

I dared not accept the thought that I would see your face, and here G-d has shown me even your offspring. (48:11)

Yaakov *Avinu* is overjoyed as he shares his innermost feelings with his long lost son, Yosef. For twenty-two years he had mourned a son who supposedly had been mauled to death by a wild animal. Little did he dream of ever seeing Yosef again. Now, not only does Yosef stand before him, but even Yosef's children are there waiting for his blessing. *Lo pilalti* – “I dared not accept/I dared not dream”; after all, it was impossible. Yosef was dead! What is there to dream about? In this vein, *pilalti* means resignation, a lack of acceptance, an unwillingness to hope, to dream. The Patriarch was resigned to a life without Yosef – and surely without his children. Now, he expresses his gratitude to Hashem.

Horav Shlomo Levinstein, Shlita, suggests that *pilalti* maintains its relationship with the word *tefillah*, prayer. Yaakov is expressing his incredulity over seeing not only Yosef, but his children as well. This occurred despite *lo pilalti*; “I did not pray.” He was so consumed with grief, so enveloped with mourning, that he never thought about praying. Why? Yosef was dead! For what could he have prayed? Nonetheless, Hashem was so good to him. Despite his *lo pilalti*, lack of prayer, Hashem “listened” and sent a dual salvation – Yosef and his children!

The world was established on the principle that prayer is effective. Not only is it effective, but, without it, one simply will not see his requests answered. Heavenly bounty does not simply appear from nowhere without a formal request on the part of man. Hashem wants to hear from us. The vehicle for achieving this relationship, our medium of conversation with Hashem, is prayer. This idea is underscored by *Rashi* in his commentary to *Bereishis* 2:5.

Rashi teaches that plant life had already been created, but it was waiting beneath the surface for the creation of Adam, who would recognize the utility of rain and its critical importance for crop production. As long as man was not present to work the soil, acknowledge and appreciate the gift of rain, the crops remained beneath the surface in their potential for growth. When Adam was created, he prayed and was answered. Hashem provides for the needs of man, but man must request them by using the vehicle of prayer as his means of communication. Prayer is our conversation with G-d. We pray; Hashem responds. We are unaware of the magnitude of the wealth of spiritual and material bounty that is reserved for us, and, if we do not pray, we may never know what we are neglecting

Yaakov *Avinu* realized the tremendous chesed that Hashem performed for him. He did not pray because he did not know for what to pray. Hashem knew this, and granted him the wonderful gift of a long-lost son and grandsons. At the *bar-mitzvah* of his grandson, **Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl**, expressed a similar feeling of gratitude. He began by remembering the almost idyllic life he had experienced as a *yeshivah* student in the *Novaradoker Yeshivah* in Biyalastok, Poland.

"We were sitting and learning – not bothering a soul. We kept to ourselves. Our only life, our only care, was Torah study. The Communists thought otherwise. They decided that we were a dangerous threat to the world. Without warning, and without due process, we were herded into a train bound for Siberia. After days of travel under the most inhumane conditions, with no concern for our physical needs, we arrived in Siberia. The cold was bitter, and what little clothing we had was hardly sufficient to keep us warm. Added to this was the news that we had been given a twenty-five year sentence at hard labor. This punishment was meted out to enemies of the state.

"Hard labor in Russian parlance meant working at back-breaking labor from early in the morning until late at night, outside in the bitter cold, under the watchful eyes of sadistic guards who looked for every opportunity to "punish" offenders who were slacking off on their job. There was no hope of escape. In his "welcoming address," the labor camp's supervisor shared with us that no one had ever escaped from Siberia. Indeed, where would he go in the frozen tundra?

"Confronting such miserable conditions, the only prayer that coursed through my mind was to ask Hashem for a piece of bread, or at least the privilege of burial in a Jewish cemetery. I was beyond hope. There was nothing else for which to pray. Anything else was absolutely unrealistic. We were all going to die here.

"If someone would have informed me that, sixty-five years later, I would be standing proudly and speaking at my grandson's *Bar-mitzvah*, I would have looked at him as if he had lost his mind. Indeed, I have been blessed with a large family, with *simchos*, joyous occasions, on a regular basis. I never dreamed that such experiences would be a part of my life.

"I now understand David *Hamelech's* prayer in *Sefer Tehillim* 22:2, *Rachok m'yeshuasi divrei shaagasi*, which is usually translated as, 'Why so far from saving me; from the words of my roar?'

"Simply, this means that a person requests twenty thousand dollars and, in the end, receives only one dollar. Now, I think the *pshat*, interpretation, of the *pasuk* should be just the opposite. I asked Hashem that He at least provide me with a Jewish burial. In the end, He gave me so much more than I had asked for. My salvation far exceeded my request!"