



HOW TO BREAK THROUGH WITH TEFILLAH



BITACHON FOR ANYTHING “AL PI TEVA”

The passuk says in this week's parsha, ואתחן אל ה' בעת ההוא לאמר, “And I pleaded with Hashem at that time, saying” (Devarim 3:23).

We learned about the *koach habitachon* that Yitzhak Avinu needed to have in order to daven to Hashem. We also mentioned a *yesod* from Rav Tzadok that a person could have *bitachon* for anything that's *al pi teva*.¹ That's why even though Chana did not have children, she was able to *daven* to Hashem because *beteva* she could have had children. The *shaylah* was *lema'aseh*, Yitzchak Avinu was someone who *al pi teva* could not have children, because his wife was an *akarah* and *akaros* don't have children. We said over from the *Kad Hakemach*, Rabeinu Bachaye (1255-1340), that *tefillah* could be *meshaneh teva*.² *Tefillah* has the *koach* to change the natural order of things, provided it's for something that a normal person could expect in the course of his life. Therefore, even if you're an *akarah*, you can *daven* to have a child. Of course, you have to be on the *madreigah* for your *tefillah* to have power. Even Yitzchak Avinu in such a situation had to be *marbeh*, be *maftzir betefillah*.

HOW MANY TIMES SHOULD YOU DAVEN?

We also mentioned a number of times how people came to Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman to tell him about different predicaments that they found themselves in, and he would say, “Nor davenen, nor davenen. Only davening.” And what did the people always come back saying? What did people answer? “We davened already. We davened and davened.” You know what he used to say? He used to say, “How many times did you daven?” They would say, “I don't know.” He used to say, “Did you daven 265 times?” “Not sure.” Rashi says that ואתחן is *begematria* 515, to tell us Moshe Rabeinu *davened* to Hashem 515 *tefillos*. Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman said, “The minimum is 265.” He said, “The word *tze'akah*, crying out to Hashem is *begematria* 265.”

Everybody thinks they *davened* up to the kazoos. But I've asked many people. “You have no idea how many times you *daven*?” “Oh, tons and tons.” Tell me when did you daven “tons”? Do you have a special *sefer* every day when you *daven* for this thing? No. If not, maybe you did thirty. Maybe forty. To you, it seems like a million times.

Now the greater the person is and the more the *zechusim* that he has, the more power his *tefillah* has, and the more it could accomplish.

RELYING ON TEFILLOS BEING ANSWERED

There is a famous *gemara* in *Kiddushin* (29b) that relates a story about Rav Acha bar Yaakov.³ He came to learn Torah in the *beis hamedrash* of Abaye and there was a problem. They were having a problem in that *beis medrash*. What was the problem? Besides for the *bonei Torah* that had taken up residence in that *beis medrash* there was a certain *sheid*, a certain demon who caused a lot of damage to the *chachamim* who came to learn in that *beis medrash*. This *sheid* was a strong *sheid*. Usually, *sheidim* can only cause damage when you are by yourself. But this *sheid* was active even when people came with their *chavrusah*. Also, most *sheidim* operate only at night. This *sheid* operated by day and by night, and they couldn't figure out how to rid themselves of this *sheid*. So when Abaye heard that Rav Acha bar Yaakov came to the *beis medrash* and had joined them in the *beis medrash*, Abaye said, “No one should give him a place to sleep tonight. No one should invite him to sleep in their house. Let him end up staying in the *beis medrash* by himself. Rav Acha bar Yaakov is a very big *tzaddik*, he's a very pious man. Maybe he'll produce a *nes* and he'll get rid of the *sheid*.” Now Abaye was also a big *tzaddik* and a big *chassid*. Abaye couldn't get rid of it.

¹ ואמר יבטח בשם ה' וישען באלהיו, וגו', [ישעיהו נ"ז:] פרוש שם ה' הוא מה שלמעלה מהטבע, כנודע, בזה 'יבטח' שיוכל להושיע למעלה משכלו. ומקל מקום זהו רק בטחון, אבל ישען, משען הוא יותר, ומה שהוא בידו ונשען עליו, זהו 'באלהיו', כידוע דשם זה מורה על כחות המטבעים בברואים, ו'אלהיו' רצה לומר כחותיו שיש לו, שנתן לו ה' יתברך לכלל עצמו על ידיהם בכל צרכיו, בעצות מדברי תורה וספקיה ופבורה, בזה הוא עקר השעיהנה (ראה לעיל לות ליל). ומקל מקום יבטח בישועה שלמעלה מכחו גם כן, כי אין מעצור לה', וכן לא קצרה ידו מהושיע (ראה ישעיהו כט ל)

