

And Yisrael said, “How great! My son Yosef still lives!” (45:28)

Yaakov *Avinu* was ecstatic. His long-lost son, Yosef, was alive – physically and spiritually. Not only had he risen to a position of great distinction in his newly-adopted country, but he had maintained all of the strict spiritual standards that had been so much a part of his early life. The Patriarch had to see this for himself. His sons’ report gave him hope, but, until he saw it for himself, he was still anxious concerning Yosef’s spiritual erudition. The *Midrash* makes an interesting comment which focuses on Yaakov’s use of the word *rav*, “how great”. *Rav kocho*, “How great is Yosef’s strength of character?” He experienced so much travail in his life, yet he still remains steadfast in his commitment and faith in Hashem. He is much more righteous than I, who sinned with the words, *nisterah darki mei Hashem*, “My way is hidden from Hashem” (*Yeshayah* 40:27). (*Yeshaya HaNavi* admonishes Jews who despair, thinking that G-d ignores or forsakes them. Hashem withholds His salvation for reasons beyond our grasp.)

In his commentary to the *Midrash*, the **Matnos Kehunah** questions the Patriarch’s assumption that Yosef never questioned Hashem. While it is true that he withstood the test presented by Potifar’s wife and the many other trials and challenges that confronted him in life, who says that he did not have “issues” concerning his treatment by Hashem? How do we know that Yosef never felt in his heart, *shoin genuck*, “enough is enough, I have suffered so much”?

The *Baalei Mussar*, Ethicists, explain this based upon a principle advanced by the **Alter m’Novaradok, zl**. The *Alter* explains that the ability to withstand Hashem’s trials is based upon one’s ultimate faith in the Almighty. One whose conviction is, at best, shaky, who complains concerning his state of adversity, will not have the fortitude necessary to traverse future trials successfully. One who does not sense Hashem’s Presence with him at all times – if he despairs that he is all alone – will be unable to battle with the *yetzer hora*, evil-inclination. To win at battle one needs to feel a sense of confidence, he must believe in himself, his weapons, his strategy. If he is not confident in winning, he might as well not bother, because he will inevitably lose. Therefore, if Yosef had successfully withstood Potifar’s wife’s banishments, if he had been able to overcome her wiles, he obviously believed wholeheartedly in Hashem. Otherwise, he could not have successfully overcome the temptation.