

The Miraculous Power of Prayer

Our tefillos have tremendous power. The Maharsha (Kiddushin 29b) writes that tefilla can bring about even the miraculous. Let us take a look at the astonishing words of R' Bachaye (Devarim 11:13). He writes that the power of tefilla is so great **that it can change nature, save one from danger, and remove a decree.**

In 1941, when Eretz Yisrael was in danger of German invasion due to Erwin Rommel's advance through Africa, there was a Yom Tefilla where they said the *yud gimel middos harachamim*, the thirteen attributes of mercy. The Brisker Rav was there and he said after davening, "We have accomplished with our tefillos as we have turned back the decree."

It's not only the tefillos *b'rabim* and those uttered by great tzaddikim that can reverse a terrible decree. In the times of the Baal Shem Tov there was once a drought. It got to the point that it caused the people to recite special tefillos coupled with fasting. Upon seeing a simple Jew davening with intense *kavana* along with tears by *v'atzar es hashamayim*, He will restrain the heaven so there will be no rain (in Shema), the Baal Shem Tov asked him what his intent was by those words. The man responded: Hashem should squeeze (in Bereishis 40:11, the Targum Onkelos on *va'eschat*, squeeze is *v'atzaris*) out waters from the heavens and then there won't be any water there (*v'atzar es hashamayim*) because it will then be here. It was because of this Jew who didn't know much that the Jews then were answered, and rain descended from the heavens (Keser Shem Tov, volume 2).

The halacha underscores the power of tefillos of an individual. The Shulchan Aruch states that the halacha is that if one said *morid hageshem* in the summertime he needs to repeat Shemoneh Esrei - (If he didn't finish the bracha yet, then he just returns to the beginning of the bracha Orach Chaim 114). Amazingly, the *Taz* (1586-1667) tells us this is because rain is bad in the summertime and through an individual's mistaken, absentminded tefilla, he can cause rain to come to the world. Wow, the power of tefilla!

It was in 1830, at the age of 65, that R' Avraham Dov of Avrush (1765-1840), author of the Bas Ayin, settled in Tzefas. Although he waited many years for the opportunity to bask in the spiritual light of Eretz Yisrael, once there, he found life too difficult to bear as the hardships were all too apparent. He decided to return to Avrush, where he had been the Rebbe since 1785. One day, as he was walking to shul for Mincha, he heard noises coming from the surrounding rooftops. Upon inquiring, he was told that in Tzefas, they performed household chores on their flat roofs in addition to using the roofs for storing food and supplies. The ruckus he heard was caused by the women scurrying about, removing everything from the roofs so that they wouldn't get ruined by rain. Looking up at the clear blue sky, he muttered that it certainly didn't look like rain was coming. But tonight will be the seventh day in Cheshvan, he was told, when we begin saying *v'sein tal u'matar l'vracha*, so rain will surely come. The unquestioning faith of the people there affected him so deeply that he decided to stay in the Holy Land.

