

Sincere Prayer

There was once a draught in the times of the Baal Shem Tov. A fast day was proclaimed and special prayers were said in the synagogue. The Besht noticed one unlearned man among the worshippers who placed particular emphasis in the Kerias Shema upon the words, "And G-d will restrain (otzar) the heavens and there will be no rain", weeping and bawling as he recited them. When the Baal Shem Tov later asked him what his thoughts were as he exclaimed this verse so fervently, the simple man answered :

"I was beseeching G-d that he squeeze the heavens (otzar — as in atziras anovim — the squeezing of grapes) so that no rain remains above and all will fall upon the earth." It was through this very man's prayers and concentration explained the Baal Shem Tov, that the people's supplication was answered, for the blessed rains fell soon afterwards.

The Creator who divines a person's innermost thoughts, desires the service of the heart and was gratified by this simple man's intent, although confused, which had sprung from the depths of his soul. (B'er Moshe)(From: Stories of the Baal Shem Tov)