



KINDER TORAH

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PARASHAS VAYESHEV

PEACE AND QUIET

"Yaakov settled in the land where his father lived, the land of Canaan" (Bereshis 37:1). Rashi adds that Yaakov wanted to live in serenity. However, the distress of Yosef came upon him, and spoiled his hopes. Tsaddikim want to live in serenity?!? In heaven, the angels were dumbfounded by this request. Hashem said, "Isn't it enough for tsaddikim to have peace in the next world? They want tranquility in this world also?"

At first glance this seems a bit puzzling. After all, why would a tsaddik want peace and quiet? Not to sit back on his easy chair and daydream all day. A tsaddik is not interested in just passing the time away. He wants to be free of stress and worries, in order to learn Torah better. He wants a beautiful private study; walls lined with new seforim, comfortable new furniture, and sparkling clean windows, open to the clean fresh air. Such a place will allow him to put all of his energies into serving Hashem. What is wrong with wanting nice surroundings in order to perfect ones *Avodas Hashem* (Service to Hashem)? Rav Leib Chasman in his sefer *Ohr Yohel* answers this question. We may think that we want these things to broaden our spiritual vistas. They are really the requests of the *Yetzer Hora* (Evil Inclination). He cares nothing about our souls, and only wants to increase our physical desires.

Rav Chasman relates a fundamental principle. A person's mission in this world is not to acquire things that he does not have. Rather, he must use what he does have to acquire as much wisdom as he can. Hashem gives him everything that he needs to perfect himself. We say this twice daily in *Kriyas Shema*. "And you shall love Hashem your G-d . . . with all of your might" (Devorim 6:5). Rav Chasman interprets the Gemora's (Berachos 54a) commentary on this verse to mean that you must love Hashem in each and every situation that He creates for you. You are lacking nothing.

Kinderlach . . .

"I can't learn now. I'm too tired. I'm too hungry. I don't like the Rebbe. I'm not happy with my chavrusa. My seat is too near the window. My seat is too far from the window. My gemora is too small. My foot hurts. My glasses are dirty." Kinderlach, these may all be valid reasons for not being able to learn. Or, they may be the Yetzer Hora talking to you. He wants to spoil you, telling you that things have to be "just so" in order for you to learn well. Don't believe him. Remember that the greater the difficulty, the more reward for the mitzvah. Take a deep breath and "full speed ahead"!

HASHEM IS

ALWAYS WITH YOU

The pit dungeon of Mitzrayim. The last place in the world that anyone would want to be. Any prison in the world today is a five star hotel compared to the pit dungeon of Mitzrayim. Yet who finds himself there? None other than Yosef HaTsaddik. Framed up on false charges by the wife of his master, he is thrown into the horrible dungeon. Besides suffering physically from the terrible conditions, he meets up with the dregs of society – the worst criminals and derelicts in Mitzrayim. What humiliation and degradation for an innocent man! One could not blame him at all if he got depressed. It is very easy to lose one's faith in Hashem's goodness in such a situation.



Rav Mattisyahu Solomon, Shlita, offers an inspiring and compelling analysis of the story of Yosef HaTsaddik. Yosef does not get depressed in the pit dungeon. We see this directly from the verses in the Torah. The warden sees that Yosef is intelligent and capable. He appoints him to be in charge of the prisoners. Two new prisoners arrive in the pit – Paroh's officers. The *Sar Ha'ofim* who oversees his food, and the *Sar Ma'mashkim* who oversees his drink. A fly was found in the drink, and a stone in the bread. Therefore, these two men were thrown into the pit dungeon. After twelve months in the prison, they each dream strange dreams.

The next day, Yosef sees them sitting in the corner with long faces. He asks them, "Why are you looking so sad today?" (Bereshis 40:7). What an astounding question! What kind of a question is that to ask prisoners in the pit dungeon of Mitzrayim? They are in a nasty dungeon and they do not want to be there. They

want to go home. If there is anywhere in the world where they are justified in wearing long faces, this is it.

We see two things from Yosef's question. Firstly, we see that Yosef himself is not depressed. If he were, he would not care that others were wearing long faces. After all, misery loves company. Secondly, we see that the mood of the prisoners in the pit dungeon was cheerful. After all, these two officers of Paroh stood out – they were sad. Their mood was different from that of everyone else in the pit. Yosef had to ask them, "What is this all about? True, you are prisoners in the pit dungeon of Mitzrayim, but why the long faces? Where are the smiles that naturally belong on the faces of people with *emunah* (faith) in their hearts?" We see that Yosef HaTsaddik was so happy and filled with trust in Hashem that he brightened up the mood of all of the prisoners in the worst prison imaginable. He knew that The Almighty was with him, even in this pit dungeon. What *emunah* in Hashem! What a happy heart! What a tsaddik!

Kinderlach . . .

Things do not always go so smoothly. Sometimes very unpleasant things happen to us. We may even experience suffering. How do we react to this? Some people may become sad and melancholy. They may give up hope in Hashem's kindness. Others may become angry and bitter. They feel that their suffering is unfair. How did Yosef HaTsaddik react? With emunah in his heart. He felt Hashem's presence at all times and trusted in Him. He knew with perfect clarity that everything was for the good. He knew that Hashem was always with him; constantly showering him with good things, even if they were unpleasant. Therefore, he was never sad, despairing, or angry. He was only happy. Happy with the warm feeling of closeness to Hashem in his heart. He is a role model for us. This is quite a high madrayga (spiritual level); after all, he was a tsaddik. However, we can appreciate it and strive for it. We can pray for Siyata Di'Shmaya (Heavenly Assistance) to achieve it. If we deal with isorus (troubles) with this attitude even once a day or once a week, we have accomplished something great. We have taken a step towards becoming a holy person – a tsaddik – just like our ancestor Yosef.

Parasha Questions:

- Where was "Emek Chevron"? (Rashi 37:14)
- Which types of events were designated to happen in Shechem? (Rashi 37:14)
- How did Potiphar know that Hashem was with Yosef? (Rashi 39:3)
- Why did the Sar Mamashkim forget Yosef? (Rashi 40:23)

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