



## The Silent Prayer of Confidence

Rabbi Yosef Dovid Rothbart, Rabbinic Administrator

I did not always live in Thornhill. Where I grew up crime existed and walking in the park at night was not safe. But that did not stop us as teenagers. Nothing ever happened to me, but my brother was stopped twice. He told me that there were two types of hoodlums. There was the type that walked up to you calmly and spoke quietly without any threats. This type was dangerous. Then there was the loud type. This type usually travelled in groups; swaggered so hard that you were never sure how they stayed on their feet; and when they reached someone they would loudly sneer, "You wanna fight?" This type of hoodlum is like the Chihuahuas; their bark was loud but not something to be afraid of. If you responded that you were looking for a good fight, they would run off like threatened puppies. These hoodlums were not confident with themselves and spoke loudly in an effort to convince their prey that they were really confident. When their façade was discovered, they looked for a new career.

Speaking loudly to mask a lack of confidence can occur in other areas of our life as well. A person may raise his voice when arguing a point or when haggling over a price. The *Gemara* (*Brachos* 24b) focuses on how this may manifest itself in prayer. "A person who raises his voice during prayer is someone who lacks faith, for they believe that *Hashem* will not respond to a low voice" (*Rashi*). Rav Tzadok (*Kuntres Sefer Zichronos*) explains that this is not referring to a person who thinks that *Hashem* is too far away to hear the silent voice of the pleading Jew during *Shemona Esrei* and only the loud chanting of *Kedusha* reaches Him. Rather, this is referring to the Jewish person who stands in prayer harboring doubts about the efficacy of his prayers. He wonders, after requesting the same thing day after day, that perhaps his prayers are being ignored. And he expresses this doubt with a tremendous display of loud emotion hoping that perhaps this will engender mercy and his request will be granted. But the truth is that a

Jew must believe that *Hashem* listens to each prayer and responds to the quiet prayer of each individual Jew regardless of his level of observance.

It has been pointed out that Moshe's name is not found in this *parsha*. The reason is that when Moshe *davened* that *Hashem* forgive the sin of the golden calf Moshe said, "forgive the Jewish people or erase me from Your *sefer*" (32, 32). *Rashi* explains that Moshe felt so strongly that if his entreaties were not accepted that his name should not appear in the *Torah*, for he was concerned that people would feel that he was not worthy of having his prayers accepted. Was Moshe not the most humble of people? Was Moshe really concerned what people thought of him?

Moshe was not concerned how people perceived him. The Chozeh of Lublin explains that Moshe was worried for the Jewish person who years later would wonder what the purpose of *davening* is. "I know what I have done, and I know that *Hashem* knows, so I am not worthy that my *tefillos* should be answered." And Moshe was worried that he would be used as a paradigm for this erroneous attitude. "For was Moshe, the leader of the Jewish people who received the *Torah*, not also turned away presumably because he was not worthy? Certainly then, my prayers are for naught." Therefore, Moshe pleaded that *Hashem* respond to his request, even if he was not worthy, so that many years later a Jewish person could take comfort knowing that *Hashem* responds to every *tefilla* of a Jew, whether he is worthy or not. So that each Jew, no matter what he has done throughout his life or even the previous moment, can reach to the shelf, pull down a *siddur* and without any loud fanfare quietly and confidently beseech *Hashem*, knowing that his prayers are being heard.

# For The Right Price

As the Jews of the small Polish town made their way to *shul* for *Mincha* on that *Shabbos* afternoon, they were not surprised to see the 'Pots and Pans' store down the street open for business. The owner of the store, a secular Jew, unabashedly kept his business open seven days a week. What was unusual though, was what was going on inside the store. Ivan, a gentile but far from genteel giant of a man, stood sweating profusely at the counter holding in his large hand a small copper cup. He had brought with him a few 'zlotys' to purchase the cup, knowing that it probably wasn't worth more than even one zloty. Behind the counter sat a young girl. The passersby noticed her pointing at the cup in Ivan's hand and insisting, in a quiet, calm, but adamant voice, that the price for the cup was one hundred zlotys! Ivan's face turned red with rage as he argued that the cup was only worth one zloty. The girl was unmoved by his size nor by his belligerence and did not budge. Normally the big 'bulvan' would have begun to get physical – throwing things or even attacking the merchant, but the fact that he was up against a petite young girl suppressed his instincts. Finally in utter frustration, he made his final offer. "Fine you stubborn girl, I'll give you five zlotys for it! I even know that is a ridiculous price, but that is my final offer!"

The girl, cool as a cucumber, looked him straight in the eye, and serenely shook her head and said, "I'm sorry sir, but there is nothing to talk about. My price will not even be reduced to 99 zlotys. Take it for a hundred or find another one elsewhere."

With all of the self-control he could muster, angry and frustrated, he gruffly deposited the cup back down on the counter and stormed out onto the street. And the girl – seemingly unaffected, picked up her *siddur* and devoutly began to *daven Mincha*...

But what was this obviously *charedi* but otherwise enigmatic girl doing in the store on *Shabbos*?

Her parents, owners of the store, despite their totally secular lifestyle, decided, upon moving to

an apartment located next door to a '*Bais Yaakov*' school for girls, to send their daughter there for her education. After only a short while, the girl began to observe *Torah* and *mitzvos* as she was being taught in school. Her parents were not very pleased with these developments but allowed her the freedom to live her life as she pleased.