² ה' אלהים צבאות שמעה תפילתי האזינה אלהי יעקב סלה (תהלים פד). פסוק זה אמרו דוד ע"ה והיה מתחנן להקב"ה שישמע תפילתו לפי שעם התפלה יתקרב אדם לבוראו, והנה דוד שריוה להקב"ה בשירות ותשבחות ריבה לפניו תפלות ותהלות מכל אשר היו לפניו וערך שלחן התפלה לכל באי עולם, וכיון שבא דוד באת תפלה לעולם כי הוא החזיק יסודותיה והדריך בה לכל הבריות ולימד דעת את העם איך יתנהגו בתפלה ובתחנה לפני אדון הכל. וגדול כח התפלה אפי' לשנות הטבע ולהנצל מן הסכנה ולבטל הנגזר. לשנות את הטבע ממה שכתוב (בראשית כ"ה:כ"א) ויעתר יצחק לה' וגו' ה' הכתוב ראוי לומר ותהי רבקה עקרה ויעתר יצחק לה' ויעתר לו מפני שראוי ה' להקדים הסבה שבשבילה באה התפלה. אבל נ"ל כי זה יורה כי אין העקרונות עיקר הסבה אלא התפלה ולא בא העקרונות אלא בשביל שתבא התפלה אם כן התפלה עיקר. ולכן רצה להקדים העיקר ולהתחיל בתפלה. אמרו במס' יבמות (פ"ו ע"ד) מפני מה נתעקרו האמהות מפני שהקב"ה מתאוה לתפלתם של צדיקים, בארו לנו בכאן כי לא בא העקרונות לאמהות אלא מפני התפלה וכשהתפללו בה נשתנה הטבע בהן וילדו. וא"כ ה"ז מבואר שהתפלה יש לה כח לשנות הטבע, וכן להנצל מן הסכנה ממה שכתוב (תהילים ק"ז:כ"ג-כ"ד) יורדי הים באניות עושי מלאכה במים רבים המה ראו מעשי ה'. ויאמר ויעמד רוח סערה יעלו שמים ירדו תהומות נפשם ברעה תתמוגג ויעקו אל ה' בצר להם. וכתוב בתריה יקם סערה לדממה ויחשו גליהם הרי שהתפלה מגינה על הסכנה. וכן כח התפלה לבטל הנגזר ואמרו בברכות (פ"ק דף י') מחזקיהו שהוסיף לו הקב"ה בכח תפלתו חמש עשרה שנה שנא' (ישעיהו ל"ח:ה') הננו יוסיף על ימך חמש עשרה שנה, ומלת יוסיף היא מורה שהיה זמנו קצוב ונגזר שלא לחיות יותר. ויפה כח התפלה לבטל הנגזר, ואמרו בברכות (פ"ק דף י') אמר לו ישעיהו לחזקיהו אנה אמיני לך צו לביתר ואת אמרת לי ה' לי ברתך כבר נגזרה גזירה, אמר לו בן אמוץ כלה נבואתך וצא כך מקובלני מבית אבי אבא אפי' חרב מונחת על צוארו של אדם אל ימנע עצמו מן הרחמים שנאמר (איוב י"ג:ט"ו) הן קטלני לו איחל. ביארו לנו חכמי האמת בכאן כי התפלה מבטלת הנגזר במערכת הככבים, כי מה שאמרו בכאן כבר נגזרה גזרה ביאורו במערכת הכוכבים שמשם הגזרות והמשפטים באים לעולם השפל בכח עליון עליהם כי היה רואה כן בבואתו, והוסיפו עוד באור שהתפלה למעלה מן הנבואה כלומר מן המקום שמשם תוצאות הנבואה לנביאים (כד הקמח, תפלה א)

³ שמע אבי דקא הוה אתי. הוה הוה מתיק בי רבנן דאבבי, דכי הוה עיילי בתריי אפילו ביממא הוה מיתקני. אמר להו: לא לייתיב ליה אינש אושפיזא, אפשר דמתרחיש ניסא. על, בת בהווא בי רבנן. אידימי ליה קפתינא דשקבעה רישותיה. כל קריעה דקרע נטר חד רישיה. אמר להו למחר: אי לא איתרחיש ניסא ספיתני.

