

Hashem spoke to Moshe on that very day. (32:48)

The phrase, *b'etzem hayom hazeh*, on that very day, appears three times in the Torah, each time indicating that large masses of people were prepared to impede Hashem's decree from being carried out. Thus, to demonstrate that He was in charge – and not the people – Hashem ordered that it be done in the middle of the day, in plain view of everyone. Let them see that no one – absolutely no one – has the power to prevent Hashem's word from being carried out. The first time was when the people of the *dor ha'mabul* were bent on preventing Noach from entering the *Teivah*, Ark, followed by when the Egyptians foolishly thought that they could halt *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the Exodus, followed by this situation.

The first two instances were cases of *reshaim*, wicked people, thinking that they could impede Hashem's will from being carried out. Here, it was a distraught Jewish nation seeing that their beloved leader was to be taken from them. Their love for Moshe *Rabbeinu* was so overwhelming that they thought they could prevent his death by preventing him from ascending *Har Navo*. Hashem instructed Moshe to go up the mountain publicly, as an indication that no one could keep Hashem's word from achieving fruition.

When the *Brisker Rav, zl*, was gravely ill with his final illness, all of the *yeshivos* and *Kollelim* increased their prayers for him. Many held special prayer sessions to beseech the Almighty, to petition the Heavenly Tribunal to grant continued life to this giant of Torah. *Yeshivas Mir* held a special prayer gathering in the *zchus*, merit, of the *Rav*. Prior to the recitation of *Tehillim*, the venerable *Rosh Yeshivah, Horav Chaim Shmuelvitz, zl*, ascended to the podium to address the assemblage. He cited the above *Rashi*, which describes *Klal Yisrael's* desire to prevent the death of their *Rebbe*, Moshe. How could they imagine that it was within their ability to prevent death? Life and death are not in the realm of human domain. Only Hashem can grant life and decree death. Mortals are powerless in this completely spiritual dimension.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explained that Hashem has imbued *Klal Yisrael* with a unique *koach*, power: the ability to pray fervently with such sincerity and outpouring of passion that individuals are effectively able to catalyze change in a Heavenly decree. It is not as if they cause the change; Hashem is the only One Who can avert or alter a decree, He does, however, listen to *Klal Yisrael's tefillos*. Therefore, even when the situation appears hopeless, it is not. Hashem listens. Ostensibly, many factors beyond the scope of our human perception go into play, although the decision is ultimately Hashem's. Through the vehicle of sincere prayer, we can and do play an active role in ameliorating the final decision.

Rav Chaim related that a year earlier he had attended the funeral of *Horav Zaidel Samietetzky, zl*, together with the *Brisker Rav*. He had shared this *dvar Torah* with the *Rav*, who replied that he had learned a similar *p'shat*, exposition, in a passage of *Chazal* relating to Moshe's death. Hashem had instructed Moshe to ascend the mountain and die there. This indicates that Moshe's death was contingent upon his going up the mountain. Therefore, if *Klal Yisrael* had wanted, they could

have prevented his death by obstructing him from going up the mountain.

Horav Shmuel Aharon Yudelvit^z**l**, posits that Moshe was acutely aware that *Klal Yisrael* would attempt to impede him from ascending the mountain. Thus, as *Rashi* explains, rather than climb the mountain step by step, our quintessential leader made one leap and reached the summit of the mountain. Why did he do this? Was he not aware that his death was intricately connected with going up the mountain? Hashem had issued a decree. Being the ultimate *eved Hashem*, servant of G-d, he carried out Hashem's will with utmost alacrity. Knowing fully well that his flock would do everything to "keep him," he bounded up the mountain in one giant leap. He loved *Klal Yisrael*; he loved his life; but he loved Hashem more.