

Yitzchak entreated Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren. Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by him. (25:21)

What is the significance of the fact that the Torah describes Hashem's response to Yitzchak *Avinu* using the same word which it attributes to the Patriarch's prayer? *Atirah* means to entreat. Yitzchak entreated Hashem. The Almighty did not entreat Yitzchak. Therefore, we translate the *pasuk*, "Hashem allowed Himself to be entreated by him." Could it not have used another word for "answered" or "listened"? It is almost as if Hashem responded to Yitzchak in the same manner in which Yitzchak prayed to Him.

The **Nesivos Shalom** presents the scenario of Yitzchak and Rivkah *Imeinu* praying side by side, putting it into perspective. They were up against a stone wall. Their prayers were seemingly ineffective, because the decree against their having a child was firm and unyielding. *Al pi derech ha'teva*, according to the laws of "nature," our Matriarch, Rivkah, was not going to be able to have a child. Our Patriarch, Yitzchak, was acutely aware of this. He realized that all of their *hishtadlus*, endeavoring, had been spent; the path to offspring was spiritually impeded. The situation appeared hopeless.

A Jew, however, never loses hope. Yitzchak was aware of one last, albeit difficult, approach. The *Midrash* reads the word *va'yeetar Yitzchak* as *va'yachator Yitzchak*, "And Yitzchak dug/penetrated." They compare this form of supplication to a king who wants to avail his son of a large treasure. The problem is that the monarch is in a sealed room, behind locked doors that are impenetrable. How is the prince to reach his father? There is one way: Digging beneath the ground, creating a channel whereby the prince can come up beneath the floor of the room.

The prince begins to dig his tunnel. To make things more feasible, the king begins to break the floor in his sealed room and also dig beneath the ground. The prince is digging toward his father; the king is digging toward his son. Soon they will meet and the gold treasure will be transferred.

Yitzchak was aware of this type of last ditch effort that works under even the most adverse conditions. The storm clouds are dark; the future appears bleak; hope does not seem to be on the horizon. What is a person to do – if he must receive a positive response from Hashem? What does one do if "no" is not an option? He begins to "dig," seeking an opening, making a last attempt to penetrate the Heavens, to break through the sealed gates.

Many of us have needs: physical; spiritual; emotional. Some are suffering in emotional and physical pain – with no letup in sight. There are two possible approaches: One is the tried and proven way, consisting of *teshuvah*, *tefillah*, *tzedakah*; prayer, repentance, charity, which usually invoke Hashem's merciful response. What, however, if nothing has yet worked? Do we throw up our hands and give up? Do we say, "I have tried it all: every *segulah*, every *tefillah*, every *brachah*?"

This might all be true. When all else fails, begin to dig! This is what Yitzchak *Avinu* taught us. It worked for him. Perhaps it will work for us.