



SHOSHANA JUDELMAN

TORAH TIDBITS CONTRIBUTOR

# Infusing Ourselves with Tefillah

When I was a kid and went to sleepaway camp, I would yearn for letters from my family and friends like a person waiting for a life-saving prescription. My thirst for connection and words of love was endless and I wanted reassurance that I had not been forgotten.

Of course, receiving letters is often dependent on writing them. The more diligent I was in writing, the more responses I got.

And so too with Hashem.

I want so badly to feel His love for me. For us.

When I daven, I know I have a better chance of connecting. A better chance at receiving His love letters. At feeling confident He's sending them.

But this year it has become increasingly challenging to voice words of love and devotion to Hashem with real emotion. Because I'm not feeling it.

The explosion of hatred for Am Yisrael, the constant barrage of words and missiles, the distortion of reality. All of it pushes me to a place of self-protection and numbness.

Of silence.

And I don't want that.

We never come to a place of healing through

silence and withdrawal. Only through open hearted sharing and expression.

But it's really hard to start the conversation.

I turn to Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch's definition of Tefillah for a way forward. In his Torah commentary on Beraishis, Rav Hirsch explains that the root of להתפלל is פלל.

The first time this word shows up in Torah is when Yosef brings his children to Yaakov Avinu to be blessed at the end of Yaakov's life. The Torah tells us that Yaakov expresses delight and wonder at having the chance to do this.

וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יוֹסֵף רְאֵה פָנַי לֹא כָלְלֹתִי וְהִנֵּה הָרָאָה אֹתִי אֱלֹהִים גַּם אֶת-זֶרְעִי;

And Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see you again, and here G-d has let me see your children as well." (Beraishis 48:11)

In his beautiful wording, Rav Hirsch explains that פלל is related to בלל which means to combine two separate physical components to the point where they become one. Like pouring instant coffee into boiling water. Once they are mixed, they merge completely to form an entirely new substance.

פלל is that in spiritual form. Meaning, taking an idea and injecting it into a thought until there is integration and transcendence.

Since להתפלל is a reflexive verb, Rav Hirsch explains, it means injecting *ourselves* with truths from Torah and Chazal, with the beautiful words of tefillah, until these concepts merge into our souls and imbue us with a new strength.

Input, not output.

Tefillah is not an outpouring of what we

currently feel but rather an infusion of the love we *want* to know.

Tefillah then becomes a vitamin. Taken every day, its cumulative effect causes a fundamental shift in our spiritual health. It becomes a source of comfort.

May Hashem bless us all with the awareness of this very powerful spiritual prescription, with the privilege to utilize it daily to build ongoing relationship with Our Creator, and with the courage to hear the words of tefillah as love letters from Him, even if spoken in our own voices.

Shabbat Shalom. ■

**Shoshana** teaches Chassidus for the Shirat David Community in Efrat as well as in Jerusalem for Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya and Shiviti Women's Institute. She is a guide in Poland with JRoots and co-leads inspirational trips to Ukraine and around Eretz Yisroel. Shoshana has also been a guide at Yad Vashem since 2014.



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