

# Peninim On The Torah

*Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum*

## *Parashat Mikeitz*

*It happened at the end of two years to the day. (41:1)*

The events that catalyzed Yosef's release from prison began two years to the day after the sar ha'mashkim, Chamberlain of the Cupbearers, was himself released from prison. Yosef had been imprisoned for twelve years. Chazal tell us that Yosef erred when he asked for the chamberlain's assistance in procuring his release from prison. Because Yosef placed his trust in the chamberlain, rather than Hashem, his sentence was increased by two years. Interestingly, Chazal make an apparently paradoxical statement. They initially describe Yosef as someone who placed his complete trust in the Almighty. Thus, he was inappropriate in relying on Pharaoh's servant to help him out of prison. If it was wrong to seek human intervention, how can he be credited for relying solely on Hashem? He had no alternative but to rely on Hashem. Furthermore, what was so inappropriate about turning to the cupbearer? Everyone has to make his hishtadlus, endeavoring, to create a medium upon which Hashem will confer His blessing. Yosef was mishtadel. Why should he be held in contempt for doing what every gadol, Torah luminary, has done?

The Chazon Ish, zl, explains that while it is true that Yosef was to be mishtadel, he did not have to approach an individual who, by his very nature, was not a kind and benevolent person. When Yosef approached Pharaoh's cupbearer, it was clear that this was his final alternative. He was acting out of yiush, hopelessness. A hishtadlus of yiush is not a true hishtadlus and is, thus, inappropriate. In other words, it was appropriate for Yosef to ask someone for assistance - but not of an Egyptian whose perspective in assisting him was negative. Yosef should have trusted Hashem by being mishtadel through normal channels. Asking an individual who is not known for his favors is not considered hishtadlus. It is an act of desperation, of giving up hope.

Horav Chaim Kamil, zl, offers an alternative explanation. The criticism was assessed against Yosef for the actual hishtadlus, because he should have realized by this time that Hashem was dealing with him b'derech neis, through miracles. Nature did not play a role in Yosef's existence. Everything that he achieved, every situation from which he was extricated, occurred miraculously. He should have understood that Hashem was watching over him in a unique manner, so that he should let things happen on their "own."

What seems to be questionable, according to both of these explanations, is that after all was said and done, it was the cupbearer that served as the medium for Yosef's release. Apparently there was a purpose and benefit to this hishtadlus. If so, why is Yosef criticized? Rav Kamil explains that while Yosef's hishtadlus did, indeed, produce fruit, it was, nonetheless, a hishtadlus that was not consistent with his elevated spiritual stature. To beg, to act obsequiously, is below the dignity and bearing of a tzaddik. He should have prayed to Hashem and hoped that his entreaty would effect a positive response.

Yosef remained in prison for two additional years after the cupbearer was released. This should not be viewed as a punishment for asking the cupbearer for assistance, but, rather, to provide him with an opportunity to "reflect" and "review" the underlying concepts relating to bitachon, trust, in the Almighty. He needed a refresher course, and when he completed this "two year" course, he was ready to leave prison and become the viceroy of Egypt. He was no longer a lowly slave begging for an Egyptian cupbearer to help him; he was Yosef, the viceroy of Egypt, who was acutely aware that all assistance is ultimately from Hashem. He left prison with class. This idea is consistent with the comment made by the Zohar HaKadosh that it was Hashem Who personally caused Yosef to leave the prison at the appointed time. In the end, Yosef's release and salvation were the results of his deep commitment and trust in Hashem - not the result of the intervention of the Egyptian. This is why he exited the prison with glory and honor. The catalyst of our salvation determines the means and the manner of our salvation.

*Then the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers spoke up before Pharaoh, "My transgressions do I mention today." (41:9)*

If we follow the Chamberlain's monologue, we notice a vestige of arrogance: "My transgressions do I mention today." He could have simply said, "I remember my transgressions."

Why does he emphasize that "I" mention it today? He continues to say, "Pharaoh had placed me in the ward of house of the Chamberlain of the Butchers - me and the chamberlain of the Bakers." He adds that, "We dreamt a dream - I and he." If they had a dream, then obviously it was I and he. Why does he reiterate the "I" factor?

Horav Aizik Ausband, Shlita, views this to be typical of human nature. The average human being, unless he is refined, invariably emphasizes and promotes himself in speech, action, and at every opportunity that avails itself. It is always about "I" or "me." By our very nature, we think first and foremost about ourselves. This is not why Hashem created us. He created us to be a conduit to help others - not just ourselves.

Rav Aizik relates that in the city of Kelm, home to the famous Mussar movement, where the emphasis was placed on ethics and character refinement, the word "I" was never used. It was always the collective "we" or "us." The individual was always a part of the entire community, not a person in his own right. A man once knocked on the door. When asked, "Who is there?" he responded naturally, saying, "I" or "Me." No answer. He knocked again, only to receive the same response. It was only after he stated his name that the door was opened for him. "I" was not an acceptable response.

*They then said to one another, "Indeed we are guilty concerning our brother inasmuch as we saw his*

*heartfelt anguish as he pleaded with us, and we paid no heed..." Reuven spoke up to them saying, "Did I not speak to you saying, 'Do not sin against the boy?'" (42:21,22)*

There seems to be a clear difference of opinion between the brothers and Reuven with regard to their behavior concerning the sale of Yosef. The commentators elaborate on this. Apparently, the brothers felt strongly that Yosef was a serious threat to their spiritual future. Yosef was disparaging them, and this would lead to their exclusion from becoming the progenitors of Klal Yisrael. Indeed, Chazal say that they acted with mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, against Yosef, because they felt that if they were to be deposed, it would create a chillul Hashem, desecration of Hashem's Name. They did agree, however, that they should have demonstrated greater compassion towards Yosef. As far as halachah was concerned, he was a rodef, pursuer, bent on destroying them, and they had the right to protect themselves.

Reuven, on the other hand, disagreed. He felt that the actual sale was a sin and that Yosef was not guilty of being a rodef. Incredible! Two gedolei olam, world Torah leaders, viewed the same episode from different vantage points and arrived at two distinct renderings of the law. The other brothers felt that Yosef was guilty and deserved the penalty of death. Reuven disagreed. Why did Reuven perceive the situation in a different light?

Chazal tell us that Reuven was impressed when Yosef, in relating his dream, mentioned, "And eleven stars bowed down to me." Reuven said, "Yosef is including me among the brothers, as a full-fledged member of the Shivtei Kah, Tribes of Hashem." While this dream catalyzed greater hatred towards Yosef from the brothers, it created an inextricable bond of love towards him from Reuven. In addition, Reuven was undergoing a process of teshuvah, repentance, for his part in moving his mother's bed. Thus, Reuven was in a totally different state of mind than his brothers. He had thought that he had been excluded from the Tribal hierarchy as a result of his impetuous act of moving the bed, and yet Yosef included him. This increased his love for Yosef. Reuven, in a state of contrition himself, observed the scenario from a more passive perspective.

Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, derives from here that Reuven's frame of mind allowed him to view the brothers' actions against Yosef with greater depth and understanding. He did not see Yosef's dreams as an act of redifah, pursuit, against them. He perceived Yosef through a different spectrum and, thus, rendered a more favorable decision concerning him.

Horav Avraham Schorr, Shlita, supplements this idea, suggesting that Rav Aharon is teaching us another lesson. Upon hearing Yosef's dream and realizing that Yosef included him among the Shevatim, Reuven felt indebted to Yosef. This heightened sense of hakoras hatov, debt of gratitude, to Yosef, catalyzed within him an ability to view Yosef in a different light. The brothers had an external, superficial perspective of Yosef, while Reuven, because of his hakoras hatov, saw beyond the outward facade of malicious activity, and, instead, saw the truth - Yosef's innocence; his intentions had been noble. He had not been seeking to harm them.

We derive from here that through the attribute of hakoras hatov, we are able to view a person whose actions might not be above-board in a positive light. Hakoras hatov gives us a new set of spectacles which enable us to see clearer and with greater optimism. After all, when we realize that we are indebted to someone, we tend to be melamed z'chus, find merit, in everything that he does.

We can take this one step further. We owe our greatest and continued debt of gratitude to the Almighty for sustaining and providing us with our lives, our welfare and everything that accompanies

it. Given this reality, how then can we criticize Him when things just do not seem to go our way? The only answer to this question is the obvious: Those who criticize Hashem do not really appreciate the benefits they receive from Him. They take everything for granted until they are deprived of something. Then, they know Who to criticize. If we were to give thanks to Whom it belongs, we would never find fault when something that seems to be negative occurs. We would realize that everything comes from the same Source - One that is good and beneficial.

So Yehudah said, "What can we say to my lord? How can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? G-d has uncovered the sin of your servants. Here we are! We are ready to be slaves to my lord - both we and the one in whose hand the goblet was found."(44:16)

When we peruse the pesukim analytically, we note an almost paradoxical behavior on the part of Yehudah. Initially, when the brothers approached Yosef, we see Yehudah speaking in an almost obsequious manner, "Hashem has uncovered the sin of your servants. How can we justify ourselves? We are all prepared to become slaves." Then, almost suddenly, we see an about face, as Yehudah approached Yosef and spoke sternly to him. In the beginning of Parashas Vayigash, Rashi cites the Midrash which records their dialogue. Yehudah was prepared to go to war against Yosef and all of Egypt. "I will kill you and Pharaoh!" Yehudah declared. Thus, transforming from hachnaah, from being subdued and lowly, to a declaration of war seems a bit irrational. What happened? What occurred the moment that Yosef replied to Yehudah's offer that they all be slaves? "It would be sacrilegious for me to do this. The man in whose possession the goblet was found, only he shall be my slave, and - as for you - go up in peace to your father." (Ibid 44:17)

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, cites Horav Elya Lopian, zl, who explains what took place. We are acutely aware of the terrible tragedy that took place when the Roman government sentenced ten of Klal Yisrael's greatest Torah luminaries, the Asarah Harugei Malchus, to die in the most cruel and horrific manner as a result of what his brothers did to Yosef. When the decree was made, the Tannaim decided among themselves to have Rabbi Yishmael ascend to Heaven to confirm this decree and the reason for it. When we hear this, we wonder: What difference does it make? Does the fact that the gezeirah, decree, emanates from on High change the nature of the decree? Is there a purpose to having Rabbi Yishmael confirm the decree?

There certainly is. Indeed, if the Ten Martyrs had known that this decree was not against them, they would not have reacted the way that they did by going to their deaths willingly, with dignity. They would have fought! They would have uttered incantations to protect themselves. The gentile executioner had no power over these tzaddikim, saintly rabbis, unless they gave him permission to kill them. They were so holy that the power of life and death was within their ability. By using the Shem Hameforash, Ineffable Name, they could bring someone back to life, or vice versa. Were they really afraid of their enemies? Did they have to submit to the executioner? No! They did so because Rabbi Yishmael returned with a Heavenly message: It is Hashem's decree. To try to undermine it would be futile. They would go to their deaths with dignity and pride, as befitting gedolei Yisrael, Torah leaders.

Another case in point is related in Meseches Kallah. It once happened that Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon, one of the Ten Martyrs, mistakenly exchanged money designated for Purim with money set aside for charity. When he realized what had happened, he remarked, "Oy, maybe I was guilty of Heavenly death." At that very moment, there was a knock at his door, and the executioner came in, wrapped him in a Torah scroll, and took him outside to be burned alive with the Torah. Miraculously,

the fire did not "want" to burn Rabbi Chanina. At that moment the executioner asked, "Are you Rabbi Chanina? Perhaps, I made a mistake and I took out the wrong rabbi."

"No, you did not err. I am Rabbi Chanina," the sage replied. "Why then does the fire not consume you?" the gentile asked.

Rabbi Chanina's reply should make us shudder. "I made a vow in Hashem's Name that the fire would not hurt me until I confirmed with Heaven that this was a Heavenly decree. Please wait a moment while I make this confirmation." The executioner waited for Rabbi Chanina's reply from Heaven.

During these moments, the executioner was pondering. Individuals such as these great rabbinic sages have the power to sway decrees of life and death. Yet, the Roman government seems to have power over them. Why? What determines when they fall under the dominion of the Romans and when they do not? The executioner turned to Rabbi Chanina and commanded, "Quickly, rise up and flee from here. Whatever punishment the government wants to give you, I will take instead. Go save yourself!"

"Vacuous one! Do you not understand? Heaven has approved my execution. What will I gain by running? If you do not kill me, then it will be the bears in the forest who will devour me. When Hashem makes a decree - it is final. My time has come, regardless of what you do or do not do. You will, however, be punished by Heaven for your complicity in my death," replied Rabbi Chanina.

When the executioner heard these poignant, but powerful, words, he flung himself into the fire together with Rabbi Chanina. As his soul left him, he cried out, "I will die with you; I will be buried with you; and I will continue to live with you." Immediately, a Heavenly voice declared, "Rabbi Chanina and his executioner are both destined to enter Olam Habah, the World to Come." We now have a glimpse as to how one of the saintly Tannaim left this world.

Bearing this in mind, let us return to Yehudah and his brothers. We now understand the rationale for their seemingly contradictory actions. These were individuals who were pure and holy. The only criticism levied against them was their involvement in the sale of Yosef, an activity which they validated according to halachah. Despite their justification, they felt that their ordeal in Egypt must have been prompted by some infraction on their part. They accepted this and, therefore, acceded to all of Yosef's demands. After all, it was ordained by Heaven. Hashem wants us to suffer for our part in the sale of Yosef. We accept the decree and are all willing to be slaves to the viceroy.

It was when the viceroy said that only Binyamin, the only brother who had not been involved in the sale of Yosef, was to be incarcerated that their quiescent attitude quickly changed. If this was a Heavenly decree for their sin, then Binyamin should have been the one to be released. Apparently, this was nothing more than Egyptian evil orchestrated by a diabolical viceroy. That was something which they could not and would not tolerate. Yehudah approached Yosef and demonstrated his physical ability to conquer Egypt - if necessary.

