

Our *Parashah* opens two years after the end of last week's *Parashah*. Yosef had solicited the help of Pharaoh's chief cupbearer, saying (40:14), "If only you would think of me . . . and you will do me a kindness, if you please, and mention me to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this place." Last week's *Parashah* ends: "The Chamberlain of the Cupbearers did not remember Yosef, and he forgot him." *Rashi z"l* explains: He "did not remember Yosef" on that day, "and he forgot him" thereafter. *Rashi* continues: Because Yosef had placed his trust in the Egyptian, he had to remain in prison for two more years. Thus it is written (*Tehilim* 60:5) "Happy is the man who places his trust in *Hashem* and does not turn to the arrogant," *i.e.*, he does not trust in Egyptians, who are called "arrogant" (see *Yeshayah* 30:7). [Until here from *Rashi z"l*]

Midrash Rabbah expounds on the above verse from *Tehilim* as follows: "Happy is the man who places his trust in *Hashem*"--This refers to Yosef. "And does not turn to the arrogant"--Because Yosef said to the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers, "Think of me . . . and mention me," *Hashem* added two years to his prison time. [This *Midrash* seems contradictory--first, praising Yosef's *Bitachon*, then criticizing him for seeking help. This is discussed below.]

Midrash Rabbah also teaches: We read (*Iyov* 28:3), "He placed a limit on the darkness"--*Hashem* decreed how long Yosef would remain in the darkness of the prison. Once that time was up, "It happened at the end of two years to the day, Pharaoh was dreaming" (the opening of our *Parashah*).

R' Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik z"l (1820-1892; rabbi of Brisk, Belarus; progenitor of the Soloveitchik rabbinical family) writes: *Bitachon* means feeling calm, secure in the knowledge that one can cast his burdens upon *Hashem*. - **Continued on back page** -

Bitachon

This year--a *Shemittah* year--we are focusing on the related subject of *Bitachon*/placing one's trust in *Hashem*. This week's installment begins on the front page.

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R' Soloveitchik continues: The Torah permits a person to engage in *Hishtadlut*/efforts to achieve one's ends, because not every person is on a spiritual level where he feels at ease relying on *Hashem* alone. In the same way that our Sages tell us to begin studying Torah for ulterior motives because that leads to studying Torah with pure motives, so a person is permitted to help himself up to the point where he feels comfortable relying on *Hashem* and, hopefully, his "comfort level" with *Bitachon* will grow over time.

As such, continues R' Soloveitchik, there is no "one size fits all" balance between *Bitachon* and *Hishtadlut*. Someone who can work only a little bit and otherwise have *Bitachon* is considered a sinner if he works more than that small amount. On the other hand, someone whose *Bitachon* is currently less is permitted to work more. But, if a person is capable of *Bitachon* and he nevertheless relies on his own efforts, his punishment will be that he will get what he wants, *i.e.*, he will need to work harder and harder.

At first glance, R' Soloveitchik writes, Yosef did the least *Hishtadlut* possible--he merely spoke a few words to the Cupbearer. Indeed, it was reasonable for Yosef to think that this was *Hashem's* intention, for why else did *Hashem* cause the Cupbearer to have a dream and look preoccupied in Yosef's presence?!

Nevertheless, says the *Midrash*, *Hashem* added two years to Yosef's prison time because Yosef said to the Cupbearer, "Think of me . . . and mention me." R' Soloveitchik explains: For Yosef, even that small request was too much *Hishtadlut*, which we learn from the fact that he was punished for it. This is what the *Midrash* is teaching: "Happy is the man who places his trust in *Hashem*"--This refers to Yosef, whose level of *Bitachon* usually was very great. "And does not turn to the arrogant"--Because he said to the Egyptian, "Think of me . . . and mention me"--behavior that was inappropriate for a person on Yosef's level of *Bitachon*--*Hashem* added two years to his prison time. - **Continued inside** -

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“Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.”

(42:8)

R' Chaim ben Attar z"l (1696-1743; Morocco, Italy and *Eretz Yisrael*) writes: Granted that Yosef did not have a beard the last time his brothers saw him, and now he did. Even so, human nature is that, when one person recognizes another, recognition will dawn on the second person as well. The reason for this is that their hearts communicate silently with each other, as we read (*Mishlei 27:19*), “As a face reflects a face in water, so does one man’s heart to another.” People tend to study each other’s eyes, foreheads, and speech, and slowly recognition dawns.

