

## Kol HaRav

The ancient priests of Israel, the Kohanim, were forbidden to attend to the dead or the dying. Isn't this a rather puzzling instruction? We would expect the opposite. When there is a death in the community, the rabbi is among the first we call for help. Why were priests not permitted to attend to the dead? A Hasidic rebbe of the 18th century answered: In the presence of death, one is filled with rage and bitterness. The priest is Oved Hashem, the servant of God, the embodiment of God's love and care. One so charged cannot carry out his calling with a heart full of anger. Rage and bitterness disqualify him. Only one free of anger may lead and teach the Jewish people. Jewish discourse today, like civil discourse, is filled with such rage and harsh anger. The Right accuses the Left of naiveté and disloyalty. The Left charges the Right with moral hypocrisy. The Left accuses the Right of senseless chauvinism and racism. The Right accuses the Left of treason. Combat flares up, of all places, at the Western Wall. As the rhetoric rises, one hears the same cry from every side: Enemy! Destroyer! Traitor! Purveyor of Fake News!

In the imagination of the Talmud, God prays each morning. And what, the Talmud asks, does God pray? "May it be My will that My love may suppress My anger, and that My love may prevail over My other attributes, so that I may deal lovingly with My children." So may it be for us.