

BEYOND CALCULATION

While a worker has to perform his tasks to earn his keep, and a tenant has to pay rent to keep a roof over his head, a child receives his sustenance simply because of his father's love. Similarly, when coming to pray, we can rely on Hashem's constant care, even when he may have little merit to show for himself.

The words that conclude the *Avinu Malkeinu* prayer capture the essence of this approach to Hashem: "*Be gracious with us and answer us, though we may have no worthy deeds; treat us with charity and kindness, and save us.*" This faithful reliance upon our Father creates the merit that awakens His desire to care for His children – to sustain the constant miracles that flow into our lives and enable us to function.

When person approaches an employer as one who has labored and thus deserves his pay, his performance is measured and his pay is precisely determined. In contrast, the constant, life-sustaining bounty a father provides is of such magnitude that the child realizes he can never "earn" it. There is no merit great enough to earn that which is priceless. Therefore, the child comes to the father without a claim, relying on his father's love. When one approaches Hashem as a "Father," the prayers that emanate come from deep within.

The portrayal of Hashem as the loving Father is, in fact, a central theme of the entire period encompassing the *Days of Awe*. When we pray we come before Hashem and plead, "as a father has mercy on his children, so, Hashem, may You have mercy on us." On Rosh Hashanah (Yom Teruah) one recites: "Today all creatures of the world stand in judgment – whether as children of Hashem or as servants. If as children, be merciful with us as the mercy of a father for his children."

POINTS TO PONDER

The father takes care of his children out of love, not as compensation or reward.

A child cannot possibly do enough to "earn" what his father gives him. Therefore he must rely completely on his father's love as the motivation to beseech Him in prayer.

Coming to Hashem as "our father," claiming no merits by which we might believe we have earned His favor, elicits His Fatherly love for us.

Psalm 14:2 The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. (ESV)