This powerful insight into the workings of Heaven illuminates for us many of the "responses" our saintly forebears have given to the various decrees that have been made against us. They were able to confirm the source - and the corresponding reaction.

*It happened at the end of two years to the day. (41:1)*

It took an additional two years after the release of the Chamberlain of the Cupbearer before Yosef was finally remembered. Chazal attribute this to a breach of bitachon, trust, on Yosef's part. Because he placed his trust in a man, rather than in Hashem Himself, his prison sentence was increased by two years, consistent with the two times he asked the chamberlain to remember him. Let us attempt to understand Yosef's rationale. He was incarcerated in a filthy prison, a place certainly not conducive to spiritual and moral growth. He wished to be released so that he could continue his spiritual ascension, to return home and continue studying Torah with his father. Thus, his attempts to gain freedom were, from his point of view, mitzvah-oriented - certainly, not a sin. Furthermore, why do Chazal say that he was wrong in twice requesting of the chamberlain that he remember him? If the first request was acceptable, why was the second request considered a sin?

There is a noteworthy discourse from the Alter, zl, m'Novardhok, Horav Yosef Yoizel Horowitz, zl, on the paths towards building bitachon, trust, in Hashem, which sheds light on Yosef's error. He first explains that internalizing the attribute of bitachon accrues to two benefits. First, one who trusts in Hashem is freed from all of the troubles of the world. He is spared the emotional upheaval and fragmentation that result from worry and concern, from overly intense involvement in worldly issues. He is relaxed, calm, content. He no longer needs to flatter, seek to gain favor, or sell himself for the proverbial bowl of red lentils. The man who has acquired bitachon can ignore life's problems, for he knows that he will not want. He trusts Hashem. He walks securely, not fearing what tomorrow will bring, for as long as he relies on Hashem, his needs will be addressed.

Second, in addition to the direct benefits he has gained, he has also acquired the habit of bitachon, a constructive course in life. The direction that one has in this world is even more valuable than the benefits to which it leads. Indeed, the advantages and benefits gained through bitachon are only barometers of its supreme value, and by no means its only measure. This habit becomes a way of life, with bitachon his shadow.

The Alter explains that there are two obstacles to man's quest for spiritual growth. Veritably, these obstacles are incongruous with one another. On the one hand, we are told in Sefer Mishlei (24:16), "The righteous will fall seven times and rise up again." Yet, we learn in the Talmud Yoma 86a that when one commits a sin and repeats it, it becomes to him as something which is permitted. The resolution to this contradiction is to be found in yet another source. Chazal say in the Talmud Berachos 19a, "If you see a talmid chacham, Torah scholar, commit a sin at night, do not think badly of him the next day, for surely he has repented." The specific terminology used here clarifies our discrepancy. A talmid chacham is translated literally as a "student of the wise." He is still experimenting with various approaches to the Divine. He is a student who is searching, grappling with issues, looking for his way in life. At times, he might even unintentionally stumble, because he is a sincere seeker of the truth, so that he might err in his search. His fall, however, is a learning experience. He immediately rises, dusts himself off, and goes on. Every blunder becomes a guiding light which furthers his mission. Each failing is an opportunity for change and growth.

A serious student will not allow himself to fall twice. This is not true of the individual who considers himself no longer a student. He sees himself as being a "wise man" who will continue on his chosen path, regardless of the obstacles and how often he falls. He knows better. Rigid and set in his ways, he will not deviate from his decision. For such a person, each failing becomes a greater obscurity, each error diverting him from following the correct course. In fact, he is so committed to the correctness of his position that he will denigrate anyone who disagrees with him and praise those who follow in his ways. The more he repeats his error, the more permissible it becomes in his eyes.

Yosef's error lay not in his initial request, but in repeating it. He erred, and then he repeated his mistake. He had the opportunity to realize that a baal bitachon, one who trusts in Hashem, does not ask man for assistance. Yet, he asked again. Therein lay his fault and failing.

Why was it inappropriate for Yosef to be mishtadel, endeavor, to help himself? Do we not all do just that? There are many levels of trust in Hashem. Yosef stood on a very high plane in this respect. When Yosef was sent by his father to search for his brothers, the Angel indicated to Yosef that his brothers were scheming against him (Rashi, Bereishis 37:17). Yosef, however, was resolute in his faith and maintained his unequivocal trust in Hashem, so he went to them. When Potifar's wife attempted to seduce him, he did not rely on his spiritual immunity. He ran from the house. He did not think of the future; he did not care. He was at risk in the present. One who has achieved such a lofty plateau is judged accordingly. Great demands are made upon such a person. It all goes with the territory.

*Yosef answered Pharaoh, saying, "That is beyond me; it is G-d who will respond with Pharaoh's welfare." (41:16)*

Yosef's response to Pharaoh was an inherently Jewish response. Indeed, his response epitomized the way a Jew should act. Yosef was locked up in a dungeon with little hope of release. He was in a strange country, in a pagan nation which was governed by an egotistical king. The king had an ambiguous dream, which no one was able to interpret to his satisfaction. Suddenly, Yosef was taken from prison, shaved, cleaned up and dressed in finery and presented before the king as the one man who could shed light on his dream. Everybody looked at Yosef. This is the type of moment that dreams are made of. His destiny was in his own hands. He could have taken all of the credit. After all, he was in a country where such a response would not only have been acceptable, it would have been lauded! This was not Yosef. He took no credit for himself. He eschewed any praise that came his way, "That is beyond me. It is all Hashem." Why did he do this?

Yosef acted like a Jew - or at least the way a Jew should act. In fact, this is what distinguishes the Jew from all other people: his humility, his ability to attribute everything to the Almighty. The Jewish people are compared to the moon. The moon does not have its own ability to illuminate. It reflects light from the sun. So, too, the Jewish people do not take credit for their success. They attribute it all to Hashem. Their wisdom, intelligence, wealth, life, health: everything is from Hashem. Avraham Avinu viewed himself as dust. Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon said, "What are we?" David Hamelech compared himself to a lowly worm. In contrast, the pagan kings, Eisav, Pharaoh, Nevuchadnezer, Chirom, Alexander the Great, and the Christian god all claimed divinity; they all demanded reverence; they all pontificated.

We only have to peruse history to note this glaring distinction between our people, our leaders, our tzaddikim, righteous and pious people, and their counterparts among the nations of the world. Yaakov received Hashem's kindness, and he felt diminished by it. He did not consider himself to be deserving. This does not seem to be the nature of the nations of the world. There are givers and takers, and there are those who, when they take, feel indebted beyond words. This approach characterizes the Jewish way.

*They turned trembling one to another, saying, "What is this that G-d has done to us?" (42:28)*

There is a fascinating Midrash on this pasuk which conveys a powerful message. After the sudden death of Rabbi Simon, Rabbi Levi commented, "The Shevatim, Tribes/brothers, made a discovery of something of value, yet they trembled. We, who have lost so much, how much more should we tremble." The Midrash is teaching the way a Jew should think and view life. The brothers opened up their sacks and discovered money. Nevertheless, they were in a state of fear, because it is uncommon to have money returned after it is spent. Certainly, Hashem was demanding something of them. He was talking to them. What did He want? These were the questions they asked. This should be the Jew's reaction to every gift that he receives from Hashem. There is no such thing as luck or coincidence. Hashem does everything with a purpose. We have to search for that purpose. Perhaps it is a test: Will he thank Hashem? Will he spend the money prudently? If this is how we should react to a gift, how much more so should our reaction to misfortune be thought out with concern? "What does Hashem demand of me?" should be our first reflection.

Horav Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita, goes one step further. No human being can possibly fathom Hashem's reasoning. When the brothers noted that the viceroy, who had originally acted harshly towards them, was now returning their money, they understood that something was brewing. This does not happen without a reason. What does Hashem want of them? Likewise, when a brilliant Torah scholar such as Rabbi Simon was suddenly plucked away in the bloom of his youth, there had to be a serious reason, but Hashem's ways and His rationale are hidden from man. We have no clue why Hashem does what He does. Thus, just as the Shevatim had no idea why the money was returned, why Hashem was doing this to them, so, too, could the reason for Rabbi Simon's sudden death not be discerned. Hashem decided; we must accept His decision with trepidation and awe.

Rav Shternbuch suggests that this is the underlying meaning of the words of consolation which we say to a mourner, Hamakom, yenechem eschem, b'soch shaar aveilei Tzion v'Yerushalayim. "The Makom/Almighty should comfort you among the other mourners of Tzion and Yerushalayim." Just as it is impossible for us to understand why, throughout the course of history, the Jews have been subject to cruel persecution: to death under the most heinous circumstances; with the greatest and most righteous suffering unspeakable horrors; in which tender, young children died under the most brutal conditions. Similarly, it is beyond our grasp as human beings to understand the current death of a loved one. Our only consolation is that it is a direct action of the Almighty, whose rationale is just and whose reasoning is peerless, but, nonetheless, beyond our comprehension.

*And Yehudah said to Yisrael, his father, "Send the lad with me... that we may live, and not die, both we and you and also our little ones." (43:8)*

The emphasis of Yehudah's concern seems to be misplaced. He first expressed his concern regarding himself and his brothers, followed by his concern for his father, and only in conclusion does he express his distress for the imminent danger facing the young children. Is this the way a human being, let alone a Torah leader, should act? His primary focus should have been the children, and only then should he have dealt with the hunger's effect on the adult members.

Menachem Tzion suggests that Yehudah was acting practically, in a manner befitting a Torah leader. He understood that as the food supply depleted and the food had to be rationed, the first to give up their portions would be the able-bodied men. Thus, Yehudah and his brothers were the ones who

were destined to succumb to the famine before anyone else. Afterwards, Yaakov Avinu, the elderly Patriarch would have to make the ultimate sacrifice in deference to the young children. Last, the children would become victims of the famine.

Yehudah understood that the hunger would progress downward, from him and his brothers, to his father, and, last, to the young children. His concern was certainly not misplaced.

*I will personally guarantee him; of my own hand you can demand him. (43:9)*

Yehudah offered to serve as guarantor for Binyamin's safe return from Egypt. The idea of arvus, whereby one serves as the responsible party in addition to the borrower, is viewed by Chazal as being rooted in Yehudah's affirmative action. Yaakov Avinu feared sending Binyamin to Egypt. Yehudah came forward and said, miyadi tevakshenu, "of my own hand you can demand him." When we think about it, Yehudah's acceptance of responsibility neither makes sense nor can it be compared to a standard case of arvus. A guarantor assumes the responsibility to pay back the loan if for some reason the borrower does not - or cannot - repay it. The lender lends the borrower money based upon this assumption. In Yehudah's case, the situation was different. In the event something happened to Binyamin, Yehudah could do nothing about it. If Binyamin was gone - he was gone -and nothing Yehudah could do would bring him back. How then is Yehudah an areiv, guarantor, in the classic sense of the word?

Apparently, arvus has a different connotation. It has been the assumption that a guarantor takes on the responsibility to repay the loan if the borrower does not. The actual concern to see that the loan is repaid is the sole responsibility of the borrower. The guarantor enters the picture only when, and if, the borrower leaves the scene. We see from Yehudah a new perspective on arvus. A guarantor is responsible from the minute the loan takes place. He must see to it that the loan is paid, or else he must pay it. Daagah, concern, is his responsibility. Veritably, if Binyamin suffered a mishap, Yehudah could do nothing about it. Binyamin would be gone. Yehudah could not reproduce him. Yaakov acquiesced to sending Binyamin, because Yehudah took responsibility for his safe return. Yaakov knew that Yehudah would do everything within his power to see to it that Binyamin returned safely.

Arvus means accepting responsibility, being concerned, caring all of the time. Horav Yerachmiel Krom, Shlita, derives from here a new dimension in the famous Rabbinic dictum of Kol Yisrael areivim zeh la'zeh, "All Jews are responsible for one another." This means that just as I am obligated to put on Tefillin, shake a Lulav, and eat Matzah, so, too, am I responsible to see that my fellow Jew does the same. It is my concern, my responsibility, my obligation as a Jew. If my fellow Jew does not put on Tefillin, I cannot do it for him. Thus, my responsibility extends to seeing to it that he fulfills the mitzvah. I must worry and concern myself constantly about his spiritual welfare. I can no longer wash my hands and say, "I fulfilled the mitzvah." My responsibility extends beyond myself. I am an areiv, guarantor, for my fellow Jew.

*They approached the man who was in charge of Yosef's house. (43:19)*

Chazal tell us that "the man who was in charge of Yosef's house" was none other than his son, Menashe. Let us for a moment attempt to put ourselves in Menashe's shoes. He was acutely aware that

the people with whom he was dealing were his father's brothers, his uncles. What must have gone through his mind when he saw his father act toward them as a stranger, accusing them of being spies, and then incarcerating Shimon? Menashe was instructed to strike and imprison Shimon. He was the one who was told by his father to place the silver coins in each brother's sack. What did he think then? The turning point was when his father instructed him to place the silver cup in Binyamin's sack. Certainly, he knew that his father was preparing a libel against his unsuspecting uncles. Was he not bothered by his father's actions?

The Torah informs us that, "He followed Yosef's word exactly" (Bereishis 44:2). Apparently, Menashe followed his father's orders, despite their questionable nature, to the letter. How? The Maharil Diskin, zl, explains that one thing - and only one thing - went through Menashe's mind: My father is greater and wiser than I am. He is more righteous and more holy than I. He knows exactly what he is doing. My function is to follow orders, to obey my father's command - no more, no less. What a powerful lesson for us to digest. There is such a concept as daas Torah, the wisdom that emanates from the Torah. One who is erudite in Torah law, who has absorbed its lessons both halachic and ethical, who reflects everything that Torah teaches us, has the ability to render an incisive decision regarding all facets of life. There are times when we do not understand or agree with the decision expounded by our Torah leaders, but our function is to listen and carry out their command. They represent the foundation of Torah. To question them is to question the Shechinah.