What happened was, since he had no place to sleep, Rav Acha bar Yaakov was forced to sleep in the *beis medrash*. That night, he woke up and he had a nightmare. He came face to face with a serpent, this huge serpent who had seven heads. Now what would you do if you saw a serpent with seven heads? You would try to run in the opposite direction but you probably would be so frozen you wouldn't be able to run. You hope you'd be able to run. You'd probably jump out the window if you could. It says Rav Acha started to *daven*. He didn't run. He said, "Hashem, please put this monster out of his misery and let him go." And he *davened*. He said his first *tefillah*. He opened his eyes and he counted: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 heads. He went back to *davening*. He opened up his eyes. Five heads. He kept on going. After seven tries the *sheid* was headless.

The next day, Rav Acha told Abaye and his *talmidim*, "If I wasn't *zocheh* to a tremendous miracle last night, you would have endangered me. You put my life in danger." He realized it was a setup.

The Maharsha asks a *gevaldige* question. He says: How did Abaye, the *rav*, the *rosh yeshivah*, allow Rav Acha bar Yaakov to be put into a situation of danger? Maybe he wouldn't have a *nes*. You can't be *somech* on a *nes*.⁴

The Maharsha says Abaye was *boteach*. He understood the greatness of Rav Acha and he was certain that when Rav Acha would *daven* he would win the battle. So Abaye, from his perspective, didn't see it as a *nes*. It was a *metzius*, a fact, that Rav Acha would *daven* and he would get rid of the *sheid*. Ai, Rav Acha himself said, "If I didn't have a miracle last night, I could have been in danger." So Maharsha says that it was because of Rav Acha's great *chassidus* and his great *tzidkus*, righteousness, that he said, "I got lucky. I lucked out. I had a *nes*."

But you see from here, that when you're on the right *madreigah*, you have the right *bitachon*, the right *tzidkus*, even if you need *nissim* and you *daven*, there's a certainty that your *tefillas* will be *neskabel*.

TEFILLAH TOGETHER WITH BITACHON

By Yitzchak Avinu, it says he was barren. It says his wife was barren. Both of them were barren. *Al pi teva* they couldn't have had kids. What did Yitzchak do? He threw himself into the *parshah* of *tefillah* and he believed. He had to believe. He had to have *bitachon*. That if he *davens* a lot and pleads a lot, he's going to be *zocheh* to change history, to change *teva*. So he made the effort and he hoped that he was going to be *zocheh*. And he was *zocheh*.

This applies even to us, on our small *madreigah*. A person shouldn't give up. A person has to understand that he has to fight. A person has to remind himself of the power of *tefillah* that Hashem gives him. You have to know the following. We think everyone *davens* in some way - is there a difference how we *daven*? If you'll ask people, "What do you think about *davening* to Hashem? What do you think about the concept of talking to your Creator?" Do you know what they'll say? "Every *goy* talks to his *avodah zarah*, whoever *goyim* believe in. Either their prophets or whoever they believe in. They talk to them." But, you have to know that the *gemara* says that *tefillah* is from the *devarim haomdim berumo shel olam*, it's from the most powerful tools that Hashem gave us.

DAVENING IS CONNECTING WITH HASHEM

The Chazon Ish said an amazing statement. The Chazon Ish was known for his outstanding toil in learning Torah, his outstanding diligence. He would learn until he had no *kochos* left. Sometimes, they would find him in the morning, sleeping on the floor. So one time he got up from his table - and he didn't make it to the bed that was located in the same room. They used to ask him, "What happened? You had a fall?" He said, "No. I made the wrong *cheshbon*. I thought I had enough *kochos* to reach the bed. I didn't. After a few steps, I collapsed. So I went to sleep here, on the floor. That's all." Do you know what kind of *yegiah* that is? You know what kind of toil that is? I can't imagine what it is. And for years, decades, year after year, day after day. And he was a sick man. He toiled unbelievably hard. And he said a phenomenal statement. He said: "I want you to know that however much I toiled in my learning, I toiled a lot more in my *davening*. For my *davening* to succeed, I had to do a lot more than I did for learning." I can't imagine what that means! Now, when the Chazon Ish *davened* it wasn't serious. It was more than serious.

There is a famous story with the Chazon Ish. A fellow came in in the middle of the *davening*. The Chazon Ish was in the middle of *davening shemoneh esrei*. The guy went over to the *gabbai* and said, "I need the Chazon Ish. It's a *pikuach nefeshdike shaylah*. It's a matter of life and death!" The *gabbai* said, "So go over. Tap him on the shoulder." *Pikuach nefesh!* The fellow went over to the Chazon Ish. He didn't move. So the man took him by both shoulders. He started to shake him. The Chazon Ish wouldn't move. He was unaware. *Gornisht!* Finally, the *gabbai* told him, "You're going to have to lift him off the floor." He didn't want to do it, so the *gabbai* went over. The *gabbai* put his hands around the Chazon Ish and he lifted him off the floor. After shaking him a little, after lifting him off the floor, he opened his eyes and didn't know where he was. There are a lot of *eidim* to that story. The Chazon Ish *pashut* was in a different world, communicating with Hashem.

