

Prayer is the Lock and the Key

מִיּוֹם שֶׁחָרַב בַּיִת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ נִנְעְלוּ שַׁעְרֵי תְּפִלָּה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "גַּם כִּי אֶזְעַק וְאֶשׁוּעַ שְׁתֵּם תִּפְלְתִי". וְאִף עַל פִּי שֶׁשַׁעְרֵי תְּפִלָּה נִנְעְלוּ, שַׁעְרֵי דְמָעָה לֹא נִנְעְלוּ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "שְׁמָעָה תִּפְלְתִי ה' וְשׁוֹעֲתִי הֲאִזִּינָה אֶל דְּמָעֹתַי אֶל תִּחְרָשׁ".

Since the day that the Temple was destroyed the gates of prayer have been locked, as it is said: "Even though I cry out, my prayer is blocked (Lamentations 3:8)" But the gates of tears are not locked, as it is said: "Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my pleading do not be silent at my tears (Psalm 39:13)"

(Babylonian Talmud Berachot 32b)

The Master Key To Heaven's Doors

Once, the Ba'al Shem Tov, of blessed memory, commanded Rabbi Ze'ev Kitze, of blessed memory, to learn the deep meanings behind the names of the shofar blasts, for he would be the one who called the notes on Rosh Hashanah. Rabbi Ze'ev learned the deep meanings and wrote them on a piece of paper intending to look at them during the service and he put the paper in his robe, next to his heart. When the Shofar service came, he searched for the paper everywhere but it was gone and he did not know how to focus on the deep meanings. It saddened him and, with a broken heart, he sobbed the notes in a simple way—without the deep meanings. Afterwards the Baal Shem Tov said to him: Behold, in the palace of the king there are many rooms and halls with different keys for each and every door. But, the master key is the axe with which it is possible to open all of the locks on all of the doors. The deep meanings are just like the keys. For each door there is a different deep meaning, but the master key is the broken heart. When a person is truly heartbroken before the blessed Name, that person can enter every door in the palace of the king who is king of all kings, the blessed Holy One.

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