Certainly, Menashe was bothered by some of the things he saw, but he would never question his father. Yosef embodied the Torah, and one does not question the Torah.

*Yosef answered Pharaoh saying, "That is beyond me; it is G-d Who will respond with Pharaoh's welfare." (41:16)*

Yosef was quiet and unassuming, taking no credit for himself. He ascribed whatever powers he may have manifest to He Who is the source of all power - Hashem. Daniel was also endowed with great powers. He attributed all of his powers to Hashem. The Midrash cites the pasuk in Shmuel (1:2:30), Es mechabdai achabeid, "Those that honor Me I will honor," as applying to such people as Yosef and Daniel, who understood that whatever they achieved was through the kindness of Hashem. The character trait of anavah, humility, is an attribute found most often in those that are truly great individuals. Their sense of justice and integrity does not permit them to believe for one moment that they possess their own power to achieve. Whatever they accomplish reflects the will of Hashem. They never call attention to themselves, because they consider themselves to be nothing more than a vehicle for glorifying Hashem's Name.

There were great people who exemplified this character trait. The Alter zl, m'Slobodka, Horav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, was an educator without peer. He was fluent in every Chazal, understanding the profundities of their most difficult axioms. He never wrote a sefer, a volume of novellae. He would comment, "My life is my book."

Horav Meir Chodosh, zl, the Mashgiach par excellance, was a master of self-containment and silence. Yet, he was Rebbe and mentor to thousands from different walks of life. He taught the greatness of man. To teach gadlus ha'adam, the greatness of man, however, one must himself be a great man, a man of impeccable nobility and ethical perfection, one who lives life with perfect equanimity.

Rav Meir Chodosh lived his entire life with such conviction. He radiated tranquility, but he was

sensitive to the needs of all those with whom he came in contact. Nothing seemed to bother him; he was serving Hashem. On his last day on earth, the doctor came to his house and asked him, "Rebbe, where does it hurt?"

"It does not hurt," replied Rav Meir.

"Rebbe, what is not right?" the doctor queried.

"Everything is all right," was Rav Meir's response.

"What is not comfortable?" the doctor tried again.

"I am comfortable," Rav Meir answered.

And so, comfortable, quiet, all right and calm, Rav Meir returned his soul to his Maker. He died as he had lived - quietly, not calling attention to himself. He was a biladi mench, everything came from the Almighty. He was just the medium. This is the attitude of great people. Indeed, the greater they are, the less they think of themselves. Horav Avraham Yitzchak Kohn, zl, the Toldos Aharon Rebbe of Yerushalayim, was such an individual. His incredible love for every Jew manifested itself in his self-effacing character. Gadlus ha'adam was a way of life for him. He saw immeasurable greatness in every person to the point that he felt himself subservient to them. As his health deteriorated, his doctor insisted that the Rebbe adopt a change of pace and accept a regimen of rest. He would, therefore, go for a stroll every day in the company of his attendant. One day, as they were walking down the street, a huge truck pulled up and the driver respectfully asked the Rebbe if he could offer him a ride.

Rav Avraham Yitzchak was overwhelmed with the gesture. The driver was obviously not an observant Jew, while the Rebbe was dressed in the ultra-religious garb of a Yerushalmi. Yet, the driver had overlooked the differences between the two. His inner feeling to perform a kindness, and the Rebbe's outstanding love for another Jew, overcame the differences between them.

The Rebbe, motivated by a powerful emotion to recognize the goodness of another Jew despite his spiritual shortcomings, accepted the offer and ascended to the truck's cab. As the Rebbe was about to get up on the truck, his attendant realized that this was no mere truck - it was actually a garbage truck. He begged the Rebbe not to go, as this form of transportation was far from dignified, especially for an individual as distinguished as the Toldos Aharon Rebbe.

The attendant approached the driver and explained that the Rebbe's stroll was for medical reasons and, thus, a ride on the truck would not be serving his best interests. The driver was visibly disappointed. He had wanted so much to perform a kindness for the Rebbe.

After the driver drove off, the attendant brought to the Rebbe's attention the irony that this was a garbage truck, and how ludicrous it would appear to see the great Toldos Aharon Rebbe driving around Yerushalayim in a garbage truck.

The Rebbe's reply defines his essence and demonstrates his distinction, "The moment the driver halted and offered me a ride, I immediately noticed he was driving a garbage truck. When I think about it, I think it is truly a pity that we declined his offer. If a Jew wishes to perform a kindness for another Jew, why should I deprive him of it as a result of personal reasons of pride and vanity?"

We should ask ourselves a question: How many of us would have a similar feeling of regret?

*Suddenly, seven other cows emerged after them - scrawny and of very inferior form and of emaciated flesh. (41:19)*

When one peruses the text carefully, we note that in Pharaoh's dream he saw cows that were, *raos mareh v'raos basar*, "ugly appearance and gaunt flesh." The word *dalos*, scrawny, does not appear in the text. Yet, when Yosef repeated the dream in order to render his interpretation, he clearly mentioned the fact that the cows were scrawny. This seems to be Pharaoh's own rendition of the image he saw. What was Pharaoh attempting to prove? The *Beis HaLevi* explains that this was Pharaoh's test to determine whether Yosef was truly Divinely inspired or simply a bright person who had a talent for interpreting dreams.

Yosef, however, had a more profound understanding of the situation. He was acutely aware that the Egyptian magicians lacked the ability to interpret the dreams correctly because they were missing one detail, a detail that served as the key to understanding the dream. There was a hidden secret that eluded the magicians without which the dream could not have been interpreted.

How was Yosef to uncover this key? He understood that the key to the dream would be provided by Pharaoh himself. Specifically, the one word that Pharaoh added to throw Yosef off the track in itself served as the key towards interpreting the dream. Yosef knew Hashem's ways. He delivers salvation through the hands of the enemy. What greater demonstration of Hashem's control than to manipulate the enemy, so that he becomes the medium for salvation?

As soon as Pharaoh uttered the word *dalos*, scrawny, Yosef knew that the dream revolved around grain. This is consistent with Chazal's axiom in the Talmud *Bava Metzia 59a*, "*Klal Yisrael is referred to as *dalim*, poor, because of its relation to grain.*" Now it all became clear to Yosef. The dream was about a shortage of grain - a famine. This teaches us, says the *Bais HaLevi*, that one should always place his trust in Hashem, even when he see that the person he once trusted is now trying to harm him. Everything has its source in Hashem, and this instance is no different. It is for a purpose and for a reason. Be patient. Trust in Hashem, and things will work out.

*Yosef called the name of his firstborn Menasheh, for "G-d has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's household." (41:51)*

It seems enigmatic that Yosef would praise the Almighty for helping him forget his past. On the contrary, one would think that Yosef would do everything in his power to remember his roots, his home and his family. True, there might have been some negative aspects to his memories, but, for the most part, his spiritual foundation had its genesis in that home that he was now trying to forget. What did he mean? The *Netziv*, *zl*, gives a practical explanation. Yosef missed his father. He had an overwhelming love for Yaakov Avinu. Had the memories played an active role in his mind, they would have wreaked havoc on his ability to maintain a clear mind when running the country. The viceroy of Egypt, upon whom the management of providing for millions of hungry people relied, could not afford the luxury of falling apart while he was thinking of home. Thus, by making him forget his past, Hashem was helping him.

Horav Moshe Shternbuch, *Shlita*, takes a different approach, one that also conveys a very practical message. Yaakov Avinu raised Yosef in a specific milieu, with a singular goal and mission in mind for his special son. He was to be a *kadosh v'tahor*, holy and pure, totally divested of the frivolity of this world. The material and the mundane were to be far-removed from Yosef's focus. He was a *tzaddik* destined to become the *gadol ha'dor*, preeminent Torah leader of his generation.

Hashem had other plans for Yosef, as demonstrated by his rescue from prison to stand before Pharaoh as the future leader of the world. Yosef was to be the viceroy - not the gadol. This would necessitate a complete revocation of his past, a past which demanded a life of isolation from the material focus of this world. Yaakov's aspirations for Yosef and the reality that Hashem created for him did not coincide. When Yosef realized that Hashem's goals for him were not consistent with the way he was raised, he had no second thoughts. Hashem needed him for a specific purpose. Therefore, he praised Him for allowing him to forget his past, so that it would not lay like a heavy stone on his heart. "Oy, what I could have been!" True, you could have been - but Hashem selected you for another mission.

Rav Shternbuch observes that there is a powerful lesson to be derived from this pasuk. At times, a great person sees that Hashem is steering his life towards a new mission: to guide and direct the community. It takes time away from his learning, teaching and personal spiritual development. Hashem, however, has selected him for another task. He must do what is asked of him with no regrets regarding his personal development. Apparently, Hashem views his life from a different perspective. Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, gives a similar explanation to a statement made by Rabbi Yochanan, who said that he awaited the advent of Moshiach, but not the accompanying chevlei Moshiach, pangs of Moshiach, a reference to the various tzaros, troubles, that will befall the Jewish People prior to his coming. This statement is hardly consistent with the type of personality that characterized Rabbi Yochanan, a man who had buried ten sons. This was a person to whom tragedy and pain were no stranger. Why was he so afraid of confronting chevlei Moshiach? Rav Elya explains that Rabbi Yochanan knew himself well. He understood that he could not tolerate the enormous chilul Hashem, desecration of Hashem's Name, that would occur as a result of the victims of myriads of Jews who would suffer wholesale slaughter. He could not handle the way the Jewish apostates openly flaunted their derision and disdain for everything Jewish. It was not the pain that he could not endure. Rabbi Yochanan could not sustain the pain and anguish that constituted chevlei Moshiach. He could not tolerate seeing Jews in excruciating agony and torture, and he could not sit back while Hashem's Name was being profaned by vile degenerates. Yosef certainly was aware of his father's anguish concerning the loss of his beloved son. The love that existed between Yosef and his father was inextricable. One can only imagine the incredible pain and torment, the overwhelming mental anguish, that must have plagued Yosef. It would have driven a lesser person to the point of insanity, or, at least, to a point where they could not have functioned normally. Yet, Yosef knew full well the underlying message in Pharaoh's dream, the ensuing famine which would serve as the catalyst for his family to descend to Egypt, thereby setting the foundation for the Egyptian exile. Therefore, he understood that he had a function to execute as the Egyptian viceroy. For a lesser person, it would have been impossible. Hashem, however, gave Yosef the ability to forget his past, to put aside his memories, so that he could address the present and build for the future. The gift of forgetfulness enabled him to fulfill his role. Rav Shternbuch concludes with the thought that every baal teshuvah, penitent who returns to Jewish observance, should first forget his past and focus completely on the future. What occurred in the past can only bog him down. He must go forward and think only of the future, to build a home that adheres to Torah and mitzvos, the performance of good deeds and acts of loving kindness.

*But Yosef said to them, "It is just as I have declared to you: You are spies!" (42:14)*

Horav David zl, m'Lelev observes that redemption does not occur for a community until the

members recognize their shortcomings and take action to correct them. The same idea applies to an individual. As long as people blame other people's deficiencies, and not their own, as long as they place the onus of guilt on everyone but themselves, they will be unable to take the corrective actions which would facilitate redemption. Thus, they will not succeed in achieving salvation. We derive this from the narrative concerning Yosef and his brothers' meeting. As long as the brothers proclaimed their innocence, Keinim anachnu, "We are innocent;" we have done no wrong, we have no regrets, (ibid. 42:12) they were not fit for redemption. On the contrary, we see that Yosef spoke harshly to them, referring to them as spies. It is only after they confessed and said, Aval asheimim anachnu, "Indeed, we are guilty concerning our brother," (ibid.42:21) that we find that, "He (Yosef) turned away from them and wept." (ibid.42:24) When the brothers expressed their regret, when they realized that they could be at fault, Hashem caused Yosef's brotherly love to be reignited, so that their reunification began to take root.

When people are involved in a dispute, each one standing firm in his own opinion, when an individual errs and does not see or is not willing to accept the fact that he might be wrong, there is no hope. Only when the individual is not so wrapped up in himself that he does not see the other person's position can there be an end to controversy and a beginning of salvation.

*They rent their garments. (44:13)*

The Midrash teaches us an intriguing lesson: nothing is left unremitted; whatever a person does, however subtle it may or may not be, he will be called to task for it. The brothers caused Yaakov Avinu to tear his garments; Hashem recompensated them by compelling them to rent their garments when Binyamin was being taken away from them. The Midrash continues: Yosef caused the brothers to tear their garments. Therefore, his grandson Yehoshua, many years later, was forced to tear his garments. Binyamin was the cause for his brothers to tear their garments. Therefore, his grandson, Mordechai, tore his garments in Shushan over Haman's evil decree. Menashe caused the brothers to tear their garments. This later resulted in the split of his tribe's land between Eretz Yisrael and Ever HaYarden.

Three things caused the brothers to tear their clothes: Yosef issued the command to place the silver goblet in Binyamin's knapsack; Menashe chased after the brothers at his father's behest; Binyamin was the one in whose knapsack the goblet was discovered. Three people, three actions, three distinct punishments: each was commensurate with the degree of sin.

When a punishment takes place against a community, a family, or an individual, who would ever assume that there is a hidden agenda, perhaps hundreds of years old, that had to be rectified? Chazal are teaching us that such is the case. We do not understand the rationale behind what occurs because we are unaware of various components that comprised the decision. Mordechai cried bitterly in Shushan. Chazal tell us this was a reimbursement to Eisav for his tears at losing the berachos, blessings, to Yaakov. Hashem always pays his debts. At times, it takes awhile. This gives us a new perspective on reward and punishment. What appears to be enigmatic is really very clear and rational. It just depends on the perspective.

