

I implored Hashem at that time. (3:23)

In the *Zera Kodesh*, the *Ropshitzer Rebbe, zl*, observes that the *pasuk* neglects to identify “that time.” Was Moshe *Rabbeinu* referring to a specific time? The *Ropshitzer* explains that this omission is by design. The Torah is teaching us a critical lesson with regard to *tefillah*, prayer. No specific time is established for petitioning Hashem. We can approach the Almighty at any time. No “appointments” are necessary. A son need not have a special time to speak with his father. (If he does, both father and son have a problem.) Hashem is our Heavenly Father, Who waits for our entreaty with a warm welcome. Even if the response is not what we are hoping for, our supplication will be heard, our emotions felt and saved. No prayer is lost; no tear is wasted.

The *Rebbe* says that a person should never say to himself, “Right now, at this moment, I do not have the lucidity to pray. I need to be in a proper presence of mind to be able to articulate my needs correctly. Later on, when I am free of some of the burdensome pressures that are overwhelming me, I will be able to *daven* like a *mentch*. This is an incorrect way of thinking. One should *daven* whenever the need arises, regardless of his frame of mind. No wrong time exists to speak to a father.

Horav Yechezkel Abramsky, zl, would *daven* to Hashem in the most natural manner, as if this were the only way he could ever accomplish or obtain anything. When he would return from praying at the *Kosel Maaravi*, he would remark in *Yiddish*, “I asked Him for this or that.” Everyone knew that “Him” was a reference to Hashem. This was his usual vernacular – He spoke with “Him.” His relationship with Hashem was very real, like a son to his father.

Rav Abramsky's Shabbos table was set with its fine linen, dishes and flatware as early as Friday morning. A student who was visiting that morning inquired why the family was preparing for *Shabbos* so early in the day. He explained that, years earlier, upon immigrating to *Eretz Yisrael*, his wife's grandfather, the venerable *Radbaz, zl*, moved to Tzfas where he maintained a *yeshivah*. He became gravely ill and the medical establishment had already despaired his returning to good health. He suddenly spoke the following: “Hashem, what is it You want of me? I study Torah all day. I authored a commentary on the *Yerushalmi* (which no one else had really achieved). If You want me to write a commentary to *Bavli*, You already have so many other commentaries that cover the gamut of *Bavli*.” As soon as he concluded his short “request” of Hashem, he closed his eyes and appeared to be drifting off into a deep sleep. A few minutes passed, and he opened his eyes and spoke. He turned to his *rebbezin* and made a request, “Please, I ask that every Friday morning when I return home from *Shacharis* that the *Shabbos* table should already be set. I was told by ‘Heaven’ that my cure is dependent upon this.” *Rav Abramsky* said, “In deference to the *Zaide's* custom, we, too, set our table early.” (The purpose of redacting this story is to show how the *Radbaz* prayed to Hashem. It was his conversation with the Almighty.)

Rav Abramsky would walk over to the *Kosel* and place his face close to it and speak to the stones. His close students wanted to know what their saintly *Rebbe* said to the stones. As the *Rav* was lost

in his conversation with the stones, they carefully moved closer in order to listen. This is what they heard: “*Ribbono shel olam*,” he wept, “You are the greatest *Rebbe* of all. How do I know this? It is written, *Hamelameid Torah l’Amo Yisrael*. ‘How will *Moshiach* know Torah?’ Where will he study it? Not in Brisk, Ger, Porat Yosef or Ponovez. Where then? Apparently, You, Hashem will teach him. So I ask, ‘If you can teach Torah to *Moshiach Tziddkeinu*, what would be if you would learn Torah with me?’” This is how *Rav Abramsky* prayed to Hashem! He conversed with the Almighty like a son to his father.

Raising good, G-d-fearing, Torah-abiding children does not just *happen*. It requires much vigilance, hard work, and, most of all, prayer, or, as the *Brisker Rav* was wont to say: *Tehillim mit treren*, “*Tehillim* accompanied by copious weeping.” He observed that his father, *Horav Chaim, zl*, cried for him even after he was a *Rosh Yeshivah*! Indeed, *Rav Chaim’s* father, the *Bais HaLevi, zl*, davened for his son even after he was *Rav* in Brisk.

Likewise, someone once asked the saintly *Chasam Sofer* how he merited to have such a holy son as the *Ksav Sofer*. The *Chasam Sofer* removed his hat, turned it over and said, “I filled this hat with tears to merit having such a precious son.”

We all want good children – on our terms. We check off all the boxes on the parenting guides to make certain that we do everything correctly. What about *tefillah*, prayer? Perhaps, because it is not included in all the parenting guidebooks, it is not necessary. We maintain otherwise. It is our first and only line of defense. Without Hashem’s participation and blessing, the guidebooks are meaningless. If we do not petition His blessing, then we are failing our children as parents.

Rabbeinu Bachya (*Shemos* 19:3) writes: “It is befitting for a woman to *daven* to Hashem following the lighting of candles, for this is a *mitzvah* that helps her very much. This is the time in which she should *daven* that Hashem grant her children who are enlightened with Torah.” Parents once came to one of the *gedolim* and cried concerning their son’s spiritual status, which had dwindled terribly. Sadly, he had deviated from the Torah way. What could they do? The *gadol* replied that the mother should light and accept *Shabbos* upon herself thirty minutes prior to candle-lighting time. This should be followed by intense prayer from the depth of her heart, with tears and pleading to Hashem. Their child would return. He did. *Horav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro, zl*, said that whenever he had a difficulty or a problem with a child, the first thing he did was speak to Hashem and ask for His help and guidance. He asked that Hashem give him sound counsel on how to speak with his child effectively in addressing the different situations that they faced.

As I wrote in the beginning: Nothing just happens. We must ask – nay, beg – for it. Only then can we hope to merit Hashem’s blessing.