

And Eisav lifted up his voice and wept. (27:38)

The *Sefarim HaKedoshim* teach that the few drops of tears which Eisav emitted have been the source of much trouble for our people throughout the millennia. In Eisav's mind, Yaakov *Avinu* was the villain who stole his rightful blessings. He was so overwrought with pain at this perceived loss that he expressed emotion. Eisav was not an emotional person. He was a hardened criminal, but even criminals have feelings. These tears have stood against us as a prosecuting agent, condemning us and seeking reparation. While no one questions the veracity of the above statement, it still begs elucidation. We have a *halachic* mechanism in which the minority (either through *rove*, majority; or *miyut*, minority); or *bateil b'shishim*, nullification when one entity is sixty times more than its counterpart) is nullified by the majority. This is called *bitul*, nullification. Surely, our People have cried torrents of tears throughout the years. We have suffered countless travail. We have before us two sets of tears: Eisav's tears; and the tears of Yaakov's descendants. Obviously, our tears should overwhelm and obliterate his tears.

Horav Shmelke, zl, m'Nikolsburg, resolves this based upon the *halachic* axiom, *min b'mino einu bateil*, two like-tasting ingredients do not nullify one another. Thus, Eisav wept over his loss of *olam hazeh*, this world, with its materialistic and physical pleasures. We, too, weep over the pain generated as a result of the bitter exile in which we find ourselves. The physical and emotional trauma caused by our persecutors has wreaked havoc on our lives. This is why we cry. If we focus our tears on the exile of the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, on the *Bais HaMikdash* that is no longer extant, then our tears would be *b'sheino mino*, different than those of Eisav. Under such circumstances, our tears would nullify Eisav's tears.

The *dvar* Torah teaches us an important lesson: We cry for the wrong things. We cry for our personal pain. We ignore Hashem's pain. Furthermore, there is a spiritual component to everything that we do, and, likewise, for everything that we ask. We ask for a livelihood, for what purpose? So that we may live in luxury, go on vacations, keep up with the neighbors, or because we want to have more time to learn, support those in need, give our children more opportunity for spiritual growth? We could go through the gamut of requests and demonstrate that our Heavenly requests lack the spiritual contingency that makes them worthy of overcoming Eisav's tears. The message is clear: For sincere prayer to have prime efficacy, it is vital to have a spiritual focus and objective.

The following two stories are not new. One is well-known. In the past, however, the lesson gleaned from these stories was the significance of sincerity in prayer. I suggest the lesson is spirituality. In both circumstances, the individual who prayed focused on spiritual ascendancy as the goal in prayer. It was never about himself; it was always about Hashem. Perhaps this is the meaning of sincerity.

One day, a *kollel* fellow visited *Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita*. He brought along his seven year old son who obviously was going through a difficult period in his life. The child had not long before

been diagnosed with the dreaded disease and was presently in the midst of taking treatments. “*Rebbe*,” the father began, “I would like to share with the *Rav* what has just taken place concerning our son. My son was diagnosed with the dreaded disease and, as part of his treatment regimen, he was to take a few rounds of heavy chemotherapy. The side effects of the treatment are pain and nausea and eventually losing all of one’s body hair.

“My wife and I were heartbroken concerning the pain and suffering our son would experience. Our son, however, announced that if this is Hashem’s decree, he is prepared to accept the decree of Divine Strict Justice with great love. He is a *Yid*, and, like the countless *Yidden* before him, he is prepared to endure whatever Hashem sends his way. When he heard about the hair loss, however, he “lost it” and began to cry incessantly. Between the heaving and sobbing, he cried out, ‘I don’t care about my hair loss, but how can I be without my *payos*? It does not bother me that I will look weird, and that children (like myself) will stare, question and even laugh, but if this is what Hashem asks of me, what can I say? But my precious *payos* are my physical Jewish uniform. This is how a Jewish boy looks. How can I live without my *payos*?’”

The father continued describing how his son cried and prayed (like a veteran), pleading with Hashem to “leave” his *payos*. He related that his son had cried, “Hashem, I accept everything with love. My parents explained to me that every decree that comes from You is filled with the greatest love. I believe this, but please let me keep my *payos*!” I watched my son pray; I heard him plead with the Almighty. I, too, prayed that my son’s pleas should not be in vain. *Rebbe!* Look at my *yingele*. Hashem listened! Every hair on his body fell out except for his *payos*. They are as full and long as they were before he began his treatments!”

