

תורת אביגדור הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha

Adapted from his Tapes, Sforim and Writings of Talmidim

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732.844.3670

5014 16th Avenue Suite 488

Brooklyn NY 11204

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Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l on

פרשת מקץ

THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL GOES DARK

When we left at the conclusion of last week's *parsha*, Yosef seemed to be quickly nearing the end of his long stay in prison, the light at the end of the dark tunnel. After having languished there for ten years, and for a crime he didn't commit no less, Yosef could already taste the sweet savor of freedom. His fellow prisoner, a cellmate who had taken a liking to him, was now being released from prison to be reinstated to his former glory as the cupbearer of Pharaoh. And there was no better *protektzia* for Yosef, no greater hope than this. It was more than he could have ever dreamed of, the chance of a lifetime - the *sar hamashkim* for whom he had just interpreted a dream *l'tovah*, would have the ear of Pharaoh, and he had given his commitment to Yosef to speak to the king on his behalf. Help was on the way!

And then everything stops. A deafening silence! Between the end of *Parshas Va'yeishev* and the beginning of our *parsha*, we don't hear anything for two years. For two long years Yosef is sitting in prison and waiting. And waiting. Here he had believed that he was standing on the precipice of achieving his freedom, and yet he hears nothing at all. Silence. It's only day after day of waiting, two years of bitter disappointment.

YOSEF IN THE PALACE

And now our *parsha* begins two years later and we are standing with the *sar hamashkim* in the palace of the king. Pharaoh is frantically gathering together his advisors as he searches for someone to interpret his puzzling dreams. And then suddenly, the *sar hamashkim* remembers his old prison buddy, the friendly man who had proven himself more than capable of interpreting dreams. And so he finally tells Pharaoh about his old friend from two years back, the *eved ivri* in prison who might be able to help. And within no time at all we are being told of the climax of Yosef's career. Yosef is standing before Pharaoh about to be crowned vice-regent of all of Egypt.

And so, we will begin the subject for tonight by studying the words that the Torah uses to introduce the story of Yosef's exit from prison: ויהי מקץ שנתיים ימים - "And it was at the end of two years" (Bereishis 41:1). Now the words "And it was at the end of two years," seem conspicuous for those familiar with *lashon kodesh*. We would have expected the more familiar phrase, שני אחר יודי, "And it was after two years." That's what we would have said if we had been writing the *possuk*. And the medrash makes note of this unusual phrase and tells us that there must have been an "end" to something here. The choice of the word מקץ, is meant to imply "the end" of a set period of time, the culmination of a specific event.

The *medrash* (Medrash Rabbah 89:1) says: קץ שם לחושך - "Hashem sets a time-limit for darkness (Iyov 28:3), זמן נתן ליוסף, כמה שנים יעשה באפילה בבית האסורים - Hashem fixed an amount of time for Yosef, for how many years he would have to sit in the darkness of prison. The two years had to run its course, and at the end of that, "At the end of those two years," that's when Yosef was able to finally leave prison and achieve the climax of his career.

A LACK OF BITACHON

But the question is what two years are we talking about? Because we know that he was imprisoned there in that dungeon for much more than two years! The *possuk* cannot be referring to the "the end" of his years in prison, because Yosef spent ten years before these last two years in the same prison. And so we have to

understand why these two years would be any more significant than the first ten, that the Torah should say that it was only upon the culmination of these two years that Yosef was set free.

Now the *medrash* offers us an answer, and we'll study the words, but we'll see soon that it is actually quite cryptic. First, the words of the *medrash* inside: 'על ידי שאמר לשר המשקים זכרתני' - Because Yosef said to the cupbearer of Pharaoh, 'Remember me,' and 'Mention me,' Hashem added on two years to his internment in prison" (Bereishis Rabbah 89:1).

After helping the *sar hamashkim* by interpreting his dream for him, Yosef made the following request from him: 'כי אם זכרתני אתך... ועשית נא עמדי חסד והזכרתני אל פרעה והוצאתני מן הבית הזה' - "If only you will remember me... and you will please do me this kindness and mention me to Pharaoh, and you shall take me out of this house of prison" (Bereishis 40:14). And the *medrash* is telling us that it was two years after his conversation with the *sar hamashkim*, 'מקץ שנתיים ימים', that Pharaoh finally summoned him from prison to interpret a dream and to become the *mishneh lamelech* in Mitzrayim.

