

At the end of last week's *Parashah*, we read that Yosef asked Pharaoh's *Sar Ha'mashkim* / Chamberlain of the Cupbearers to remember him and help him get out of jail. The last verse of the *Parashah* tells us: "The *Sar Ha'mashkim* did not remember Yosef, and he forgot him." This week's *Parashah* opens two years later, when the *Sar Ha'mashkim* finally is caused to remember Yosef.

Midrash Rabbah comments on the verse in *Tehilim* (40:5): "Praiseworthy is the man who places his trust in *Hashem*"--this refers to Yosef. But, because he asked the *Sar Ha'mashkim* to remember him, he had to sit in prison an additional two years. [Until here from the *Midrash*]

This *Midrash* appears to contradict itself! Was Yosef the paradigm of a person who trusts in *Hashem*, or did he wrongly seek the assistance of a human?

R' Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal z"l *Hy"d* (1885-1945; rabbi of, and *Rosh Yeshiva* in, Pieštany, Czechoslovakia) writes in the name of his wife's grandfather, R' Menachem Katz Prostitz z"l (1795-1891; rabbi of Tzehlem, Austria): For an ordinary person, there would be nothing wrong in seeking the help of the *Sar Ha'mashkim*; man is obligated to expend reasonable efforts to accomplish his goals, and doing so does not necessarily indicate a lack of *Bitachon* / trust in *Hashem*. However, the *Midrash* is teaching, even such a modest effort was considered sinful for a person of Yosef's stature as the model of *Bitachon*.

How do we know that Yosef was, in fact, on such a lofty level? Because he knew that his brothers hated him, yet he did not hesitate when his father sent him to check on their welfare. Rather, he placed his trust in *Hashem* and declared, "I am ready!" (*Mishneh Sachir*)

Shabbat

The *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 21b) teaches: Wicks and oils which may not be used for *Shabbat* candles may be used for *Chanukah* candles--even for the *Shabbat* of *Chanukah*. The *Gemara* explains that the light of the *Shabbat* candles is intended to be enjoyed; therefore, one may use only materials that produce good quality light. If one uses inferior wicks and oils, he may adjust them on *Shabbat* in the hopes of getting better light. But, adjusting a burning candle transgresses *Shabbat*. In contrast, one is not permitted to make use of the light of the *Chanukah* candles; thus, there is no fear that one may adjust the wicks or oil to improve the light's quality.

R' Menachem Nochum Twersky z"l (1730-1787; *Chernobyler Maggid* and *Chassidic Rebbe*) explains the *Gemara* homiletically:

Shabbat is a special gift that *Hashem* gave us in order to draw us closer to Him. However, *Shabbat* is so lofty that it is difficult for some people to rise to it.

On *Chanukah*, in contrast, *Hashem* lowers Himself to us, so-to-speak. Thus, the ideal height at which to light the *Menorah* is quite low--below 10 *Tefachim*, approximately 40 inches, off of the ground. Oil, with which we light the *Menorah*, is frequently used as a metaphor for wisdom--thus, for example, one who wishes to become wiser is advised to face slightly southward when praying, as the *Menorah* was in the southern half of the *Bet Hamikdash*. The message, writes the *Chernobyler Maggid*, is that, on *Chanukah*, *Hashem* comes "down" to us to make us wiser and help us come closer to Him. – **Continued in box inside** –

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“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)

Speaking in Shanghai, China, during the Mir Yeshiva’s exile there, R’ Yechezkel Levenstein z”l (1895-1974; *Mashgiach Ruchani* in several *yeshivot* in Poland and Israel) observed: We have a tendency to say, “With *Hashem’s* help,” when making plans. This implies that our efforts are primary, but that we can use an assist from *Hashem*. This perspective is misguided, however. We are, indeed, obligated to expend efforts to achieve our goals, but only because of *Hashem’s* curse to Adam (“By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread”). As for the outcomes of our plans, it is solely *Hashem’s* Will that brings success or failure.

Yosef’s brothers understood this, R’ Levenstein noted. When they were accused of spying and given an ultimatum to bring their younger brother to Egypt, they did not say, “We should not have told the Egyptian viceroy (Yosef) that we have a younger brother.” They did not ask themselves what would have been a better strategy for dealing with the Egyptian ruler. Instead, they immediately attributed their troubles to a sin--failing to have compassion for their brother Yosef. It is our good deeds and sins that “drive” *Hashem’s* Will.

