

FROM THE EDITOR

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We are about to enter the month of Elul, with the new year and all that it brings with it not far off. I came across a sicha (lecture) for Elul by Rabbi Shimshon Dovid Pincus, ztz"l, that touches on the importance of prayer.

When a person goes to a hospital and sees that there is someone in a difficult situation, he naturally davens (prays) to Hashem that the person should be healed. If he observes an improvement in the situation of this sick person, the man who davened feels good, "I davened and I was answered – amazing!" If, however, the same man returns to the hospital the next day,

sees another person who is in a difficult situation, and again davens, but this time he isn't answered, the man thinks that he has wasted his efforts. "Where is the result that I asked for? The sick person was not healed from his sickness!" After the latter experience, this man may become reluctant to daven at all for the sick because he saw that his davening didn't help, that his words didn't do anything, and he thinks, "Perhaps it's better in a situation like this to do other things, rather than offer mere words".

If this man only knew that the words that he said had been deposited with Hashem like an investment, everything would look different to him. If he only knew that, from his prayers, something will grow – even from mere words alone that lack any sort of real, heartfelt intention behind them, because we don't say in our davening¹, "Because You hear the prayer of every heart," but rather, "Because You hear the prayer of every mouth". Every word of tefilla uttered by this man is a precious diamond – and all of his words are safely deposited with the Creator of the Universe, and a day will come when fruits will grow from these words and be reaped.

And it's a mistake to think that this man's prayers were not accepted. The prayers were accepted by Hashem, but their results will only appear at another time, and, perhaps, even regarding another matter.

From where do we learn this? When Hashem was about to destroy Sedom, the Torah tells us² that He said, "Shall I conceal from Avraham what I am about to do? Avraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and all of the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him." The Dubner Maggid explains the connection between these two verses via a moshav (a parable): An old man went to buy a suit. He was very careful and checked many suits to see if they fitted him or not. Soon after, a young man came into the shop. He bought one suit and then another suit without bothering to measure whether it fitted. The old man asked him, "How are you able to buy a suit without checking that it fits?" The young man answered, "If the suit doesn't fit well today, it will be good for another day. If the suit doesn't fit me, it will be good for my son – either way, these suits will be used."

Hashem was saying: "Shall I conceal from Avraham the decree for overturning Sedom? I know that the decree will stand and Sedom will still be overturned, regardless of Avraham's heartfelt davening to rescind the decree and save Sedom. So, what's the point of telling him when his prayers won't make a difference anyways?" Regarding this, Hashem says, "Avraham will surely become a great nation" – "I know that Avraham will go on to build the nation of Israel, and these prayers will not be lost. The nation of Israel will use these prayers that did not benefit Sedom, and if not today, then another day – in the end, Avraham's prayers will come to be realised."

So too, when we daven regarding someone who is sick and, G-d forbid, the person passes away. Don't think for a moment that the prayers that were davened were not accepted – that they were said for nothing. The prayers that did not help this sick person will help another sick person; or, perhaps, they will help in other times of trouble; or, perhaps, the prayers will help this person who passed away because he needs merits before the Heavenly Court.

Our job is to daven. Period. And to keep davening. And to trust that every word finds its way to Hashem, who treasures them all, and to know that every prayer is accepted, that no prayer is ever for naught.

ROBERT SUSSMAN,
EDITOR

¹See the bracha of shomeia tefilla in Shemoneh Esrei (Nusach Teman, Nusach Sephard, Nusach Sephardi)

²Bereishis 18:17-18

ON THE COVER: A CONCEPT IMAGE OF LEADERSHIP, WITH A GROUP OF FIGURES HELD AND SUPPORTED BY SOMEONE STANDING BEHIND THE SCENES, LITERALLY LIFTING THEM UP. BIGSTOCKPHOTO.COM

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