What the *medrash* is telling us here is that that Yosef was punished with having to spend an extra two years in prison because of this error of relying on a *basar v'dam*, on a human being. This lack of *bitachon*, the lack of faith in Hashem, that his request of the *sar hamashkim* revealed, was the cause for an added two years of languishing in prison. And only when those two years came to their *keitz*, was Yosef set free.

WHAT WAS THE GREAT CRIME OF YOSEF?

Now, this Medrash is 'אומר דרשני', it's asking to be explained. Because it's actually very difficult for us to understand what was so wrong with Yosef to take advantage of this opportunity to achieve his freedom? What was the terrible crime of Yosef? Why would he be punished with an additional two years in prison because of his sensible attempt to achieve his freedom? If anything, it was a *mitzvoah* for Yosef to help himself. You know, if it was a fellow Jew in prison, wouldn't we praise Yosef for being *mishtadel* on behalf of a fellow Jew? So חייך קודמין,

it's even a bigger mitzvah to help yourself! After all, you're also a fellow Jew!

Let's say a big *tzadik* fell onto the river. Should he try to save himself by swimming or should he trust in Hashem? Certainly he should do whatever he can! Not only should he, but *he must* try to save himself. If not he's **מתחייב בנפשו**. So this *tzadik* is struggling to escape the raging river and he sees a gentile in his fishing boat. He should have *bitachon*, he should have faith in Hashem, and keep drowning?! And if he asks the gentile to throw in a rope, should he be punished with having to drown some more in the river? If he thinks he can swim to the bank of the river, or grab onto a log floating by, he shouldn't do so?! Certainly he should cry out, and swim, and grab onto anything he can. Absolutely!

YOSEF HATZADDIK WAS DROWNING

And Yosef too, was drowning in the raging river of this Egyptian prison for ten years already. Ten years! And he wasn't going to get out anytime soon. He was going to languish in that prison for a long time, probably forever. He was going to die in that hole! And so, certainly, Yosef was justified in attempting to use any opportunity to achieve his freedom. And what would be a better opportunity than this one? The *sar hamashkim* would soon be restored to his position in the palace, in fulfillment of Yosef's interpretation. And he would once again have the ear of his master Pharaoh, and he could easily whisper into his ear: "Your Majesty, I want you to know that there's a man in prison, a fine young man, and capable as well. And he's innocent. Maybe you could do something for him?"

For that we should say on Yosef, **אָרוּר הַגִּבּוֹר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בְּאָדָם** - "Accursed is the man who trusts in a human being"?! Yosef Hatzadik didn't trust in man! He trusted in Hashem. But after all, even the biggest *tzadik* who trusts in Hashem must do something to help himself. If a *tzadik* is sitting at the breakfast table, shouldn't he pick up the spoon to put the cereal in his mouth? He should wait for a *neis*?! So what was Yosef's crime already?

TEHILLIM GIVES US PSHAT IN THE CHUMASH

Now if you look in Tehillim you'll see a remarkable statement that opens for us the door to understanding this plan of

Hashem. In *kapitel kuf-hei*, (Tehillim 105:17-20) it speaks about the story of Yosef. And it says as follows: **שְׁלַח לְפָנֵיהֶם אִישׁ -** "Hashem sent a man down to Mitzrayim ahead of the Bnei Yisroel, **לְעֵבֵד**, נִמְכַר יוֹסֵף, that's why Yosef was sold as a slave" He was sent ahead to prepare for his family to eventually settle in Mitzrayim where they could increase and multiply and become the Am Yisroel. It was all the plan of Hashem.

Now what happened when he got to Mitzrayim? **עֵינָיו בְּכַבֵּל** **בְּרִזְלֵי בַּאֵה**, they afflicted his feet with iron chains in prison. **נִפְשׁוֹ**, His body came into metal. That means he was tied down with metal chains in the dungeon. He was suffering in prison to no end.

HASHEM PURIFIES YOSEF IN PRISON

So Dovid says: Until when did he suffer? Was he waiting to come before the parole board for a review? Was the end going to come when Pharaoh would grant him a pardon? No, says Dovid. It was **עַד עֵת בָּא דְבָרוֹ**, until the time when Hashem's command would come. Hashem was holding him in prison for a purpose. **אִמְרַת הַשֵּׁם צִרְפְּתָהּ**, the word of Hashem - the command that he must stay in prison - was going to purify him. That's how **דוֹד הַמֶּלֶךְ** explains Yosef's two extra years in prison; it was a *tziruf*, a refinement.

Now, the word **צִרְפְּתָהּ**, purified, is the same word that is used for the purification of gold. When you have gold, silver or some other precious metal, so you put it in a furnace for it to melt down, you put it over a fire to cook. And as the gold melts, some of the dross separates from the gold, then you take off the dross from on top. That's how you purify precious metals like gold and silver. You melt it into a liquid and the dross goes to the surface and you ladle off the impurities.