*The cows of ugly appearance and gaunt flesh ate the seven cows that were of beautiful appearance and robust. (41:4)*

There must be some purpose in having the ugly cows swallow up the healthy cows. It seems to be more than a minor detail. Yosef interpreted it to mean that the seven years of famine would be so severe and drastic that they would overshadow the years of plenty to the point that they would be completely forgotten. Yet, the seven meager cows swallowing up the seven robust cows does not seem to express this idea. While the seven years of famine might be ruinous, they did not interfere with the comfort level enjoyed during the seven years of abundance. Why was it necessary for the gaunt cows to swallow up the healthy cows?

Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl, explains that there is a significant lesson about human nature to be derived from this dream. A person may be blessed with incredible bounty, but, if he knows that the time he has left for enjoying this gift is very short, his enjoyment will be limited, at best. One who is about to be executed hardly enjoys his last meal, regardless of how tasty it may be. The Egyptians were aware that the wonderful years of abundance were to last for a limited amount of time, to be followed by years of famine and disaster. How could they enjoy the gift, knowing fully well what was soon to strike them? Every time they ate a delicious, bountiful meal, they thought of the impending doom that would result in the upcoming famine. The dream was quite accurate in describing the years of famine. The seven years of famine would actually erode any remembrance of the years of bounty. In anticipation of the pain, the enjoyment could hardly be felt.

*Then Pharaoh said to Yosef... "There can be no one so discerning and wise as you... You shall be in charge of my palace and by your command shall all my people be sustained. (41:39,40)*

Yosef certainly came across as wise, astute and knowledgeable. He was wiser than anyone Pharaoh had previously employed as an advisor. Yet, how does a king of Pharaoh's stature take a "criminal" out of jail and almost immediately make him Viceroy over the land of Egypt? Yosef was given the "keys" to the country! Is that the way a wise king acts? Could he have not simply appointed Yosef as Secretary of Finance and Agriculture? Why make him Viceroy?

Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, explains that the answer lies in one word - biladoi, "this is beyond me" (41:16). Yosef could just as well have said, b'ezras Hashem, with Hashem's help, I will interpret the dream. No! he did not attribute any power to himself whatsoever. Everything came from Hashem. He attributed all of his success to Hashem. A person such as this was a unique find. Pharaoh had never met such an individual who took absolutely no credit for himself. Such a person could be trusted to direct his country.

In the ensuing years of bounty that Egypt would experience, there was great opportunity for an enterprising individual to put a little away for himself. Later on, during the years of famine, this person could make a healthy profit from his foresight. Yes, this is what the average person might do. A person who was prepared to give everything up and not take any credit for himself, however, was above taking personal gain - albeit legal - from the country's bounty. Such a person was unique. He was worthy of immediately being put into place to govern the land.

As Jews, we should always realize that biladoi - everything comes directly from Hashem. Whatever success we achieve has one source: Hashem. This awareness should fortify our faith and trust in the Almighty as it gives us the fortitude to confront life's challenges stoically, with determination and courage.

*They then said one to 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)*

The brothers' regret and consequent confession regarding their lack of compassion to Yosef's pleas was constituted a turning point in the story of mechiras Yosef, sale of Yosef. They acknowledged the degree of their culpability and recognized that what was occurring to them, the anguish caused by the Egyptian Viceroy, was the result of this previous lack of compassion. The Brisker Rav, zl, was wont to say that every religious decree that is enacted against us by those who seek to undermine our religious observance is the direct result of our own failing in that area. When we are complacent in regard to tznius, moral chastity, decrees are made that endanger our ability to maintain proper morality. When edicts are legislated that are harmful to Torah study, it is because we have been deficient in our attitude toward Torah study. When we deprecate the value and sanctity of Shabbos, injunctions will be made against our observance of Shabbos. In other words, it is Hashem's way of conveying a message to us: you are not acting properly.

When our shemiras Shabbos, Shabbos observance, is of a heightened nature, when we study the laws of Shabbos and are proficient in them, when our Shabbos is replete with Torah study, when our Shabbos table is filled with song, then it will have a far-reaching effect on those around us. Chillul Shabbos, desecration of Shabbos, is directly connected with our own observance. Therefore, before we criticize and malign those of our brethren who have strayed from the fold, let us focus the lens of condemnation on ourselves. The Brisker Rav noted that we find that on Yom Kippur even those who are usually non-observant will make an effort to fast, attend a shul and refrain from traveling by car. Why? He explained that on Yom Kippur the observant are on an unusually lofty spiritual plane, much more so than during the year. This has a positive influence on the non-observant.

*"Indeed, we are guilty concerning our brother inasmuch as we saw his heartfelt anguish when he pleaded with us and we paid no heed." (42:21).*

The brothers confessed their sin and indicated their contrition. This is the beginning of the teshuvah, repentance, process. It seems like they were properly motivated by heartfelt regret over their past actions. If this was the case, why did Reuven involve himself, interjecting, "Did I not tell you not to commit a sin with the child? You would not listen. Now a (Divine) reckoning is being demanded for his blood" (42:22). Exactly what was Reuven trying to do, add salt to their wounds? They apparently regretted their lack of compassion for their brother's plea. Why make them feel worse? Is this the way a would-be penitent is to be treated?

The commentators view Reuven's criticism in a different light. He was not trying to hurt them, but rather to explain to them that the teshuvah that they felt they had performed was incomplete. They were in error in regard to their notion of the sin. It was not merely a lack of compassion on their part that warranted this anguish. It was because they had "committed a sin against the boy." Unquestionably, cruelty is a despicable character trait, but Hashem does not punish people simply for being cruel. Divine retribution is meted out against those who commit definite sins. Teshuvah is all-important and necessary, but it is only effective if it is performed with the correct sin in mind.

*Indeed, we are guilty concerning our brother. (42:21)*

Viddui, confession, is a primary component in the teshuvah, repentance, process. Before one takes leave of his earthly experience, he is enjoined to confess his sins so that he enters the World of Truth pure and clean. Ashamnu, "we have become guilty," has become the catchword of Viddui. I recently read a fascinating story of how the Klausenberger Rebbe, zl, assembled thousands of Jewish survivors on Erev Yom Kippur, immediately following the liberation from the infamous death camps. The purpose: to speak to them about maintaining their religious observance. The method: he focused on the Viddui that we recite on Yom Kippur. The Rebbe had just undergone trial by fire in the camps. He had lost his wife and eleven children to the Nazis. Yet, his primary focus was on the deficiencies of faith in Hashem during the persecution that they had all experienced.

The rebbe went up to the lectern and opened his Machzor. With bitter tears, he spoke not from the Machzor, but from the heart. Directing his monologue Heavenward, he began with Ashamnu. Rather than inflecting the word as a statement, he presented it as a question, "Did we sin? Did we rebel?"

"Did we really sin? I hereby challenge the entire congregation. Is there one person here who was remiss in not repaying a loan? Nothing belonged to us - not even our bodies which were nothing more than receptacles for beatings and whippings. Gozalnu, we stole. Did we steal? From whom could we have stolen? No one owned anything. It was all confiscated by the Nazis. Wait - yes. I am guilty of theft! I admit that I stole. One day, upon returning from slave labor I collapsed into my bunk to rest, and my shriveled skin became caught between two boards. When I attempted to free myself, my skin tore from my bones. Blood streamed out, and I moaned softly. Regrettably, my moan was loud enough to wake up a fellow prisoner. Yes, I stole. I stole sleep from an exhausted prisoner. This is the only theft that I committed. I admit my iniquity!"

The Rebbe continued with his litany. Dibarnu dofi, 'We spoke slander.' Did we slander? How could we? We did not even have the strength for idle conversation. If by chance we had any strength left, we saved it so that we could respond to the probing questions of our vicious tormentors. He'evinu, 'We caused perversion?' Hirshanu, 'We caused wickedness.' Latznu, 'We scorned.' Who could do such a thing here? We had no strength to do anything! Moradnu, 'We rebelled.' Against whom did we rebel? We could not muster enough strength to work. Rebellion was the last thing we could think of. We did not even have the strength to cry out as they beat us. We did not rebel against Hashem. We suffered in silence, accepting our fate."

The Rebbe finished the Viddui. After dismissing each and every sin as being physically impossible for them to have committed, he closed his Machzor. "We did not wrongfully sin. We committed no iniquity. This Viddui was not written for us!" The congregation just stood there, shock registering on their faces.

A few moments went by and the Rebbe raised up his voice again. "But we are guilty of sins that are not written in the Machzor. We did sin, perhaps in a minute and delicate manner, but we did sin. We sinned in our faith and trust in the Almighty. Did we not doubt Hashem out of despair and hopelessness in the camps? When we recited Shma at night, did we not hope it would be our last Shma, that the end to our suffering would finally come? How many times did we entreat Hashem, 'Master of the Universe, I have no more strength. Take my soul, so that I will no longer have to recite Modeh Ani.' And when

daybreak came, and we were still alive and we were once again obligated to thank Hashem for 'returning my soul with great mercy,' were we not filled with rage? When we removed the corpses from the barracks, were we not envious that they no longer had to suffer?

Yes, Hashem, this is how we sinned. We sinned with a lack of faith and trust. We should have held our heads up high, taking the suffering and pain, but we did not. And for this we beat our chests and confess our sins. Hashem, restore back our faith and trust in You. Help us to establish new families, so that we may perpetuate this faith to future generations. Above all, we must make simchah, joy, our foremost goal."

The Rebbe's words rang eternal for those in attendance. Everyone was moved beyond words. He brought out the inner yearning that every Jew has to return and be close with Hashem.

*It happened at the end of two years. (41:1)*

The "two years" refer to the additional two years Yosef remained in prison. Initially, the Heavenly decree was that he serve one year for each brother against whom he had spoken. Because he placed his trust in the wine steward by asking him to intercede with Pharaoh on his behalf, Hashem extended his incarceration. He should have maintained his trust in Hashem Who had protected him until that point. We must try to understand this. What did Yosef do that was so wrong? He was mishtadel, endeavored, by asking the wine steward to put in a good word for him. Is that so bad? He never rejected Hashem. Certainly, he was waiting for Hashem's blessing. This does not preclude or detract from man's right and responsibility to be mishtadel. Furthermore, it is natural for someone in prison to seek every opportunity to liberate himself.

Horav Avroham Kilav, Shlita, explains that while this concept might be true in regard to most people, Yosef was different. He later told his brothers, "Do not worry, for it is as a supporter of life that Hashem has sent me ahead of you" (45:5). In other words, Yosef acutely sensed Hashem's dominating force in the evolving events. Furthermore, when Yosef was in the house of Potifar, with free reign to do as he pleased, why did he not communicate with his father? Apparently, Yosef was cognizant of the significance of the dreams and the importance of their being actualized. Since Yosef understood and clearly perceived Hashem's preoccupation in the affairs surrounding his life, he should have trusted in Him irrevocably. Endeavoring is for those who do not anticipate the Hand of Hashem in their affairs. Yosef certainly did. Thus, he should have waited for the signal from Above.

*Now let Pharaoh seek out a discerning and wise man and appoint him over the land. (41:33)*

Troubled by his strange dreams, Pharaoh sought an individual who could interpret them for him. He listened to - and ignored - various interpretations until Yosef presented a lucid explanation of the dreams. Moreover, Yosef even suggested a way to respond constructively to the message of the dream. He advised Pharaoh to seek a wise and competent administrator to oversee the gathering of the grain during the seven years of plenty. This is enigmatic. Pharaoh only sought an interpreter; he did not ask for an advisor. Why did Yosef give unsolicited advice?

Furthermore, while it might have been true that Pharaoh needed a wise man to interpret the dream and even to suggest how to implement a response, why would he need a wise man afterwards to serve as administrator? Could he not simply hire an able and accomplished professional to take charge of gathering and selling the grain? Why would he have to be a *navon v'chacham*, discerning and wise?

Horav Yaakov Lubchensky, zl, explains that it was not enough simply to gather and sell the grain. Only a wise man could construct a plan to hoard grain during the years of plenty, when massive surpluses were accessible. Someone would have to arouse the people, impressing upon them a sense of urgency to save the grain at a time when they were literally wallowing in it. To illustrate hunger to the point of actualization - during a period of abundance - takes discernment, penetrating insight and wisdom. An able administrator might have been able to convince some of the people to store their surplus, but a unique individual was required to teach people to understand and feel the danger of not doing so at a time when so much was available.

Horav Avraham Pam, zl, feels that Yosef's insight has a practical application to our youth. Our sojourn on this world may be likened to the seven years of plenty. We think that life is endless and time is limitless to the point that we completely lose perspective on the value of time - until it is too late. In the World to Come, all we have is what we take with us, what we have stored up in this world. How bitter will be our regret when we realize that we have exchanged spiritual jewels for worthless forgeries.

We may add that the *navon v'chacham*, the discerning and wise men, whose function it is to arouse and inspire the youth of our generation, are the Torah teachers and spiritual mentors. They are charged with a mission: to paint a picture of reality to a world that views life through a lens of distortion and imagination. While it is true that it takes wisdom to transmit this image, the frame that holds up the picture is the integrity behind it.

*So Pharaoh sent and summoned Yosef, and they rushed him from the pit. (41:14)*

Hashem Yisborach's plan does not necessarily coincide with that of man. Indeed, every one of us must have moments when he wonders "Why me?" We are at a loss for a rationale that explains the various life situations to which we are subjected at times. Perhaps Yosef had the same dilemma. The youngest in the home of the distinguished Yaakov Avinu, he surely must have yearned to have a close relationship with his brothers. They shunned and loathed him. His brothers wanted nothing to do with him. Yosef must have been very lonely. In fact, he grew up alone. It was an adversarial situation - Yosef against everyone else. One who reads the narrative of Yosef's early childhood might wonder why it had to be this way. Why could Yosef not have had a normal, healthy relationship with his family? Why was there always tension catalyzing his rejection? Let us look at "page two" of his life. He was sold into slavery to a country which set the standard for moral depravity. If he were to have to make up for lost time by socializing with his fellow slaves, the chances that he would have maintained his spiritual status-quo was minimal. It was not difficult for Yosef to be a loner; he had been one until now at home. It was just more of the same situation. "Page three," Yosef was flung into prison to live among the degenerates of society who - as mentioned - had rewritten the laws of morality. Once again, Yosef was alone. Yosef, however, was accustomed to being alone - a little more would not destroy his life. Once again, we wonder: Did Yosef not deserve a little better? Should he not have had some harmony, some companionship in life?

