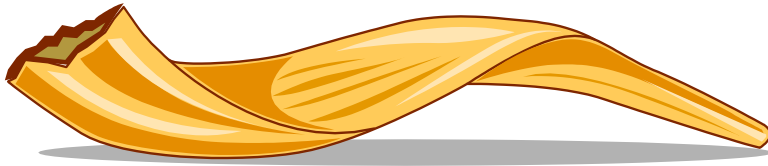


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What Can We do? A Message for 5764

Darkness has enveloped our world. Anti-Semitism is now politically correct, and no longer hidden by the thin veneer of platitudes following the murder of six and a half million of our brothers and sisters. Moslem countries, even those without any Jewish population, spew forth hatred of Judaism and of the State of Israel. Our own beloved country cannot take an unambiguous moral stance against the murderers of our people in Israel because of the rabid anti-Semitism of our State Department and the all too powerful political power of the oil lobby. Were it not so, the arch enemy of Western civilization, Saudi Arabia, would be allowed to drown in its oil, while, if only temporarily, we supplied our needs for petroleum by purchases from Russia and South America and by other energy sources such as nuclear powered generators and technologically available alternate sources such as sun, wind, and alcohol.

Church orchestrated anti-Semitism over the centuries has resulted in a modern Europe whose hatred of the Jew does not abate. France, England,

Germany blood enemies of our nation and Sweden, Norway with their minuscule Jewish communities, join in every effort to reduce the viability of the Jewish State. Our enemies from within the State of Israel, the liberal left, who foisted on us the horrors of Oslo and its two-state proposition to destroy Israel, have now modified their plan, not their mission, and propose a single "Canaanite State" devoid of Jewish "racism".

The strength of the Jewish community in America is being sapped by rampant secularism and an intermarriage rate among the non-Orthodox of 60% or more. There will not be any Jewish grandchildren from these intermarried families who at present give over Jewish identity - as little as it is - to only 30% of their progeny.

What are we to do to dispel the darkness? Rabenu Bachya (in 1040 published famous philosophical work, *חובות הלבבות*) in his commentary on Parshas Ekev, elucidates the verse of "Shma" that we recite twice daily:

ולעבדו בכל לבבכם

ובכל נפשכם [דברים י"א:יג]

(paraphrased partly) "You must know that the power of prayer is mighty. It can change nature, protect from

imminent danger, and even avert a Divine decree. Rivka's physiological infertility was cured by prayer [Beraishis 25:21].

Prayer calms the raging sea to save the seafarers [Tehilim 107:25]. Even a Divine decree announced by the prophet of Hashem Isaiah to King Chezkiyahu was reversed by the prayers of Chezkiyahu and fifteen years were added to his life. [Kings II 20:5].

The statutory service ordained by our sages (the Amida) was composed to aid us in properly expressing our prayers when petitioning Hashem. They encompass all human needs. If they are uttered "with all our heart and all our soul" they have the power to reverse natural processes and even avert a punitive decree from Hashem.

רחמנא ליבא בעי [סנהדרין ק"ו]
"Hashem wants to hear our hearts' voice". Heartfelt prayers for health (רפאנו); prosperity (ברך עלינו); silencing our enemies from within (ולמלשינים); deliverance from our

enemies (ראדהבענינו); restoration of true sovereignty in Israel (ולירושלים עירך-את צמח דוד) and the petition שמע קולנו, for all expressed and unspoken needs.

The affirmation of the efficacy of prayer is an axiom of our faith. We have the promise of Hashem that He will accept our heartfelt petitions - but only if He hears the voice of our heart and our very soul!

We hopefully await the same response that He gave to King Chezkiyahu:

“שמעתי את תפלתך ראיתי את דמעתך והנני יוסף על ימך”

“I heard your prayers because I saw your tears. I will add years to your life”

May Hashem add years of happiness and joy to our lives as we pray to Him with heartfelt sincerity for His protection in the year תשס"ד.

תהא שנת סוף ד מעתינו