

And he (Yitzchak) said, “Father,” and he (Avraham) said, “Here I am, my son.” (22:7)

The dialogue between Yitzchak (*Avinu*) and Avraham *Avinu* seems superfluous. What does this exchange between father and child add to the narrative? The *Melitzer Rebbe, Shlita*, explains that when a Jew is in distress, when he is undergoing a physical, emotional or spiritual hardship, all he needs to do is cry out, “*Abba, Tatte!*” The cry should emanate from the innermost recesses of his being. When one does this sincerely, Hashem responds, *Hineni*, “I am here, my son.” Furthermore, even if a Jew is unable to articulate his request properly, to convey the hardship that is overtaking and overwhelming him, the cry of *Abba* will suffice.

What a powerful thought. In *Parashas Mishpatim (Shemos 22:26)*, the Torah writes concerning the poor man who needs the collateral he gave his lender to be returned to him at night, *V'hayah ki yitzaak Eilai v'shomaati ki chanun ani*, “And it will be that if he cries out to Me, I shall listen, for I am compassionate.” When a person cries with sincerity, Hashem listens because He is a compassionate Father. As a father does not (should not) distinguish between the son who follows in his religious beliefs and the one who is wrestling with religious challenges, so, too, does Hashem not distinguish between Jews. When a Jew/child cries out, his religious persuasion does not determine Hashem’s listening quotient. He is our Heavenly Father.

Horav Mordechai Pogremansky, zl, was a brilliant *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, whose erudition was eclipsed only by his *emunah* in Hashem. *Rav Mottel* (as he was endearingly called) walked into the *bais hamedrash* in Versailles, France (following World War II where a number of Holocaust survivors had gathered), and stood before a group of young men, ranging in age from 15 to 30 years old. These men were in transit, only there to rebuild their shattered lives, either in *Eretz Yisrael* or America. He stood before them, but he was in his own little world.

Rav Mottel began to speak to Hashem, as they listened into the “conversation.” *Oy Tatte in Himmel, es iz nisht da kein ghetto, nisht da kein tatte, nisht da kein mamme, nisht da kein shtoob; nisht da kein mishpacha,; nahr ein zach is gebliben: Es iz nohr Du un ich.* “Oy, Father in Heaven! There is no ghetto, no father, no mother, no home, no family. Only one thing remains: You and I. It is just You and I.” These words were repeated over and over as he stood in a world far removed from the *bais hamedrash*, and the young men who were there, staring at him, enthralled by his otherworldly presence.

He finished speaking. Then he closed his eyes for a few moments, deep in thought. For five minutes, the students watched him. Then ten minutes. Finally, after fifteen minutes had elapsed, they realized that *Rav Mottel*’s body may be standing in front of them, but his soul, his psyche, was in a place distant from this edifice. He was with Hashem. Having realized that all that he once had – family and home – were gone, he only had Hashem: *Du un ich*. You and I. This is all any of us really have. Sadly, we often do not realize this verity until we have exhausted all other avenues.

Hashem is always there with us.

Horav Yisrael. zl, m'Shklov was one of the *Gaon, zl, m'Vilna's* premier *talmidim*, disciples. As such, he led the third *aliyah* of the *Talmidei Ha'Gra (Perushim)* to *Eretz Yisrael* in 1810. *Rav Yisrael* was not just a *talmid*, he was also very close to his revered *Rebbe*, having attended to him in the final weeks of his life. He brought his intrepid group of settlers to Tzfas with the hope of establishing a strong Jewish community there. The poverty, however, was so intense that *Rav Yisrael* took it upon himself to return to Europe on a fundraising trip to support the hardy and brave Jews who had taken the initiative to live in the Holy Land, despite the physical hardships that it might entail. They knew that nothing of value comes easily, and that, after they established the community, life would return to normalcy.

Adversity was almost an accepted way of life for these emigres. In 1814 the Galil (of which Tzfas is a part) was struck by a terrible plague. The five hundred *Perushim* who lived in Tzfas deserted their homes in search of safe haven. *Rav Yisrael*, who had recently returned from his fundraising venture, was not spared the ill effects of this plague. He, too, left Tzfas, with Yerushalayim as his destination. Tragedy struck along the way when his wife succumbed to the plague. By the time he reached the gates of Yerushalayim, he had buried most of his children and he, too, had been stricken with the plague.

His health troubled him only because he knew that the future wellbeing of the community was riding upon him. He prayed to Hashem that he be spared, so that he could continue his *Rebbe's* lofty goals. He had lost his wife, daughters, sons and sons-in-law, as well as his parents. His daughter, Sheindel, a young girl, lay ill beside him burning with fever. He writes: "I was lying there weeping bitterly, throwing myself about, pleading before our Father in Heaven to spare my Sheindel. My sorrow was great." He vowed to Hashem that if his daughter would be spared and he would live, he would write a comprehensive *sefer* on *Hilchos Eretz Yisrael*, the laws pertaining to the Holy Land. In the preface to this volume, entitled, *Pe'as HaShulchan*, he writes: "I wept until I was overcome with sleep. I dreamt that I was approached by someone who put his hand on me. I then awoke, well-rested, as if from a long night's sleep. This "being" stood over me and said, 'You have been stricken and now you have been healed.' I then felt Hashem's compassion and loving kindness shine upon me, and I knew that I would survive." His Father in Heaven had responded affirmatively to his plea.

I just came across the following inspirational story. A young couple, members of the Satmar community, had not yet been blessed with their own biological offspring. After a number of years visiting fertility specialists, participating in countless procedures and tests, they decided that the time had come to seriously consider adoption. They went to a bonafide agency and filed the forms. Now, the next hurdle was to meet with a social worker who would speak with them and decide if they were fit to be parents.

The social worker began the meeting by asking the husband to write on a piece of paper

what/who he loves more than anything in the world. There was no question in his mind. He wrote, *Der Eibishter*, "The Almighty." Afterwards, she turned to his wife and asked her to write down what she loved most. She wrote, *Abba she'ba'Shomayim*, "Father in Heaven." (The social worker was very devoted to her work, to the point that she did not cognitively process anything; she did not think on her own. She just followed the instructions she was given. Had she used her common sense, she would have realized that the young *Chassidic* couple that stood before her was different and had different values than the usual people that sought her help.)

"Now," the social worker said, "I must ask you to qualify what you wrote. If you were given a child, if our agency deemed you worthy of raising one of our children available for adoption, would you love the child more than what you wrote on the pad of paper?" (The woman neither knew what they had written on the paper, nor did she inquire about it.) The question seemed legitimate. They both responded, "No." (In other words, their love of Hashem superseded all else.) "I warn you that a negative response quite possibly will undermine your efforts to adopt. We cannot place a child in a home in which the prospective parents will not place their love of the child over everything else." They replied that come what may, they were not inclined to change their response.

One year later, the young couple was blessed with the birth of twins; a boy and a girl. They had demonstrated their overriding, abiding love for their Father in Heaven and were rewarded in kind.