Now that we have presented the negative aspect of Yosef's life, let us examine the positive effect these presumed negative circumstances had on Yosef. Since he was destined to be deprived of the protective spiritual environment of his home, Yosef needed a shield to repel the harmful influence of the Egyptian culture. He was sold as a slave. Slaves are not part of the upper echelon and, thus, not exposed to its worst debauchery. When he was liberated and raised to a position of importance and power, the wife of Potifar attempted to seduce him. He withstood the test, but ended up in jail. Once again, he was spared an association with Egyptian society. How does one survive the loneliness of jail? That depends upon the individual's background. If he has led a gregarious, fun-filled life, then he might find prison depressing. If, however, in his previous lifestyle he has been reclusive and scorned, then he might not find prison that unpleasant.

In other words, the hardship and dejection to which Yosef was subjected was a preparation, a training period to protect him from the environment and culture which would one day be his home. He could deal with the dejection of servitude and the loneliness of prison because he had "graduated" from it at home. What might have appeared as negative circumstances were actually what saved Yosef, helping him to develop the ability to rise to the position of Viceroy of Egypt, while still remaining as devout and righteous as he had been when he left his father's home. This should be a lesson for us, to reconsider, when we look at what seems to be a negative situation.

We may go a step further in analyzing Yosef's ten-year incarceration. The Midrash HaGadol teaches us that since Yosef caused anguish to his ten brothers, he was punished and imprisoned for ten years - one year for each brother. Incredible! His brothers sold Yosef. They sought to kill him. Instead, they only ruined his life. He sinned against them! His dreams implied that he would rule over them. This catalyzed their anxiety, which was the precursor of the envy and enmity that led to their selling him as a slave. He sinned, and he must atone for his sin. He hurt his brothers unnecessarily; he was insensitive to their feelings. He needed to learn what it means to hurt someone: how the pain feels, how deep is the hurt. It is not enough to listen to a mussar shmues, ethical discourse, about sensitivity and feelings. One must experience the hurt - himself. Only then can he begin to atone his actions.

Ten years is a long time, but ten brothers is a large group. One year for each brother's pain may seem a bit excessive, but Yosef Ha'Tzaddik was no ordinary person. He is called ha'tzaddik, the righteous, for a reason. Hashem is very demanding of those who are close to Him. A deviation of a hairsbreadth is enough reason for His close ones to be punished.

Yosef spent ten years in a special school - an Egyptian prison. During this time, he became sensitized to his brother's feelings. He experienced pain and deprivation, hurt and dejection. He had the opportunity to introspect, to delve into his past actions and their effect upon others. He prepared for his next page in life-monarchy. In order to be a successful leader, one must be sensitive to the needs of others. A leader represents his community and, hence, must represent each of its members. In the classroom called life, we all have the opportunity to learn from our experiences. Those of us that do are better people as a result.

*Take of the land's glory...And take double money in your hand...And may Kel Shakai grant you mercy before the man. (43:11,12,14)*

Rashi explains that Yaakov Avinu was telling his sons, "I have done everything; I have sent a gift; I have given double money; now, you lack nothing - but prayer. Behold! I will pray for you." We

learn the correct approach one from Yaakov must manifest when confronting challenge. He first ascertained that there were sufficient funds for purchasing the necessities for his large family. He even sent a gift for the Viceroy to assure a swift and pleasant exchange. Last, after all of his hishtadlus, endeavoring, he began to pray, because - when all is said and done - prayer will be most efficacious. Moreover, even those areas of achievement which "seem" to be the result of one's endeavor are not. Hishtadlus is an important component in the process which serves as the vehicle through which one receives Hashem's bounty.

To paraphrase the Chovas Halevavos, cited by Nachlas Tzvi, "Ein hahishtadlus mo'il ela muchrach," "Endeavoring is not useful, but rather, (it is) compelled." We may add a comment I heard related in the name of the Gerer Rebbe in regard to the area of shidduchim, finding one's designated mate, "Hishtadlus is nor far di nerven." "Endeavoring is only for one's nerves." In other words, one is compelled out of anxiety or driven by a feeling of helplessness, to be mishtadel, endeavor, to do everything possible to find/locate/discover/chance upon" his/her "bashert", designated mate. In the final analysis, however, when the appropriate time arrives, Hashem reveals the one who seems to have been so elusive.

Nachlas Tzvi cites Chacham Machluf Chadad, in his sefer "K'racheim Av," who relates the following compelling story, which demonstrates the significance of prayer. An extremely wealthy man by the name of Elkanah lived during the reign of Shlomo Hamelech. His home was open to all, as he contributed heavily to the welfare of those who were less fortunate than he. Suddenly, the situation reversed itself, and overnight he went bankrupt. He lost everything - except one goat, which he saved. He was now impoverished, in worse condition than many of those whom he had previously assisted.

Shlomo Hamelech would often change his royal garb and discretely go out among the populace to associate with the common citizen, to get an unbiased perspective on what was "going on" in his country. The day that Shlomo chose to go out was extremely hot. The sun was beating down on those who were unfortunate enough to be outside. When Elkanah noticed a poor man walking by his home in the intense heat, he ran to him with cold water and a piece of meat. He began to converse with Shlomo/ the poor guest. In the course of the conversation, Elkanah mentioned he had once been wealthy and was left with nothing more than a single goat, which he had just slaughtered in honor of his guest. Shlomo Hamelech was extremely moved by the man's munificence. He said, " I am a good friend of Shlomo Hamelech. I will give you a letter which you should take to him, and he will reinstate you to your original position. Indeed, a person so kind and magnanimous as you deserves to be wealthy."

Elkanah took the letter to Yerushalayim. When he arrived at the palace of the king, he was told that Shlomo had gone to the Bais Hamikdash. He entered the Bais Hamikdash to find Shlomo prostrated on the floor supplicating Hashem on behalf of Klal Yisrael. "May they be blessed with wealth and good fortune. May their crops be plenty. May peace reign in the land," the king prayed. When Elkanah heard the king pray, he thought to himself, "If the king himself prays to Hashem for blessings, why should I turn to the king? I might as well turn to the Source of all blessing - Hashem." He began to pray and pour out his heart to Hashem, beseeching Him to return him to his former state. He left Yerushalayim filled with confidence and hope that his prayers would soon be answered.

A few days later, Elkanah went to the forest to chop some trees for wood. He went over to a tree. For some reason, he found it difficult to chop. The heat, which made him very tired, added to his toil. After resting for a short while, he again attempted to fell the tree, to not avail. Depressed and disgusted, he sat down and began to weep, pouring his heart out to Hashem. He soon arose and decided to dig up the tree by its roots. He began to dig and shortly discovered a hidden treasure of gold coins.

Realizing that Hashem had just granted him his wish, he profusely offered his deep gratitude to the Almighty. He invested his newly found treasure in various business ventures and soon became wealthy beyond anything he had ever been before.

During this time, Shlomo Hamelech began to wonder why Elkanah never came to him with "the letter." He asked his servants if anyone had ever come to see him with a letter. They responded in the affirmative, he had been there and left upon hearing that the king was in the Bais HaMikdash. His curiosity piqued, the king felt he must investigate what had transpired with Elkanah. He changed into his "traveling clothes" and started out on the road in search of Elkanah. Arriving in Elkanah's town, he was shocked to see that Elkanah now lived in a palace surrounded by servants. Seeing the "guest," Elkanah summoned him to partake of food and drink and rest. Shlomo looked at Elkanah and queried, "Do you not recognize me? I am the poor man for whom you slaughtered your only goat. I gave you a letter to give to Shlomo Hamelech. Apparently, you succeeded in seeing him and receiving his aid."

"No!" answered Elkanah. "It is true that I went to see the king, but he was unavailable. After discovering that he was busy praying to Hashem, I decided that I should do the same. I poured out my heart, and Hashem listened to my pleas."

"I am Shlomo," the king responded. "Praised are you that you did not rely on man and trusted instead in Hashem. As He is the Source of everything, why should we not pray to the source?" What a beautiful story! Hopefully, its message will not elude us.

*It happened at the end of two years to the day. (41:1)*

The Yalkut Shimoni, cited by Rashi at the end of Parashas Va'yeishav, attributes Yosef's "extra" years of incarceration to the fact that he asked the sar ha'mashkim, chamberlain of the cupbearers, to remember him to Pharaoh. He stated his request to be remembered twice, which explains the two years of incarceration. Chazal end with a pasuk in Tehillim 40:5, "Fortunate is the man who has placed his reliance upon Hashem and has not turned to the arrogant ones." This refers to one who does not rely on Egypt to sustain him. Incredible! On the one hand, Chazal consider Yosef to be the symbol of bitachon, faith and trust, in the Almighty. On the other hand, they criticize him and hold him in contempt because he turned to the "arrogant" Egyptian for help in securing his release from prison. How are we to understand this apparent contradiction?

Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, explains this in the following manner: In the Talmud Yevamos 121b, Chazal cite the pasuk in Tehillim 50:3, "And his surroundings are exceedingly turbulent." They glean from here that Hashem deals strictly with those surrounding Him, even to a hair's breath. This is derived from the relationship between the word "nisarah," stormy/turbulent, and "k'chut ha'sarah," like a thread of hair. We learn from here that the Almighty deals with those who are close to Him in the most strict measures. If they deviate ever so slightly, He punishes them in an uncompromising and severe manner. Now, let us ask ourselves: if one were to question one of those "close ones" concerning whether he is willing to relinquish his "position" of proximity to Hashem, so that he would not have to be subject to such exacting discipline, - what would he respond? Unquestionably, he would never trade positions, even for a moment!

In fact, anyone who would entertain this opportunity, clearly is not one of Hashem's "close ones." Why is this? Why are they inclined to live by the rule of a "hairbreadth"? The answer, explains

Horav Eizrachi, emanates from the fact that to them it is not a hairbreadth; it is a wide gap. Their proximity to Hashem lends them a greater and more profound perspective on service to Hashem and responsibility to the klal, community. Yosef Ha'tzaddik's relationship to Hashem dictated that he should not turn to the Egyptian for anything. To us, as individuals who are far removed from such a lofty spiritual plateau, it appears that Yosef really did nothing more than the usual hishtadlus, endeavor, on behalf of his freedom. Would we not have mentioned to the Egyptian, "Remember me when you go out"? It is merely a deviation of a hairbreadth. Perhaps this deviation is minute to us, but for Yosef Ha'tzaddik it constitutes a major departure from what is expected of him.

To have bitachon in Hashem is a primary component of Jewish theology. One must never give up hope for salvation. Chazal say, "Even if a sharp knife is resting on one's throat, he should not despair, he should not give up hope." For some people, every waking moment in the day is a lesson in emunah, belief, and bitachon, trust in the Almighty. They persevere amidst pain and anguish, with no prospects for a natural cure; never does their trust in Hashem wane, never does it falter. Everyone has his own "pekel," package, of tzaros, troubles and misfortunes. For some, it is health related, for others, it could be a situation in chinuch ha'banim, raising children - educational, emotional, social, or shidduchim, marriage. Each person is doled out his "pekel" package, in accordance with his ability to manage with the problem.

Klal Yisrael has undergone misfortunes that would have destroyed a lesser people. Only our trust in the Almighty has sustained us physically and spiritually throughout our ordeals. The Holocaust was a particular period of our history in which cataclysmic persecution put the emunah and bitachon of a Jew to its greatest test. Countless narratives have related the spiritual heroism of Jews, their overwhelming adherence to their faith in the face of overwhelming affliction, their trust in the Almighty against all odds.

I recently heard a story about a Jewish doctor who lived in Germany prior to World War II. He was a brilliant physician, whose fame had preceded him. For this reason, the accursed Nazis did not immediately send him to the gas chamber, but, instead, placed him in charge of the camp's hospital. He was to treat the SS men and even those Jews who, because of their importance to the "cause," were given medical treatment until the moment that they were no longer needed. The doctor did everything he could to help his brethren, even at times at great risk to his own existence. He was, however, not able to deal with the pain and suffering and brutal death which he witnessed the Nazis perpetrating upon his brethren.

This feeling of helplessness led to a deep depression that had severe physical side effects. He stopped eating; he lost his will to live. Soon he became a skeleton of skin and bones, waiting for the angel of death to relieve him of his misery. The Nazis did not "provide" for sick people in their concentration camps. They were immediately sent to their "final solution".

Our doctor had a boyhood friend, a gentile with whom he had spent many years in medical school. Following their graduation, they had worked together on a number of research projects. The non-Jewish doctor was always in awe of his Jewish friend's brilliance. Indeed, he was the doctor to whom all of the German physicians would turn to if they, or a member of their family, had become ill. Over the years, the doctor had become the medical director of a large German hospital. Despite his eminence and success, he was a compassionate human being who was seriously troubled by the horrible crimes against humanity -- especially the Jews -- that his people were organizing. He was determined to do something, however minor, to help the hapless Jewish People. He decided that he was going to attempt to save one Jew, one single solitary Jew. This would be his good deed, this would be

his contribution to humanity which would "cleanse" the stench of German evil from him.

He sent a letter to the Gestapo hierarchy requesting one Jewish "specimen" from the camps whom he could use for research. This way he could attempt to save a Jewish soul. The Gestapo agreed, on the condition that when his treatment of the patient was completed, he would have him returned to the camp to be killed with everyone else. He traveled to Auschwitz to look for that unique patient whom he would save. One can only begin to imagine his joy when he found his long-lost friend interred in the infirmary of the death camp. He immediately requested from the commandant that he release this depressed, sickly patient so that he could be used for his research project.

