

Then you retreated and wept before Hashem, but Hashem would not listen to your voice and He did not hearken to you. (1:45)

Moshe *Rabbeinu* lauds *Klal Yisrael* for acknowledging their sin and repenting. Nonetheless, their sin could not be expiated, because Hashem had already taken a vow to punish them. Some decrees can be rescinded. If, however, a vow has been taken, it may not be undermined. Hashem's Name is mentioned twice in this *pasuk*: "They wept before Hashem, but Hashem would not listen." Is there a reason for reiterating to them that Hashem would not listen? In *Kol HaTzofeh*, **Horav Tzvi Hirsch Ferber, zl**, explains the reason for the apparent redundancy.

He first quotes the well-known *Chazal* which posits that all of the gates to Heaven will eventually be closed. There will be no way for our entreaties to enter up to the Most High. *Chazal* add that one set of gates will be left open: the gates of tears. If they are always open, why do we need gates altogether? What purpose do they serve? The **Kotzker Rebbe, zl**, explains that certain tears are not allowed! This applies to the tears of a fool who weeps for insignificant items which either have no special value or, at least, do not warrant weeping.

Rav Ferber observes that in previous generations our ancestors wept for such important things as a livelihood, so that they could sustain their children as they developed into *talmidei chachamim*, Torah scholars of note. They prayed for sons-in-law who would be a credit to the Jewish People. They entreated Hashem that future generations would maintain their adherence to Torah Judaism, so that when they would leave this world, they would be assured of sons and daughters and future offspring who were unequivocally committed to Torah and *mitzvah* observance.

Regrettably, times have changed, and so have the people. Today's prayers are oriented towards furthering material pursuits, physical pleasures – homes, cars, jewelry, vacations. Today's supplications reflect an inner envy on the part of the supplicant. Why should my neighbor, friend, colleague have "everything," while I have "nothing"? There is no end to the foolishness for which many of us pray. Our sense of moral, ethical and spiritual value has been so diminished due to our exposure to the vacuous society in which we live that we have forgotten how – and for what – to pray.

Rav Ferber quotes the prayer recited during *Tefillas Neilah, Merubim tzarchei Amcha*, "The needs of Your nation are many, and (but) their intellect is short," explaining it according to the above homily. He compares this to the Torah scholar who sends his young son off to school. When the boy requires school supplies, he has no problem asking his father for money. Likewise, the father will gladly part with his money for such merchandise upon which he places supreme value. If, however, his son were to "require" funds for gambling, or worse, in all likelihood he would not receive a penny from his father. So, what does the son do if he needs money to maintain an illicit lifestyle which he does not want his father to discover? He simply cries, "I need money." He does

not divulge the purpose of said money, hoping that his father will simply listen to his cries and be moved by his tears.

We act much the same way as that boy in school. We have a multitude of requests of Hashem, most of which have little or no value for an observant Jew. We cannot bring ourselves to articulate some of the foolishness which we obsess to possess. Our imaginary needs are not much different. It is one thing to ask Hashem for a livelihood; it is completely another to ask for luxuries, or more. How do we circumvent this problem? We cry. Such tears do not penetrate the Heavenly Gates.

Merubim tzarchei amcha – “The requests of Your People are indeed many” – but “their intellect is short (limited).” We have great difficulty in presenting these requests, because we know their true value; instead, we cry. These tears might ascend to Heaven, but they do not enter its portals. Our lack of intellect does not validate the foolishness of our requests.

This is the meaning of the dual mention of *Shem Shomayim*, the Name of Heaven. “The people retreated and wept before Hashem,” they cried, but alas, “Hashem would not listen to your voice.” There was nothing in their weeping which was “Hashem-related.” They did not cry because they wanted to serve Hashem. Their tears were totally unwarranted. Had they maintained a modicum of *bitachon*, trust, in the Almighty, they would never have cried. They did not cry because of Hashem – they cried because of themselves. Such tears do not have ingress to the Heavenly Gates.