



DEDICATED IN APPRECIATION OF RABBI BROG  
& THE SICHOS YISROEL TEAM

## THE POWER OF KORACH'S TEFILLAH

In their great challenge against Moshe, Korach and his company made a showdown. Moshe Rabeinu told them, “We’ll meet you here, at the *Mishkan* tomorrow at noon. Bring your fire pans and we’ll bring our fire pans and we’ll have the showdown. May the best man win.” (Bamidbar 16:4)<sup>1</sup>

Now, it’s interesting that the *passuk* says ויחר למשה מאד - Moshe was exceedingly upset (ibid v. 15).<sup>2</sup> If you notice, the word *vayichar*, generally appears together with the word, אף, like in אף חרון. The word אף has to do with the nose, the nostrils, the flare up. People read this *passuk* and think that Moshe “lost it,” ויחר למשה מאד, that Moshe was very angry. However, Moshe didn’t get angry. It doesn’t say ויחר אף. You know the first time in the Torah we find the word ויחר without the term אף? With Kayin. After Kayin took Hevel’s life and Hashem gave him some bad news, it says ויחר לקין מאד, and Kayin became very ויחר. So if you take a look at Rashi here (Bamidbar 16:15), Rashi says you know what ויחר למשה מאד means? נצטער עד למאד - *he became very full of pain*. A person could be pained without being angry. He gets bad news. Does it mean he’s angry? No. Moshe was upset. Kayin wasn’t angry with Hashem. He was upset.

Then Moshe turns to Hashem (verse 15) and he says a *tefillah*. He says אל תפן אל מנחתם - *don’t accept their offering*. Rashi says: “Tomorrow, when they’re going to bring before You this *ketores* and they’re going to beseech You don’t turn to them.”<sup>3</sup> That’s one *pshat*. That’s the *pashut pshat*. Rashi goes on to say another *pshat*.

The Ramban says a very interesting thing on this *passuk*. The question that begs to be asked is what was the *hava mina*, what’s the thought that they would win the showdown? If you have a duel and two

guys meet out in the street, even if one guy is a *tzaddik* - maybe the other guy, the *rasha*, will draw the gun quicker, and before you know it, the *tzaddik* will be sprawled out in the dust. But here, they were bringing *korbanos* to Hashem. Hashem was definitely on Moshe’s side. What was the *tzad* that Moshe could lose?! Why did Moshe have to *daven* to Hashem for this? It’s a *moradike* question.

## THE MOST POWERFUL SECRET

The Ramban says: כי בעבור שהיו אלה רוצים בכהונה להקריב קרבן, because these folks really truly wanted to be *kohanim* and to be *makriv* a *korban*, because that was their sincere desire, Moshe Rabeinu said, אל תפן אל מנחתם - *don’t turn to their minchah*, meaning, אל תפן אל קרבן, *don’t turn to the korban*, שיקריבו לפניך, *that they’re going to offer You*, ואל תפלה, *or to the prayer*, שיתפללו לך, *that they will offer up to You*.<sup>4</sup> Do you hear that?

The Ramban reveals to us a powerful secret. How huge, how humongous, how powerful, is the *koach* of a prayer! We’re talking about *reshaim*, wicked people, and Moshe Rabeinu said, “If you die like any other person, I’m going to be shocked. Hashem should create a new *briah* and a new creation. The earth should open up its mouth and swallow them alive!” And in their *rishus* they went down and down and down. They went to very serious ‘downs.’ And even so, Moshe knew that the power of *tefillah* is such that it could change everything. *Moradik!*

Therefore, Moshe Rabeinu needed to *daven* to Hashem that Hashem should not turn to their *tefilos*, because this was going to serve as proof that Hashem was the One who told him whom to appoint as *Kohen* and *Nasi*, and Moshe Rabeinu

<sup>1</sup> וידבר אל קרח ואל כל עדתו לאמר בקר וידע ה' את אשר לו ואת הקדוש והקריב אליו ואת אשר יבחר בו יקריב אליו

<sup>2</sup> ויחר למשה מאד ויאמר אל ה' אל תפן אל מנחתם לא חמור אחד מהם נשאתי ולא הרעתי את אחד מהם

<sup>3</sup> רש"י שם ד"ה "אל תפן אל מנחתם." לפי פשוטו הקטרת שהם מקריבין לפניך קחור אל תפן אליהם; ומדרשו: אמר, יודע אני שיש להם חלק בתמידי צבור, אף חלקם לא יקבל לפניך לרצון, תניחנה האש ולא תאכלנו (תנחומא).