Likewise, R’ Levenstein continued, when Yosef’s brothers found their money bags in their pouches, their immediate reaction was (42:28), “What is this that *Elokim* has done to us?” And, when the Egyptian told them, “Fear not! Your *Elokim* and the *Elokim* of your father has put a hidden treasure in your sacks,” they were immediately assuaged. No better explanation could be hoped for than: Such is the Will of G-d!

R’ Levenstein added: The *Chashmona’im* also attributed everything to *Hashem*, and that is what gave them the courage to go to war. They understood that it made no difference that they were outnumbered by the Greeks; numbers and odds do not matter to *Hashem*. And, that is why the *Chashmona’im* succeeded.

In short, R’ Levenstein concluded, just as it makes no sense to blame one’s injuries on a stick that is used to hit him, so it makes no sense to blame those injuries on the person wielding the stick,. Only the Creator determines our fates!
(*Mi’mizrach Ha’shemesh*)

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Man, continues the *Chernobyler Maggid*, is like a wick, waiting to be “lit” (enlightened) by wisdom, so the he can shine brightly. The *Gemara* is teaching: Even those individuals who are not yet ready to be set aflame by *Shabbat* can be enlightened by *Chanukah*.
(*Me’or Enayim*)

“By this shall you be tested: By Pharaoh’s life, you will not leave here unless your youngest brother comes here.” (42:9)

Why did Yosef subject his brothers to this ordeal? R’ Shlomo Twerski z”l (1923-1981; *Hornesteipler Rebbe* and rabbi in Denver, Colorado) answers:

When we say that we are “*Mochel*” / forgive someone who sinned towards us, that does not mean that we are erasing that person’s sin. Indeed, it is absolute haughtiness for us to think that we can erase another person’s sin.

What then is “*Mechilah*” / “forgiveness”? R’ Twerski explains: The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 103a) states that the angels did not want the repentance of the evil king Menashe to be accepted, but *Hashem* created a “*Mechilah*” / tunnel for Menashe that reached directly to the Throne of Glory. We see, says R’ Twerski, that *Mechilah* is a “path” for a sinner, a way to restore his self-esteem and achieve atonement. That is what we are giving a person when we forgive him.

Yosef, too, was giving his brothers a path to achieve atonement, R’ Twerski continues. Our Sages teach that repentance is complete only when a person faces the same challenge that caused him to stumble before, and this time he does not stumble. Thus, the way for Yaakov’s sons to atone for what they did to Yosef was to stand up for Rachel’s other son, Binyamin. Yosef was creating that opportunity, that path to atonement, so that his brothers’ repentance could be complete.

R’ Twerski cautions: We do not have the right to test others in order to “help them” repent. What we can learn from this is what *Mechilah* means: The hurt person removes himself from the picture so that the one who hurt him has room to repent. [This also teaches that the one who sinned should not think his repentance is complete just because his friend, neighbor, spouse, etc. says, “I forgive you.”]
(*Malchut Shlomo*)

R’ Dr. Abraham J. Twerski z”l (1930-2021; prolific author, and younger brother of the above) elaborates in the name of his brother: The above idea explains why Yosef never contacted Yaakov to say that he was alive. Yosef wanted his brothers to achieve atonement for what they had done, and he understood that that would require a process, not simply saying, “I forgive you.” Indeed, had Yosef simply said, “I forgive you,” he would have appeared as a magnanimous *Tzaddik*, while lowering his brothers to the status of groveling sinners. That would not have given them a path to atonement. Moreover, Yosef understood that he was doing exactly what Yaakov would have wanted had he been aware of all the facts.

We read (41:51), “Yosef called the name of the firstborn Menashe, ‘For, *Elokim* has made me forget all my hardship and all my father’s household.’” [Note: This is a different Menashe than the king mentioned above.] Obviously, Yosef had not forgotten all his hardship and all his father’s household! What he meant was: I recognize that everything that has happened to me was by the hand of *Hashem*, and now *Hashem* has given me the tools to begin to put my hardship behind me.
(*Forgiveness* p.192-195)