



In this week's Parsha, we learn that Yitzchak prayed, in the presence of his wife, because of Rivka's barren state. The Torah employs the term VAYE'TAR to express Yitzchak's entreaty to Hashem - and Hashem responds with the same term, VAYEI'ATER, best translated as Hashem 'allowed Himself to be entreated' (after Artscroll). How fascinating that the narrative so describes this mutual encounter between Yitzchak and Hashem!

Our rabbis tell us that although Rivka also prayed for a child, only Yitzchak, the son of a Tzadik, was answered. Clearly, the merit of Avraham played a role, hence the introductory description of Yitzchak as Avraham's progeny. Rivka, by contrast, was the daughter of a wicked man.

Rashi explains that the term VAYE'TAR implies much and extended prayer. For, following the Radak, Yitzchak was insistent not to beget a child from any handmaiden, but only from his beloved wife Rivka. Nevertheless, asks the Netivot Shalom, why was this Hebrew term employed and not, say, VAYITCHANEN - 'and he implored' -

as was Moshe's plea to enter Eretz Yisrael described. And why record that Hashem reciprocated? Would it not have been enough to say that Yitzchak 'knew his wife and she conceived', in the more common vernacular of the Chumash?

To explain, the Netivot Shalom invokes the story of Menashe, King of Yehuda. As recorded in Divrei HaYamim Bet 33, Menashe committed the worst of evils, destroying holy places and replacing them with idols. When punished, Menashe begs for mercy and Hashem responds (VAYEI'ATER) by forgiving him. In a Talmudic debate on this issue, Chazal remind us that since the letters AYIN and CHET are interchangeable, VAYEI'ATER can be written as VAYEI'CHATER meaning that Hashem 'dug out' or 'broke through'. That is to say that although Menashe was undeserving, Hakadosh Baruch Hu nevertheless responded to his plea by "exposing a small gap in the clouds of glory to let his prayers reach Him."

Thus with Yitzchak: He had every reason to despair and to give up after so many "unanswered" prayers. But he continued to entreat Hashem who, finally, dug a hole under the heavy metal obstruction that had impeded the prayers until now, to paraphrase the Netivot Shalom. Now Hashem responds in like manner, seemingly

touched by the deep sincerity and authenticity of Yitzchak's entreaties.

And so, even when we feel undeserving and that the outlook is bleak, let us pray fervently in the knowledge that Hashem actually wants to hear from us and will answer us, like a good friend, in a mutual manner. **MP**