And if you want to refine the gold even more, if you want to create an even more pure piece of gold, then you won't settle for that one smelting. You'll do it again; you'll boil up the water and cook the gold again. And then some more dross separates from the gold. And the more pure you want your gold to be, the more times you'll put it over the fire. I don't know if anybody would refine gold for two years, but it's a job, a big job.

HASHEM'S GREAT SMELTING POT

So Tehillim is telling us that Hashem was purifying Yosef in prison. Because when the *sar hamashkim* was taken out of prison, Yosef began to wait for results, he began to hope, "Ahh, now there might be some movement here." And as much as he trusted in Hakodosh Boruch Hu, he was also relying on the *sar hamashkim*. There was still some dross there of ארור הגבר אשר יבטח בִּאֲדָם.

But nothing happened. A week passed. Two weeks, a month passed. Nothing. A half year passed. Silence. And as Yosef was sitting in prison, in chains, for these two years, and he's waiting and waiting, he's being refined of any trust in human beings. He began to think, "There's no use in trusting in human beings at all." אמרת השם צרפתהו - The command of Hashem to remain in prison was refining him of the dross.

Yosef had put some trust in a human being, and it would take two years of disappointment, two years of unrequited trust in a human promise, to purify Yosef from his reliance on man, be it himself or others. And at the end of two years, after a culmination of days upon days, weeks and months of telling himself, "A human being is really nothing after all; only Hashem can save me," now he was smelted as good as he could be. He was purified of even the slightest flaw of ארור הגבר אשר יבטח בִּאֲדָם because אמרת השם צרפתהו, "Hashem's word had refined him." So now שלח מלך, Hashem sent a king right away, ויתיריהו, and He let him loose from prison, He took him out.

So we're learning now that these two years weren't a punishment - there's no punishment for trying to help yourself. But if Hashem loves a person, He'll give him opportunities for *tziruf*. He'll refine you from the dross of wrong attitudes and ideas. And that's why Yosef had to spend two more years in prison, so that he would become purified.

THE STONE OF DARKNESS

And now we can understand a puzzling statement of the *medrash*. Because the *medrash* says, קץ שם לחושך, Hashem put an end to his days of darkness in prison, days that had to be spent there because of אבן אופל וצלמות, because of "the stone of darkness" (Iyov 28:3).

But what does it mean **אבן אופל**, "the stone of darkness." What stone doing is the *medrash* talking about? And what does it mean that finally, after two years of Yosef sitting in prison, that there was no more **אבן אופל**, no more "stone of darkness"?

Pay attention. In *Mesichta Sukkah* (52a) the *gemara* says that there are seven names for the *yetzer harah*, seven different names. And one of his names is **אבן**, a stone. **יחזקאל קראו אבן**, Yechezkel Hanavi called it "a stone."

It says (Yechezkel 36:26) **והסירוני את לב האבן מבשרכם ונתתי בשר** - "I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh, a heart that feels." Yechezkel called the evil inclination a *lev ha'veen*, a heart of stone. Now, I've told you many times that in *lashon kodesh* **לב** means "mind". So Hakodosh Boruch Hu is saying here, that instead of a mind of stone, I'm going to give you a mind of flesh.

THE MOST DANGEROUS FEATURE OF THE YETZER HARA

Why is it called a stone? The other names there, **רע**, the evil one, **טמא**, impure, **שונא**, the enemy, and the other names there, good. But "the stone"? What kind of name is this for the *yetzer harah*?

Stone means that a person has a mind that is not thinking; it's stagnant, not functioning as it should. His mind is a **דומם**, like a stone; a stone doesn't feel. The *yetzer harah* is not like we think, a person gets excited about something and it causes him to choose the wrong thing which he wouldn't have done had he been more calm and able to think it over. It's not when people are excited over certain wrong ideals. No, not when their emotions are boiling over. That's not the worst feature of the *yetzer harah*. Of course it's a problem, but it's not the most dangerous. The most dangerous feature of the *yetzer harah* is when it makes you stony, with no real thought or emotion at all.

When people have no awareness, they're not conscious of the issues involved, of what's going on, that's when the *yetzer harah* has accomplished the most. When a person has a **לב האבן**, a stony mind, that means he is not putting his mind to work. And that's why people will take step after step, and go through life, but they're just doing, reacting, living by habit, with a lack of feeling

for the real issues at hand. They're not thinking and therefore they are missing out on the great opportunities in life to create a mind of perfection, a mind of Torah ideals and Torah attitudes.