Now listen to this Yerushalmi in *Brachos* (9:1).⁵ The Yerushalmi says Hakadosh Baruch Hu appears distant. "Where is Hashem?" people ask. "He's in *shamayim* far away." But the *emes* is, ואין קרוב ממנו, there is no one closer than Him. Now listen to what Yerushalmi says. Rav Levi explained, from the earth until the *shamayim* is a distance to walk five hundred years. From the *rakia* to the next *rakia*, to the next heaven, is another five hundred years. And the thickness of each *rakia* is also a distance of five hundred years. There are seven *raki'im*. Do you know how many years it would take to walk to Hashem? Five hundred years

⁴ אפשר דאתרחש ניסא כו"ק"ק דהיאך דחה אביי אותו למקום סכנה על הספק דשמא יתרחש ניסא וגם אם יתרחש ניסא יהיו מנכין לו מזכותיו כדאמר בעלמא ו"ל דודאי סמך אביי על חסידותו ושמתוך תפלתו לא יהיה ניזוק ויהרוג את המזיק ואין זה מקרי נס אלא שאמר דשמא קודם תפלה יתרחש ניסא וינכו לו מזכותיו ומשום ספק זה אין למנוע הודאי שיהרוג אותו ולזה יתיישב דא"ל למחר אי לא איתרחש ניסא כו"ק"ק שיהיה מתרעם עליהם שלא תלה הדבר בתפלתו אלא בניסא והבאתם אותי לידי מדה זו שמנכין לי מזכותי ודו"ק.

⁵ חזרו ונשאלו אותו. מה אהן דכתיב מי גוי גדול אשר לו אלהים קרובים אליו. אמר להן כ"י אלהינו בכלי קראינו אלהים אין כתיב כאן אלא בכלי קראינו אליו. אמרו לו תלמידי רבי יצחק דחיתה בקנה לנו מה אתה משיב. אמר להן קרוב בכל מיני קרובות. דאמר רבי פינחס בשם רבי יהודה בר סימון עבודה זרה נראית קרובה ואינה אלא רחוקה. מה טעמא ישארהו על כתף וסבלוהו וגומר. סוף דבר אלוהו עמו בבית והוא צועק עד שימות ולא ישמע ולא יושע מצרתו. אבל הקדוש ברוך הוא נראה רחוק ואין קרוב ממנו. דאמר לוי המהרץ ועד לרקיע מהלך ה מאות שנה. ומרקיע לרקיע מהלך תק שנה. ועביו של רקיע תק שנה וכן לכל רקיע ורקיע. ואמר רבי ברכיה ורבי חלב בשם רבי אבא סמוקה אף טלפי החיות מהלך ה מאות שנה וחמש עשרה מניין ישראל. ראה כמה הוא גבוה מעולמו. ואדם נכנס לבית הכנסת ועומד אחר העמוד ומתפלל בלתישה והקדוש ברוך הוא מאזין את תפילתו. שפאמר וסנה היא מדברת על לבה רק שפתייה נעות וקולה לא ישמע. והאזין הקדוש ברוך הוא את תפילתה. וכן כל בריותיו שפאמר תפילה לעני כי יעוטר. כאדם המשיח באזן חבירו והוא שומע. וכי יש לך אלוה קרוב מזה. שהוא קרוב לבריותיו כפה לאזן

between each one and then the thickness of each one is five hundred years. And then there's the *Chayos Hakodesh*. And Hakadosh Baruch Hu is on top of that.

However, the Yerushalmi says, אדם נכנס לבית הכנסת, a person walks into the *shul*, and he stands up behind the *amud*, behind the stand, ומתפלל בלחישא, and he *davens* quietly, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu מאזין לתפילתו. Hakadosh Baruch Hu listens to your *tefillos* like a man who is talking into the ears of his fellow man. וכי יש לך אלוה קרוב מזה, is there any Elokah that is closer than this?! He is קרוב לאוזן, like a mouth to somebody else's ear. You hear this? *Chazal* give us this description. It's not an exaggeration. It says, it's just like a person wants to tell a secret to his friend. You can talk to a friend across the room. But then you can talk to him even closer. You whisper in his ear. That's how close Hashem is to us when we *daven*. This is what a person has to know.

