

## "And they took him, and cast him into the pit; the pit was empty, no water was in it." ( 37:24)

*Chazal* derive from the redundancy of the text that, although there was no water in the pit, dangerous creatures, such as serpents and scorpions, abounded. We may question the *Torah's* style in expressing its point. If the pit contained serpents and scorpions, why did the *Torah* not clearly state that fact? What purpose does the *Torah* serve with this back-handed approach? This question is posed by every serious reader of the text. The commentators offer a number of explanations. **Horav David Shneuer, Shlita**, takes a novel approach which teaches us an important lesson. The *Torah* asserts, "The pit was empty, no water was in it." It is making a positive statement. The pit is empty; no one will die as a result of drowning. Saying, however, that the pit is filled with dangerous creatures bent upon killing whatever comes their way is tantamount to presenting a negative perspective. The *Torah* would rather indicate the pit's positive traits, leaving its negative feature up to the imagination. The lesson for us to derive is simple: whenever one is about to judge his friend's deed or activity, he should view it from a positive perspective. Upon expressing criticism, one should emphasize the positive and allude to the negative. This is one of the most difficult things to do, since by nature we focus in upon the negative aspects of a person's behavior. This jaundiced view of others regrettably spreads to the home when parents fail to laud their child's successes and instead accentuate their faults.

*Horav Shneuer* cites **Horav Shlomo Ganzfried zl**, in his *Aperion Al Ha'Torah*, who makes a similar observation in regard to the birth of Peretz, the son of Yehudah and Tamar. In relating Peretz's birth, the *Torah* recounts how Peretz pushed ahead to emerge before his brother, Zerach. *Rashi* cites *Chazal*, who note that the word "yad" refers to Zerach's hand which had emerged first. The word "yad" is repeated four times. *Chazal* derive from this repetition that the *Torah* is alluding to four sins committed by Achan, a descendant of Peretz. The question is obvious: What relationship is there between the act of an infant in his attempt to be born first and the iniquitous deeds of this child's descendant? *Horav Ganzfried* explains that we may derive from this *pasuk* the significance of a parent's influence upon his child - even upon a descendant many years later. The not-so-innocent act of an infant who desired to be first in birth, in order to gain the birthright for himself, left an impression on the psyche of his descendants to the point that his grandson, four generations later, committed a series of grave sins for which he was censured. The impression and influence that parents exert upon their offspring is amazing. It may not surface for generations, but it will eventually emerge. Most often, it will be expressed by the descendant in an insidious manner.

Once again, the *Torah* expresses only the positive act of the infant without giving mention to its iniquitous effect. This slight "geneivah," act of stealing, pushing himself in front, getting ahead of his brother who was actually before him, catalyzed a much more harmful sin. Incidentally, this explanation is inconsistent with the *Midrash* that says it was Hashem who declared that Peretz emerge first, since *Moshiach* would descend from him. We may reconcile the two analyses by suggesting that despite the fact that Hashem had decreed that Peretz should precede Zerach, the

forcefulness he employed in obtaining this position left an impression for later generations.

In conclusion, the *Torah* teaches us to always look for the good in a person, to underscore his positive actions and to accentuate his noble intentions - even if we do not always see positive repercussions.