<sup>4</sup> רמב"ן שם ד"ה "אל תפן אל מנחתם." לפי פשוטו הקטרת שהם מקריבים לפניך למחר אל תפן אליה ומדרשו אמר יודע אני שיש להם חלק בתמידי צבור חלקם לא יקרב לפניך לרצון לשון רש"י (על במדבר ט"ז: ט"ו) ואינו נכון בעיני שיהיה על הקטרת לפי שעל דתן ואבירם הוא אומר כן שחרה לו על דבריהם והם לא היו בתוך העדה הנועדים להקטיר קטרת אבל פשוטו כי בעבור שהיו אלה רוצים בכהונה להקריב קרבן אמר משה אל תפן אל מנחתם אל תפן אל קרבן שיקריבו לפניך ואל תפלה שיתפללו לך כי כל הקרבנות גם התפלה יקראו מנחה בכתוב וגם אמר אונקלוס (תרגום אונקלוס על במדבר ט"ז: ט"ו) קרבנהון איזה דבר שיקריבו לפניך.

didn't do anything by himself. Moshe said, "If you die like any other normal person, לא ה' שלחני, Hashem did not send me. You're right. I made it up." (Bamidbar 16:29)<sup>5</sup>

## HOW AND WHEN TO UTILIZE TEFILLAH

Now, it seems that if not for the fact that Moshe *davened*, there was a chance that their *tefillah* would have been accepted and would be *mavetel* this proof. *A peledike zach!*

So we learn from here that even if you're a *rasha*, if you turn to Hashem sincerely, you become completely empowered. We say every morning in *davening* ברבים וחרב פיפיות בידם - *with song of praise to Hashem in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands*, that means when the Jewish nation *davens*, they are now empowered with powerful swords (Tehillim 149:6).

We have to understand that we don't utilize this powerful tool, that Hashem gave us, enough. When we don't have a challenge and we don't have a problem then we don't feel the need to *daven*. And when we do have a challenge, you know what we think? "My *tefillah* won't help me. This is just a problem that I have to deal with."

Let me give you some common examples. A person is in *yeshivah* and he's learning and he feels challenged sometimes with difficulties focusing, and the person doesn't know what to do about it. The first thing he has to think is Hashem is telling him, "Come to Me." Another person is challenged because he's a little bit on the spoiled side and he likes things a certain way. He likes his food served a certain way. He likes his food cooked in a certain way. He likes his food to look a certain way. The person has a challenge and he doesn't understand how to deal with that challenge. The first thing he has to do is turn to Hashem.

Here is a person who has allergies, which is very common. The first thing you do when you have allergies is not to get Benadryl or some other allergy medicine. That's the second thing you do. The first thing you do is you *daven* to Hashem in *Refa'inu*. Hay fever and allergies are a gift to you from Hashem. You know what it's about? It's to let you know that you are dependent on Hashem.

Here is a person whose digestion doesn't work so well. Let's say his metabolism doesn't work so well. Let's say he's challenged with digestion and with going to the bathroom. He's a person who can't go to the bathroom at the right time. What does that mean? He can't go to the bathroom before *davening*. One of two reasons, either because he doesn't have the time to sit there and check himself and to see if he could go to the bathroom and get a clean body before he *davens*, or because it doesn't work so well. But it always happens that once he starts *davening*, as soon as he's in *Shemoneh Esrei*, *Oseh Shalom Bimeromav*, he has to go to the bathroom. That's a tragedy! You know why? When that happens to me I feel awful, *mamash* awful! Because it means that your *davening* was worth zero. That's what it is. That means, that day you didn't *daven*, and that's very sad. It's not easy, especially if you're a *bachur* and you wake up late, or you're a *yungerman* and you wake up late. It becomes very challenging; you don't have the time to spare, so you think you might as well start *davening* and then you'll *chap arein*. You'll pass time during *davening*. You'll spend half the time in the bathroom. By the time you're finished it's already breakfast time.