That *Shabbos*, the parents took an opportunity to visit relatives in another town and asked their daughter to mind the store in their absence. She could not refuse their request, but at the same time was resolved not to break any *Shabbos* laws. After some deliberation, she came up with a plan – she would indeed open the store but she would make sure not to sell anything – that way she would be obeying her parents without being put into the uncomfortable position of transgressing *Shabbos*. Ivan came into the store to buy that cup several times that day, but the wise young girl, by raising the price to such a ridiculously inflated and prohibitive amount, made it impossible for any sane person to purchase it!

*Shabbos* came to an end and the girl was getting ready to close the shop when Ivan appeared once again. He stomped in, slammed a hundred zloty bill down on the counter, and grabbed the little copper cup. "I know this silly little cup is not worth anything near a hundred zlotys," he said, sounding defeated, "But I need it! I have been in this store numerous times and have noticed this cup. I have just finished renovating my house and it occurred to me that this cup would go perfectly on my new mantle above the fireplace. I've tried to convince myself to forget about it, but I simply cannot – take the hundred zlotys and we'll both be happy."

Epilogue: The parents upon their return the next day, were quite impressed with their daughter's business skills, but were even more amazed to hear of her firm resolve and her rock-solid faith in *Hashem* and commitment to *Torah*. So much so, that they made their own incredible decision – when the Jewish townsfolk passed by the store the following *Shabbos*, a new sign hung on the door – "Closed Saturdays".

## How Can H.I.T. Help You?

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# Questions from the H.I.T. HOTLINE

***I see that some people are careful to fill up the entire kiddush cup, while others are not. What is the halacha regarding this?***

The *Shulchan Aruch* in *siman* 183 discusses the qualifications of any *kos shel bracha*. In *sif beis* the *Rema* writes that a *kos shel bracha* should be full. This means that it should be sufficiently filled such that the wine is slightly higher than the lip of the *kos*. The *Mishna Berura* (9) writes that it is sufficient that the *kos* be full even if it is not overflowing. The rules that are set out for a *kos shel bracha* apply to a *kiddush* cup (*Shulchan Aruch siman* 273, 10 and *Mishna Berura* 42). That said, the requirement to fill up the entire *kos* is not an essential requirement. It is only necessary in order to fulfill the *mitzvah l'chatchila*. However, if a person does not fill up the entire *kos*, he has fulfilled the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush* as long as there is the minimum *shiur* which is a *revi'is* of wine. If a person does not have enough wine to fill a large *kos*, he may pour the wine into a smaller *kos* that contains a *revi'is* or add a small amount of water to the larger *kos* or he may even add a piece of bread (*Mishna Berura* 182, 32) to the *kos* so that the wine reaches the top.

***Can I allow my non-Jewish help to reheat chicken for my children in a microwave?***

Many *poskim* maintain that the Rabbinic *issur* of *bishul akum* would apply to a microwave and unless there is extenuating circumstances one should adhere to this position. However, once food was already cooked by a Jewish person there is no prohibition of *bishul akum*. Therefore, in your situation where the food was already prepared and it just needs reheating, it would be permissible to allow your non-Jewish help to reheat the food.

That said, it's not always a good idea to allow this. Once a non-Jew is allowed to cook in your home, they may cook their own non-kosher sandwich or cook, even kosher food, using your pots on your stove. Either of these outcomes are not allowed and would even *treif* up your *kaylim*.

**To have your question  
answered call**

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# KIDZ KORNER



# TIDBITS...

In this week's *Parsha* we are given a description of the clothing that the *kohain gadol* wore. These garments included many different colour threads. Here are some interesting facts about colours.

- Researchers say that red and yellow are the most appetite-stimulating colours. Perhaps this is why many large food chains use this colour scheme. Because these colours increase the appetite, it is not a good idea to paint your kitchen yellow if you're on a diet. On the other hand, the colour blue is the most appetite suppressing colour and using blue plates, or blue placemats or even eating inside a blue painted dining room will curb one's desire to eat.
- The first colour that a person is able to distinguish is the colour red. Infants as young as 2 weeks of age can already perceive this colour.
- Colour affects the taste of food. For example, hot chocolate tastes better in an orange or cream coloured cup than in a white or red one.

## RIDDLE



Although there were many *kohanim* in *shul* this morning, a *yisrael* was given the first *aliya*. Why was that?

Please send in your answers to [yrothbart@halachainstitute.com](mailto:yrothbart@halachainstitute.com). Any correct answer that is received by Tuesday will be entered into a raffle to win a \$10 gift certificate to Miriam's Judaica.

**LAST WEEK'S RIDDLE:** In this week's *Parsha* we are taught that a non-Jew may not serve as a judge. Can you bring a proof from *Pirkei Avos* (or from another source) as to whether a convert may be a judge?

**ANSWER:** שמעיה ואבטליון who are brought in *Perek aleph Mishna yud* were righteous converts (*Bartenura* and *Rambam, Hakdamah L'Mishneh Torah*). The *Mishna (Chagiga 16a-b)* writes regarding the many sets of *Tanaim* mentioned in the first *Perek* of *Pirkei Avos* that the first of each set was the *Nasi* and the second was the *Av Beis Din*. Accordingly, a convert can serve on a *Beis Din*. (עי' בתוי"ט)

Thank you to all those who sent in an answer to last week's riddle.

**WINNER OF LAST WEEK'S PRIZE:** Dovid Slome

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