

Afterthoughts **by Yocheved Bienenfeld**

HASHEM S'FOTAI TIFTACH U'FI YAGID T'HILATECHA

Before we begin the Shmoneh Esrei, we say the above - HaShem, open my lips and my mouth will tell Your praises. I am requesting that HaShem give me the ability to speak by opening my mouth and then I can proceed with His praises as I say the Shmoneh Esrei. Given the way I often daven, however, I think to myself that I need help in "opening my mouth" literally - in being careful in pronouncing the words and not davening the gibberish that often comes out.

In addition, these words tell me even more. If Gd is behind my opening my mouth, then what will come out will serve as a praise of Him. If I open my mouth on my own, however, and not HaShem, I can't be so sure that what will emanate from it will be praiseworthy. More likely than not, this won't be the case. Therefore, it would be best to speak only when I'm sure that it is HaShem Who is there in the opening of my mouth.

I find a hint to this idea in T'hilim 81:11. King David tells us 'I am HaShem, your Gd, who brought you up from the land of Egypt; open your mouth wide and I will fill it.' Gd is reminding us that if we follow Him, He is willing to do anything we request: "just open your mouth wide

and I will fulfill your request." Unfortunately, in that chapter of T'hilim, Gd bemoans the fact that V'LO SHAMA AMI L'KOLI - His nation did not listen to Him.

If I can be allowed to wax homiletic a bit, I learn something else from this verse. HaShem is telling us HARCHEV PICHA - open your mouth - and when you do, let VA'AMALEHU - let it be Me who fills it - anything that reflects who I Am, which will result in My praise. And a different text from King David's T'hilim tells us what the result of this will be: T'HILAT HASHEM YIDABEIR PI - My mouth will declare the praise of HaShem - if what my mouth produces is a praise of HaShem; VIVARECH KOL BASAR... - and all people shall bless His holy name forever - the result will be that it leads to all of humanity "blessing" His holy Name. Our mouths will produce a Kiddush HaShem.