He took his friend back to Germany and placed him in his hospital. He was able to secure the finest nurses for him and provided the best medical treatment for him. Slowly, the doctor began to return to the world of the "living." During his treatment period, the war ended, and he was now able to leave as a free man. He was no longer a prisoner of the Nazis. He was, however, still a prisoner of his own mind. He could not reconcile himself with the questions he had regarding the catastrophe that had befallen his People. He requested that his friend please locate a Jew who had survived the concentration camps so that he could pose his questions to him.

There happened to be a survivor in the hospital, a strictly observant Jew, whose external appearance, his beard and payos together with his piercing eyes, bespoke an individual who had lived in the shadow of death and, as a result, had become a better, more spiritual person. Indeed, one could sense in talking to him that he was in the presence of a Heavenly Angel. When this saintly man came to visit the doctor who was recuperating, the doctor cried out, "My brother, how is it possible to continue on, to live with hope after the terrible destruction that was wrought upon us? How can we not give up hope?"

The Jew answered him saying, "What kept me going throughout the bitter war? Let me tell you. I am a chasid of the great tzaddik, Rav Nachman Breslover, who died as a very young man. He was stricken with tuberculosis at the young age of thirty. He suffered indescribable pain, becoming weaker every day. He would cough up blood amidst excruciating pain, but he never complained. As he was nearing his end, he convened his "tish," table, when the Rebbe and chasidim would sing and listen to words of Torah. During the "tish," he began to cough up so much blood that he began to choke. We could see his agony and his torment. Yet, in the middle of this scene, the Rebbe cried out, 'Yehudim, Jews; it is forbidden to ever give up hope. Even in a situation such as mine, when all of the doctors have said it is hopeless, I do not give up hope! I still believe with my whole heart that I will continue to live.' The Rebbe's hope, his total trust in the Almighty, infused me with courage and hope to go on despite the challenges which I confronted." When the doctor heard these emotional words, he exclaimed, "You have consoled me!"

Let us hope that those sincere emotional words will inspire all of us.

*Yosef called the name of his first born Menashe, for G-d has made me forget all my hardship... And the name of the second he called Efraim for, G-d has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.  
(41:51,52)*

As Yosef named his second son, he chose to emphasize that Egypt was not his home; it was "ereztz anyi," land of my suffering, even though this land had been the source of his eminence. Here, he had become known; here, he had become wealthy and powerful; here, he went from being a lowly

slave to associate ruler of the country. Yet, he wanted to remember and inculcate this idea in his children: Egypt is not our home; it is *eretz anyi*, the land of *aniyus*-affliction, suffering and poverty. Horav Chizkiyahu Cohen, zl, comments that the greatest "ani," poor man, is an "ani b'daas," one who is deficient in his mind, one who lacks wisdom. In Egypt, Yosef was far-removed from daas Torah, the Torah perspective of his father. Yosef sought to convey to his sons that Egypt was the land where they happened to live. It was not, however, their home. It was a land whose values, culture and lifestyle was antithetical to the way of life mandated for a Jew. Egyptian "weltanschauung" did not represent the Torah point of view and way of life. Horav Cohen supports this thesis with an exposition of the *Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei Tosfos*. They attribute Efraim's name to the root word "eifar," which means dust. The Patriarchs, Avraham and Yitzchak, Yosef's ancestors, had a distinct relationship with "eifar." In his humility, Avraham compared himself to the dust of the earth. Yitzchak, as the perfect sacrifice, is considered before Hashem as if his eifar, ashes/dust, had been on top of the Mizbayach, Altar, as atonement for Klal Yisrael. The name Efraim, which is a plural form of "eifar," recalls the two Patriarchs, the legacy that they bequeathed to their descendants. Yosef underscored this legacy in naming his son, telling him to follow in the Patriarch's footsteps by perceiving Egypt as *eretz anyi*, a land foreign to the Jewish way of life.

*So Yosef's brothers, ten of them, went to buy grain from Egypt. (42:3)*

Rashi questions the Torah's usage of the term "Yosef's brothers," as opposed to "Yaakov's sons." Furthermore, why does the Torah state that ten brothers went down to Egypt? We are told in the next *pasuk* that Binyamin went down. Is there a reason that the Torah emphasizes the number ten? Rashi explains that by referring to them as Yosef's brothers, the Torah seeks to emphasize that they all were remorseful over the sale of Yosef. Consequently, they went with brotherly affection to find and redeem him at all costs. Their sentiments towards him were not uniform, since some brothers had stronger filial feelings towards Yosef than others. We are, therefore, told that there were ten brothers with ten distinct levels of concern about their brother. Yet, they were totally united in their quest to purchase grain from Egypt.

Horav David Feinstein, Shlita, supplements this exegesis. He observes that the Hebrew word "ach," brother, is etymologically related to two other words, one meaning "sorrow" and the other meaning "to sew together." A brother's obligation encompasses both of these concepts. A brother has a natural inclination to be sensitive to the worry or sorrow of his brother. Likewise, when one brother has a problem, his brothers are obligated to join together with him to minister to his needs.

With this in mind, Horav Feinstein posits that the term "achei Yosef," Yosef's brothers, has an additional connotation. Had the Torah referred to them simply as Yaakov's sons, we might be led to believe that their desire to liberate Yosef reflected their concern for their father's feelings. Now that the Torah emphasizes that they came as Yosef's brothers, it attests to their genuine concern and sorrow as true brothers who were naturally trying to help him. Their collective feelings notwithstanding, they were still ten brothers with ten individual degrees of sensitivity. It would serve us well to take this thesis into mind in regard to our interpersonal relationships with our friends. After all, are not all Jews brethren?

*Indeed, we are guilty concerning our brother in as much as we saw his heartfelt anguish when he*

*pleaded with us. (42:21)*

If we peruse the preceding parsha, which relates the story of the sale of Yosef to the Yishmaelim, we notice that there is no mention of Yosef pleading with his brothers. It is only from their vidui, confession, that we are able to derive that he pleaded with them not to sell him. Horav Yosef Konvitz, zl, observes, that implicit in the brother's statement, is that this pleading must have taken place only at the moment that they decided to sell him to the Arab merchants. Why? Why did he not implore then earlier, when they were throwing him into the pit? Was his life not in danger then? What delayed his plea?

Horav Konvitz explains that as long as the danger was concentrated on his physical well-being, Yosef was prepared to accept the pain and suffering as *yesurim shel ahavah*, pain inflicted by Hashem out of deep love. Yosef was willing to accept Hashem's decree, as long as his spiritual status-quo remained intact. When his brothers decided to sell him to the Arabs, Yosef became afraid. He was experiencing a clear and present danger to his *neshamah*, soul. If he were sold to the pagans, there was the distinct possibility that by living among them, he would slowly acculturate and eventually assimilate. Now he began to beg. He implored his brothers, "Please do not sell me. Please do not cast me off to live among the nations of the world." This is implied by the brother's statement when they said, "We saw *tzoras nafsho*," translated as heartfelt anguish, but quite possibly referring to the anguish of his *nefesh*, soul, the fear that his soul would now suffer. As long as the danger was only to his physical being, Yosef accepted his fate. When his *neshamah* hung in the balance, he poured out his heart to them to listen to him. Regrettably, they did not.

It happened at the end of two years to the day, and Pharaoh dreamed. (41:1) The commentators explain that the "two years" that preceded Pharaoh's dream is a reference to the two years that followed Yosef's interpretation of the dreams of Pharaoh's chamberlains. After two years the chief cup-bearer "remembered" how Yosef had successfully interpreted his dream. The Midrash explains the word "mikeitz," as "keitz sam la'choshech," Hashem ended the darkness to which Yosef had been subjected, and he was subsequently taken from prison. The Bais Halevi comments that this parsha serves as the key to understanding Divine Providence, to comprehending the true concept of *sibah* and *mesovev*, cause and effect.

Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita, explains this in the following manner: Simply, one would say that the course of events seems apparent. Pharaoh had a strange dream, which no one could interpret for him acceptably. The chief cup-bearer finally remembered that there was a gifted young Jewish slave in jail who could successfully interpret dreams. He suggested to Pharaoh that he might ask Yosef to interpret his dream. The rest is history. The *sibah*, cause and reason, for initiating the cycle of events "seems" to be Pharaoh's dream. The *pasuk* doesn't indicate this when it says, "It happened at the end of two years to the day." This implies that the cause was the fact that two years had passed; Yosef's tenure in prison had come to an end. Thus, Pharaoh had a dream that would eventually facilitate Yosef's release from prison. The "sibah" is Yosef's need to be released - not Pharaoh's dream. On the contrary, Pharaoh dreamed because Yosef was destined to be released!

We derive from here that our concept of cause and effect is distorted. What we think is the cause is, for the most part, the effect and *visa versa*. The *sibah*, cause for everything that occurs, is Hashem's decree. Throughout Jewish history, from our very first episode of *galus*, exile, we have experienced incidents of *hester panim*, Divine concealment, in which Hashem hides His presence and guiding Hand. He causes people to perform actions inadvertently that are irrational and unexplainable. This is part of

His sibah, cause, for "arranging" a certain result. Hashem does not punish us for a shogeg, inadvertent action. The Ramban claims that in mechiras Yosef, sale of Yosef, everyone was taken to task for their inadvertent actions. Yosef erred in misjudging his brothers, wrongly accusing them of transgression. They also misconstrued Yosef's actions as reflecting hostile and aggressive attitude towards them. They were both chastised for their misconceptions. Yaakov Avinu also erred in assuming that the brothers hated Yosef. Yaakov was not punished for his error. Ramban remarks that there is a profound lesson to be derived herein. Hashem causes every "shegagah," involuntary action/error, for a reason. Each one of the errors of Yosef and his brothers serves to teach us this lesson. This is why one is not responsible and is not punished for a shegagah: because he errs in response to Hashem's will.

Horav Solomon cites an incredible passage in Chazal which corroborates this idea. The Talmud in Gittin 56 quotes the dialogue between the Caesar and Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai that preceded the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash. The Caesar instructed Rabbi Yochanan, "tell me, what do you want and I will grant it." Rabbi Yochanan responded, "Give me a doctor to heal Rabbi Zadok. Give me Yavne and its scholars, etc." The Talmud questions why he did not ask Caesar to spare Yerushalayim. Chazal respond that when Hashem makes a decree, when He wants something to happen, it happens. Suddenly, all the wise men become deficient. To paraphrase Horav Solomon, "This is an example of hester panim, Hashem's concealment; people do things that are not ordinary or rational." What we are being taught is simple: There are incidents or situations in life when we notice people who are -- to the best of our knowledge -- normal, intelligent human beings acting in a manner totally out of character. We must view these irrational moments as Divinely ordained. Before we disparage a person, we should reflect on the source of his behavior.

*It happened at the end of two years to the day. (41:1)*

Yosef was incarcerated for two years longer than his original sentence dictated because he had asked Pharaoh's sar hamashkim, chief cup-bearer, to remember him to Pharaoh. For trusting in a human being, rather than relying solely upon Hashem, Yosef was subjected to this extra time in prison. Hashem demands His tzaddikim to purify even the slightest vestige of sin. Why is this? Why should one who gives so much of himself be expected to give even more? Horav Yosef Chaim Zonenfeld, zl, explains that when one builds a tall building, he must be sure to prepare a solid and deep foundation. Otherwise, the support system for the structure will be weak and undermine the stability of the entire structure. The tzaddikim of every generation form the foundation upon which Klal Yisrael is built. They are the support system for their generation. Hashem is precise in making sure that the foundation upon which Klal Yisrael is to develop is strong. There is no room for leniency in dealing with a spiritual deficiency, regardless of the fact that this deficiency may be commensurate with the tzaddik's lofty spiritual plateau. The righteous are acutely aware of the therapeutic effect of yisurim/pain, affliction. Consequently, they welcome the opportunity to purify themselves, so that they can better serve the klal, community.

*Then Pharaoh said to Yosef, "see! I have placed you in charge of all the land of Egypt." (41:41)*

Upon reading the text, one might wonder why Pharaoh felt the need to remind Yosef that he had appointed him to the position of viceroy over Egypt. After all, who else would have given him that

position, if not Pharaoh? Later on in pasuk 44, Pharaoh tells Yosef, "Ani Pharaoh," "I am Pharaoh". Did Yosef not know that he was Pharaoh? Horav Sholom Shwadron, zl, cites a pshat, exposition, of this pasuk that gives us a profound and practical insight into human nature.

When the angel came to tell Manoach and his wife of the future birth of their son, whom we know as Shimshon, they were at first uncertain of the individual who brought these tidings: was he a human or an angel? The pasuk concludes that when the "angel" no longer returned to them, they knew for certain that he was an angel. Why? Why did his "not returning" determine his spiritual essence? Human nature dictates that when one does a favor for another person, he seeks recognition for his service. This recognition does not necessarily have to be manifest in terms of repayment or tribute, just a special smile indicating an acknowledgement of favors received. Indeed, the need to receive this recognition provokes the benefactor to go out of his way to "walk by" the beneficiary just to get that special smile or "hello." He will walk by, with a big "knowing" smile on his face, to give the beneficiary of his favor a great big "gut Shabbos" - only to see a special reaction. This is human nature: We do favors, and we want to receive recognition.

Pharaoh was implying to Yosef that he was not interested in any special kavod, glory, from him. He only asked that whenever he sat back to reflect upon his unique sovereign position in Egypt, he should remember who it was that gave him that position. "I did. I am Pharaoh, and whatever you have emanates from me."

Yosef called the name of his firstborn Menashe, for "G-d has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's household." And the name of the second he called Ephraim, for "G-d has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering." (41:51,52) Yosef was blessed with two sons, whom he named Menashe and Ephraim. The stated reasons for their names draws the attention of commentators. Menashe, the elder son, was given this name, "ki nashani Elokim," "Hashem made me forget my house." Ephraim's name is derived from, "ki hifrani Elokim," "Hashem has made me fruitful." In both these names, Yosef was acknowledging Hashem's guiding Hand throughout his sojourn in Egypt. In a homiletic rendering of these pesukim, Horav Moshe Swift, zl, attributes Yosef's intentions to the fact that these names allude to the two reasons for abandoning the faith of one's people and one's father's house. One cause of assimilation is that the current situation causes the individual to forget the past. He comes to a new country; he does not know the language; he has no money, no friends, no home. The depression that ensues will quickly impede his patience for davening, learning, and - eventually - mitzvah observance. Very quickly, he is made to forget the past, to build a new life, a different life, a life no longer associated with the traditions of the past.

