

TOLDOS 5772

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Our parsha opens with a familiar theme regarding the Avot- Yitz'chak and Rivkah are childless. Avraham and Sarah had this problem and Ya'akov and Rachel will be facing the same issues in parshat Va'yeitzei [30:1].

After 20 years of praying for a child, no- not merely “praying” in the usual manner, such as “Vayitpallel” but rather “Va'ye'tar” Yitz'chak to HaShem, then finally “Va'yei'ater” Lo HaShem”, G-d finally answered his pleas. What is the difference between Va'yitpallel and Va'ye'tar? Rashi comments that Va'ye'tar is a stronger, a more intense type of prayer. In other words, the usual method of prayer was ineffective as far as Yitz'chak was concerned, he needed a special type of prayer that was more forceful and concentrated before he could be helped. Why was that so? Why were Avraham and Ya'akov able to succeed with ordinary prayer yet Yitz'chak had to resort to extraordinary method of prayer?

According to the Midrash Avraham Avinu was destined to live 180 years, however, his life was shortened by 5 years, he died at age 175 [25:7], so as to spare him the anguish of seeing his grandson Eisav grow up as a “hunter, a man of the field” [25:27]. What that means is, in order for HaShem to grant children to Yitz'chak HaShem had to reduce the life of Avraham, [unbeknown to Yitz'chak]. A request for children under such circumstances does not come with ordinary prayers but only through intense and forceful prayers.

If one prays for a position of employment but the only way he could get that job is if the one who currently occupies that position is removed [one way or the other] then he would have to pray extremely hard, with very intense feelings. This is true for shidduchim as well. The Gemara Mo'ed Katan [18b] states that one is permitted to be Me'kadesh [betroth] a woman on Chol HaMo'ed because otherwise another man might take her. The Gemara asks how this can be possible since we learned that every single day a Heavenly voice emanates and declares “The daughter of So-and-so is destined to So-and-so”. Since one's mate is predetermined, how can one man lose his prospective bride to another? To which the Gemara replies, “Perhaps another man [a jealous suitor] preceded him through [very intense] prayer.

It is truly amazing what intense prayer can accomplish.