

THE INCREDIBLE POWER OF PRAYER

Background

Moshe Rabbeinu went up to receive the Torah. At the end of the forty days, because of a mistake in calculation, it was assumed that Moshe should already have returned, so something was wrong. The *Soton* made the world dark and showed the Jewish People an image of Moshe's casket floating in the air. Feeling lost and lacking a leader, one group turned to Aaron to build the *eigel ha'zahav*.

As this event was so close to when the Jewish People had heard HASHEM speaking directly to them, this act was considered the egregious sin of abandoning HASHEM for an *avodah zarah*. It was so severe that HASHEM told Moshe that they would be killed out – unless he *davened*.

Questions

If their act was so evil that they deserved to die, how could Moshe's *davening* change that? Surely if there had been room for HASHEM to forgive them, He would have. So clearly, there wasn't. How could Moshe's begging for forgiveness make them less guilty?

ספר שמות פרק לב

(י) וְעַתָּה הַנִּיחָה לִּי וַיִּחַר אֲפִי בָהֶם וְאֶכְלֶם וְאֶעֱשֶׂה אוֹתָךְ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל

And now let Me go, and My anger will flare against them, and I will destroy them, and I will make you into a great nation.

רש"י על שמות פרק לב פסוק י

(י) הַנִּיחָה לִּי - עֵדִיין לֹא שִׁמְעֵנוּ שֶׁהַתְּפִלָּה מִשֶּׁה עֲלִיהֶם וְהוּא אוֹמֵר הַנִּיחָה לִּי אֲלֵא כִּאֵן פִּתַּח לוֹ פִּתַּח וְהוֹדִיעוּ שֶׁהַדָּבָר תְּלוּי בּוֹ שֶׁאִם יִתְפַּלֵּל עֲלֵיהֶם לֹא יִכְלֹם (שִׁמ"ר)

We haven't yet heard that Moshe prayed for them, yet HASHEM is saying, "Let Me go." From here we see that HASHEM gave an opening to Moshe, saying, "The matter depends upon you. If you pray for them, I won't destroy them."