An individual may manifest another approach: One wants to forget. "ki hifrani", "I have become fruitful." He wants to impress new friends in the new society he has found. His child goes to new schools, joins new clubs, lives in a neighborhood that has long divorced itself from the past. He no longer wants to daven, to observe mitzvos, to maintain a Torah way of life.

Two types of Jews become lost to our heritage: The first is the Jew who is made to forget. Examples include the Jews of Russia, of foreign countries, who -- through hate, scorn and persecution -- were forced to forget their past. Those are the "Menashes" who, despite the years of anti-Semitism and persecution, are coming back into the fold. The second type is the prototype of Ephraim, the Jew who fell prey to the blandishments of fame and fortune, who wanted to ignore his heritage for the gold and glitter. These Jews are also returning. Their children are beginning to realize the folly of their fathers' decision, the foolishness of running away from the stability of the past.

This, perhaps, is why we bless our sons on Friday night with the words, "Yesimcha Elokim

k'Ephraim u'Menashe." "Hashem shall make you like Ephraim and Menashe." Regardless of what is imposed upon you, be it suffering or prosperity, do not forget your past; do not ignore your mesorah, tradition. In suffering, do not forget; in prosperity, do not abandon. Ephraim and Menashe represented two people who maintained the balance between the past and the present, between the world that was and the world that is. They were faced with challenges; they withstood the trials. They built their present upon the foundation of the past, so that their offspring would have a future. They comprised the links between the generations.

Horav Swift notes that of the three Patriarchs, Yitzchak Avinu exemplified the middah, attribute, of gevurah, strength. Avraham Avinu, the "founder" of Judaism, challenged a world totally subjugated by paganism. Yaakov Avinu battled with Eisav's guardian angel and triumphed. Yet, Yitzchak was called the gibor. He was the middle link in the chain of tradition. He must be the strongest, because he holds together the other two links. He received the Torah that Avraham taught him and transmitted it to Yaakov. He connected the past with the future. He exemplifies true strength.

This is the underlying reason for Hillel's procedure for lighting the Menorah on Chanukah. On the first night, we light one candle and recite a brachah, blessing. On the second night we light two - one for that night and one for the previous night. This continues on for every night of Chanukah. We work backwards: today, yesterday, the day before. To make a brachah today, we must see to it that yesterday is included along with it. The Jew who does not relate to a past has very little prospect for a future. Certainly, Hashem could have performed a greater miracle and poured olive oil from Heaven. Why did He leave an old flask with an old drop of oil that would only last for one day? He taught us that one drop of old oil is much more significant than all the new "oils." The new does not always survive; the old obviously has. If yesterday goes hand in hand with today, then there is hope that tomorrow will continue along the same path.

*They served him separately, and them separately and the Egyptians who ate with him separately, for the Egyptians could not bear to eat food with the Ivrim, it being loathsome to the Egyptians. (43:32)*

Sforno comments that Yosef ate neither with his brothers nor with the Egyptians. In other words, Yosef ate alone, his brothers ate alone, and the Egyptians ate alone. He is implying that the Egyptians did not eat with Yosef because he was a Jew. Indeed, all of Egypt knew that their viceroy had once been a Jewish slave who had ascended to royalty. We must ask ourselves: How did an entire country know that Yosef was Jewish, while his brothers did not? Nachlas Tzvi contends Hashem is "capable" of preventing an individual from becoming aware of a reality - even if the others around him are aware of that reality. Hashem did not want Yosef's identity to be revealed to his brothers. Even if there were signs all over Egypt "screaming out" Yosef's lineage and ancestry, the brothers would remain unaware.

He says that this notion is especially true in the area of shidduchim, marriage matches. The whole world may be aware of certain characteristics or behaviors of one of the sides, but if the shidduch is "bashert," destined to occur, the other side will never find out.

He cites an incident involving the Imrei Emes, Gerrer Rebbe, to validate this point. A Jew once came to the Imrei Emes to ask him advice and receive his blessing concerning a specific shidduch/family that lived in another city. The Imrei Emes told him to go to that city and seek "information" about the family with whom he was considering arranging a shidduch. He followed the

Rebbe's advice. Upon arriving in the city, he asked the first Jew that he met about the family in question. The man responded by lauding the family, citing the father/mechutan as being one of exemplary character, particularly devoted to chesed, acts of loving kindness. Following the Rebbe's advice, he consented to the shidduch, and the boy and girl became engaged.

The very next day, this person went to shul to daven Shacharis, attend the morning prayers. He heard how everybody in the shul was disparaging his new mechutan as being a selfish and evil man. Upon hearing this, the Jew who had followed the Rebbe's advice immediately returned home to relate to the Rebbe the series of events surrounding the shidduch. "Why did the Rebbe advise me to go through with the shidduch with such an irreputable mechutan?" asked the Jew of the Imrei Emes. The Rebbe answered, "Listen carefully to what I will tell you. I knew that this person is in conflict with the people of that city. I knew, however, that there is one Jew with whom he has not yet fought. I figured that if you come to the city and "happen" to meet that specific person who was not in contention with your mechutan, it was surely by design. It was a sign from Heaven that this shidduch was meant to be. What is bashert is bashert."

*It happened at the end of two years to the day; and Pharaoh was dreaming. (41:1)*

Pharaoh's dream was the beginning of Yosef's liberation from the Egyptian jail and the precursor of his ascension to leadership. At the end of Parashas Vayeishav, the Midrash Tanchuma distinguishes between Hashem and man in regard to reward and punishment. Man strikes with a blade and heals with a bandaid. Hashem, on the other hand, transforms the source of punishment into the actual healing agent. Yosef was sold into slavery as a result of his own dreams; he was liberated as a consequence of Pharaoh's dreams. His dreams caused his downfall; by interpreting Pharaoh's dreams he ascended to freedom and power. This Midrash seems to ignore the fact that Yosef manifests other "problems" which catalyze his sale as a slave. The multi-colored coat caused jealousy among his brothers; he spoke ill against his brothers, which did not help to further his relationship with them. While the dreams were a catalyst for the reversal of his fortune, they were not the only cause. Indeed, the lashon hora he spoke -- which caused his brothers to view him as a serious threat -- was certainly much more sinful than his dreams -- which were beyond his control. Why does the Torah place the responsibility of Yosef's downfall upon his dreams?

Horav Elchonon Sorotzkin, zl, asserts that dreams played a pivotal role in Yosef's life. His brothers called him the baal ha'chalomos, the dreamer. He had a dream in which his brothers' sheaves in the field bowed down to his. This dream was followed by yet another dream in which the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to him. These dreams were a factor in his sale to the Egyptians. The dreams of the butler and the baker impacted Yosef further. On the one hand, the dreams caused him to remain in jail longer. On the other hand, they helped to effect his release. In the final analysis, his interpretation of Pharaoh's dream catalyzed his ascent to power. One dream was a sin. The other represented his salvation. Why did this discrepancy exist?

Every young person is not only permitted to dream, but should be encouraged to dream. He should dream of great expectations for himself, great achievements, great triumphs. He should even aspire to and dream of monarchy - as Yosef did. One criteria, however, must be met. He should view his position of power as an opportunity to serve the greater community, to effect a greater good for everyone - not a chance to take power for personal reasons. His dreams should be visions of his empowerment to help more people, to make a greater kiddush Hashem, sanctification of Hashem's

Name.

In Yosef's original dream he envisioned himself as a ruler; everyone was bowing down to him. He was attaining nothing for the people; he was just receiving the honors. In the butler and baker's dreams, he perceived an opportunity for self-advancement, namely to be released from jail. The salvation, the moment of healing, appeared as soon as Yosef interpreted Pharaoh's dream. His dream implied the need to care for a nation, to direct and supervise the years of abundance in preparation for the years of famine. Yosef came forward to take the initiative. He was prepared to lead, to direct, to supervise and prepare the country for the worst that was yet to come. Yosef had come of age. His dreams were no longer visions of grandeur; rather, they now represented his mission in life, a call to serve others. The source of his "ailment" transformed into the harbinger of his recovery.

*Yosef named his firstborn Menashe, for G-d has made me forget all my hardship,...and the name of the second son he called Efraim, for G-d has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering. (41:51,52)*

Horav Zeev Weinberger, Shlita, asserts that Yosef purposely gave his sons specific names. In naming Menashe, he was determined first to focus on removing the "past." With Efraim's name, he intended to offer gratitude for the present. We note that Yosef is the only tribe for whom two reasons are given for his name. Rachel says, "G-d has taken away my disgrace" and "May Hashem add for me another son." Once again, the twin concepts of erasing the past and maintaining a positive attitude about the present are manifest in these two names. This implies that Yosef's personality consists of two overt forces which were transmitted to his descendants via the two tribes that descended from him.

These two forces represent two concepts which have been the subject of dispute: "sur meira," turn away from evil; and "asei tov", perform good deeds. Which is more important? On which idea should greater focus be placed? Can one perform mitzvos if he has not yet eradicated the evil within him? Should one wait to perform mitzvos until after he has purged himself of all evil? Menashe and Efraim symbolize these two distinct concepts. Menashe's name emphasizes total elimination of past evil, while Efraim's name alludes to focusing on constructive future activity, particularly mitzvos. Yosef and Yaakov differed regarding the relative significance of these concepts. Yaakov sought to bless Efraim prior to Menashe, an action which Yosef could not understand. He felt that we must first expunge evil before we can proceed to perform good deeds. Yaakov's experience in life taught him to be flexible. One cannot totally rid oneself of all evil without developing the capacity to "do good."

In their classic dispute regarding the neiros, lights of Chanukah, Bais Shammai and Bais Hillel also debate this issue. The light of the candle creates two forces: the power to burn; and the power to give off light. The Chashmonaim triumphed over the Greeks, destroying their evil. They came to the Bais Hamikdash to purify it of its tumah, spiritual contamination. They lit a jar of untainted oil, which they discovered. This oil miraculously lasted for eight days. We can view the light/fire of Chanukah from two perspectives. It is a flame that burns and destroys evil. This is symbolized by Bais Shammai's approach, pocheis v'holeich, decreasing in number each night. According to Bais Shammai, on the first night we should light eight candles. On each subsequent night, we should subtract one light, signifying the destruction of evil. Bais Hillel, on the other hand, holds that one must first be kum v'asai, take a positive approach, purifying oneself through serving the Almighty and performing His mitzvos. This avodah, service, will succeed in eradicating evil, according to Bais Hillel. Thus, they contend that one should be moseif v'holech, increase a candle each night, starting with one candle and adding an additional candle each night as the force of purity becomes stronger and brighter.

*Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. (42:8)*

There is a story told about Horav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl, and the infamous Jewish apostate, Professor Daniel Chivalson, who was a Bible scholar and critic in Czarist Russia at the end of the nineteenth century. Chivalson had the position of chief censor for Hebrew books. Despite his apparent betrayal of the religion to which he was born, he continued to act favorably to his "ex" co-religionists. He was in touch with many famous rabbanim of his time. He signed his letters with the name Yosef, the name by which he was called prior to his spiritual demise. When Chivalson reached his seventieth birthday, he received letters of congratulations from many communities and prominent rabbis as a display of gratitude for benefitting Jewish causes. Horav Chaim Soloveitchik was vehemently against this move, claiming that it was absolutely forbidden to maintain any relationship with an apostate.

When Chivalson became aware of this, he sent a note to Rav Chaim with the above pasuk from our parsha written on it: "Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him." He meant to imply that he, Yosef, remembered his Jewish brethren and continued to act on their behalf, but they -- his brethren -- act towards him as if he never existed. Why? Rav Chaim quickly responded, "The brothers sold Yosef. In this case, however, it was "Yosef" (Chivalson) who reneged and became a traitor!"

We cite this story for the purpose of deriving an important lesson from it. We see how far one can go in his error and hypocrisy. Chivalson committed the ultimate sin when he baptised himself. Yet, he had no qualms about maintaining a cordial relationship with the people he had forsaken. He continued to think that business went on as usual, which indeed it did! After all, did not those whom he denigrated continue to "recognize" him? All acknowledged him, except Rav Chaim Brisker. One person was secure enough in his belief, firm enough in his conviction. He had the temerity to stand up to this blasphemer, who had the gall to vilify the G-d for whom so many of his co-religionists had died for throughout history. When we honor those that have turned their back on our religion, we give them strength and encourage them to fortify their apostasy.

*They said to one another, "Indeed we are guilty concerning our brother inasmuch as we saw his heartfelt anguish when he pleaded with us... Reuven spoke up...Did I not speak to you saying, "Do not sin against the boy." (42:21,22)*

Realizing that things were not going well for them, the brothers became introspective. They recognized that Yosef's ill treatment of them was Divine retribution for their part in the mechiras Yosef, sale of Yosef. They did not, however, acknowledge any wrongdoing with regard to the actual sale, only in their lack of compassion towards him as he begged them to let him go. Reuven seems to be saying, "I told you so." He had attempted to thwart their plan and save Yosef. He claims to have said, "Do not sin against the boy." The Ramban questions this statement, maintaining that it is to be found nowhere in the Torah. It is true, indeed, that Reuven objected to the sale, but he never actually confronted them, saying "Do not sin against the boy."