Rav Chaim called his family to join him in paying tribute to a child who had prayed with sincerity. This has always been considered the lesson of history. When a person prays sincerely from his heart, his prayers penetrate the Heavens and rise up directly to Hashem’s Throne. Certainly, this is true. Nothing can compete with – or achieve more than – sincere prayer. I think the lesson of this story, however, is something else. It demonstrates the effect of tears that are emitted for Hashem. This child cried because he wanted to keep his *payos* which represented an integral part of his Jewish appearance. This is how Jewish children in Bnei Brak looked. He wanted to maintain that appearance. So, he cried.

Horav Meir, zl, m’Premishlan was an illustrious *Chassidic* leader whom Jews from all over turned to for advice and blessing. One week, as he traveled with his small entourage, he realized that it was getting late, so that reaching home before *Shabbos* was not realistic. As a result, he made plans to stop in a nearby village where a certain *Reb* Shimon was a community leader. He would surely see to the arrangements necessary for providing hospitality for him and his students. *Reb* Shimon, the premier *baal tzedakah*, charitable benefactor, of the community was only too happy to serve the holy *Rebbe*.

The excitement in the community was palpable. It was not every day that the community was

honored to have such a distinguished guest. The *shul* was filled with all of the members of the community. *Chasid* or not, when such an illustrious Torah giant visits, it is a memorable occasion. After *davening* concluded and the *Rebbe* wished *Gut Shabbos* to the congregants, he left for *Reb* Shimon's home, where, surprisingly, it was the meal that left a lasting impression on him. *Rav* Meir recited *Kiddush* and then *Hamotzi*. He took one bite of the *challah* and declared that he had not eaten such *challah* before. Indeed, the *challah* had the flavor of *Gan Eden*. Apparently, this was not the first time that the *Rav* had tasted *Gan Eden* in the *challah*, but this was an ordinary home in an ordinary small village. Something out of the ordinary was occurring here. *Rav* Meir asked his host who had made the *challah*. *Reb* Shimon proudly replied that his wife baked the *challah* every week. "Could you find out what special ingredient she added which might have given the *challah* such an outstanding taste?" the *Rebbe* asked.

Reb Shimon asked his wife what she had done differently that week. She replied that she had not baked the *challah* that week. Apparently, an orphaned girl had knocked on the door and asked if she could help around the house in order to earn some money to live. *Reb* Shimon's wife did not really need any work done around the house. She wanted very much to help this young girl, however, so she invited her to bake *challah*, for which she would reimburse her.

The young girl, who was all of eleven years old, was summoned and asked for her *challah* recipe. She replied that she did nothing different from the way she had learned to make *challah* from her mother. She mixed the ingredients, kneaded the dough, rolled it out, braided it and then baked it in the oven. All of this was standard fare; she had added no ingredients.

The girl continued with her description of how her mother, of blessed memory, would prepare the dough. She would take the rolling pin, and during the repetitive motion of rolling out the dough, her mother would sing the tunes of *Hallel*, as is customary. As the girl described this process, she sort of slowed her speech, and, for a pensive moment, seemed distant from the *Rebbe*, as she conjured up memories of her recently departed mother. It was then that the girl added, "While I sang the songs of *Hallel*, I thought of my mother, and I could not help but cry as I braided the *challah*."

The *Rebbe* thanked the girl for her recollection and for the delicious *challah*. He then turned to those gathered around him and said, "I now know why that *challah* had the special taste of *Gan Eden*. Life is far from simple, and, to us as Jews living in *galus*, exile, the painful moments more often outnumber and outweigh the moments of joy that we experience. When a young, innocent girl, however, can transform her tears into the songs of *Hallel*, when her tears can be an accompaniment to the joy that emanates from the *Hallel* prayer, then we have experienced the taste, the unique flavor, of *Gan Eden*!"

This story teaches us that it is possible to elevate personal tears to Heavenly status when one is focused on singing Hashem's praises amidst personal adversity.