

I implored Hashem. (3:23)

Moshe *Rabbeinu* prayed – and prayed. He pleaded with Hashem five hundred and fifteen times to grant him access to enter *Eretz Yisrael*. It is not that Hashem did not listen. Hashem hears every prayer. Every *tefillah* pierces the Heavens. The answer is not always “Yes.” When we receive “No,” as an answer we think that Hashem did not hear the *tefillah*. He heard it, but His response is not what we want to hear. Hashem stores up the *tefillos* that, for one reason or another, carry a “no” response, and He transforms them into a “yes” for someone else. *Chazal* (*Devarim Rabbah*, *V’Zos HaBrachah*) teach, that had Moshe prayed one more time, Hashem would have allowed him to enter the Holy Land. It was not to be. Hashem had said, “No.”

In his *Bais Elokim*, the *Malbim* writes concerning the *tefillah* of *Shema Koleinu: Ki Atah shomeia tefillas kol peh*; “For You hear the prayer of each mouth.” Why do they underscore *kol peh*; “every mouth?” *Tefillah* is *avodah she’b’lev*, service of the heart. As such, we should place our emphasis on the heart – not the mouth. True, the mouth vocalizes/articulates the emotions of the heart, but the source of the prayers is the heart. The *Malbim* explains that this is the power of prayer. Despite the fact that, upon occasion, our prayers come from the mouth and not from the heart, Hashem still hears them. We might think that when one is in a rush or has much on his mind, to the point that he is unable to express his heartfelt emotions properly, such prayer might be deficient. They are in his heart – and he expresses them with his mouth, but a disconnect exists between the heart and the mouth. If the *tefillah* is sincere, if the petition that emerges from his mouth is heartfelt, but lacks his feelings – Hashem still listens. He knows what goes on in one’s heart; thus, He listens to his mouth. If Hashem “hears” such a *tefillah*, He certainly hears a prayer which one has prepared and vocalized with full *kavanah*.

This was the way our Patriarchs lived. They viewed prayer as the only way to actualize their needs. When Yaakov *Avinu* asked Yosef to promise him that he would arrange his burial in the *Me’oras Ha’Machpeilah*, he promised him the city of Shechem in return. The Patriarch refers to Shechem as the city “which I took *b’charbi u’b’kashti*; with my sword and with my bow” (*Bereishis* 48:22). *Targum Onkelos* interprets *charbi* and *kashti* as *tzlosi u’ba’usi*, “my prayer and my entreaty.” *Horav Shmuel Aharon Yudelevitz, zl* (*Meil Shmuel*), asks an obvious question: If Yaakov meant prayer and entreaty, why does the Torah not state this explicitly? Why write one word/thing and mean another?

Rav Shmuel Aharon explains that the Torah seeks to convey a powerful lesson concerning our Patriarch’s *emunah*, faith in the efficacy of *tefillah*, to the point that when he verbalized the words *charbi* and *kashti*, he meant prayer and entreaty. Yaakov knew that the only weaponry that is effective is prayer. The sword and bow are meaningless without the power of *tefillah*. Thus, the Torah underscores that while Yaakov said one thing, he actually meant and believed another. As proof of this idea, *Rav Shmuel* notes the possessive form, “my” sword, “my” bow. Why not simply write sword and bow? What is unique about his sword and his bow? Yaakov was referring to his singular weaponry: prayer.

One of the students in Yeshivas Mir, Poland, became gravely ill, with hopes for his recovery becoming slimmer by the moment. The doctors who were treating him despaired of his living more than a few more days. His mother made the trip from her home in Baranovitch to Mir to be by his side and to advocate for some treatment that would save his life. One of her relatives knew a doctor who was not among the well-known physicians in the community. He was brilliant, however, and had successfully treated patients upon whom others had given up. He was unconventional in his approach to medicine. His track record was impressive. They really had nothing to lose.

The doctor came and examined the patient. "I can help him," the doctor said. "The pill that I will give him might not work. If it does not work, it will hasten his passing under very painful circumstances." The mother was confronted with a decision to make. Was it worth gambling on a treatment for which the results could either be life-saving or devastating? She conferred with *rabbanim* who came to the consensus that they should take a chance at saving her son.

The day that treatment was commenced, the *Mashgiach*, *Horav Yechezkel Levenstein, zl*, walked into the *bais hamedrash* and spoke of the unsurpassed importance of efficiency of *tefillah*. He concluded by exhorting the students to join together in storming the Heavens on behalf of their friend and colleague. Suddenly, the doors of the *bais hamedrash* were opened as the mother of the student entered the room, walked up to the *ahron ha'kodesh*, opened its doors, and cried out to Hashem, "*Ribono shel olam!* You blessed me with a number of sons, of which I consecrated this one to a life of Torah. Why specifically do You want to take him from me?" She then broke into bitter weeping, in which she was soon joined by the others who were witnessing this heart wrenching scene. They all prayed together until they soon heard the good news that her son had taken a turn for the better.

The *Mashgiach* spoke to the student body following the successful outcome of the student's therapy. His mother's *tefillos* had made the difference. Her pleading with Hashem emanated from the depths of her heart, her *tefillos* reflected absolute sincerity. Her sincere prayers had "turned the tide."