

## Then he fell upon his brother Binyamin's neck and wept; and Binyamin wept upon his neck. (45:14)

The casual reader of Biblical text, who refuses to look beyond the simple translation and delve into the profundities of the Torah's interpretation, sees an emotional meeting between two brothers who had been separated for twenty-two years. This might be the case if this were a secular novel and the two heroes were simple people. When an encounter is recorded in the Torah for posterity and the players are Yosef and Binyamin, two members of *Shivtei Kah*, one must be obtuse to view this meeting superficially. *Chazal* illuminate the scenario when they tell us that this was no simple emotional crying over a long separation; rather, Yosef saw the destruction of the *Batei Mikdash* which were built in Binyamin's territorial home in *Eretz Yisrael*. Binyamin wept over the *Mishkan* in Shiloh which was situated in Yosef's portion of *Eretz Yisrael*. One never ceases to be amazed at the denseness manifest by secular commentators, who absolutely eschew the truth.

Having said this, let us now understand why Yosef wept over Binyamin's destruction, and Binyamin wept for Yosef's troubles. One would expect each one to mourn his own personal adversity. **Horav Aharon, zl, m'Belz**, and the **Imrei Emes, zl**, asked this question shortly after these venerable *Admorim* arrived in *Eretz Yisrael* following the cataclysmic Holocaust tragedy which claimed the lives of tens of thousands of their *chassidim*, along with millions of their Jewish brethren. In a meeting with the remnants of their *chassidus*, they presented this question. In order to better understand and appreciate their response, I take the liberty of quoting a story which was related by *Rav Yitzchak Hershkowitz, Shlita*, in *Nitzotzos*.

*Chabad Lubavitch* had a chain of clandestine *yeshivos* that operated under the radar of the Soviet authorities. The KGB were on the prowl, looking for any infraction on the part of the Jewish refuseniks. To be caught meant a quick trip to Siberia or another one of Russia's wastelands, exposed to the elements and subject to daily deprivation and beatings. There is no doubt that those who came to learn, as well as those who did the teaching, were individuals of a most elevated spiritual status.

**Horav Yechezkel Fagin, zl**, was one of these unique mentors whose devotion to spreading Torah knew no bounds. One time, he convened a group of students whom he felt were not devoting enough energy to *davening*, Torah study and *middos*, character trait, development. Even the finest student requires a little nudge every once in a while. He spoke with extreme emotion, and his words were well received. The young men began to weep, expressing their remorse concerning their failure to be more devoted to their spiritual growth.

Suddenly, one of the students whose turn it was to stand guard as a lookout, to warn the group of KGB police in the area, came running in to notify them that it appeared that the KGB were making a sweep of the area. The danger was very real. If they were caught – they would be in serious trouble. No excuse would suffice. To leave meant being subjected to intense questioning

concerning why they were there in the first place.

Immediately, those gathered around the table came up with suggestions about how to avert a disaster. One suggested running for their lives. Another suggested shutting the light, thus giving the impression that the house was empty. Another said that they should put newspapers and secular reading material on the table, so that the KGB would not suspect any wrongdoing on their part.

With the blessing of the Almighty, the KGB halted their search before they came to their house. They were now able to return to the table to continue their learning. Prior to continuing his lecture, *Rav Fagin* said, "I just saw something strange. Explain to me what is your greater fear: physical adversity or spiritual hardship?" Before they could respond, he continued, "How is it that when I spoke to you concerning your lack of spiritual ascendancy, you responded with remorse; yet, when you feared for your lives, you came up with various ideas on how to solve the problem? When your lives were in danger – not a single one of you cried! You immediately went to work seeking solutions."

One of the students replied, "Did you think that when the KGB comes knocking at our door, we would sit around with folded hands and cry? What would that help? When they come, one either hides or runs away. Crying helplessly is of no consequence!"

"Aha," said the *Rav*. "Now, I understand. There is no place for tears when you must move quickly and decisively. You know that crying will be of little consequence. It is a time for action. When it comes to issues of spirituality, suddenly you have time, you cry, feel bad, and slowly seek a solution to your spiritual morass. Why rush?"

The *Rav* explained to them that weeping is an excuse, a delay tactic to ward off a confrontation with reality. Crying solves no problem. It relieves one's emotions as it delays his reaction to the issue at hand. One who is serious about his desire to change and grow spiritually has no time for tears. He acts decisively and definitively – immediately.

This is the response the holy *tzaddikim* gave to their question concerning Yosef and Binyamin weeping over the other one's troubles. "When it comes to someone else's adversity; one cries. When the troubles are his own; when they are present – one acts. There is no time for weeping. We must immediately begin to rebuild. This is our *tzarah*, trouble."

This was the attitude of the **Ponevezer Rav, zl**. Following the Holocaust, he was asked how he could live with the tragedy, the pain of losing his *yeshivah*, friends and family. He replied, "I will rebuild it all! Every tear is another brick in the *yeshivah*. Every sigh is another *shtender*, lectern, in the *bais hamedrash*. I have put aside the pain, so that I can build and return the Torah-world to its previous splendor and majesty."