IT IS A HUGE *CHESS*ED THAT WE CAN *DAVEN*

Now, what is the purpose of coming to a *shul* and *davening*, calling out to Hashem? So, the Ramban tells us, number one, that when people come together and they all talk to Hashem, they are publicizing the fact that, "Hashem, we know we are dependent upon You. You are our Creator. You are our *manhig*. We are completely in Your hands." You understand that? Can you imagine that? Every time you step up to the plate to *daven* you have to know you are pronouncing and announcing, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu, You are my Creator. I have no one to rely on but You. You are the only one I rely on. You created me, and You run my life." You've got to get that in your *kishkes*. You've got to pound that into yourself. You have to remind yourself of this, and focus your mind on that thought throughout your *davening*.

Davening is called '*avdeihu*'. It's an *avodas Hashem*. It's a service of Hashem. In what way are you serving Hashem? By you *davening* to Him, and saying "Hashem, give me *parnasah*?" What you're supposed to be saying is, "Hashem, there's no other source of *parnasah* for me but You. There's no other source for my *da'as* other than You." If I'll play a Rubik's Cube, if I'll play chess, or do mind exercises, that's not going to help me in my *da'as*. My *da'as* is going to come as a gift from You, Hashem, and only from You. Hashem is going to be the one Who is going to help you do *teshuvah*. Hashem is the one Who's going to give you *selichah* and *mehilah*.

That's why the Chazon Ish said, "It takes me a lot more effort and strength to *daven* than it does to learn." A person has to know that.

When you come to *davening*, how should you look at *davening*? If you ask a person: "How do you look at *davening*? How do you view *davening*? How do you think you should view *davening*?" The answer is: it's an *avodah* of Hashem. What does that mean? That you have a *chiyuv* to serve Hashem. That's what service means.

Rav Chatzkel Abramsky (1886-1976) once said a *gevaldige zach*. He said, a person, a respectable person, gets up in the morning. He *davens Shacharis kehalachah, kedas vekadin*. He doesn't talk. He prepares himself and he comes and *davens*. When he's finished, do you know what he feels? Ah! I feel good. If somebody asks, "What do you feel good about?" He says, "I started off my day with an *avodah* to Hashem. I served Hashem." You know what Rav Chatzkel says? Rav Chatzkel Abramsky said: In my *siddur*, in the beginning of *davening*, what's written is as follows: ואני ברב חסדך אבוא ביתך, and I, in Your abundant kindness, I come to Your house to *daven* to You. That means I'm given the *reshus*. I have permission. I was given an opportunity to talk and communicate with Hashem and to open up my mouth *lefei melech malchei hamelachim* Hakadosh Baruch Hu. A person who *davens* correctly should feel that his *tefillah* to Hashem is a tremendous opportunity of *chessed* to do the service of Hashem.

THE WOMAN WHO TALKED TO HASHEM LIKE A FATHER

Many people absolutely do not realize what the opportunity of *chessed* is. A number of years ago, a lady from Eretz Yisrael called me with a heartbreaking story. She's married. She has four kids. Her husband is learning, he's *shteiging*. They moved to Eretz Yisrael from America. The husband is *be'emes* a *ben aliyah*, he's *mamash* growing. They're very *frum*. They live in a wonderful *frum* city. They have no money. So they started to budget. First, they cut down what they eat: We're not going to have this on weekdays, not that on weekdays. Eventually, they cut out all *fleshigs* during the week. Even on Shabbos, it's the bare minimum. They looked wherever they could cut. *Lema'aseh* their debt had accumulated. They owed \$15,000, which was over the top for them.

I smile, because I've heard stories of people who owe \$100,000, \$200,000, \$300,000. People have called me with debts, serious debts. A man used to come collecting here for years. He started with \$800,000 of debt. The guy spent fifteen years coming here. I told the guy once, "Listen, between me and you, where are you holding with the debt?" He had that same letter from fifteen years ago, showing that he had \$800,000 of debt. I told him, "Don't tell me it didn't go down." He spent a whole year collecting. He said, "I'm holding by \$300,000. It's going down. It's getting someplace." But for the family in this story, \$15,000 in debt was a huge insurmountable debt.

They didn't know what to do, so she decided she had to go to work. But where they lived there weren't many opportunities available. She decided she's going to clean houses for neighbors. Everybody in Eretz Yisrael likes cleaning help. Sometimes, good cleaning help is hard to find.

I remember I was once in Yerushalayim for *bein hazmanim* and a guy came and begged me to hire his wife for cleaning help. I said, "I feel terrible hiring your wife for cleaning help." He said, "My wife would love the job." I said, "Are you sure?" So she went to clean by one of my children. A week later, the guy came by, and I said, "How is it going?" He said, "My wife is blown away. She said to me that the Americans, whom she always thought were so rich, live way below the way she lives." The family lived in Yerushalayim. I told him, "They're only like guests. They're visiting. They're only here temporarily, so they live at a low level."