What you have to do is talk to Hashem. That's what you have to do. You have to understand, Hashem is letting you know that something as mundane as this, is dependent upon Him. So, you'll say to yourself, "But I'm a *rasha* anyway. If I'm a *rasha*, how is it going to help if I *daven* to Hashem?"

And then you think about *Korach v'adaso*. You think about these *reshaim*, serious challengers to Moshe Rabeinu and Hashem. Had Moshe not *davened* to cancel their *tefilos*, who knows what would have happened.

## ELIYAHU HANAVI'S SHOWDOWN

You know where else you find this mystery? By Eliyahu. Eliyahu Hanavi was having a very famous challenge. He was challenged by 400 prophets of the idol Ba'al (Malachim 1, 18:1-46). It was another famous showdown. These *ganavim ve'gazlanim*, these thugs, made this whole thing. Eliyahu Hanavi said, "We're going to put our *korban* on the *mizbeach* and a fire will come down from *shamayim*." Eliyahu Hanavi had to *daven* to Hashem not to accept their *tefilos*. They were doing the rain dance thing. They were jumping around. That was the first episode of the Trojan horse. People don't realize. They built this big huge *mizbeach*. They didn't tell anybody that they planted a fellow inside the *mizbeach* and they told him when they say "boom boom," he should strike the fire and make it appear as if the fire came down from *shamayim*. Eliyahu

<sup>5</sup> אם כמות כל האדם ימתון אלה ופקדת כל האדם יפקד עליהם לא ה' שלחני

Hanavi *davened* that they shouldn't be successful. You know what happened? A snake came and joined that fellow in the *mizbeach* and did "boom boom" to him first, so when those 400 false prophets of the Ba'al were jumping around doing the rain dance and they were *shreying nu, nu* and banging on the *mizbeach*, nothing happened. They realized that Hashem had got to that guy first.

From there, we can see the power of *davening*. So let us employ it. Don't give up just because you think you're a *rasha*. But I didn't say you should daven for *rishus*. Don't *daven* for wicked things. A guy who wants to do *aveiros* and *davens* for that, that I don't think you should do. But here they wanted the *kehunah*, they wanted to do the service of Hashem!

### A HIGH SCHOOL "DROPOUT"

Imagine if a person who was challenged with certain issues would embark on a career of saying one *kapitel Tehillim* a few times a day, and he would say that *kapitel Tehillim* in a way that he would *taka* be yearning for the *emes*. We once had a story with a young man who came to us. He was very distraught. He came here for Shabbos. He was in public school and he had misguided parents. They would prefer that he do every *aveirah* in the Torah and be a *beheimah* on drugs and do the worst things, as long as he was in public school and didn't go to *yeshivah*. This young man surprisingly decided to undertake to go to *yeshivah*. His father said, "Oh, no, no." People gave him advice: "When you are done with high school, when you are 18, then you can do what you want, how you want, and when you want. But not now."

Then he came to me and told me about his distressful situation. I said to this young man, "Do you really want to go to *yeshivah*? Do you realize that your father and mother and grandfather and grandmother have absolutely no power over you? It is just between you and Hashem, and Hashem is withholding this from you, just like Hashem withholds digestion from a person." He said, "What should I do?" I said, "I want you to start to say four chapters of *Tehillim* every day, but you have to say them seriously." I said, "Bring me a *siddur*." I showed him the *siddur*. I showed him which chapters he should say. I said, "Right now, for the next twenty five minutes read a couple of these chapters and get the definition of them, so you know what you're imploring Hashem. *Daven* to Hashem to help you get out of public school, because Hashem doesn't want any decent Jewish boy to be in a public school where they do *kol davar asur*. They're diseased places where all the negative influences are imparted." Now, even if people get past it, you have to be out of your mind to put your child in such a place. I told him, "Hashem surely wants you to be out of there."