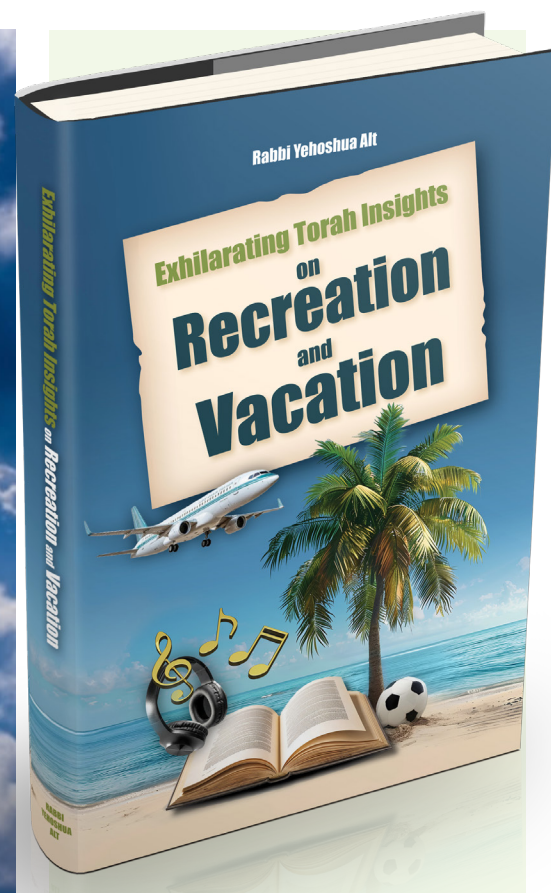
In the days of R' Naftali Ropshitzer there was a terrible decree against women in which many died. A man who didn't know much was davening Mincha on Erev Yom Kippur. In the bracha of *bareich alainu* in Shemoneh Esrei, instead of saying *u'vareich shnasainu kashanim hatovos*, bless our year like the best years, he said *u'vareich nshosainu kanashim hatovos*, bless our women... followed by concluding the bracha with *mevarech hanashim*, blesses the women, and not *mevarech hashanim*, blesses the years. It was because of this man's tefillos that the decree was removed, said R' Naftali, because although he recited the wrong words, he davened with tears and passion (Shomer Emunim, Maamar Ha'emuna, chapter 19).

In explaining why Sarah laughed when she was told she would have a son, the Sforno (Bereishis 18:12) comments that she thought that the words of the *malach* were from the bracha of a *navi* and not from Hashem. It is therefore impossible to return to youth from old age from such a bracha since that is like *techias hamaisim*. This can only be done through Hashem or a tefilla that finds favour with Hashem.

A Jewish boy who grew up secular in Tampa, Florida, always felt attached to Judaism and would frequent shuls and Jewish community functions. He later became religious and eventually authored *sefarim* that are used by many. His father wrote to him, "Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would have an Orthodox son. But I realised that when your mother was sick with German measles in her pregnancy with you, **I prayed to G-d that if she and the child would be fine, I would dedicate the child's life to Him. I forgot about that prayer but obviously He didn't.**"

The Gemara records that on the day Rebbe died, the Rabbis decreed a fast because of his illness. They said whoever will say Rebbe has died shall be pierced with a sword (Kesubos 104a). What is wrong with saying Rebbe died if he did? The Shitah Mekubetztes (s.v. *u'bsim*) explains that the Rabbis wanted to ensure that they would remain unaware of Rebbe's death because they knew that once they would learn of his death, they would be compelled to stop davening for him since it is not proper to daven for someone's resurrection. If, however, they remained ignorant, they could continue on the presumption that he was still alive and keep davening, in which case it might return him to life. They therefore forbade mention of his death.

When R' Shlomo Eiger asked his father, R' Akiva Eiger, to daven for a sick person and he wasn't answered, R' Akiva Eiger told him, "I davened for Sarah bas Rivka and I wasn't answered. Maybe there was a mistake with the name." R' Shlomo Eiger investigated and realised he submitted the wrong name. After submitting the correct name, R' Akiva Eiger wrote, "I davened for Rivka bas Sarah and was answered." And so it was — the woman had a complete recovery (Igeres Sofrim, p. 74). It was clear to R' Akiva Eiger that the wrong name was submitted to him, since obviously the tefilla would have been answered!



RABBI YEHOSHUA ALT

The newly released book "Exhilarating Torah Insights on Recreation and Vacation" is now available (as a paperback, hardcover and digitized version) for purchase and delivery on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0DF4ZHPKJ> or by sending a WhatsApp to +972 54 849 5217. Alternatively, you can call 054 849 5217 (Israel) or 917 732 2371 (United States) or send an email to yalt3285@gmail.com.

Some of the questions discussed in this book are the following.

What role does recreation play in our service of Hashem?

What does the Torah teach us about music?

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Is there a mitzvah to take a vacation?

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