

## **Fortunate are you, O Yisrael. Who is like you! O people delivered by O Hashem, the Shield of your help. (33:29)**

Our salvation is only in Hashem, Who is the Shield of our salvation. This relationship is truly unique; it is one that we must acknowledge and sustain through our tefillos. Horav Chaim Friedlander, zl, explains the nature of prayer as the medium for maintaining our closeness with Hashem and as the vehicle for catalyzing our salvation in times of need. He cites the Midrash that comments concerning Mordechai's salvation from Haman's diabolical plan to hang him on the scaffold that he had prepared for him. Suddenly, the tables were turned, and Mordechai was no longer the victim. He was dressed in the king's royal garments, paraded through the streets on the king's royal steed, led by none other than the evil Haman! The Midrash asks, "What caused Mordechai to achieve such greatness? What brought about this sudden turn of events whereby the victim became the victor?" They explain that it was because Mordechai understood fully well what was occurring and what was behind these decrees. He began to pray – and he continued praying even after the king had conferred eminence upon him. He immediately returned to his sackcloth and prayer.

Incredible! One would think that after achieving such a victory like being led through Shushan, perched on the king's royal steed and guided by the most distinguished minister in the land, Mordechai would go home and throw a Kiddush! No, instead he went back to his siddur and sat down on the ground and cried out in prayer. Why? Is this the correct response to continued salvation? After all, Hashem obviously answered his prayer. Why did he return to his sackcloth and continue to pray?

This teaches us an important principle with regard to prayer. The trials and tribulations that challenge us do not happen to stimulate us to pray. Tzarah, trouble, is not the cause, and tefillah, prayer, is not the effect. Prayer is not a medium to catalyze yeshuah, salvation. If this were the

case, once the yeshuah arrives, there would be no reason to continue praying. Mordechai did continue praying as before. Why? This indicates that tefillah is the objective (and perceived effect) catalyzed by tzarah, and the vicissitudes and troubles serve as a vehicle to arouse and inspire man to move closer to Hashem via prayer. In other words, the objective is to move closer to Hashem. The method is prayer. Prayer is the means that continues on even when the salvation has already materialized. On the contrary, now that one has experienced the closeness, he should strive to intensify and deepen it. Even when Mordechai saw a glimmer of hope, he continued praying. We, too, must be aware that Hashem wants our tefillos, prayers – always.