

"And they said, 'An Egyptian man rescued us from the shepherds.'" (2:19)

The *Midrash* states that there is a more profound meaning to the words, "*An Egyptian man rescued us.*" They do not refer to Moshe, but rather to the Egyptian whom Moshe originally slew in Egypt. This individual was the "cause" of *Bnos Yisro's* rescue from the shepherds. He actually catalyzed the cycle of events which resulted in *Bnos Yisro's* appearance in Midyan. The *Midrash* offers an interesting parable to elucidate this statement. A man, who was bitten by a poisonous snake, ran to the river to wash out the venom. The moment that he arrived at the river he heard the anguished cries of a young child drowning in the water. He immediately jumped in to save the child. "How can I ever thank you?" exclaimed the child "If not for you, I would have surely drowned." The man responded, "It was not I who saved you. Rather, it was the snake who bit me, causing me to come to the water that "caused" you to be saved." Likewise, the message of this *Midrash* is that Hashem guides all events with the intention to achieve His aims. We must believe that every occurrence is an act of Providence.

This *Midrash* raises a number of issues. First, when Moshe told Yisro's daughters that he was an Egyptian, he was implying that he was fleeing Pharaoh. Why did he find it necessary to share the reason for his fugitive status with anybody? Second, if Moshe had been searching for the catalyst that brought him to Midyan, he should have attributed it to the two Jews who were fighting with one another. When Moshe attempted to reprove them, one of them remarked, "Are you going to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" These accusing words precipitated Moshe's flight from Egypt. Third, Moshe should have simply stated that he was escaping from Pharaoh, why did he find it necessary to report to them what had originally motivated him to leave?

Horav Meir Bergman, Shlita, offers a novel response based upon a story related to him by *Horav E.M. Shach, Shlita*. At the cornerstone laying ceremony for the famed Lubliner *Yeshiva* in Poland, the most eminent Jewish dignitaries had assembled. The distinct honor of laying the cornerstone was given to a wealthy Jew who had contributed a large sum towards the building fund. After the stone was set, the *Boyaner Rebbe z.l.*, said to the wealthy benefactor, "The opportunity to donate a vast sum of money to the Lubliner *Yeshiva* and be the one to lay the cornerstone is undoubtedly a remarkable *mitzvah*. You were, however, availed of this *mitzvah* and wonderful opportunity because Hashem rewarded you for preforming an exemplary act of kindness in **private** prior to this occasion. A similar idea, suggests *Horav Bergman*, applies to Moshe *Rabbeinu*. *Chazal* teach us that Moshe rescued the daughters of Yisro from a number of impending disasters that day. Moshe told them, "Would you like to know what I did prior to coming to Midyan which gave me the *z'chus*, merit, to save you from the shepherds? It was a certain act of *chesed*, kindness, that I performed in Egypt, in secret, which earned me the *z'chus* to continue performing *chesed*. The reward for doing *chesed* is the opportunity to continue to do *chesed*."

Indeed, all the travail and near disaster that Moshe had undergone in Egypt because he killed an

Egyptian was in reality part of his "reward" for having saved a Jew. All these events led up to the special instance in which he could rescue the seven daughters of Yisro. For the true *baal chesed*, the ultimate reward is the opportunity to continue to perform acts of *chesed*. It was Moshe's first act of *chesed* that was the precursor of all ensuing acts of *chesed*. This is consistent with *Chazal's* dictum: "The reward of a *mitzvah* is (the ability to perform) another *mitzvah*."