

# From the desk of Rabbi Baumann



Dear Parents,

*Erev Shabbos Parashas Tazria-Metzora 5780*

The past weeks have witnessed an outpouring of *Tehillim* and tears to a degree we have never experienced. Numerous times a day we have participated in different group Tefilla chats in addition to our own prayers in which we have poured out our hearts for loved ones and friends. We have been *zocheh* to some miracles, but we may perhaps be feeling, that overall, our prayers have gone unanswered. Our lives are still in crisis and the tragedies abound. What happened to our *Tefillos*? Why were they not answered?

## What happened to our *Tefillos*?

A remarkable booklet, bearing the title of that question was penned several years ago by R' Avi Shulman, the well-known *mechanech*, speaker and life coach. He received a letter from a person who had suffered a tragedy and was asking this question, and was able, over the course of time to substantially answer the question on his own.

The young man, who lost his wife, wrote: "Another lesson I learned is that no matter what, prayers do not go unanswered. Sometimes the answer is positive, the way you asked for it...and sometimes the answer is positive in a way you didn't ask for it. But the answer is always positive. Every prayer is answered." The Almighty deemed it necessary to take his wife's soul and not extend her health and life in the way it was requested.... But in some ways the prayers did positively affect the situation!

The young man continued: "G-d answered when I called, just not in the way I asked for. But G-d is not a vending machine. He is a loving, caring Father with whom we have a dynamic relationship. We pray. He listens, considers, and decides how best to respond based on who we are and what we need. His answers are always positive."

If your children ask what happened to our prayers and learning, you can say perhaps because of our prayers people who we don't know were given additional hours or days or even years of life in which to continue performing *mitzvos* and accruing *zechusim*. Perhaps because of our prayers other people's pain was eased. Perhaps because of our prayers, the souls of those who passed away had an easier passage to heaven. Perhaps because of our prayers their families will be strengthened and comforted. We may not know how our prayers affected the situation, but we believe that in some great way they did.

R' Shulman also quotes from the *Steipler Gaon zt'l* who was asked a similar question, when, after a worldwide outpouring of *Tefillos* for a certain *Gadol*, his condition continued to deteriorate: "Do not be dismayed. There is no such thing as a sincere prayer that goes unanswered. It can't be otherwise. If it is not answered today, it will be answered tomorrow. If not tomorrow, it will be answered in a week. If not in a week, in a month. If not answered in a month, it may be answered in a year, or in ten years, or in a hundred years or more. If your prayers are not answered in your lifetime, they will be answered for your children, or for your children's children. We cannot say for sure **when** a prayer will be answered, but we can rest assured that every prayer **will** be answered somehow, someday."

R' Shulman explains this with a parable. Imagine an eight year old who desperately wants his father to buy him a bicycle. He asks many times in many ways. The father is moved by his requests, but because they live on a very busy street, the father determines it would be too dangerous. The answer is **no**. However, because the father was impressed by the sincerity of his son's requests, he decides he will grant it at some point in the future.

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Years later, the son, now a young man, wants to begin a business and desperately needs a car, but cannot afford to buy one. At that time, his father remembers his youthful request for a bicycle and decides that now would be a good time to grant that original request by offering the vehicle that his son so badly needs. The son gets the car and is able to build his business. Put another way - he asked for two wheels, and in the end he received four!

Could the eight year old have envisioned or appreciated the great value of waiting until he was grown to be granted his request? Of course not. If he had been able to understand his father's hesitations in buying the bicycle and also the lifelong benefits to be gotten from getting a car in adulthood, would he have understood and appreciated his father's decision? Definitely.

Similarly, we can't understand all the parameters of our requests, and we have to trust our Father in Heaven, to answer our requests in the way that is best for us.

May Hashem give us the good health and courage to live each day with meaning. May He strengthen us in the face of our current adversity, and let us continue to pray for its removal and accept His response no matter what, and help us to move forward and grow.

Best wishes for a meaningful Shabbos,

*Rabbi Kalman Baumann*

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