THE LAMDAN WHO DOESN'T THINK

What does that mean? We're coming now to the most important subject in life, and that's the principle that we're here in this world to acquire a *leiv*, to acquire understanding. Now when people live day by day with *hergel*, with habit, then their minds are stone. Their thinking is stultified; they don't feel anything. And they're missing out on the great lessons of life.

Even when a person knows things, he's a *lamdan*, he can even tell you about the Torah. But he hasn't softened his mind. His mind is still hard. It's like taking a piece of tough meat from the freezer; it hasn't been salted yet, it hasn't been softened - it's hard and cold. You have to let it soften up a little bit, you have to soak it and salt it. And it's the same with your mind as well. Because if you live a life of *hergel*, of habit, without thinking, without constantly stimulating your mind to the fundamentals of the Torah, then no matter how much you know, the *yetzer harah* has already succeeded.

TRANSFORMING YOUR KNOWLEDGE

I always give the same *mashal* so I'll repeat it once more. If you're standing in the kitchen cooking and your little boy walks into the kitchen, so you tell him, "Don't touch the hot stove. You'll get burned if you touch it." So he believes you. He knows that you're a wise woman. Every little boy knows that his mother is full of wisdom. So he touches the stove with his finger anyhow. He shouts, "Oooh, it burns. It really burns!" Now what was added now that he didn't know before? Before he knew it burns - after all his mother is a walking encyclopedia and she said so - and now he also knows it burns. What changed? The answer is that before it was *chochma*, knowledge, and now it became *dei'ah*, sensory perception.

And *bitachon*, reliance on Hakodosh Boruch Hu, is a prime example of where people are living superficially. You might have learned about the fundamental principles of our *emunah*, of *bitachon*; but you never thought into them. You never acquired

what is called *dei'ah*. In this world we have to take all the *chochma*, all the knowledge that we have and transform it into *dei'ah*. *Gedolah dei'ah!* How great is it to acquire *dei'ah*! *Dei'ah* means that what you know from beforehand has been changed into sensory perception - now you feel it!

Everyone *knows* that Hashem is running his life. You know it, you say it. But is that enough? The fact that you say it? You can even be a good *darshan*; you can make *drashas* like I'm saying to you right now. So what if I'm saying it?! It doesn't mean that I've assimilated it. It has to become part of a person's personality. You have to soften the stony mind and feel these things.

BECHOL LEVOVEVCHA WITH FULL DEPTH

So maybe you've acquired some *chochma* - you learned *Sha'ar Habitachon* a few times already. So you say, "Oh sure, I know it, I know all about it." No, you don't know it. You don't even begin to know it. It's not enough to say words of wisdom, of *bekius*, all kinds of Torah ideas. Some people know *sodos hatorah*, some can say *peirushim*, *chiddushim* in the *peirushim*. But to transform your stony mind into a mind of flesh - did you do that?! To understand *bitachon* in a way that it becomes part of your personality, that you yourself are feeling it, it's not easy.

That's what it means *leiv ha'even*. He has a mind, yes. He knows everything! But it hasn't penetrated his personality yet. It doesn't say *בכל לבך*, it says *בכל לבבך*. Why two *beises*? The two *beises* means the *לב שבלב*, depths of the mind, that you should actually have a *hargasha*, a sensation, a feeling that what you're saying is true. That's already a different story.

DOING WITHOUT THINKING: THE STONY HEART

Now the Navi says that a time will come one day, *והסירוני את לב האבן מקרבכם*, I will take away the stony heart from you, *ונתתי לכם לב בשר*, and I'll give you a heart that appreciates and really understands. One day we will see Hashem so clearly that our hearts will soften automatically under the weight of the truth of Hashem.

But the great achievement is to accomplish it on your own *now*. That's the great achievement in this world. So what does Hakodosh Boruch Hu do? How does he take away your heart of

stone? He sends upon a person *yissurim*. It hurts sometimes; it's no fun for the gold when it's being smelted. Sometimes it hurts like the dickens. And that's important. Because the purpose of *yissurim* is so that the mind of a person should be stirred into motion, it should be stimulated into thinking, "What is going on here?!"

You know, a person can refine himself by studying *mussar seforim*, absolutely. But it takes work. You have to study the words again and again. And you have to internalize them, it doesn't always enter into your bones, it doesn't go into your *kishkess* on its own. You have to realize that the sefer is talking about *you!* It's not easy. Even if you learn a good *mussar seder*, it takes work for it to seep in.

