

## She opened it and saw him, the boy, and behold! A youth was crying. She took pity on him. (2:6)

*Horav Nachman Breslover, zl*, teaches that everything has good and bad, positive and negative, aspects. Tears/crying are/is no different. Some tears emanate from *atzvus*, depression, despair, hopelessness, which are “motivated” by the *sitra acharah*, evil inclination, under the auspices of Satan. In such an instance, a person weeps for something entrenched in the *yetzer hora* – a passion, a desire, something that rightfully does not belong to him. Yet, he seeks to have it – and when Hashem is not forthcoming with filling his *taavah*, desire, he cries bitterly. When Eisav did not obtain his father’s blessing, he raised his voice and cried. Why did he cry? He had lost his *olam hazeh*, this world. He wanted to fulfill his heart’s desire. He lost out, and now he wept, because he was dejected. His tears emanated from depression.

Not so the tears of the Jewish people. We weep, because we have become distanced from Hashem. Our bitter exile has removed us from His sanctum sanctorum. Our sinful behavior has caused us to move farther and farther away from Hashem. We lost the *Batei Mikdash* and constantly pray for its return. These are noble tears, tears of hope coupled with remorse. We concede our guilt and beg Hashem’s forgiveness.

Our people weep like an infant who cries for its father/mother. This is what is meant by, *V’hinei naar bocheh*; “And behold! A youth was crying,” immediately followed by: *Va’tachmol alav*, “She took pity on him.” We must express our tears of pain and remorse over the sins which by their commission, we have distanced ourselves from our Father in Heaven. Tears have the ability to transform anger into acquiescence, strict judgment into mercy. The tears of *Yisrael* emanate from a source of hope; the tears of Eisav evolve from hopelessness.

What is the source of *bechayah*, weeping? Where did it all begin? When Hashem created the world, the *mayim ha’tachtonim*, lower waters, wept saying, *Anan b’inan l’mihevei kadam Malka*, “We want to be closer to the King.” The lower waters cried, because they were further away from Hashem than were the *mayim ha’elyonim*, upper waters.

Eisav’s tears are tears of *sheker*, falsehood, since they seek only self-gratification. The tears of *Klal Yisrael* are the tears of the Matriarch, Leah *Imeinu*, who cried and cried. Her eyes became soft from weeping, because she feared falling into Eisav’s clutches through marriage. We, too, must weep that we shall not fall into the embrace or clutches of Eisav.

I have written much about the power of tears and how no tear is wasted. Every sincere tear that a Jew sheds is highly valued by Hashem. It has incredible staying properties and is preserved by Hashem for generations until that time that it can be used to help someone in need. There are good stories about the power of tears, many of which have found their way to these pages. Not wanting to be redundant, I looked for what would be a new story for me. I was fortunate to come

across an incredible story in an old edition of the *Jewish Observer*.

The story is about a fellow who made a *Siyum* on *Shisha Sidrei Mishnah* in honor of his father's *yahrtzeit*, on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of his father's arrival in America. Today we have no idea of the trials and tribulations, the almost daily spiritual challenges, that the newly arrived European immigrants faced. They came to the *goldeneh medinah*, the golden province, completely unaware that it was also the *treifah medinah*, unholy, unkosher, province. During the *Siyum*, the son, who was now a grown man, himself a *baal teshuvah*, returnee to ritual observance, spoke about his past.

The *goldeneh medinah* had claimed the spiritual lives of his eight siblings. For all intents and purposes, in the words of his father, they were all *goyim*. As the youngest of his nine children, his father viewed him as his last chance to leave a Jewish legacy. If he lost this son (named Motke/Mordechai) – all would be lost. America had destroyed his family. Motke was approaching his sixteenth birthday, and his father had enrolled him in *yeshivah* college.

On the morning of his sixteenth birthday, Motke gathered together his courage, approached his father, and said, "Poppa, I am not going to *yeshivah* college. I am no longer going to put on *Tefillin* or keep kosher. I have no intention to continue my *Shabbos* observance. I love you dearly and I do not want to hurt you, but I have decided to follow in the footsteps of my brothers and sisters. I, too, will become a *goy*."

The author writes: "The courage that I had conjured quickly dissipated, as I lifted my hands to protect my face from the slap that was certain to come. Indeed, my father's eyes blazed, and he took a step forward. Then suddenly he stopped and began to plead with me: 'Motke, *du bist dehr letzter*, you are the last one. You are my last hope. You are different than your siblings. Do not say what you just said. G-d will forgive you. Please do not mean what you said.'

"My father had never begged. It shocked me to hear him begging me not to turn my back on Judaism. He must really have been hurting, if he did not attempt to hit me. I loved my father so; I could not bear to see him in pain.

"Papa, please do not try to make me become a rabbi. I want to be like all of my friends and everyone else in our family. Judaism does not interest me.'

"So, do not become a rabbi,' my father asserted. 'Become an observant Jew; put on *Tefillin*, keep kosher, observe *Shabbos*, but do not become a *goy* like the rest of the family. It is enough for me that I raised eight *goyim*. I do not need to have nine. Motke – Motke – *shoin genug*, it is enough. Please listen to me!'

"Papa burst into bitter weeping. I also burst into tears. We embraced and cried on one another: 'Papa, Papa, please do not cry, I do not want to hurt you. It makes no sense for me to be *frum*,

observant, but I will try.'

"It did not take long for the sixteen-year-old to forget the tears. Yes, they were soon forgotten, as the allure of America with all its glitz and culture beckoned me to join all the other *goyim*. I followed in the path forged by my siblings who had fallen prey to the charm of America.

"Many years went by until those tears came back to haunt me. It was then that I realized how those tears had never given up on me. They became a source of encouragement, reminding me that a Jew never really leaves 'home.' I had raised my family in the way I had chosen for myself – completely divorced from the Judaism practiced by my father. Religious observance was a burden that I was not prepared to carry on my shoulders. Certainly, I would not subject my children to such a life.

"Later in life, it was my Shlomo Michael, named for my father, who catalyzed my remembrance of those tears. He had gone to *Eretz Yisrael* on a student trip and, after a while, he wrote to me that he had enrolled and was studying at *Yeshivah Ohr Someach* in Yerushalayim. He had decided that he wanted to learn what it means to be a Jew. I did not waste a minute. I immediately purchased a ticket and flew to Yerushalayim to confront my son. I was going to talk him out of this *narishkeit*, foolishness. Then, suddenly when I saw my son sitting and learning in the *bais hamedrash*, I remembered my father's tears.

"So, on this centennial of my father's arrival in America and on his *yahrtzeit*, I made this *Siyum* in order to tell America, 'America, you beat us Jews bad, but you did not win!'

"And to tell my papa, 'Papa, you were beaten badly, but you did not lose.'"