קונטרס

The Ways of My Heart

נתיבות לבי

Adapted from the shiurim of

R' Dovid Steiman shlit"a

Digging Through to the King

Parshas Toldos

נתיבות לבי — The Ways of My Heart

A WEEKLY MAAMAR · ADAPTED FROM THE SHIURIM OF R' DOVID STEIMAN SHLIT"A

ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

Nesivos Libi — The Ways of My Heart is a weekly maamar on emunah, bitachon, and avodas Hashem, adapted from the shiurim of R' Dovid Steiman shlit"a in the derech of the *Nesivos Shalom*.

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Digging Through to the King

Why the Torah says vaye'esar about Yitzchak's tefillah — and why only the one who really wants to see the King crawls through the small door

There is not one Yid in the world who is not looking for a yeshuah. Very simple: we are in golus, and we need a yeshuah. And this week's parshah is talking about a yeshuah that many people are looking for.

Yitzchak and Rivkah did not have children. Al pi teva, by nature, Rivkah could not have children. Yitzchak had a promise that the generations would come from him — but who said it would be from this wife? Maybe it would be from a different wife. Yitzchak did not want that. He wanted it to be specifically from Rivkah, Rivkah the tzadeikes, who grew up among all the resha'im and was able to hold herself back from becoming like them.

So the pasuk tells us: Vaye'esar Yitzchak laShem l'nochach ishto ki akarah hi, vaye'aser lo Hashem, vatahar Rivkah ishto — Yitzchak davened to Hashem opposite his wife, because she was barren; and Hashem accepted his tefillah, and his wife Rivkah conceived. [1]

Not an order on the phone

What is the lashon *vaye'esar*? That is what I want to talk about. *Vaye'esar* is not a simple thing. It means davening a lot.

But how much can you daven? A lot of times a person gets to a point where he feels ready to give up. You are davening and davening and davening, and nothing is happening.

So he needs to hear from a big tzaddik that tefillah is not about getting what you want. It is not that you are making an order: you pick up the phone, you place the order, *please deliver it to me*. That is not what tefillah is.

How do we know that? We see it by Avraham Avinu. He went to daven for all the people of Sedom. He davened a huge tefillah. He started from fifty people and went slowly down, and in the end what happened? Nothing. Sedom was wiped off the face of the earth. [2]

You will say: the tefillah was conditional, kind of. He said only if there are ten tzaddikim, leave them alone. It's true, it's true. But still he davened. He really wanted it to stop the destruction. And the seforim tell us that even today, when we hear this in the kriah, it is *me'orer es hazman* — it awakens the time. This tefillah of Avraham Avinu is full of rachamim, so even today when we hear it, it still awakens the rachamim. That is how powerful it is.

So we are not talking about fifty or ten. That is the lashon; he was trying to put Hashem in a situation: *please*. But the real tefillah, what he meant to say, is that he wanted rachamim. He wanted Hashem to have rachmanus on Sedom and Amorah. He wanted midas rachamim everywhere.

And in the end it was destroyed. But what happened the next day? He came back to the same place. He was still davening. [3]

From here we see that the whole idea of tefillah is that we are getting closer to Hashem. That is the point of tefillah. Not because I asked, deliver. It is not a technical way of getting things. It is the way that Hashem wants us to be close to Him.

And sometimes Hashem wants us to be close in a way that we give part of ourselves to Him. In other words, it is not just saying the words of tefillah. It is really physically feeling that you are giving away your entire self.

Digging

The Nesivos Shalom explains that with this tefillah, Yitzchak Avinu opened a door for every Jew: there is a way that a Yid can ask Hashem and get whatever he is asking for, with a tefillah.

But sometimes you cannot get it with a tefillah. You are saying tefillah, saying tefillah, and nothing happens, right? So what does Hashem want? He wants *chasirah*. Chasirah is digging. He wants the digging.

When do we need it? When we need a yeshuah that is *lemaalah miderech hateva*, above nature. Shidduchim are above nature — Chazal say it is as hard to match a couple as *krias Yam Suf*.[4] Parnassah is also above nature. We think these things are natural. But we see there are poor people and there are rich people; everyone is in a different situation. The point is that it is above nature.

And in such a situation, Hashem wants us to work harder to reach Him. When a Yid puts himself together and starts *chosser*, digging, Hashem is going to open all the doors for him, and Hashem is going to answer his tefillah.

Where do we see that you need to work harder to get what you want? A Yid is trying to get himself together in tefillah, and he is not mevater, he does not give up, until Hashem gives it to him. That is what Yitzchak was doing: he was really digging into it: *Hashem, I want it, I want it, I want it. Klal Yisroel needs to be built, and I want to build it with the wife that You gave me now, who is a tzadeikes. I want to have it.*

The small door

And the Nesivos Shalom brings a mashal. There was a king who had many sons and servants. He wanted to see them all come together: the ones who love him and are in awe of him, and the ones who are in awe of him but do not love him.

What did he do? He built a tunnel, only four amos — about six feet. Imagine this small tunnel. And in the courtyard he made a small entrance, a small door that you have to crawl into, and only through it can you get to see the king. And all the people were standing there in the courtyard.

