

If you [dare to] cause him pain! For if he shall cry out to Me, I shall surely hear his outcry. (22:22)

Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl, derives an important principle concerning *tefillah* and its efficacy. When a person is confronted with adversity of any kind, he runs from person to person, doctor to doctor, *brachah* to *brachah*. In addition, “he also” prays to Hashem. Regardless of the circumstances – financial, health, family – the observant Jew makes a point to cover all the bases – even praying to Hashem. After all, one must make *hishtadlus*, endeavor. When a poor person goes from house to house begging for alms and, included among the many houses that he visits is the wealthiest man in town who could easily solve all his financial problems, the wealthy man is not required to give commensurate with his ability, since the poor man is not focusing solely on him.

Likewise, concerning *tefillah*. One who is *mishtadel* through every venue of *hishtadlus* including – but not exclusively – *tefillah*, might receive a paltry response from Heaven. After all, he has turned to other avenues. Veritably, this makes sense. If a would-be benefactor would know that the poor man is not going elsewhere, it is here or nothing, he will likely (or at least he should) respond favorably, because it is all upon his shoulders. When we pray to Hashem, He should not be our last avenue – but our only avenue. We may and should be *mishtadel*, endeavor, but with the understanding that salvation comes from Hashem alone. Our *hishtadlus* provides a *keli*, vessel, for the blessing to fill. If we would only turn to Hashem first – and not after we have exhausted all other avenues of (what we think are) salvation...

This is why the *yasom*, orphan, and *almanah*, widow, are different, why Hashem declares *Shamoa Eshma tzakaso*, “I shall surely hear his outcry.” These individuals have no one else to whom to turn. Thus, they put all of their *hishtadlus* into Hashem. They cry out twice to Him because they have no one else. When Hashem does not listen the first time, they return and intensify their supplication – and He listens. This is how we should *daven* if we want our *tefillos* to achieve efficacy.

Our *gedolei Yisrael* went out of their way with regard to their sensitivity to – and care for – widows and orphans. The *Tepliker Rav*, *Horav Shimshon Aharon Polonsky, zl*, was a giant in Torah in Europe post World War I. A scion of the *Tchenobler* dynasty, he immigrated to Yerushalayim in 1922 and became one of the distinguished *poskim*, *halachic* decisors, of his time. He was a saintly person who, prior to his *petirah*, passing, told his son-in-law, “I know that I am gravely ill, and, within two months, I will pass from this world. I purchased a plot on *Har Hazeisim* which will not be available because war will soon break out, and that area will be off limits. Please bury me in the cemetery in Sanhedriah. If, in two years’ time, *Har Hazeisim* becomes accessible, disinter me and bury me there. If, after two years, it is still inapproachable, leave me in Sanhedriah.” He left this world *Sivan* 28, 1948, in middle of the War of Independence.

Having prefaced the story with a brief appreciation of the saintliness of the *Tepliker Rav*, we can

better understand the following incident. When it came close to the festival of *Succos*, the *Tepliker Rav* began to search for a beautiful *esrog*. One year, he was unable to find what he was looking for until *erev Succos*. Being that it was shortly before *yom tov*, he was able to obtain the *esrog* at a reduced price. While he was there, he noticed another Jew, one of Yerushalayim's distinguished lay leaders, also purchasing an *esrog*.

On the first day of *Succos*, the *Tepliker Rav* came to *shul* without an *esrog*. He requested to borrow the *esrog* from one of the congregants. [It was, of course, through the dispensation of *matanah al menas l'hachazir*, a gift given on the condition of return, since the *esrog* must belong to the user.] When it came to the *Naanuim*, waving the *lulav* and *esrog* during *davening* (*Hallel*), the *Rav* did not have an *Arba Minnim*, Four Species, set. The Jew who had been in the store the other day when the *Tepliker Rav* had purchased a fine set was incredulous concerning his lack of *Arba Minnim*. He asked the *Rav*, and he received the following reply, "As I walked this morning prior to *neitz*, sunrise, I heard a young child crying and his mother chiming in with her tears, which seemed more out of fear than remorse. I knocked on their door to inquire if I could be of assistance. A young mother, recently married following a period of widowhood, answered the door. She explained that her young son, who is not the son of her present husband, was playing with his stepfather's *esrog* – an *esrog* which was very *mehudar*, beautiful, and he dropped it. The *pitum*, tip, of the *esrog*, broke, rendering the *esrog* invalid. Both mother and child feared the stepfather's reaction. I immediately removed my *esrog* from its pouch and placed it in the box reserved for the woman's husband's *esrog*. The man would not notice the exchange, since this was a beautiful *esrog*, and I left for *shul* without my coveted *esrog*." How does it appear for the *Rav* of a congregation to be without an *esrog*? The *Tepliker Rav* did not care. He knew that in Heaven they would have another take on the story.