

## **And now, be not distressed, nor reproach yourselves for having sold me here, for it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you. (45:5)**

Does the realization that it was all part of Hashem's plan mitigate the evil that one has wrought against another person? Is it so simple to overlook, to forgive the evil, the hurt, the pain and misery that had been a constant accomplishment for years, just because one is aware that the perpetrator is G-d's agent? For most of us: probably not. For Yosef: the above *pasuk* states that he told them, "Do not lose sleep over what you had done; you were G-d's agents."

*Maavir al midosav*, "Passing over one's faults," disregarding the bad *middos*, character traits, of those who hurt us requires effort – almost superhuman effort. Not only did Yosef not exhibit animus towards his brothers for the misery they had caused him, he even consoled them and told them not to worry, not to feel bad. This was Yosef *HaTzaddik*. A righteous person realizes that he – and his adversary -- are both part of a Divine Plan.

*Horav Meir Chadash, zl*, was such an individual. He was a *baal mussar*, ethicist, who lived an exemplary life – of example. Episodes of *maavir al midosav* are strewn throughout his life. It did not just happen. He worked on himself his entire life – and he attempted to imbue his many students with this amazing character trait. While many of these incidents are well-known, a great many more were concealed and kept to himself. He would do anything in an effort to avoid hurting another's sensibilities. The following incident is a classic and lends the reader a small window of insight into the individual who represented Slabodka, who was the quintessential *talmid*, student, of the *Alter, zl, m'Slabodka*, who more than exemplified *mussar*; he was *mussar*.

It was World War I, a bad time for Europe and an even worse time for European Jews. As usual, the *yeshivah bachurim*, students, were at the bottom of the barrel. *Rav Meir* was a young man, a *yeshivah* student, running from place to place to seek refuge from the quickly approaching German army. He, together with a companion from the *yeshivah*, had just reached a certain village to catch their breath, when the news suddenly arrived that the Germans were on the way. In a panic, most of the villagers hitched up their wagons and fled.

The two *yeshivah* students were not waiting around. Anxious to leave, they went to the outskirts of the village and waited for a spot in one of the wagons. Suddenly, *Rav Meir's* friend remembered that he had left something important in the village. He rushed back, while *Rav Meir* stood his ground, waiting for his return.

One by one, the wagons laden with refugees and their belongings passed. The passengers called out to him, "Come with us! Why are you waiting here? Join us!" He declined. After all, how could he turn his back on his friend and desert him? Soon there would be no more wagons left in the village, but he would not leave without his friend. He stood firm – waiting patiently for his arrival. At

long last, he saw his friend running toward him from afar. Another minute, and he would arrive and they could hopefully still avail themselves of a wagon going out of town. At that very moment, a wagon approached with room for only one passenger. His friend leaped aboard with his bag in hand – and left *Rav Meir* standing in stunned silence.

*Rav Meir* had waited so devotedly for his friend. Yet, he was left alone to gaze at the dust left in the wake of the wagon's departure. At that moment, he must have had deep feelings of chagrin, and even anger. Indeed, as a result of the disappointment that enveloped him he said to himself, "If something like this ever happens again, I will not wait!"

Then, on the spot, he recanted. "*Chas v'shalom!*" Heaven forbid! he said to himself. "Despite everything, I do not regret having waited. It was worth it, for me, for the purity of my soul. It was worth it for me to have waited, not to have left a friend behind."

The *Mashgiach* would often use this story as a lesson to his students. He would tell them, "At that moment, when I decided that, despite the letdown, I would act similarly again, something within me changed. I became a different person – a better person."

It is not easy to train oneself to look away, to rise above one's natural feelings of insult or offense – not to be angered; rather to forgive – ignore the negative emotions welling up within him. Some do train themselves. The *Mashgiach* was one of the few. Perhaps, this is why he became the *Mashgiach*.