THE ATHEIST IN THE FOXHOLE

But *yissurim* are much harder to ignore. Instead of a mind of stone, not thinking, just walking blindly through the days, the *yissurim* make you think. It does something to your mind, something changes, it becomes a mind of flesh. It's one of the ways that Hashem refines us. Here's a man lying in the hospital with a broken leg, a broken thigh. He has to have a cast. And it hurts like anything. He has to listen to the *mussar* that Hashem is giving him. That's what it's for. It's much harder to ignore that type of *mussar*, that type of *tziruf*.

Some people became frum when they were in the trenches. Hiding in the trenches in wartime. And bullets flying overhead. They became *ba'alei teshuva* in the trenches. I know someone like that. It's a fact. He was so frightened, that in the trench, he became a *ba'al teshuva*. He came back to America and became frum.

TRUSTING IN THE WHISPER

And now we know why the *medrash* called the those days in prison a refining of the **אֶבֶן אוּפֵל**, the stone of darkness. What does it mean? Yosef had invested some of his hopes in a human being when he spoke to the *sar hamashkim*. After all, he wanted to get out of prison. And here he saw a chance. He knew that this man was going to be elevated back to his old position; he would find favor once more in the eyes of Pharaoh and be a confidant of the king once again. And Yosef was the one who had made him happy; he had foretold for him what would be his future. So the

sar hamashkim would be able to whisper into the king's ear, "You know, there's a man in prison, a fine young man, and he's innocent. Maybe Your Majesty can do something for him; maybe you can bring up his sentence for review." That's what Yosef hoped for.

So Hakodosh Boruch Hu said, "That's a stony mind! Of course you'll turn to the *sar hamashkim* for help. But what's going on in your mind is what matters most. Are you reacting because of the cause and effect that you see in this world, forgetting that I am the only cause!" That's the great danger of a stony mind, the *hergel* of not being aware of what's really doing here.

You're trusting in a human being?! ארור הגבר אשר יבטח בְּאָדָם - Accursed is the man who trusts in a human being. Now Yosef Hatzadik didn't trust in man; he trusted in Hashem. But after all, even the biggest *tzadik* who trusts in Hashem must do something to help himself. So Yosef was justified in attempting to get out. Absolutely. And yet under Hashem's magnifying glass, the magnifying glass of perfection that we are here in this world to achieve, Hashem saw that there was a certain amount of trust, reliance, in a human being that Yosef had.. And for someone who understands that he's in this world to be refined, to be purified and perfected before entering the *traklin* of the Next World, even the slightest attitude of יְבִטְחָה בְּאָדָם is considered a flaw in his perfection. And therefore, before Yosef could go on to his greatness, to the next stage of his life, that flaw had to be removed.

DISAPPOINTMENT: THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Now what would accomplish that polishing of the flaw of reliance on man? Disappointment! Disappointment in man! Disappointment in his own capabilities, and disappointment in the capability of others to help him. Yosef had put some trust in a human being, and it would take two years of disappointment, two years of unrequited trust in a human promise, to purify him from his reliance on man.

And so after the *sar hamashkim* was freed, Yosef waited eagerly for his freedom to arrive. "Maybe today," Yosef thought. And when the disappointment came, he said, "Maybe tomorrow." And when a full week came to an end, "Next week for sure," Yosef

thought. And he waited and waited. And with each passing day, with every slight pang of disappointment, a little more of the impurity was removed.

But Yosef still held out some hope. He told himself that it was useless to trust in a man of flesh and blood, but in the most inner recesses of his mind, there was still some stone that had to be softened. He still held out some hope, he still waited for the knock on his cell-door, for the expected message from the palace.

HASHEM GIVES THE SAR HAMASHKIM AMNESIA

You should know, that it wasn't an accident that the שר המשקים forgot for two years to let פרעה know of his good old friend in prison. It says there: ולא זכר שר המשקים את יוסף - He didn't remember about his old prison mate, Yosef. And the *possuk* ends וישכחו, and he forgot about him too. That's superfluous. If he "didn't remember Yosef," why do you have to tell me "he forgot him"?