But *al kol panim*, this lady told me that she went to clean and she knocked the debt down to \$8,000. It's holding now at \$8,000. But she can't do it anymore. It's באו מים עד נפש. She called me to ask me a *shaylah*. The *shaylah* was: Should she sell her apartment in this already established city and move to a newer development? They made a *cheshbon* that if they do that, they could

buy the same size apartment they have now, and they can end up making \$8,000 after all the costs - closing costs, the shipping, the moving, and everything else. Should she sell her apartment or should she continue cleaning houses?

I said, "Is your husband *shteiging* where he is?" "100%." "Does he have a good *chaburah* and a good *rebbe*?" She said, "Yes." I said, "First of all, stop cleaning." I told her, "You should know, it's a wonderful thing that you're doing, and I'm very, very amazed at you that you would undertake to do such a thing, but I don't think that it's respectable to Hashem to have His wonderful daughter, a *bas Yisrael* of your stature clean houses. It's not a *kavod* for Him." I said, "Could you imagine Reichman having a daughter, and the daughter needed \$15,000 so she decided to go clean houses instead of asking her father? What do you think Mr. Reichman would feel like if he ever found out? The guy would blow his top sky-high. He'd be furious. Do you know what kind of *bizayon* that is? He'd say, 'You're my daughter. Your name is Reichman. You didn't change your name. So what kind of business is this? You think I can't give you \$15,000?!"

I said, "Don't do it anymore. And don't move either because your husband is *shteiging*. Live right where you are." She says, "What should I do?" I said, "*Daven* to Hashem. Hashem has got more money than Reichman ever dreamed of, and Hashem has the deepest pockets around and He wants to help you." She said, "I *daven* to Hashem." I said, "Do you *daven* properly?" She said, "I don't know." I said, "Do you ever beg your father for something?" She said, "I don't know what it means to have a father. I never had a father. My father was gone when I was a baby. I don't know what a father is." I said, "Let me tell you what a father is."

I said: "Go into a room and think that you're now in the room with somebody who's been taking care of you 24/7 all your life; someone who has given you a husband, has given you health, has given you children, has given you this, has given you that. *Mamash moradig*. Say as follows, "Tatte, could I ask you for \$8000?" I mean, it's not even a *shmek tabak*. It's *gornisht*. It's nothing to Hashem." I said, "Don't even think about how it's going to come to you. I can't tell you how it's going to come to you. Hashem will figure out a way to get it to you. But *daven* like there is no one else to talk to. Not like it's a government office. *Daven* it's like your father who cares for you and desires to hear from you. He's going to help you. Call me back when you have the money," I said. I gave her a whole *shmooze* about how to *daven*.

A couple of weeks goes by, maybe three weeks. I got a phone call from Eretz Yisrael. I didn't answer. I missed it. It was a message from her, a garbled message. I couldn't hear the message. I couldn't call her back. I knew it was her. I could tell it was her voice. I didn't know what she was talking about. I said, "Hashem, please let her call me back. I want to hear what happened." A few days later, she called me back. She said, "Did you get my message?" I said, "I couldn't hear it." She said, "I want to thank you very much. I'm holding an \$8,000 check in my hand." I said, "No kidding! What happened?!" She said, "I went into a room, and I closed the door, and I talked to Hashem like I never talked to Him in my life. As if He was my father that I never had. I discovered I had a father." She was a very *frum* girl.

I said, "Then what happened?" She said, "What happened was my mother in America had her accountant file taxes." But this guy was a little creative and *emes* wasn't his strongest point. Her mother got a check of \$3,000 back from the government. She went to her *rav* where she lived, and she asked him if she could keep it and the *rav* said, "No. It's not proper to take it. But don't give up. Tell the guy to refile it and to refile it *be'emes*. Whatever needs to be written put on there." She said, this is unheard of in the history of the IRS. Within two weeks she got a letter from them: We amended your tax return. You're now receiving \$8,000. She got an \$8,000 check. I said *הודו לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו ישתבח שמו לעד*.

