

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. (44:5)

In an attempt to assuage his brothers' fears, Yosef told them that Hashem had designed his migration from *Eretz Yisrael* to Egypt so that Yosef could prepare for their eventual arrival. He emphasizes two points: "Do not be distressed," and "Do not reproach yourselves." What is the difference between these two references to accepting blame for what had occurred? *Horav Eliyahu Schesinger, Shlita*, explains that two factors contributed to their distress. First, they were bothered by the fact that they had wrongly suspected Yosef of attempting to harm them. They assumed that his dreams were nothing more than manifestations of his own visions of grandeur. They now understood that Yosef had always been a *tzaddik* who had never harbored intentions to hurt them. Second, as a result of their erroneous suspicions, they had rendered the *halachah* incorrectly regarding Yosef. It is one thing to make a mistake about someone; it is an entirely different situation when one passes *halachic* censure, or, even worse -- as in this case -- to rule that Yosef deserved the death penalty. They were distressed over their error in judgement and angry at the fact that they had been prepared to execute their own verdict.

Yosef responded to their concerns. Their first question concerned how Yosef rose to power in Egypt. If he was really a *tzaddik* when he left his father's home and he lived all these years in a decadent, immoral society, how did he survive on a spiritual plane? Yosef explained that G-d sent him to Egypt for a purpose. Only when a person loses sight of his goals does he regress spiritually. Yosef, however, always viewed himself as a *shliach*, messenger/agent of Hashem with a specific goal in life. Such a person rises above his environment; he transcends his element as he carries out his "mission."

Regarding the anger they had manifest concerning the actual *mechirah*, sale, the fruition of their mistaken beliefs, he explained that in this situation the "end might justify the means." He cites the *Shiniever Rav, zl*, in his commentary to on *Parashas Shemos*, who explains the words of *Chazal* regarding Yisro's daughters, "*An Egyptian man saved us.*" When Yisro's daughters expressed their gratitude to Moshe for intervening on their behalf and protecting them from the shepherds, Moshe responded, "The Egyptian that I killed is responsible for your rescue. Therefore, when your father asks you, 'Who saved you?' tell him it was an Egyptian man." What did Moshe imply to them? What difference did it make who had saved them?

The *Shiniever Rav* explains that sometimes one performs a deed which at the time he thinks is a *mitzvah*. Sometime later, however, he has second thoughts. Perhaps his intentions were not that virtuous; perhaps it really was not a *mitzvah* after all. How does one recognize the truth? How does he discern between a *mitzvah* and the converse? He should look at the consequences of his actions. If they are praiseworthy, then the dictum, "*A mitzvah causes another mitzvah,*" applies. If the result, however, was not positive, if the consequences of his actions were far from admirable, it

is an indication that the original deed was inappropriate. This is consistent with the dictum, "*A sin causes another sin.*"

When Moshe killed the Egyptian, he began to rethink his action. Could it be that he had acted in haste? Perhaps his actions were too harsh? Did he have the right to take someone's life? When he saw how killing the Egyptian led to his arrival in Midyan, just in time to rescue Yisro's daughters, he realized that killing the Egyptian was the proper course of action.

Similarly, in Yosef's dialogue with his brothers, he told them, "It is true that your suspicions regarding me were unfounded, and, consequently, you were wrong in selling me. Hashem, however, had different plans. He wanted me to be in Egypt to prepare the way for you. In other words, it was not you who sent me to Egypt, it was Hashem who set the events in motion. Do not be angry with yourselves, since you were actually performing Hashem's will."

u,t ,tak ;xuh jka rat ,ukdgv ,t trhu

And he (Yaakov) saw the wagons that Yosef had sent to transport him. (45:27)

When Yaakov saw the wagons that Yosef sent, he was filled with joy and excitement. These wagons carried a profound message to Yaakov. *Chazal* explain that the Hebrew word "*agalah*," wagon, is similar to the word "*eglah*," calf. Yosef intended to hint to his father that he was spiritually healthy by making a reference to the *eglah arufah*, which was the last area of *Torah* that Yaakov had studied with Yosef prior to his being sold as a slave. The *eglah arufah* is a calf which was killed symbolizing the innocence of the elders of a city where a murder had been committed. Yosef was telling his father that he remembered what they had learned so many years ago. The *Torah* was still fresh in his mind, because its practice was still so much a part of his life.

A deeper message can be derived from this theoretic dialogue. It was not by chance that Yaakov was studying the laws of *eglah arufah* with Yosef on that fateful day. It was also not a coincidence that Yosef sent *agalos*, wagons, to remind Yaakov of this fact. Yaakov studied the laws of *eglah arufah*, because it was relevant to that day. Yosef's response was that he was also studying the lessons of *eglah arufah* on this very day. Why? What was Yaakov's intention, and what was Yosef's response? *Horav Baruch Mordechai Eizrachi, Shlita*, explains that the underlying motif of *eglah arufah*, its message and the lesson it teaches, can be summed up with one word: *achrayos*, responsibility. The *Torah* tells us that we are responsible for what goes on around us. Our area of concern must extend beyond ourselves. We must care for, and be sensitive to, the needs of others. One who does not care about others is ultimately liable for the consequences of his lack of responsibility.

Every action that we perform has consequences, some immediate and some that are far-reaching. To be oblivious of this fact is to hide from reality. One who rises late for *Shacharis* and attends *minyan* in another *shul* would seem to be a perfect example of this thesis. A thinking

person would assume that this person had *davened* elsewhere. One who is not astute might derive from his absence that it is not necessary to attend *davening* every day. Regrettably, people infer various messages from the actions or inactions of others. All this is consistent with the concept of *achrayos*, responsibility.

The *parsha* of *eglah arufah* teaches us the lesson of responsibility. If there is a murderer somewhere in the city, the elders are inherently responsible for the "results" of their lack of responsibility. Perhaps the murderer's "plight," his lack of funds, his depression, the various circumstances that led to his tragic downfall, should have been addressed. They should have provided for the murderer. Perhaps, had he not been under pressure, he would have been more careful, so that this tragedy might have been averted. These are all aspects of *achrayos*.

All of these questions were coursing through Yaakov *Avinu's* mind. As Patriarch of the home, he had to take responsibility for Yosef's disappearance. While his sons actually performed the deed, perhaps something was wrong with the manner in which he raised them. Could it have been that he ultimately bore the responsibility? If the elders are taken to task for a murder to which they clearly had no connection, why should he not have had to answer for the actions of his sons? Did he precipitate the jealousy among the brothers? *Chazal* seem to think that the multi-colored coat, the *kesones pasim*, was related to their attitude towards him.

Yosef took responsibility. He had no *taanos*, complaints, about his brothers. He perceived Hashem *Yisborach's* guiding force throughout the circumstances of his life. He did not blame, he did not punish, he did not censure. He accepted responsibility. That is what his father taught him when they last learned the laws of *eglah arufah*. He taught him to look beyond the obvious, search for the hidden reason, and accept the tremendous burden of responsibility. Only then could he build the foundation of Klal *Yisrael* in *galus*. It is easy to blame others. We do it all the time. There are some who survive only by deferring responsibility to someone else. They, regrettably, do not understand that sooner or later they will have to accept responsibility for their actions, as well as for all of the times they shirked their responsibility, wrongly blaming others for their own ineptitude. Is it any wonder that when Yaakov saw the *agalos*, he was filled with joy in the knowledge that Yosef had not forgotten their last -- and perhaps most profound -- lesson?