

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

Chazal teach us that Yosef had a specific motivation in sending "*agalos*," wagons. The Hebrew word "*agalah*," wagon, is similar to the word "*eglah*," calf. Yosef intended to provide a hint to Yaakov, referring to the laws of the *eglah arufah* (the calf which was killed as a symbol of the innocence of the elders of a city where a murder had been committed), which was the last section of *halachah* that Yosef had studied with Yaakov. He thereby demonstrated to his father that he had not forgotten his studies. Also, Yosef had taken leave of his father without escort and much had transpired. Was it not Yaakov who had said, "I am to blame for what happened to Yosef. I knew of his brothers' animosity towards him. Yet, I sent him away without protection." In another *Midrash*, *Chazal* teach us that Yosef was alluding to the three calves which Avraham saw in his vision, the harbingers of the exile.

What are we to learn from *Chazal's* words? A great man does not view any occurrence as the result of chance. Nothing just happens. There is a cause and effect; a clear pattern exists between events. One has only to open his eyes to see the whole picture. The *Chafetz Chaim* comments that it was no coincidence that Yaakov had studied the laws of *eglah arufah* with Yosef before they had parted ways - without protection. Yosef was able to infer a profound personal lesson from the laws of *eglah arufah*; he could relate to the lonely wayfarer whose innocent blood had been spilled. Yaakov could sympathize with the elders of the city who were enjoined to bring the calf. He blamed himself for not properly accompanying Yosef, for sending him out alone to such a hostile environment. Yosef foresaw the beginning of the exile as his father came down to Egypt. He sent calves, which are synonymous with the Egyptian exile. Nothing eluded their eyes. They saw wholistic relationships. This is a sign of greatness.

The *Chafetz Chaim* recounts a story which reinforces this thesis. The author of the *Amudei Sheish*, *Horav Avraham Shmuel*, once came to attend a *bris milah*. Prior to the *bris*, he asked for a few moments with the child's mother. Although this was unusual, people deferred to the great *gaon* and delayed the ceremony. A half hour later, the *rav* emerged from the room leaving a tear-stricken mother and announced that the baby was a *mamzer*, illegitimate child. Jewish law demands that such an announcement be made publicly at the *bris* of a *mamzer*, so that it be known and remembered that this child is not eligible to marry a Jewish girl of unquestionable descent. People were amazed and said that the *rav* was blessed with Divine inspiration. After all, how else could he have known of this woman's illicit affair?

The *rav* responded and explained how it was that he was privy to this knowledge. At the time that he was summoned to attend the *bris*, it "just happened" that he was studying the laws pertaining to *mamzeirus*, illegitimacy of children. It concerned him that specifically while he was studying this topic, he would be called to officiate at a *bris*. This feeling gnawed at him and intensified when he entered the house. Something just did not seem right. His suspicions were reinforced upon

discreetly inquiring about the mother's behavior. He, therefore, felt compelled to question the young woman directly to avert a further tragedy.

Many stories demonstrate the attention our *gedolim* gave to every minute occurrence. Nothing was left to chance. Nothing was coincidental. There was no such thing as being in the "right place at the right time." If they were present, it was for a purpose. Hashem sends us subtle messages from which we are either to glean a lesson or to infer a direction in what we are about to do. The ability to see and discern these lessons is a sign of greatness.

This writer once heard an excellent analogy which demonstrates how everything that occurs to us has a purpose. We have only, at times, to wait for the hidden meaning to surface. A story relates that once there was a young man who was in the desert without food or drink. The sun was beating down upon his body, as he trudged through desolate terrain in search of water and a way out of his terrible circumstance. Every step brought him closer to his destination, but as his thirst increased it became increasingly hard to go on. Suddenly, from afar, he saw another person carrying a large knapsack. "Oh! salvation," he screamed as he ran over to this man. "Water! Water! Please give me water," he begged the stranger. "I'm sorry, I have no water," responded the would be savior. "But, I am a necktie salesman, and I will happy to give you a free tie!" Words cannot describe the utter frustration that overcame our distraught traveler to hear these words. "Neckties! What will I do with a necktie; I need water," he responded with whatever strength he had remaining.

He kept on going, trudging, crawling, hoping that someday and somehow he would make it to civilization. Finally, he observed the outskirts of a town. He crawled over on his torn hands and knees to a small restaurant. He dragged his body into the restaurant and with parched lips opened his mouth, pleading, "Water, water." The waiter behind the counter looked at the bedraggled man and said, "Don't you see the sign

by the front door. We do not serve anybody in this restaurant unless he is wearing a necktie. I'm sorry I cannot serve you."

The moral is simple. Incidents occur during our lifetime which -- as far as our limited perspective is concerned -- have no meaning. These are the "neckties" that one day we might need. Let us not ignore them.