

In this week's *Parashah*, Yosef reveals his identity to his brothers, saying (45:3), "I am Yosef. Is my father still alive?" What did Yosef mean by this question? asks R' Dovid Feinstein z"l (1929-2020; *Rosh Yeshiva* of Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem in New York). Was Yehuda not telling Yosef a moment before how much his father Yaakov would suffer if Binyamin were not returned to him?!

R' Feinstein explains that Yosef's question can be understood as a rebuke: "Only now you are worried about our father's life? The threat to his life began 22 years ago when I was taken from him, not now when Binyamin is at risk!"

Alternatively, says R' Feinstein, Yosef's question can be understood as follows: The three Patriarchs represent the three pillars on which the world stands--Torah, *Avodah*, and *Chessed*. Some say that Yaakov is the Patriarch who represents *Chessed*--after all, how much *Chessed* must occur in a household where thirteen children are being raised (more than 13 according to some *Midrashim*)! Other say that Yaakov represents Torah, for he is described (*Bereishit* 25:27) as the "dweller in tents," *i.e.*, in the study hall. The Torah is referred to in *Mishlei* (31:26) as the "Torah of *Chessed*." Indeed, writes R' Feinstein, if a person's Torah study does not transform him into a doer of *Chessed*, he has not studied properly! Therefore, Yosef is asking: "Is our father's trait still alive among us? You did not behave toward me with *Chessed* and, to be honest, I did not behave toward you with *Chessed* either."

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## Shabbat

"*Va'yigash / Yehuda* approached him and said, 'If you please, my lord, may your servant speak a word in my lord's ears and let not your anger flare up at your servant . . .'" (44:18)

*Midrash Rabbah* notes that the word "*Va'yigash*" is used in the context of war (*Shmuel II* 10:13), appeasement (*Yehoshua* 14:6), and prayer (*Melachim I* 18:36--"Eliyahu Ha'navi approached and said, 'Hashem, *Elokim* of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yisrael, today it will become known that You, *Elokim*, are with *Yisrael* . . ."). All three of these interpretations of *Va'yigash* were present in Yehuda's interaction with Yosef. [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R' Don Segal *shlita* (Yerushalayim and Brooklyn, N.Y.; a leading contemporary teacher of *Mussar*) asks: The verse says that Yehuda approached the viceroy (Yosef)! How does this indicate prayer, which should be directed only to *Hashem*?

He explains: We read (*Tehilim* 145:15--recited three times daily in our prayers), "The eyes of all look to You with hope and You give them their food in its proper time." R' Avraham *ben Ha'Rambam* z"l (son of Maimonides; Egypt; 1186-1237) asks: Is this true--do the "eyes of all" really look to *Hashem* for their food? Maybe the most pious individuals do, but not "all"!

R' Avraham answers: When our eyes turn to a potential benefactor, it is not to his person that we are looking, it is to his power of decision-making. And the quoted verse in *Tehilim* is our acknowledgment that, in fact, a person has no power to make a decision whether to help others. One may exercise his free will to choose to help others, but whether one actually helps is determined by *Hashem*. (R' Segal relates that he was once late for an appointment with a government clerk whose signature he needed on a form, and the offended clerk refused to sign. Then the clerk changed his mind and signed, all the while muttering, "Why am I doing this? I shouldn't sign!")

In this light we may understand the *Midrash*, writes R' Segal. When Yehuda approached the viceroy (Yosef), he knew that the viceroy was not the decision-maker. Thus, his words contained a prayer: "I am asking the viceroy to act, but You, *Hashem*, are the real decision-maker, so please save Binyamin!"

How does one obtain the ability to see the world this way? asks R' Segal. One gets it from *Shabbat*! All week long, we may be too busy working to reflect on Who is really providing for us. On *Shabbat*, however, we do have the time to analyze our lives and see that *Hashem* is, in fact, making the decisions.

(*Ma'adanei Shabbat*)

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**“They came to Egypt--Yaakov and all his offspring with him. His sons and grandsons with him, his daughters and granddaughters and all his offspring he brought with him to Egypt.” (46:6-7)**

R' Chaim ben Attar z"l (1696-1743; Morocco, Italy and *Eretz Yisrael*; known as the *Ohr Ha'Chaim Ha'kadosh*) asks: After the verse says, “And all his offspring,” why does it need to go into detail (“his sons” etc.)? Also, why does the verse interrupt the list of descendants with the words “with him”?

