

## **A man discovered him, and behold! – he was blundering in the field; the man asked him, saying, “What do you seek?” (37:15)**

Yosef’s father sent him to seek out his brothers and report back to him concerning their welfare. *Chazal* teach that Hashem sent the *Malach*, angel, *Gavriel*, in the likeness of a man, to lead Yosef to his brothers. This was all part of the Divine master plan that would eventually lead the entire family of Yaakov *Avinu* to descend to Egypt, as part of fulfilling the prophecy to Avraham *Avinu*. The *Kotzker Rebbe, zl*, interprets the “man’s” question to Yosef homiletically. The man/angel was telling Yosef that when he – or any man – is lost, confused with life, its issues and vicissitudes, he should not allow disconcertion to prevail. First and foremost, he should determine his personal goals; then he should deal with the issues.

All too often, we are confronted with various challenges that bog us down, stunting our upward/forward mobility. We are basically stuck in the proverbial “rut.” We do not know where to turn, and we do not have the skills to do it. The sage counsel is to first determine where we want to go – our goals. Then, we need to remain focused on those objectives. If we lose our focus, **we** feel lost, aimless, because **we** do not know where **we** are going. A kite may drift around in the air, but as long as it is stabilized on the ground, it will not stray.

Every Jew must have a goal and concentrate on that goal. He must set standards and maintain them religiously, not deferring to every whim that he encounters. Even in *Avodas HaKodesh*, serving Hashem, one must have standards and priorities which are consistent in his life. Let the following serve as an example: The *Bais Yisrael* makes the following observation concerning Yehudah’s remark, “What gain will there be if we kill our brother and cover up his blood?” (*Bereishis* 37:26). What did Yehudah mean by the phrase, “What gain will there be?”

The *Bais Yisrael* explains this based upon a *kabbalah* undertaken by the *Chozeh m’Lublin*. The *Chozeh* had a support system to protect him from falling into the clutches of the *yetzer hara*, evil-inclination. He had accepted upon himself never to do anything unless his actions would bring pleasure/benefit to Hashem. If his actions would not catalyze *kavod Shomayim*, the *Chozeh* refrained from acting.

This, explains the *Bais Yisrael*, was Yehudah’s intention when he asked his brothers, *Mah betza ki na’harog es achinu?* – “What gain will there be if we kill our brother?” Yehudah meant, **What will Hashem benefit from our actions?** This is what the *Targum Onkeles* purports when he translates *betza* as *mamon*, money: What **profit** is there from killing Yosef? Hashem will gain nothing. If Hashem’s honor in the world will not be increased as a result of our action, then there is no reason to act.

This is how a Jew should live his life: with a *cheshbon*, an accounting – with standards, principles

and purpose. All this reverts to one word: focused. If one lives a focused life, he knows where he is heading and why. The *raison d'être* for our actions should always be: Will Hashem benefit from this? Will it increase *kavod Shomayim*? To act without focus, aimlessly, and without purpose, is indicative of one to whom Judaism has no meaning. We know better than that.