GOING TO THE RIGHT SOURCE FOR WHAT WE NEED

Mamash, that's what it is. You've got to talk to Hashem. The power of *tefillah* is unimaginable, and very few people utilize it properly. Yeah, when they get desperate, they *daven* to Hashem like they're knocking on the government office asking for more food stamps. I know a guy who told me he's going to the HUD office. I said, "What are you going for?" He said, "I'm going to beg them. I'm going to lay on the floor. I'm not leaving the office until they give me my HUD. I want to get my HUD back." I told him, "My friend, you're laying on the wrong floor. HUD is not in charge. Go to a *beis medrash*, go to learn Torah. Talk to Hashem!" He said, "What? As if Hashem gives HUD checks? HUD checks you find in the HUD office," he tells me. I told him, "You're a *tipesh*. You have *seichel* like a cat." I told him, "It's like banging your head against the wall, hoping the wall is going to produce your money." That's what people do.

You have to understand that this is one of the most powerful tools. Yitzchak Avinu knew how to use it. He utilized it to the max. You know what the Seforno says? It's an amazing Seforno. The Seforno said (Bereishis 18:12) that when Sarah heard from the *malachim* she's going to have a kid, she laughed. Why did she laugh? She didn't believe she could have a kid? You know what the Seforno said? She didn't believe she could have a kid after some guy in the street would give her a *brachah*. Maybe through *tefillah*, the Seforno says, she could have gotten a kid. Through *davening* - yes. Even though it was *acharei balosi*, in her old age. She was old. "But through *tefillah*?" the Seforno says. Through that, she believed she could have gotten a kid.⁶

You're talking straight to Hashem when you *daven*. No intermediates. But you've got to ask Hashem. He's the only one Who can help you. A lot of people still say, "I'll try Hashem. I tried my uncle. He didn't come through for me. I tried my grandmother. She didn't come through for me. Now I'm going to try Hashem." I've told people that's a very bad approach because you don't understand what Hashem is if you tried your grandmother or your uncle." You try one address - Hashem. Hashem knows all your uncles and all your aunts and all your relatives. You've got to turn to Hashem. That's who you've got to ask and where your success lies.

It says *וחרב פיפיות בחרונם*, "a two-edged sword in their hands" (Tehillim 149:6). *Tefillah* is considered a *cherev pipiyos*. It's like swords in your mouth. Do you ever think about that, that your mouth is like swords? You may not have thought it's sharp. No, no. You've got power. Swords mean power. A double-edged sword. When a person knows that and utilizes that, he can *daven* with an

⁶ ותצחק שרה. שחשבה שהיה דבר המלאך ברכת נביא בלבד כענין אלישע לא נבואה ושליחות האל ית'. וחשבה שלא יושג זה בזקנים בברכת שום נביא כי אמנם להשיב הבהר' אחר הזקנה הרי הוא כתיבת המתים שלא תהיה זולתי במצות האל פרטית או בתפלה משגת חן מאתו.

awareness that he can ask Hashem for anything in the world, and He'll give it to you.

MAKING TRAVEL PLANS WITH HASHEM

People plan what to do for Yom Tov, or what to do for the summer. There are some *bachurim* whose fathers are nice, Hashem blessed them, and they're able to finance all kinds of trips, but most fathers can't afford it. Some fathers don't even want to. What happens? Everybody goes into initiative mode. He starts to think, "Okay, who can I *shnor* from? Maybe I could join some kind of program, and they'll fly me to Russia, they'll fly me to Belgium, fly me to here, fly me to there." Another guy says, "I'm going to get credit card miles." So, the *bachur* becomes a credit card expert. He goes into the mileage business with *shekarim* and *kezavim* and all kinds of *bubbe ma'asehs*, and he gets himself a ticket. He buys a *genevishe* ticket. Of course it's all 'honest.' He bought this stuff. He returned it afterwards. He bought it. He returned it. He said he makes a million dollars, so they gave him a credit card. *Kulo shekarim*. If a guy would sit and say to Hashem, "Please Hashem, I would love to go to Eretz Yisrael. I'm not going to do bad things there. Hashem, I need something to do for the summer. Help me out." You think Hashem can't help you out? Hashem can help you out!

I'll never forget the first year I decided my family was going to Eretz Yisrael for Yom Tov. I said, "Why shouldn't I go to Eretz Yisrael for Yom Tov?" I had children in Eretz Yisrael. I wanted to go for Yom Tov. I said, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu, please let me go." I *davened* for maybe three months to Hashem, every day, to please help me. I said, "Hashem, but You have to show me that I'm supposed to go." I decided if I get an opportunity to buy tickets for \$500 to Eretz Yisrael round trip, I can take the whole family to Eretz Yisrael. I made a *cheshbon* how much it will cost me over here, how much it will cost me there. I called up a travel agent. I called up friends to go online. They said there's no such thing as \$500 round trip tickets for Pesach, unless there is some kind of mistake and you have to rip the company off. But to get it straight, there is no such thing. I told my daughter to please check one more time. I asked her to check a lot of times. She had to go someplace. She didn't have a computer. She went to check. She calls me back, "Ta, there are \$500 tickets." I said, "Do I have to travel around the world to get to Eretz Yisrael? I want to go straight to Eretz Yisrael. I don't want to go to Eretz Yisrael by going all over New York. From Cleveland to Chicago, Chicago to New York, New York to Atlanta, Atlanta to San Francisco, San Francisco to England, England to France and finally three days later you get to Eretz Yisrael. It's like a boat." She said, "No, Ta. It's direct. Just not from Cleveland. They don't have tickets from Cleveland."