Horav Tzvi Hirsh Ferber, zl, attributes Reuven's reaction to the fact that he had heard his brothers regretting only their lack of compassion as he pleaded with them. They did not regret their

decision to sell him. He cites the Kesav Sofer who attributes another meaning to "tzaras nafsho" (which is commonly translated as "his heartfelt anguish"). Yosef was concerned about "nafsho," his soul, his spiritual well-being, if he were to be sold into an alien culture. He feared the spiritual contamination that would result from his living among pagans. They did not care; they felt his pleas were nothing more than a ruse. They decided that he only cared about his physical sustenance, not his spiritual welfare.

When the brothers saw Shimon being led away to be a captive in an Egyptian jail, thrown together with immoral degenerates and other undesirables, they realized that Hashem was giving them a message. Maybe Yosef had not been pretending. Perhaps he really did care about "nafsho," spiritual dimension. Perhaps Hashem was telling them to note what was happening to Shimon and to deliberate about what probably had occurred with Yosef as well. Regarding this, Reuven said, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy?" He was opposed to selling Yosef, because selling him to an alien culture would be worse than killing him! They were causing him to sin, to destroy "nafsho," his soul, which --- as Chazal teach us -- is worse than physical harm.

Perhaps we should stop and think about the consequences of our actions. When we act in a manner that is disdainful -- or even indifferent -- to someone whose spiritual affiliation is precarious, we literally distance them. We are responsible for their downfall or lack of growth. One can easily harm someone whose spiritual conviction is faltering. Our action or inaction can cause irreparable damage. "Do not sin against the boy" has long been the cry of those who have devoted their lives to making sure that every Jewish child receives the education he or she deserves. When parents place their personal vested interests before their child; when teachers disregard the emotional/social/religious background of a child; when communal leaders render decisions regarding Torah institutions based upon financial, rather than spiritual, need, then they transgress the parameters of "al techetu b'yeled," "Do not sin against the boy." The decisions we make today can continue to impact us tomorrow.

They had left the city...and Yosef said to the one in charge of his house, "Get up, chase after the men...and you are to say to them, 'Why do you repay evil for good?'" (44:4)

Yosef's choice of words, "Why do you repay evil for good?" is questionable. One who does evil in place of good is not "repaying." He either did not do good, or he performed evil. The term simply does not apply when one is acting wrongly. One does not pay evil for good. Horav Yitzchak Goldwasser, Shlita, explains that when we delve into the psyche of a kafui tov, one who denies the gratitude he owes and instead acts inappropriately, we note a remarkable phenomenon of human nature. One who has benefitted from another fellow is literally in debt to him. By failing to recognize the debt of gratitude which he owes, he thinks it will disappear. This is not, however, an easy task. The favor which he received stares at him, demanding appreciation, compelling him to respond in some way for the service he availed himself of. He attempts to hide from this debt, to cover it up. Hence the phrase kafui tov, derived from the word kafah, to cover. This concept is not that simplistic, because the idea of "tovah" is very compelling.

How does one deal with this "problem"? Psychologically speaking, a person's emotions respond to his actions. In other words, if one acts inappropriately or in a vulgar manner, in due time his

personality will begin to conform to his actions. He will become a vulgar, negative person. While the kafui tov may not be a psychologist, he still feels that if he acts towards his benefactor in a disgusting manner, he will ultimately break the emotional hold that he has on him, and he will no longer feel beholden to him.

Indeed, it is said over in the name of the Chasam Sofer, that he once passed by a Jew who made it a point to make life miserable for him. He remarked, "I do not know why he causes me such anguish; I never did him a favor!" The understanding is that a perverted mind that does not want to return a favor, will instead be inconsiderate to that individual. Thus, we now understand the underlying meaning of Yosef's statement. One who is a kafui tov, who refuses to recognize and appreciate the favor he received, will pay back his debt of gratitude with a disservice.

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

Pharaoh asked Yosef to interpret his dreams. Yosef interpreted the dreams to Pharaoh's satisfaction. He then proceeded to offer unsolicited advice. Is that not going beyond the scope of what he was asked to do? What compelled Yosef to step forward, to propel himself for the position? Horav Tzvi Hirsch Ferber, zl, offers a practical response. He analogizes this to two officers who had a penchant for glory. They were so wrapped up in themselves that they assumed that everyone admired and adored them. They once came to the train station and found a band playing. Each one thought that the band was playing in his honor. Each one absolutely refused to be swayed from believing that he was the focus of attention. They decided they would go seek out a Jew who was known for his wisdom and ask him to render his opinion in order to solve their "dispute."

It so happened that right around the corner from the station, this wise Jew lived in abject poverty. In fact, he had no money for the holiday of Pesach which was quickly approaching. Suddenly, these two officers burst through his door with their request that he solve their dispute. He agreed to arbitrate their case, providing they pay him fifty rubles for his time. After they paid their money, he told them, "The band was not there for either one of you, but for me, so that I could have money to purchase provisions for Pesach!"

The same idea may be applied to Yosef. He understood that Pharaoh's dreams were not for him or for his magicians. Hashem can send a famine without dreams. The dreams were there for one purpose--Yosef. Yosef was released from prison through the medium of the dreams. Consequently, Yosef told Pharaoh, "I am the underlying reason for your dreams. Therefore, seek out for yourself an astute and wise person and transfer authority to him." Pharaoh understood Yosef's implied message and responded, "There is no one more wise than you. Therefore, you will supervise over my home."

We all should open our eyes, so that we might perceive the various messages Hashem sends us. It is regrettable that we somehow always think that He is communicating to someone else.

*Then Pharaoh said to Yosef, since Hashem has informed you of all this, there can be no one so discerning and wise as you. (41:39)*

Pharaoh sounds like a believer! A man whose entire life is devoted to idol-worship, who

considers himself a deity, reverts to believing in Hashem's Word. His successor, the Pharaoh with whom Moshe dealt, was not as compliant. He exclaimed to Moshe, "Who is Hashem that I should listen to Him?" Indeed, all the miracles and wonders that transformed Egypt, seemed to have left no impression on him. What was the difference between these two Pharaohs? Is it possible that "Yosef's" Pharaoh was a kinder, gentler and more committed pagan than his successor?

Horav Yaakov Neiman, zl, comments that actually both Pharaohs had the same level of commitment; the situations differed. Neither pagan had a penchant for believing in Hashem. Indeed, if the situation would have been different, Yosef's Pharaoh would have shown his real personality. Imagine, Yosef declared to Pharaoh that his dream foretold incredible wealth and property for him and his country. Even though this period of abundance was to be foreshadowed by years of hunger, it would not affect Pharaoh. In fact, Pharaoh would become even wealthier during the years of famine, when everybody would turn to him for food. Pharaoh had no problem believing in such a G-d. Pharaoh wanted to believe and support a G-d that made him rich and powerful. Conversely, the Pharaoh with whom Moshe communicated did not hear such positive news. He was told to let the Jews go free, to release the slaves that had been subjected to his cruel torture. This would produce enormous monetary loss. Is it any wonder that such news did not evoke a cooperative response? The Pharaohs and their cohorts of each generation are all the same. They are supportive and committed as long as things go their way, as long as their evil way of life is positively reinforced. A Jew's emunah, on the other hand, is quite different. Our belief transcends the vicissitudes that have challenged us throughout history. Our faith in Hashem is indomitable. It has been tested and affirmed thousand upon thousands of times as Jews have confronted persecution, fear, sickness, and even death with the words of Ani Maamin - I Believe - on their lips. No, we do not believe in Hashem only when it directly benefits us.

Many stories demonstrate the faith and conviction evinced by our brothers and sisters who had been led through the valley of death during the Holocaust. There is a poignant story of a great chassidic rebbe who taught his chassidim how to sanctify Hashem's Name in preparation for their eternal reward.

The incident took place in the notorious Treblinka death camp, where the courtyard was filled with thousands of Jews about to be led to their deaths. They turned to the Rebbe of Gradzysk, Horav Yisrael Shapiro, zl, for words of comfort and inspiration. The Rebbe looked at the hapless Jews and spoke, "We must view ourselves as being fortunate to have been chosen to prepare the path for Moshiach Tzidkeinu, by sanctifying ourselves to die Al Kiddush Hashem. We must accept our self-sacrifice with love and joy. I command you neither to falter nor cry as you approach your deaths. Rather, rejoice and sing the melody of Ani Maamin, and, like the great Tanna, Rabbi Akiva, let your souls expire with the words Shema Yisrael."

After the Rebbe finished his words, the entire assembly began to sing Ani Maamin. With the cry of Shema Yisrael, they went to their deaths sanctifying Hashem's Name. While some view this to be as a nice, moving story, it is much more than that. It demonstrates the fiber of a Jew. It shows that our belief in the Almighty remains firm even when our lot in life is tragic. That is why He chose us to be His nation.

*And to Yosef were born two sons....and Yosef named the firstborn Menashe, for Hashem has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house. (41:50,51)*

It would be terribly wrong to think for a moment that Yosef sought to "forget" all of his past, his

family, his troubles. Although he certainly would not have wanted to spend too much time remembering his bitter childhood and his strained relationship with his brothers, how could he have sought to forget about his aged father and the Torah environment in which he grew up? Walking out onto the streets of Egypt should have evoked pangs of homesickness for his family and the community of which he was no longer a part. Why then does he give his child a name that implies forgetting his past?

We suggest that Yosef had good reason for expressing his gratitude over "forgetting" the past. Regrettably, remembering the traumatic events of one's past can have a devastating effect upon a person. In many cases it can effect a tragic "turn off" from one's religious observance. One must be able to transcend his past, literally to forget it, so that it does not continue to haunt him. Yosef was grateful that he was able to "forget" his suffering and look beyond his pain to the future rebuilding of his family. He realized that he had survived for a reason. He was saved by design, to have a family that he could raise in the Torah way. He was to be a beacon of salvation to his father and brothers as they entered into the Egyptian exile. Yosef remembered what was important for the future. He only forgot that which would hinder his spiritual growth.

*When one of them opened his sack...he saw his money and behold--it was in the mouth of his sack.  
(42:27)*

Rashi comments that the "echad," the individual who opened his sack and found the money, was Levi. Abarbanel says that it was by design that Levi found the money first. Yosef had Levi's money placed by the top of his sack, so that he would be the first to discover the money. Since he was the one most responsible for Yosef's sale into slavery, the distress he experienced would provide atonement for his sin. In any event, the one who found the money first would be the one to impose a feeling of fear and remorse upon the rest of the brothers. Horav Shlomo Carlebach, Shlita, remarks that it was necessary for Levi to be that one to engender fear of Hashem and fear of sin among the brothers. Why? What made Levi more suitable for this position of leadership?

Horav Carlebach suggests that the person who found the money first should be someone who possessed such qualities that he would not interpret finding the money as mere coincidence. It should be someone who distinguished himself from his brothers in his acute ability to pierce through the ambiguity and see the workings of Hashem. It should be someone who, after recognizing the truth, could also teach and transmit it to others. This individual would carry the responsibility to inspire his brothers to see the Hand of Hashem, weaving a tapestry of events whose focus it was to educate and imbue them with the truth.

Levi was the talmid chacham, Torah scholar, who was acutely aware of Hashem's methods. He would be able to inspire his brothers to comprehend the truth. This is why Yaakov Avinu singled out Levi to be the one to fight the Greeks. It was Levi's descendants, the Chashmonaim, who rose up against their oppressors and miraculously overwhelmed them. Indeed, the Midrash says that by their very nature, Shevet Levi were to be the nemesis of the Yevanim, Greeks. They are the third tribe in birth; Yavan is third of the four exiles to whom we are to be subjected. Each one has three letters to their name. Yavan is great in number, while Levi's population is insignificant in comparison. Yaakov blessed the "few" to triumph over the "many." This Midrash begs elucidation. One would think that the tribe whose goal it is to study in the Bais Hamedrash would not be singled out to battle Yavan. Second, what is the significance of "rabim b'yad me'atim," "many in the hands of few?" It seems that this

concept is an inherent component in the triumph over Yavan.

Horav Carlebach cites the Maharal who explains the pasuk in Yirmiyah 5, where the Navi compares each of the four nations that will persecute us to a specific animal. Yavan is compared to a na'mer, a tiger/leopard. The tiger symbolizes chutzpah, brazenness and daring. With audacity, the Greeks sought to destroy our Torah and crush our pride in being Jewish. They denied anything which they could not rationalize. The concept of a nation created in the tzelem Elokim, image of G-d, was ludicrous to them because they could not understand it. The eternity of Am Yisrael, Torah min Hashomayim, a Torah that comes from Heaven, were concepts which they looked down upon with disdain and derision. This is chachmas Yevanis, the philosophy and wisdom of Greece. Everything is in the mind, everything must be analyzed and understood. There is no room for faith. They denied everything which was not rationally comprehensible. They had no place for the spirit. Is there greater chutzpah than that represented by such a philosophy?

The only way to fight chutzpah is with chutzpah. Yehudah ben Teimah says, "Be bold as a leopard to carry out the will of your Father in Heaven." There are times when we refrain from performing a mitzvah properly, when we regress in our mitzvah observance, out of fear of what "others" might say. This type of behavior bespeaks weakness. We must be "brazen" in our observance, proud of our Jewishness, enthusiastic to serve the Almighty.

Shevet Levi are the ones who devoted themselves to Torah study. They are the ones whose commitment to Hashem, His Torah and mitzvos, was exemplary. They symbolize pride, they personify strength; they are the truly bold ones. Their conviction is above rationale; their commitment is without embellishment. They do what must be done. They do not answer to anyone, but to Hashem. Yaakov Avinu knew that in order to fight Yavan, one does not need physical prowess, horses and weaponry. Inner strength will triumph over the Greeks. Numbers will not succeed in battle. A committed group of even a "few" Jews will overwhelm the "many." Shevet Levi does not battle according to the laws of nature. They employ the power vested in them by the Almighty. They fear no man, no philosophy, and no religion. They are armed with the truth--a weapon which renders their antagonists powerless. Yosef understood what Yaakov had long before perceived: If anyone could evoke the boldness and courage it would take to repent, it was -- and has always been--Shevet Levi--the guardians of the Torah.