The *possuk* is saying that Hashem made him forget. He might have remembered his old friend. Why not? He was a human being; he was grateful to Yosef. Why would he forget about him? Only that Hashem made him forget because Hashem wanted to refine Yosef like a smelter refines gold in a hot furnace. So Hashem made the *sar hamashkim* forget. ולא זכר את יוסף, He didn't remember Yosef. But then he reminded himself; he was lying in his bed at night and he's thinking, "Yosef! I forgot about Yosef! Tomorrow I'm going to speak to Pharaoh about Yosef - first thing tomorrow morning." But Hashem said "Nothing doing! Yosef needs all those vitamins. So don't deprive him of the lessons I want to teach him." So וישכחו, tomorrow Hashem made him forget again. Hakodosh Boruch Hu had bigger plans for Yosef than getting out of prison. He wanted to give Yosef the opportunity, the perfection of אשרי האיש יבטח בהשם.

YOSEF FINALLY GIVES UP ON MAN

And as each day passed, Yosef became more and more reliant on Hashem. And as the weeks and months passed, Yosef certainly utilized his time in reflecting on the unreliability of men. And there is no doubt that Yosef would address his entreaties to Hakodosh Boruch Hu with more and more earnestness each day,

as each passing day brought forth a more intense recognition of the futility of relying on man. Until two years had passed; and now, because of the culmination of the many disappointments, Yosef relied only on Hashem. He knew it in his bones - *gedolah dei'ah* - he felt it! He was totally pure. And now he was prepared for his future; his future in this world and the next. Yosef had become a בעל בטחון, a person who relies solely on Hashem.

Two years had to pass. קץ שם לחושך - Hashem kept Yosef in the darkness until the time that He decided would be best for the darkness to end. And at the end of two years, מקץ שנתיים ימים, at the culmination of this two years of waiting for the help of man, waiting and losing his hope in man, at the end of those two years he became purified. He had no trust in human beings at all. He said, "A human being?! I can't believe I trusted in him! He can't do a thing for me. It's only Hashem!"

Two years Hashem measured out according to his precise timetable, until Yosef would be cured entirely of any trust in human being. And then ויהי מקץ שנתיים ימים, at end of these two years of Yeshivas Habitachon in prison, then Hashem said, "Now's the time. Now I can take out Yosef." Yosef's heart is stone no more and he is now ready to leave the darkness. That's what it means: וְהִסִּירוֹתִי אֶת לֵב הָאֲבֵן מִבְּשָׂרְכֶם וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם לֵב בָּשָׂר - "I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh, a heart that feels" (Yechezkel 36:26).

GAM ZU L'TOVAH IS NOT ENOUGH

Now what we're learning here is that one of the great opportunities of life is the experience of disappointment. It was two years of constant and recurring disappointments that made Yosef great. And that is the story of our lives as well. Except that, unlike Yosef, we are not using the great opportunity of disappointment to become more and more perfect in our reliance on Hashem as the sole source of everything in this world. When we are faced with disappointment in our lives, when our own plans go awry, or when the people and things we trusted in are not successful, we often fail to take advantage of the opportunity for perfection. You might console yourself; "Look, not everything can work out all the time," and you move on from it. Or you might wrack your brain for excuses, "It didn't work because of this or

because of that." And even to just say "גם זו לטובה" without thought, without some work on smelting your heart of stone - it's a great opportunity that goes lost. Yosef could have also made excuses. "Must be that the *sar hamashkim* is too busy right now. Maybe he hasn't had the opportunity to speak with Pharaoh yet." And had Yosef made those excuses for the disappointment, he would have failed to glean the true lesson of the disappointment.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu desires to teach men a lesson. And that is to understand that Hakodosh Boruch Hu alone is in charge and all of our destinies are solely in His power. And therefore when we put our trust in somebody other than Hakodosh Boruch Hu, He will often enlighten us by disappointing us. It's a system of teaching that Hashem follows in order that we should learn the great lesson of understanding and being aware at all times that only He is the ruler and that He is in full charge of all the affairs of your life.

YOU'RE NOT THE "MACHER"

A man asked me last week, "When things don't go the way I planned, how do I avoid getting angry?" So listen to what the Chovos Halevavos says about that. He tells us that Hashem will sometimes do that to you to teach you a lesson. Sometimes Hashem chooses to teach you the important lesson that you are not the one who is the author of your fate; to let you know that He's in charge. So although you made a certain arrangement, and you planned, and you hoped that it would turn out a certain way, Hakodosh Boruch Hu is teaching you a very valuable lesson. The lesson that "I am the *melech*. I am the King. I am in charge, not you." Hashem is telling you, "Don't rely on your plans. And don't rely on other people. Don't rely on other things. It's all Me!"