A king knows. Whoever loves him is ready to be in pain and crawl through this small door. It's okay, nothing is going to happen to him; it will hurt a little. It is pressing on him from all sides. But he is desperate. He wants to see the king. *My will to see the king, to be close to the king, is much greater than all this pain.*

And whoever does not love him stays outside. He wants to be comfortable. He does not want that pain.

There is a person who does all the mitzvos. He is going to do every single mitzvah, and he sits and he learns, and he does whatever he needs to do. But he is not ready to crawl into that hole. He is ready to do all the mitzvos as long as it is comfortable from all sides. But once he needs to work harder, to crawl, to do whatever it is — *I'm fine, I'm okay, I'm not ready to come out of my comfort zone.*

But the one who serves Hashem from love — his life is not a life if he does not see the King. If he does not feel that Shabbos is Shabbos, that Yom Tov is Yom Tov, it bothers him. *How can it be okay? I don't feel anything. I don't feel Hashem. Where is Hashem?* Holy times go by — Shabbos, Yom Tov, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Pesach — and he doesn't feel anything. Another person says: *It's fine, who says I have to feel?* But this one pushes himself with all his strength, with all his asking and all his requests. [5]

Into the mikveh

I told this story once already, and I will repeat it again. It is an unbelievable story, about a man who was desperate for children.

He went to the Ribnitzer Rebbe zt"l — the Rebbe lived here in Monsey already at the time — and asked him for a brachah that he should have children. The Rebbe thought into it, looked at the kvittel, and said: *I can't help you.*

But he would not give up. Wherever he saw the Rebbe, he would go over to him and ask again: *Rebbe, please, give me a brachah that I should have children.* And the Rebbe gave the same answer again and again, and he would not give up.

It was known that the Rebbe was a big baal yeshuah in the mikveh. Years before he came here, still in Moldova, it was already known that in the mikveh he was able to pull down unbelievable yeshuos.

So this man made a plan. He knew which mikveh the Rebbe came to. He went there and hid himself in a closet. That, by the way, is how desperate you have to be — it is a real chutzpah. The Rebbe came in and was already ready to go into the mikveh. You can imagine the situation. And all of a sudden this man

jumps out of the closet and begs: *Rebbe, please, give me a brachah that I should have children!*

The Rebbe was shocked, first of all. This was overstepping all the borders. And he told him: *You know what? If you are in the water of the mikveh before me, I'll give you the brachah.*

The man was standing there in all his clothing. And all of a sudden he jumps over the gate — boom — with all his clothes and his shoes, right into the water.

I don't have to tell you. The Rebbe started laughing; he could not believe it. And he said: *You got your brachah. You will have children.*

This is called desperate. This is just an example of what it means when somebody really wants it.

Where are your tears?

Another story — I also said it in yeshivah, maybe you never heard it.

There is a famous story about R' Shimshon Pincus. R' Shimshon was famous for his unbelievable chesed, and he was the Rav of Ofakim, and he was known for his strong hashkafos; there are many seforim from him.

There was a man who was also desperate for children. For years he went to all the kivrei tzaddikim, begging for a brachah from this tzaddik and that tzaddik, and nothing helped. One day he decided to go to R' Shimshon for help. He told him: *For years I am going to different tzaddikim, for brachos, to kevarim, all kinds of things, and nothing helped.*

R' Shimshon told him: *You know what? Do me a favor, come to me at twelve o'clock at night.*

So he came at twelve o'clock at night. He said goodbye to his wife; she was totally *b'yei'ush* — the same thing over again, the same story. And R' Shimshon said: *No, no, we are not staying here. Come with me.*

He took him to Midbar Yehudah. Midbar Yehudah, a beautiful place: only sand and stars. It was night, only sand and stars. And he told him: *I am going to leave you here for half an hour. Daven to Hashem. Daven to Hashem. And I will come back to pick you up.*

He closed the door of his car, and he left.

And the man stayed there alone in the midbar. You don't know which animal is going to meet you now. He didn't know where to start — how do you daven now? He was more scared for his life than he was davening. Anyway, he tried to daven.

Half an hour later R' Shimshon came back. *What's with you? Where are your tears? That's how you daven? That is not how you daven. You have to pull with full force. You have to dig into it, fully. That is how you daven to Hashem.*

And he left him there again for another half an hour. When he came back half an hour later, he saw his face. *Oh — now that is called davening.*

And this Yid was also helped.

A power Hashem gave us

What I am trying to bring out is this. *Vaye'esar* is an unbelievable power that Hashem gave us. Even when it looks like nothing is happening, we have to use it: to dig through to Hashem, so that I will be able to be closer to You.

On one side, don't be *mevater*; on the other hand, remember that davening is not an expectation. It's not being mevater while you are getting closer. You are not losing. Hashem sees everything, and He will give it to you *b'derech kovod* and *b'derech brocha*.

May Hashem answer all our tefillos, and bring us the yeshuah we are all davening for, the geulah shleimah, *b'karov*.

MEKOROS

1. Bereishis 25:21 **2.** Bereishis 18:23–32 **3.** Bereishis 19:27 **4.** Sotah 2a **5.** Nesivos Shalom, Toldos