

Untie, Unlock and Break

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

The mystic Abraham Abulafia teaches that we are "tied in knots of world, year and soul, and if he unties the knots from himself, he may cleave to God above." So one understanding of prayer is as an untying.

Agnon, in his masterpiece *T'mol Shilshom (Only Yesterday)*, writes of his protagonist Isaac's prayer: "He drew out its words and repeated every single word, like a person returning in the dark of night to a dark house and examining all the keys to find which one of them will open the lock." So prayer can be an unlocking.

The Maggid of Mezeritch writes, "Every lock has a key which is fitted to it and opens it. But there are strong thieves who know how to open without keys. They break the lock ... God loves the thief who breaks open the lock — that is, the one who breaks his heart for God." So prayer can be a breaking.

The channel of prayer can be blocked. In times of joy, sorrow, fear or deep meditation, we can untie, unlock, break — we can pray. Suddenly what seemed impossible becomes real and we feel that we are not alone.