And therefore, disappointment in foiled plans, disappointment in upset arrangements, is actually a lesson for eternity. So instead of being disappointed, you should say, "I thank You, Hashem, for that lesson. Thank you for reminding me again, for teaching me, that you're the *melech* and not me." It's worth money, that lesson. Really you should have to pay good money for it. A lesson in perfection of the mind is priceless. You should thank Hashem for that. Don't think it, say it - "Thank you Hashem for this lesson. Thank you Hashem for teaching me that

I'm not the master of my own fate. Thank You Hashem for teaching me that You are the מאכער. Not me, and not anybody else."

Because otherwise, you think that you're the boss. You think that you're the one running the show here. You're the מאכער here, you think. So Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "No, no. You're nothing at all. I'm the only מאכער around!"

And that's why things turn out the wrong way; not the way you planned. Hashem is purifying you like he purified Yosef Hatzadik. He's teaching you, "I'm the One and only. You have to rely on Me and only Me." So you're getting a free lesson in perfection of the mind. Hashem is not charging you for it, so you should be happy.

THE TRIP TO MANHATTAN FOR NOTHING

And therefore if somebody has to go to a specialist. And this specialist costs a lot of money. And let's say it's far away, you have to go to Manhattan. You had to make the appointment months in advance. And then when the day comes, you have to take the day off from work, and maybe your boss is not so happy. But what can you do already? It has to be done and you worked hard to get this appointment. So you get into a taxi and make the trip to Manhattan. And when you get to the office the secretary there tells you - without even looking up - she tells you that the doctor had an emergency and won't be coming today. "You'll have to go home and call the office tomorrow to reschedule," she tells you. Oh, are you disappointed! All your plans, all of your preparations for nothing. No, it's not for nothing! It's a great opportunity that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is giving you. Why did Hakodosh Boruch Hu make this whole story? In order to remove your לב האבן and teach you the great lesson that it's only Him and that nobody else that is in charge.

So as the pangs of disappointment well up from inside you, that's your great opportunity. It's your great opportunity to think about what Yosef thought about for two years. "What was I thinking, just going through the motions, without always remembering that it's not the *sar hamashkim*, it's not the doctor in Manhattan, it's only Hakodosh Boruch Hu." Of course you have

to ask the *sar hamashkim* for help, and of course you have to find the best specialist; but what are you thinking in your head, that's what matters most.

FAILURE: A PRICELESS LESSON

It takes hard work to actually know that it's not you doing anything. And sometimes the best spur toward that knowledge is disappointment. It's disappointment that can make you perfect. Here's a man who's driving his car to work. Is he thinking about Hakodosh Boruch Hu?! A *nechtigeh tug*! He's doing it all on his own. He's driving; he's the *macher*! Where does Hakodosh Boruch Hu even come into the picture at all? Nowhere! Suddenly, "Whooo, Whooo," the siren and the flashing lights. Now he's going to be late, and he'll miss his appointment. He has to show up in the court house. A great disappointment!

Maybe he should think that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is trying to tell him something - that he's not such a big *macher* after all! And that lesson, if that man thinks about it, if he studies it, it's priceless. And so instead of being bitter, instead of letting his disappointment be a wasted emotion, this man uses it as grand opportunity to become a *ba'al bitachon*. He's refined a little bit more and it was a lesson worth all the money in the world.

PRICELESS LESSONS ALL DAY LONG

And Hashem is constantly providing you with these lessons in perfection of character. Because no matter how much you plan, no matter how much you do to make sure things work out, you will still always suffer disappointments. But the person who is willing to work on himself, if he's willing to put effort into using his mind at all times, will be able to turn those disappointments into achievement. And that's the achievement of ridding himself of the **אבן האופל**, the stony heart that doesn't think - the lazy mind that prevents all good accomplishment. It took two years of pangs of disappointment day after day, to purify the mind of Yosef, to remove all the dross. But Yosef purified himself, only because he was willing to convert every pang of disappointment in man, into the achievement of reliance on Hashem.

And that's exactly what we are supposed to be doing with the many disappointments, big and small, that we all face throughout our lives. Instead of just moving forward - overlooking the disappointments and going on with your life - every dashed hope, every plan gone awry is an opportunity for perfection in trust in Hashem.

HAKODOSH BORUCH HU RUINS YOUR PLANS

That is what the Chovos Halevavos (Sha'ar Avodas Elokim:8) means when he says, "We see sometimes that the deeds of men are not completed according to their desire and planning. And this is done *in order to teach men that the Creator rules over them and that He is the one in control.*" If something happens in an unexpected manner, the intention of Hakodosh Boruch Hu is for you to take it as a message from Him that you should trust only in Him, and not in the things that you expected to give you success. That is why Hakodosh Boruch Hu manipulates things to sometimes not work out for you. In order that you should not be misled into believing that your affairs are in your own hand, Hashem will sometimes frustrate your plans and desires and He causes things not to turn out as you desired, to teach you the great lesson that He is in charge.

