

If I have found favor in your eyes, please place your hand under my thigh and do kindness and truth with me. (47:29)

Placing one's hand beneath the thigh was the means of taking an oath. Yaakov *Avinu* insisted on an oath, because he knew that Yosef would be under intense political pressure to bury him in Egypt. He now had a reason to justify his actions, having made a promise to his father, which he was obligated to keep. **Horav Yehudah Asaad, zl**, renders this episode homiletically, thereby teaching us a practical and inspiring lesson.

Rav Assad begins by defining the words and underlying implied homiletical meaning of: *yerech*, thigh; *yad*, hand; *chesed*, kindness; *emes*, truth. In *Devarim* 15:8, the Torah addresses the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, giving charity, by saying, *Ki pasoach tiftach es yadcha lo*, "Rather, you shall open your hand to him." Clearly, the *pasuk* is not speaking about a physical act in which one opens his hand. "Opening the hand" implies giving *tzedakah*. Thus, *yad*, hand, denotes *tzedakah*.

When the Torah mentions the word *yerech*, thigh, it is alluding to Torah study. This is seen clearly in *Bereishis* 32:26, when the angel who wrestled with Yaakov realized that he could not overcome the Patriarch, *Vayiga b'kaf yireicho*; "He struck the socket of his hip." *Chazal* teach that the angel's crippling blow to the hip is symbolic of the weakening of financial support of Torah education.

Emes, truth, refers to Torah, as it says in *Sefer Mishlei* 23:23, *Emes k'nei v'al timkor*, "Purchase truth and do not sell it." This is a reference to the truth of Torah. Last, *chesed*, kindness, denotes *tzedakah*. Thus, we have *yad* – *tzedakah*; *chesed* – *tzedakah*; *yerech* – Torah; and *emes* – Torah. Let us now turn to our *pasuk* to help us understand the meaning of Yaakov's command to Yosef.

Yaakov analyzed his life introspectively. He had devoted the major part of his life to Torah study. From the beginning, he was an *ish tam yosheiv ohalim*, perfect man who dwelled in tents, with "tents" serving as a reference to the *ohalah shel Torah*, "Tent" of Torah. This was followed by fourteen years in the *Yeshivah* of Shem and Eivar, when he did not even lay down to sleep. In short, he felt that, from the perspective of "Torah," he had done quite well.

Yaakov continued ruminating. What about the area of *tzedakah*? Had he given enough? Could he have done more to help those in need? He thought to himself, "I have a son who is the greatest *baal tzedakah*, philanthropist, in the world. Surely, this counts for something. There is one problem, however: Yosef is on salary. As viceroy of Egypt, he is paid for his work. On the other hand, why should this detract from his being considered to be a *baal tzedakah*? If he devotes his life to caring for people, does this mean that his wife and children should starve, because there is no money at home?" Obviously, it all depends upon one's intentions. If one's intention is to give charity for the purpose of carrying out *chesed*, acts of lovingkindness, what difference does it make if he is paid? It is the intention that determines his actions. Certainly, a bus driver who greets everyone with good cheer and wishes them well when they alight the bus is a kind person. Does receiving a salary

diminish his act of kindness? Certainly not! It is all about intention.

Thus, Yaakov *Avinu* decided that he had a son who was an incredible *baal chesed*. The problem is that, due to his overwhelming obligations towards *chesed*, he had very little time left for Torah study. What should he do? Yaakov decided to make a “suggestion” to Yosef: establish a Yissachar/Zevulun partnership, in which a person shares his Torah study with a partner from whom he receives material remuneration.

Yaakov intended to suggest such an option to Yosef. He called for Yosef and said, “Place your hand (*tzedakah*) under my thigh (in place of the Torah in which you are deficient), I will share with you my merit of Torah study, and you will share with me your merit of *chesed*. Thus, *V’asisa imadi chesed v’emes*, “And do kindness and truth with me.” *Tzedakah*/charity instead of Torah; *chesed* instead of *emes*; *yad* placed beneath the thigh implies the transposition of *chesed* for Torah and Torah for *chesed*.