



## The Meaning of Tefillah Part III: Tefillah as an Exercise in Hope

that this scream will not be from my house, it is a vain prayer. In both cases, the event already occurred.

**5) פסיקתא זוטרתא (לקח טוב) בראשית פרשת ויחי פרק מח**  
כלומר לא הייתי מתפלל לראות פניך, לפי שנתייאשתי ממך ואמרתי טרוף טרוף יוסף (בראשית לז לג),  
כי דבר שאדם סבור שהוא בעולם הוא מתפלל עליו רבונו של עולם זכיני לראותו:

That is to say, I did not mitpalel that I would see your face, because I despaired of you and said, "a wild animal has torn him apart," for only when someone believes a thing to be in existence does one pray to the Master of the World to see.

**6) רד"ק בראשית פרק מח פסוק יא**  
ויש מפרשים פללתי ענין תפלה, כי לתפלת שוא הייתי חושב זאת התפלה, כי באמת הייתי חושב  
שאתה מת:

Some commentators relate the word פללתי to the word תפלה, prayer, in which case Yaakov was saying to Joseph that he had not prayed to G'd concerning being reunited with Joseph in this life as he had considered it a forbidden, vain prayer, i.e. uttering the Lord's name in vain, seeing that all the evidence he had at his disposal indicated that Joseph was already dead.

**7) הרב מנחם יעקובזון, האם חשבתם פעם מה פירוש המילה "תפילה"?**  
<https://www.hidabroot.org/article/1160971>

בפסוק בפרשת ויחי 'ראות פניך לא פיללתי' – המשמעות של המילה 'פיללתי' היא במובן של ציפיה ותקוה, לא ציפיתי ולא קיויתי שעוד אראה אותך... התפילה בנויה על ציפיה ותקוה, האדם תולה את תקותו בבורא ומאמין ומצפה שיעזור לו, רק כך יכולה להווצר תלות וכך יוצר חיבור שהיא המשמעות הנוספת של המילה תפילה.

ולכל מי שמרגיש עכשיו עת צרה, כי הוא נכוה מהגזירות הכלכליות וגם מהרוע המייצר אותן, אז הנה הזדמנות לתלות ייבנו באבינו שבשמים ולהפנות אליו את הדאגה וגם את הכאב, הוא יכול והוא רוצה לעזור לכל אחד מאתנו.

A verse in Parshat Vayechi reads, "to see your face I never pilalti,"- the meaning of the word "pilalti" is a sense of anticipation and hope, i.e., "I did not anticipate nor hope that I would again see you." Tefillah, then, is built upon hope and anticipation, for during tefillah a person takes his or her hopes and depends upon the Creator and believes and anticipates His assistance. For only in this way can dependence be created, and a connection can be generated, which is the additional meaning of "tefillah."

And to anyone who feels right now that they are in a difficult time...tefillah is an opportunity to depend on our Father in Heaven, and to turn to Him with our worries and our pain, for He can, and He desires to, assist each and every one of us.

### **8) Rabbi Yechiel Spero, *Touched by a Light* (94-95)**

On December 7, 1988, a devastating earthquake destroyed much of the northwestern section of Armenia. Over 25,000 people lost their lives. Parents ran frantically to try and find their children who were buried under piles of rubble. In one small town, a father ran to his child's school, but when he arrived, he saw that the school was no longer standing. The entire building was one big pile of stones and debris.

Other parents came to the site and hung their heads and cried. They were certain that their children were no longer alive. But this loving father had frequently reassured his child that he would always be there for him. And he was not going to allow this tragedy to be an exception to the promise.

And so, he began to dig. Bystanders who had gathered wondered aloud how long the desperate father would continue. Realists tried to convince him that he was wasting his time

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and that his efforts would prove futile. But he paid no attention to anyone. Instead, he called out to his son over and over again,

“Armand! Don’t give up hope. I am coming to get you. Armand! I love you! Don’t give up hope!”

He repeated this refrain over and over, as the crowd looked on with a mixture of pity and admiration at the father’s heroic and courageous and perhaps foolhardy efforts. He removed stone after stone, block after block, and worked diligently. Although others began to help, they quickly gave up. But this father displayed unusual dedication and endurance. Twelve hours passed, but he didn’t tire. He continued to haul away piece after piece. After 24 hours, there were still no sounds and no sign of life.

But a father is a father, and he never gives up on his child. So the father continued to dig. Then, in the 38th hour, he began to hear a voice. It was his son, Armand!

“Papa! Papa!” Armand continued to call as his father, exhausted and drained, worked more feverishly than ever. Word began to spread and hundreds gathered. Those individuals who had looked on with pity and had thought that this father had lost his mind now began to join him, while strangers clapped and cheered. A short while later, he removed one final stone. He reached out and grabbed his son’s hand and cried uncontrollably.

Father and son were reunited, and thirteen other children’s lives were spared. They were saved because a slab of cement had collapsed above them, creating a small cavity, preventing the rubble from crushing them. The story was written up the world over, and Armand’s father became quite a sensation. He had taught the world a lesson in parenting. When asked if he ever gave up hope, little Armand replied, “No, I never did. My father told me that he would never give up hope on me, and I told all the other children that my father will come and find me, no matter how long it would take.”