What did he do? He went into the *beis medrash* and he *davened* like he never *davened* in his life. Twenty five minutes later he came back to my office. I noticed his eyes were red. Now, at that time it was the summer. It was May-June time frame. I said to him, "If you keep this up, I'm guaranteeing you that by Elul you'll be in *yeshivah*. You keep up the *tefilos*, and I have no doubt you will be in *yeshivah*." He said, "What about my parents?" I said, "Don't fight with your parents. It has nothing to do with your parents. This is between you and Hashem. Don't stop davening."

He kept it up. About two weeks later he called me. He was extremely distressed because it was *shekiyah* time and he hadn't said his *perakim* yet. He was on some trip and he couldn't say it. He was completely distraught. He didn't want to miss a day of this. I said, "It's not too late to say them. You could still say them right now. Don't worry about it." He said it.

### A SUDDEN CHANGE OF HEART OR ELSE?

A few weeks later he called me up. He said, "I'm going to *yeshivah*!" I said, "What?! How is that?!" He said, "The craziest thing happened." You see, I happened to have known his father. He was an irrational, stubborn type of person. Very stubborn. He's not one of these liberal fellows. Very, very stubborn mule. He had weird ideas about everything in life. He thought the whole world was poisoning themselves. This guy was one of those alfalfa sprouts people. Drinking water is poison and metal is poison. Everything was poison to him. He had very strong ideas.

So the father came home one night for supper, sat down next to his son and said, "My son, would you like to go *yeshivah*?" His son said he almost choked at that moment. He said, "What?! Like when, in the summer?" His father said, "Oh, no. Would you like to quit public school right now and go to *yeshivah*?" He said, "Yeah, why?" "I guess it's okay then." Out of nowhere! No one talked to the father. No one spoke to the father. The father is still as stubborn as ever. Now they are frum.

You know what I told him? "That's a lesson for life. Remember this for the rest of your life. *Daven*, and that's going to be your answer." It's amazing! That's what it says. Sometimes you have *tefilos* that are answered in a day, sometimes in a week, sometimes in a month, sometimes in a year, sometimes after two years, but *tefilos* are like a double-edged sword in a man's hand. וחרב פיפיות בידם (ibid). And therefore, if a person davens sincerely, it's going to make a difference.

## THE LESSON OF CHANA'S TEFILLAH

*Chazal* (Yerushalmi, Sanhedrin, 10:4) tell us that Korach and his people, when they went down to the ground, they continued traveling down.<sup>6</sup> They were *meshuka'as veyoredes* to extreme depths unlike any other depths. Do you know until what point in time they continued to descend? Until the time of Chana. Hundreds and hundreds of years later, Chana, who was the mother of Shmuel, got up and begged Hashem to have *rachmanus* on them. It says in the *passuk*: ה' ממית ויעל ומחיה מוריד שאול ויעל - Hashem deals death and gives life, Hashem brings you down, ויעל, and brings you up (I Shmuel 2:6). From the days of Moshe Rabeinu until Chana, they went down and down. They kept on going down and down. Now, what happened with the *tefillah* of Chana? She stopped their free fall! Unbelievable! If you're down, do you know what Hashem is letting you know? You can depend on Him.

### HASHEM DELIVERED

Just today, by *minchah* we *davened* to Hashem in the yeshiva. "Hashem, we bought this house for the yeshiva dormitory. We don't know what to do with it. We don't know where to start. How many bathrooms should we make? We want to make it nice. How nice? What should we do? What should we paint it with?" I said, "Ribono Shel Olam, we know nothing about this. Do me a favor. You took care of me until now. Take care of me *vaiter*. Finish the job."

Now, speaking about this house. I want you to know that I've been eyeing that house for fifteen to twenty years. I made offers on that house for more than two and a half times what I ended up paying for it. I had *talmidim* making offers on that house for more than two and a half times what I paid for it. I know other people who made offers on this house, and then, when they were in the lawyer's office and signed, they passed the paper over to the seller, they gave him a pen in his hand, the money was already there. The guy took the pen in his hand, went to the paper and said, "I don't have the heart to sell it." *Meshuge*, not normal.