And a person can do this tens of times every day. Many tens of times. Because all day long there are things that don't go exactly as you expected. And every small disappointment is the opportunity for turning to Hashem and saying, "I'm learning this lesson again, that You're the boss. Only You." The wise person takes the most minute disappointments in his day: the missed light, the burnt supper, walking up the steps and forgetting what he was looking for, taking the wrong coin out of his pocket, the flat tire, whatever it may be, and he stops his life to think for a moment. To think like Yosef did. "Why did Hashem disappoint me? To teach me this important lesson that I am nothing and that He is everything." And then he turns to Hashem and says, "Thank you Hashem for this priceless lesson. Thank you for teaching me that You are in charge. And that in You, and only You, should I put my trust."

To make plans, and to act on helping yourself, even when most appropriate, must never be devoid of thoughts of Hakodosh

Boruch Hu. When one recognizes that the outcome of everything that he does, everything that he attempts, is completely in the hands of Hakodosh Boruch Hu, then he is always turning to Him for help. Hashem is always on his mind, because everything depends only on Him. Every time you cross the street, you need Hashem to get you to the other side. Every customer that comes into the store, you need Hashem to make that sale. Every effort you make, in every single area of your life, should always be infused with Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Don't rely on yourself. Do every thing that should be done, but don't rely on yourself. At every step of the way, turn to Hashem. Because if you don't soften the stony heart on your own, Hakodosh Boruch Hu sends you disappointments to soften it His way.

THE ONE ACCOUNT THAT IS NOT SECURE

And that's why we should take as our motto a statement from the Chovos Halevavos - and it comes in handy. He tells us that if you have something in your life that you're enjoying, some happiness, some success that makes you proud, then don't put your trust in it. Don't have any hope that it will endure. If you'll be disappointed and it will continue every day for years and years, good. But if you'll make the error of putting your trust in it - let's say you have a big bank account, and you're always taking out your bank book and reading it, it's the most interesting thing for you. And you're enjoying it to no end. Why? Because it gives you a sense of security - you're all fixed for the next five thousand years! Then you'd better watch out, because it's not insured. Whatever the bank will tell you, FDIC this, FDIC that, that's one account that is not insured. That's what the Chovos Halevavos is saying here. If you desire that something or someone should help you, do not put your trust in it.

And when the disappointments do come, and they will, the wise person will use all the disappointments of life to be taught this lesson, that Hashem is the **מַאֲכֵר**, the One who provides everything. And by doing that you're walking in the footsteps of Yosef Hatzadik, who understood that every step in his life was the result of Hashem's plans for him. For the sake of Yosef's perfection, Hashem was kind enough to bestow upon him disappointment after disappointment, and this teaching him the

lesson that even when one makes the proper and necessary attempts, he must always know that it is solely the will of Hashem that will help him. Yosef knew how to make use of disappointment, and therefore **אמרת השם צרפתהו** "the word of Hashem to remain for two years in prison purified him." And the one who is willing to learn the lesson of disappointment provided by Hashem, that's the man who is purifying his mind and preparing himself for the Next World, when the truth of Hashem's full control in this world will be clear to all.

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Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l

Q:

How should a private Jew react to the disputes between the Gedolim, or to the disputes between groups of Jews in Klal Yisroel? Let's say that this *gadol* has a *machlokes* with another *gadol*. Or a certain group of Jews are in *machlokes* with another group of Jews. How should I react?

A:

Stay out of it. Keep far away, so that you don't get burned. It's none of your business. You're not a *gadol*, so stay out of it. Now, if it's a matter of fighting against רשעים and אפיקורסים, that's a different story. None of us can remain silent when we see what the Reformers are doing. When the Reformers say that when a Jew marries a *shiksa* without converting her, the children are Jews; there we should be fighting them. If a Jew says that you can be a good Jew and still work on Shabbos, then we fight him. If someone is fighting against Hashem, against the Torah, that's when it's time to open your mouth. There are times that you have to speak up, no question about it.

But when *frum* Jews are fighting, we stay out of it. That's the only safe way. It's a tragic mistake to mix in because opening your mouth is playing with fire. And not just any fire. Many people have found their way into the fire of *Gehenim*, because they were foolish enough to open their mouths. There are many people, many good people, who are screaming in *Gehenim* right now, because they opened their big mouths. So why would you want to make the same mistake they did?!

TAPE # 788

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