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POINT OF VIEW

Each issue of the CJN features an article written by one of the rabbis active in the Charlotte community.
 This month:



Rabbi Murray Ezring of Temple Israel

"THE POWER OF PRAYER"

Prayer is a very important aspect of our religious life, the centrality of prayer revolves around our need to maintain a dialogue, a conversation with God. Abraham Joshua Heschel told a wonderful tale. There was a town which had every trade (bakers, shoemakers, butchers, tailors, etc.) except a watchmaker. Eventually watch after watch that belonged to the people of the town began to run either fast or slow. The watches no longer told the correct time, and therefore lost their value. After a while the townspeople stopped winding up their watches, since they felt that there was no use in doing so - everyone except one person.

After several years the watchmaker finally visited the town and was ready to fix all the watches. As he examined the mechanisms of each of the watches, he found that they had all rusted from the lack of use - everyone's except the one person who had kept winding his watch despite the fact that it did not tell the correct time. He was fortunate, the watchmaker was able to repair his watch, since the mechanism had not rusted.

I believe that prayer for us is like those watches. However, instead of giving us our perspective in time, prayer gives us our perspective and place in the world and our relationship with God. Our prayer, even when we don't feel like praying, helps to transform, if not the way we live, the way we perceive and see things.

In the Amidah, (silent devotion) which we recite three times a day,

we are reminded that we should be grateful for the miracles which occur in our lives every day, and that our very life is in God's hands. How many of us go through a day and fail to see and appreciate the miracles that surround us? How many of us can remember the last time we saw and experienced one of God's wonders in the world? If we cannot see and experience these marvelous events and creations, how can we enjoy life the way we should. Our prayer helps us keep in perspective the important aspects of life. Are we consumed by our business? Are we consumed by our search for money, by our greed, our avarice, by our search for physical perfection? Do we take the time to really enjoy life by remembering our relationship with God and noticing the signs of God's existence in the world? Do we search for the rainbows in the sky, not seeking the pot of gold that's supposed to be at the end, but discovering the wealth and richness of the wonder and awe we feel at God's marvel in the sky, the sign?

We recently read of Moses' great sin that prevented him from entering the Promised Land. The Torah tells us that Moses struck the rock to bring forth water instead of speaking to it. Rabbis have discussed this incident for centuries. I believe the best explanation can be found in Ibn Ezra, who wrote: "Ba'avur Shelo Amru Shira." According to Ibn Ezra, Moses' sin was not anger, was not condemning all Israel, was not putting himself in God's place, and was not disobeying God. He feels that Moses's sin was that neither he nor Aaron were able to sing a song or write a poem about this wonder. They showed no excitement; they showed no joy when the waters gushed forth. They took a miracle for granted and therefore they were punished. When Moses crossed the Red Sea he sang a song. That is the response that God expected again. But Moses and Aaron were unable to see the miracle. How sad a life we live when we live without wonder.

As our summer comes to a close, pray that each of us enjoy this special time we have with our families. And as we begin to prepare for Rosh Hashanah, may our first step be to concentrate on our daily prayer; to renew our conversation with God; and to rediscover the awe, wonder and beauty of God's presence in our world. ☆



SHALOM PARK AGENCIES DIRECT TELEPHONE LISTINGS

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The Charlotte Jewish News 5007 Providence Road - Charlotte, NC 28226

Office Hours
 Hours: 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM
 Phone

(voice mail after office hours)
 Office 944-6765
 FAX 704 365-4507

email: amontoni@shalomcharlotte.org

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 Amy Krakovitz Montoni-Editor

Advertising Coordinator/Sales Rep: Rita Mond, 366-6632
 Advertising Sales Reps: Pam Grossman, 841-1544 and Debby
 Dulberg, 846-8901

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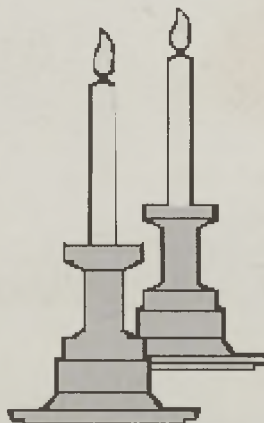
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