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A SINCERE PRAYER

One day a young kollel fellow, a scholar who studied in one of the distinguished Kollelim, post-graduate fellowship Torah programs, in Bnei Brak, presented himself together with his seven year old son before Rav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita. "Rebbe," the young man said, "I would like to relate to his honor a moving, incredible story that occurred concerning my son. As his honor can see, my son was diagnosed a short while ago with the dread disease. As part of his treatment, the doctors said that he would have to undergo several rounds of serious chemotherapy. Among the many side effects that he might suffer, losing all of his body hair was a certainty. My son has accepted Hashem's decree of strict justice with great love, far beyond a child of such young years. Yet, despite his incredible emunah, faith, and bitachon, trust, in the Almighty that whatever is decreed for him is all for the good, he became hysterical when he heard he would lose his hair. He told us, 'I do not care about the hair on my head, even if it will look strange and the other children might look at me in a ridiculing manner. I cannot, however, tolerate losing my payos, sidelocks. My payos maintain my appearance as a Jewish child. How can I lose my payos?'"

"My son cried and cried, and he prayed and prayed. He supplicated Hashem with the following words: 'My merciful Father in Heaven. I am confident that everything that You do to me is for the good. No one has greater compassion than You. This is what my parents have taught me. Therefore, I accept unequivocally and with utmost love all that You will send me. I accept everything that is connected with this disease that I have, because I am certain that You will not forsake me. I am willing to lose my hair, even though I will be greatly embarrassed thereby.'

"Suddenly, my son burst out into bitter weeping. As he sobbed, he cried out, 'Hashem, I will give it all up- but not my payos! How can I be without payos? I cannot overlook my payos. They are what make me look like a Jew. Please, Hashem - leave my payos!'"

"My son davened like this for over an hour, repeating his entreaty amid bitter wailing. Rebbe - lo and behold - look at my son. His payos have not been touched. The drugs ravaged his body. Every hair is gone - except for his payos. Hashem listened to my son's prayers."

Rav Chaim was so taken by this incident that he immediately summoned all the members of his family who were in the house to come to see the power of innocence, the power of sincerity, the power of prayer from a pure heart.

The key to prayer is sincerity. This means that the supplicant believes that only Hashem can help him. Therefore, he turns his heart to Him, understanding that any other avenue is only part of the process called hishtadlus, endeavor. This is something which we must do, but we may never forget that the result can only be affected by Hashem.