The *Ohr Ha'Chaim Ha'kadosh* answers: Yaakov's offspring did not all descend to Egypt with the same attitude. Some of them went willingly, knowing that it was G-d's Will that they fulfill the prophecy of exile that was foretold to Avraham. They went “with him,” *i.e.*, with Yaakov, who also went with that intention. Others were less willing to go. Those offspring, Yaakov “brought with him to Egypt.”

Perhaps, continues the *Ohr Ha'Chaim Ha'kadosh*, this is why *Bnei Yisrael* did not experience slavery until Yaakov's sons had died--because the merit of accepting the exile upon themselves willingly protected them.

(*Ohr Ha'Chaim*)

R' Gedaliah Eisman z"l (1910-2011; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of Yeshiva Kol Torah in Yerushalayim) writes: This verse, as explained by the *Ohr Ha'Chaim Ha'kadosh*, reminds us of a principle that we often fail to apply in our daily lives--*i.e.*, that two people may perform the identical action, but G-d will view their actions very differently depending on the attitude with which they acted. Most commonly, this dichotomy exists between a person who performs a *Mitzvah* out of habit and one who achieves exactly the same result through toil and passion for the *Mitzvah*. Likewise, one person may perform actions that make a significant impact on a community, but make no impact on him, while another person does things that seem much smaller, but he does them with a sense of accepting the yoke of Heaven. The latter person's actions are worth far more, says R' Eisman.

(*Gidulei Mussar: Elul V'yemei Ha'din* p.104)

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R' Feinstein continues: There is another aspect to Yosef's confession that he did not treat his brothers kindly. Arguably, Yosef should have been kind to his brothers from the beginning as thanks for selling him as slave, for that led to his becoming the viceroy of Egypt. One must be thankful for a good done him even when it was not intended, writes R' Feinstein.

It is relatively easy, adds R' Feinstein, to be thankful after the fact, when something that seemed bad turns out to be good. In reality, though, we should be looking for a hidden blessing as soon as something bad happens--definitely not something that is easy to do.

(*Le'David Mizmor*)

**“Yehuda approached him and said, ‘If you please, my lord, may your servant speak a word in my lord's ears and let not your anger flare up at your servant--for you are like Pharaoh.’” (44:18)**

Only two verses earlier, at the end of last week's *Parashah*, the brothers had said, “We are ready to be slaves to my lord--both we and the one in whose hand the goblet was found.” Why, then, the sudden change of heart and the plea to free Binyamin?

R' Yaakov Moshe Charlap z"l (1882-1951; rabbi of Yerushalayim's Sha'arei Chessed neighborhood and *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav) explains that Yehuda argued as follows: In truth, “You are like Pharaoh,” and there is no room to challenge your decision. However, you said (verse 17), “As for you--go up in peace to your father.” Know, therefore, that there cannot be peace for my father without Binyamin!

(*Mei Marom: Nimukei Ha'mikraot*)

**“So Yaakov arose from Be'er Sheva; the sons of Yisrael transported Yaakov their father, as well as their young children and wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to transport him.” (46:5)**

The *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 89b) teaches: Our father Yaakov should have gone down to Egypt in iron chains, as exiles are typically treated, in order to fulfill G-d's prophecy to Avraham that his descendants would be exiled to a foreign land. However, his merit protected him, as it is written (*Hoshea* 11:4): “With the cords of man I drew them, with bonds of love, and I acted towards them like farmers who raise the yoke from upon their animals' jaws, and I provided food for them.” [Until here from the *Gemara*, as elucidated by *Rashi* z"l]

R' Nachman of Breslov z"l (1772-1810; Ukraine) relates: Someone asked me whether he should travel to a particular place. I answered him: When a person sees that circumstances are leading him to travel to a certain place, he should not resist. Wherever a person travels, he accomplishes some spiritual *Tikkun* / spiritual “repair” there. The key is to take care not to sin while on the journey. This is true even of the simplest person, for wherever he goes he inevitably performs some act of holiness--for example, he may pray there, or he may eat and recite a blessing, etc. No matter where a person is, he surely was sent there by G-d because there is something to do there that only he can do, again provided that he doesn't sin there, G-d forbid.

Therefore, continues R' Nachman, a person should be grateful when he sees that he is being pushed to travel somewhere. If not for that push to go voluntarily, he might have to go involuntarily, in chains, as the *Gemara* says about Yaakov Avinu. This applies even to the simplest Jew.

(*Sichot Ha'Ran* #86)