My wife said, "What are you going to do with the expense of an apartment? Where are we going to stay? With all the kids we have to stay somewhere." I had children there but they didn't have big apartments. I said, "Why can't Hashem give me a free apartment?" "Are you crazy? Do you know what kind of market there is for apartments on Yom Tov over there?" It's crazy. People make money for a whole year that way. Anyway, we looked in the paper. We called up a place. They said they wanted \$1,500 for the whole Yom Tov. I told my wife, "Please make an offer of \$1000. Ask them if they'll take \$1000." The lady said, "I'll get back to you tomorrow." She calls us the next day and says, "My husband said no. He doesn't like \$1000." My wife said, "How much does he like?" "He said, he decided that he shouldn't take any money." My wife said, "What's the catch?" She said, "We're really happy if somebody's in the apartment when we're not here. We don't want to leave our apartment empty. I have expensive equipment in the apartment. I have recording equipment. And we had a robbery in the apartment. We're very happy if you're here." A brand new apartment. I said, "For free?!" "Yes, absolutely free." I said, "We'll pay for all the air conditioning and all the utilities." I left him a check, a blank check. I said, "Fill it for whatever you want. I won't even look at it. I won't check it." Never once did they do it. Free everything. They thanked us. I called them the next year. *Nachamol*. How about next year? Next year *nachamol*? We went again. Everybody in that block in Yerushalayim in Ezras Torah told me, "How much are you paying? How much are they charging?" I said, "I can't tell you the price." "That much?" I said, "That much. But not like you understand." It was unbelievable. For five years we went there! Five years! Finally, one year, the tickets went up to \$700. I said, "Hashem I'm not going this year. That means You don't want me to go." A guy told me, "\$700 is also a bargain. It's going for \$1300, \$1400 a ticket." I said, "My tickets are \$500. If Hashem wants me to go, He knows how to arrange it."

Then I decided I'll go in the summer. Someone said, "Summer?! Forget it! Tickets in the summer are *mamash* off the charts." I said, "Maybe for you. But my travel agent, He knows how to do legal *shtick* and make it all work out." And it worked out. Then my wife wasn't well and I couldn't go anyway. So it didn't work out. But the tickets were there. Hashem sent me the tickets. I went the next year.

You see Rabosai, you've got to know that you talk to Hashem. You can get anything you want. Within reason, if it's a normal request. Hakadosh Baruch Hu should help us be *mechazek* ourselves.

✧ IN CONCLUSION ✧

Parshas Vaeschanan begins with a beautiful lesson in *tefillah*. Moshe Rabbeinu was *mispalel* to Hashem over and over. We too can learn how to *daven* in a way that adds power to our *tefillos*. Really *davening* for something you want or need means setting aside time, a daily *seder*, to *daven* for that thing. As Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman used to ask people, “Did you *daven* at least 265 times for this?” For powerful *davening*, link it up with *bitachon*, and remember to feel sure that you can rely on Hashem to accept your *tefillos*. Real effective *davening* means you are communicating with Hashem, not even like a person who speaks to his friend across the room, but as if you can whisper in His ear, so to speak. The *chessed* in *tefillah* is that we can turn to Hashem and feel completely dependent on Him to provide all our needs and wants. We should feel like the person who *davened* as if she was talking to her father - addressing Someone Who has taken care of you all your life until now and has given you everything you have. We need to absorb the fact that Hashem cares for us, He wants to help us, He desires to give to us. Most important, perhaps, is to absorb the truth that Hashem is the real and only source for everything we need and want, from *parnassah*, to paying off debts, to going on vacation. We just need to ask Him for what we need. *Tefillah* that comes from these kinds of *machshavos* can *b'chessed Hashem* break through and be accepted by Hashem. This week (*bli neder*) I will try each day to ask Hashem for something large or small that I need or want and say, “Hashem/Tatte, please can I have such and such a thing,” and then in my mind or aloud I will say, “I can rely on Hashem. He’s going to help me.”