And now after all these years, Hashem said, "I'll deliver it to you. I didn't walk into a lawyer's office. Hashem *mamash* delivered it on the silver platter. I'm not sure for what reason. We'll see. But I have no doubt that Hashem is going to take care of us." Rabosai, rely on Hashem. Don't use your own *chochmos*. Say to Hashem, "Hashem, help me out." That's all. If a person thinks he knows it all, then he ends up like those people who think they know everything, so they go make a *chillul Hashem* and they seize land and then they're stuck with a piece of land that they have nothing to do with. It's not Hashem's plan, so it doesn't work.

### LIVING IN THE BASEMENT

This is how to approach buying a house. You hear about a guy who wants to buy a house. He gets his family around him and he starts talking, "Should I? Shouldn't I?" And *klering a hin, klering a her*. All kinds of *shaylos she'ein kamoso*. You want to know something? You've got to say, "Hashem, You know what's for me." For twenty-eight years, I lived in a basement and I never felt bad. I *davened* to Hashem that I shouldn't feel bad. And I really didn't feel bad. People asked me, how was it *shayach*? I go there and every time I go down to that part of the house, I ask myself, 'How did I live in this place?' It was a dungeon. And I loved it. I felt comfortable. I felt cozy. I *pashut* felt I was טוב כל טוב. *Mamash*.

Over the years, we had opportunities to buy a house. We got land. The *yeshivah* gave me a present which also didn't make any sense. The *yeshivah*, at one point, granted me a present of land. A gift. They said, "It's yours." But in order for me to build on that land, I would have had to unseat my mother-in-law. I had read a story not long before about how Rav Chatzkel Levenstein held off taking the job as the *mashgiach* for a number of years, until his mother-in-law passed away, because he didn't want to impose upon her and leave her. I asked my mother-in-law if she wanted to move with me and go to the new house. She said, "No." So I was sitting on the fence, "Should I? Shouldn't I? Should I? Shouldn't I? Should I sell it?" I gave it to the next guy. We gave it away.

Now the Telshe Yeshivah doesn't give people land to build on, but Hashem gave it to me. Hashem knows what He's doing. *Baruch Hashem*, Hashem took care of us. Rabosai, a person has to rely on Hashem. Ask Hashem. Say the following: "Hashem I would love to have that *dirah*. I would like to have a larger apartment for my growing family." Specify a reason. Come up with a reason why Hashem should help you, and Hashem will help you. Ask Him. If you do that, I have no doubt that Hashem will help you.

<sup>6</sup> עדת קרח אין להן חלק לעולם הבא ואינן רואין לעתיד לבוא מה טעמא ותכס עליהם הארץ בעולם הזה ויאבדו מתוך הקהל לעתיד לבוא. תני ר' יהודה בן בתירה אומר ממשמע שנאמר תעיתי כשה אבד בקש עבדך מה אבידה האמורה להלן סופה להתבקש אף אבידה האמור' כאן עתידה להתבקש. מי נתפלל עליהן ר' שמואל בר נחמן אמר משה נתפלל עליהן יחי ראובן ואל ימות ר' יהושע בן לוי אמר חנה נתפללה עליהן ואמרה ה' ממית ומחיה מוריד שאול ויעל

✧ THE BOTTOM LINE ✧

The Ramban revealed to us an important foundational understanding regarding the power of tefillah, namely, that even the prayer of an undeserving person can be very powerful, if said sincerely. Unfortunately though, many of us don't believe in the koach of our prayers because we believe that our "checkered" past (or other reasons) disqualifies us from being listened to, much less being answered. This is simply not true. This coming week - whatever physical or spiritual challenge I may be currently facing, I will turn to Hashem first, before reaching for a pill or other help. Practically speaking, if I suffer from seasonal allergies, before I take my "as needed" Benadryl or "extended release" Allegra, I will first undertake (bli neder) to say a couple of daily Tehillim and implore Hashem to send me a refuah and yeshuah. Similarly, if my learning is not going well (because I have trouble concentrating and get easily distracted), I will also ask Hashem for help in this area. In this way, I will get used to first turning to Hashem before turning to "natural" remedies.