Nevertheless, the Torah tells us, Yosef’s brothers did not recognize him. The reason is that they had actively pushed from their minds any possibility that Yosef’s dreams would be fulfilled. (*Ohr Ha’Chaim*)

“They then said to one another, ‘Indeed we are guilty concerning our brother inasmuch as we saw his heartfelt anguish when he pleaded with us and we paid no heed; that is why this anguish has come upon us.’” (42:21)

Midrash Tehilim states: *Hashem* said to Yaakov’s sons, “You sold Yosef into slavery. Therefore, I swear by your lives that you will read every year, ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.’” [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R' Moshe Yehuda Leib Rabinowitz *shlita* (*Munkatcher Rebbe* in Brooklyn, N.Y.) explains: In our verse, Yaakov’s sons fault themselves for not having compassion on Yosef when he pleaded with them. [They could have shown compassion toward Yosef even though they believed selling him was *Halachically* and morally justified.] The *Tikkun* / correction for the sin of not showing compassion is showing compassion. When the *Midrash* says that we will read “We were slaves . . .” every year, it is referring to the *Haggadah* in general, which opens with “*Ha lachma anya*,” where we express compassion for all who are hungry and need a place to eat.

(*Haggadah Shel Pesach: Munkatch p. 62*)

R' Yitzchak Arama z"l (Spain; died 1494) writes: Though man has *Bechirah* / free will to act as his heart desires about almost everything in the world, he cannot change one iota whether *Hashem*’s will is ultimately carried out. For example, if *Hashem* has decreed that a person should become rich, there are many different ways that can happen. Man’s *Bechirah* can play a role in how it happens, but the outcome is predetermined: the subject of the decree will become rich. Sometimes, the very means that someone uses to try to prevent *Hashem*’s decree from being fulfilled is what leads to its fulfillment, as we see in the case of Yosef’s brothers selling him as a slave to prevent his dreams of ruling over them from being fulfilled. (*Akeidat Yitzchak* No.28)

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The second *Midrash* quoted above (commenting on the verse, “He placed a limit on the darkness”) is also teaching a lesson about *Bitachon*. R' Soloveitchik explains: Everything in the world happens because of cause and effect. We tend to think that buying merchandise at a low price and selling it at a high price is the cause of becoming wealthy, and becoming wealthy is the effect of successful buying and selling. In fact, the opposite is true: If *Hashem* wants a person to become wealthy, He inspires that person to buy merchandise at a low price and sell it at a high price. The fact that *Hashem* wants the person to be wealthy is the cause; success in business is the effect.

Likewise, R' Soloveitchik concludes, we might mistakenly read the beginning of our *Parashah* as saying that Yosef got out of prison because Pharaoh had a dream. No! says the *Midrash*: *Hashem* decreed that Yosef would remain in the darkness of the prison for two additional years [for the reasons discussed above]. Once that time was up, “At the end of two years to the day, Pharaoh was dreaming.” The fact that it was time for Yosef’s release was the cause of Pharaoh’s dreaming; the dreaming was actually the effect. [*Bitachon* includes understanding that *Hashem* has a plan (“cause”), and He influences our lives accordingly (“effect”); our efforts are not the causes of the results we see.] (*Bet Halevi Al Ha’Torah*)

Another perspective:

R' Eliyahu Dessler z"l (1892-1953; head of the Gateshead, England Kollel and *Mashgiach Ruchani* of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak) writes: When a person attributes events in his life to natural causes, he is, in effect, forgetting *Hashem*. Measure-for-measure, *Hashem* acts as if He has forgotten the person, casting him into a world of “darkness,” where *Hashem*’s “light” is hidden.

The *Midrash* is teaching: Yosef recognized that he had made a mistake in appealing to the Cupbearer, and that he was now in “darkness,” so he worked hard to reconnect with *Hashem*. Once Yosef did that, *Hashem* “placed a limit on the darkness”; He responded to Yosef’s repentance with a miracle: “Pharaoh was dreaming.” That was miraculous because Pharaoh was not otherwise on a level to have a quasi-prophetic vision. (*Michtav M’Eliyahu* III p.242)

From the same work:

“Now let Pharaoh seek out a discerning and wise man and set him over the land of Egypt.” (41:33)

R' Dessler asks: Yosef seems to be asking Pharaoh for a job. Hadn’t he learned from his extra two years in prison to place his trust in *Hashem* alone?

R' Dessler answers: The Torah does not object to *Hishtadlut*, only to the belief that man’s *Hishtadlut* makes a difference. Indeed, exerting one’s effort but giving all the credit to *Hashem* is what the Torah expects of us.

Here, Yosef had told Pharaoh about dream interpretation (verse 16), “That is beyond me; it is *Elokim* Who will respond with Pharaoh’s welfare.” Why did Yosef feel the need to discredit himself to Pharaoh? Precisely because Yosef had worked on his *Bitachon*. But, with the recognition that credit belongs to *Hashem*, it was appropriate for Yosef to engage in *Hishtadlut*. (*Michtav M’Eliyahu* IV p.30)