Hashem's greatness. For surely this precious gift, the opportunity for mortal man to bond with the divine, is one of the greatest kindnesses that He has ever bestowed upon his people.

A king was very displeased with the behavior of one of his sons. Despite being warned many times, the young prince persisted in his profligate ways, and presently, the king could no longer tolerate the situation. With a heavy heart, he banished the prince to a distant province and decreed that he live the rest of his life as a commoner, without any of the privileges of royalty.

On the day the prince was to leave the palace, the king came into his room and handed him a tiny sealed box.

"Take this, my son," he said. "Although you are banished from the palace, this box may help you in times of most dire need."

Years passed. The prince managed to survive without the protective cocoon of privilege, but not with exceedingly great difficulty. In the hardest of times, however, he knew in the back of his mind that when all else failed he could break open the sealed box and use the riches it contained.

One time, he was in such a desperate situation that he had no choice but to open the box. He fully expected to find it filled with diamonds, but to his surprise, it contained a piece of paper folded over many times.

With trembling hands, he unfolded the paper and read it. Then he burst into tears. It was a letter from the king allowing the banished prince to enter the palace and present any request directly to the king. This letter, the prince realized, was a more precious gift than a boxful of the finest jewels.

In our own lives, when we stand before Hashem and pour out our hearts in prayer, it is important for us to realize that the very act of prayer is its own reward, that the relationship we form with Hashem through intense spiritual communication is far more important than many of the things for which we pray. Hopefully, during this season of hope and prayer, Hashem will grant us all long life, health, prosperity and joy. But it important to remember than even before all these blessings are delivered to our doorsteps, we have already been immeasurably enriched through the very act of prayer. Text Copyright &copy 2007 by Rabbi Naftali Reich and **Torah.org**.

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