

So Moshe, servant of Hashem, died there. (34:5)

The *Talmud Kiddushin* 22a states that before an *eved Ivri*, Hebrew bondsman, can have his ear bored with an awl, so that he be allowed to continue his servitude beyond the normal six years, he must twice say the required words, “I love my master, my wife, and my children. I shall not go free!” Since the vernacular in the Torah is, *V'im amor yomar ha'eved*, “But if the bondsman shall say” (*Shemos* 21:5), the words, *amor yomar*, imply that he says this twice. In his commentary to the *Talmud*, **Horav Elchanon Wasserman, zl**, (*Kovetz Shiurim*) cites the words of the *Midrash* which reveal to us the text of the prayer of Moshe *Rabbeinu* when he petitioned Hashem to allow him to gain entry into *Eretz Yisrael*. He said, *Ahavti es Adoni*, “I love: my Master, Hashem; *es ishti*, my wife; the Torah; *v'es bonai*, and my children, *Klal Yisrael*.” *Lo eitzei chofshi*, “I shall not go free! Is it possible that, with all of the love that I have for Hashem, the Torah and the Jewish People, I will not be allowed to leave the wilderness for freedom in *Eretz Yisrael*?”

Hashem's response was: *Al tosef dabeir eilai od badavar hazeh*, “Do not continue to speak to me about this thing” (*Devarim* 3:26). Why did Hashem use the words, *al tosif*, “Do not continue,” as a response? What was there about continuing/repeating his plea, that would make a difference? *Rav* Elchanan quotes his *Rebbe*, **Horav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl**, who quoted the *Maharil Diskin, zl*, who posits that, consistent with *Chazal's* statement requiring the *eved Ivri* to repeat himself, had Moshe repeated his plea, Hashem would have been “compelled” to listen to him and allow him entry into *Eretz Yisrael*. Hence, Hashem said, *Al tosif* – “No more.”

We are being taught a powerful lesson regarding the efficacy of prayer. One is permitted to “negotiate” with Hashem, to arbitrate his petition in such a manner that he presents reason for justifying his demand. To put it in popular vernacular, it is almost like “cutting a deal.” Hashem, I know that I probably do not deserve Your forgiveness – again – but, if You will accept my prayers this one more time, I promise to be worthy of Your forbearance. I will *daven* better – learn better – observe *mitzvos* better. I will better every aspect of myself. Just, please, give me this one chance.”

If a person is truly sincere, and he sticks to his commitment, it might make the difference that he so badly needs. We are complacent in prayer. We articulate the words, go through the motions, but fail to realize that *davening* is a conversation. When a person is making a plea in his own behalf, he does not just read words from a script. He talks from the heart. He cajoles; he begs; he bargains; he makes every attempt to get his point across. If the manner of our *davening* indicates that we really do not believe in the efficiency of our prayers, why truly should they be effective? We must *daven* as if our lives depend on it – because it does!

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates the following story. A woman who resides in the Bais Yisrael neighborhood of Yerushalayim is so well-known for her total devotion to *chesed*, performing acts of loving kindness for people, that many of the seminaries bring their students to her, just to see what one woman dedicated to the singular mission of *chesed* can achieve. When queried as to how she is able to do so much and what the source of her motivation is, she gives the following

explanation.

“A number of years ago, I was diagnosed with a grave illness. The prognosis for a cure was, at best, bleak. A few months later, as I lay in the hospital listening to the doctors informing me that my chances for living were not good, and it would be best that I put my affairs in order, I burst out crying. I looked up at Hashem, Whose Presence I felt throughout my hospital room, and cried, ‘*Ribono Shel Olam*, Master of the World, who will benefit from my being buried in the ground? You will gain nothing from me if I am dead, because I will no longer be able to perform *mitzvos*. On the other hand, Hashem, if You allow me to continue living, I promise to dedicate my every waking moment to Your Name, to perform acts of loving kindness in every way possible’. Then I began to cry like I had never cried before. I could not stop, because I knew this was it. I would receive no other chance. If Hashem did not accept my plea for life, I would soon be gone. If, however, He accepted my pleading, I would hold up my end of the deal.

“Hashem returned my life to me. The doctors could not believe their eyes, as I began to improve almost daily. Two weeks later, I walked out of the hospital – and I never looked back. I have kept my end of the deal. I immediately became involved and started my own *chesed* projects. I am relentless in my work, because I know that my life depends on it.”

What an incredible story, with an even more powerful message. One may not give up – regardless of how hopeless a situation may seem. Hashem listens, but we must throw our “burdens” solely on Him. When we realize that He is the only One Who can help us out of our adverse situation, we will then pray with feeling and passion reflective of our faith in Him.