

And he gave him Osnas bas Potifar, chief of On, for a wife. (41:45)

Certain words in the English language are anathema to the Jewish religion. Coincidence, believing that things “happen” without being designated by G-d, is the antithesis of Jewish belief. We could devote books to support the notion of *Hashgachah Pratis*, Divine Providence, but why look anywhere but in our *parsha*? This is, of course, true throughout the Torah, but the story of Yosef and his brothers and the need to have him descend to Egypt so that they would eventually follow, is a classic example of *Hashgachah*. Yosef’s marriage to Osnas is a classic tale of *Hashgachah Pratis* as stated by *Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer*, and cited by *Daas Zekeinim* and *Chezkuni*. It is a case of Divine Providence, but, furthermore, it is an example of a powerful message never to give up hope. The little girl that was rejected by her family ended up being the progenitress of two of our greatest *Shevatim*. First, however, let me relate the story.

Shechem violated Dinah, daughter of Yaakov *Avinu*. Dinah conceived and gave birth to a little girl who was shunned by her uncles, since she represented moral violation and a terrible incursion against the Patriarchal family. Yaakov took pity on his granddaughter and gave her an amulet which would protect her. The young girl, who was named Osnas, was eventually sold to (and later adopted by) Potifar, whose wife attempted to seduce Yosef. When she was rejected, Potifar’s wife slandered Yosef, who was saved only because Osnas, who knew the truth, defended him to the Egyptian Priests that comprised the court of law. (As a result of being found innocent by them, Yosef later passed the edict that the Egyptian government had no control over priestly land.) When Yosef was elevated to the position of Viceroy, Pharaoh sought a suitable wife for him. Pharaoh figured that, although Yosef’s roots (as a Jewish slave) were murky, by having him marry an Egyptian woman, his standing would be elevated in the eyes of the populace.

Because Yosef was quite handsome, Pharaoh had him paraded through Egypt. This brought all of the eligible women out. They all threw something at him in order to get his attention. Osnas did not have anything to throw, other than the amulet that her grandfather had given her. When Yosef retrieved the amulet, he realized that standing before him was a member of his family. The rest is history. What is history? How should one teach history? It is the recognition of the Divine Hand coordinating all events, so that one sees how everything that occurs -- both in the world and in his personal life – is all a part of Hashem’s Divine Plan.

Stories abound which underscore Hashem’s Divine Providence over each and every one of us – personally. One of the more well-known stories (of which there are a number of variations) is Tuvia Ariel’s story, “7401.” It seemed to him that life was coincidental. Interestingly, the last four digits of his childhood residential phone number were 7401. Likewise, the last four digits of his social security number were also 7401. Years later, when he found himself serving as a volunteer in a *kibbutz*, he met a man, a carpenter by trade, a man who rarely spoke. He was a Holocaust survivor who had escaped Auschwitz. He, too, had a number tattooed on his arm. Yes – the last four digits

on his arm were 7401. When Tuvia inquired concerning the numbers, the carpenter became visibly anxious. He said, "Do not talk about it. I lost my entire family, my father; my mother; there was a brother behind me in line (*selektzia*) and a brother in front of me. I am the only one who survived. Never bring this up to me. I want to forget." Tuvia acquiesced to the carpenter's request, until one day he met someone...

Tuvia is a man of many stories, his own life serving as an agent for *chesed*, for helping others. Indeed, he considers himself to be an agent to make life easier and better for others. While this is true of all of us, most do not think about life in that manner. *Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl*, writes: "Man is created *l'ho'il l'achrinei*, to help others." Tuvia took his own misfortune and transformed it into an opportunity for helping others, but this story is not about Tuvia.

As a volunteer in the *kibbutz*, he was once operating a large grinding machine, when his leg was caught in the blades. Immediately, he was sucked in. Quick thinking and incredible courage inspired him to self-amputate his leg before his whole body was sucked into the machine. As a result, Tuvia became an amputee with little ability to work at the *kibbutz*. He worked as a taxi driver, picking up tourists at the airport, ferrying them to the main office of the touring agency where he was employed. Due to his limitations, the agency would not use him as a tourist guide. This did not stop Tuvia. He did his job, knowing that wherever he was, whatever he was doing, he was acting as an agent of Hashem in one of His Divine scenarios.

One day he picked up an American tourist. His attire bespoke wealth, his attitude bespoke obnoxious wealth. His manner was crude and disrespectful. Tuvia found it difficult to be his usual friendly self; nonetheless, he acted diplomatically, responding to questions in a respectful manner, saving his usual congenial nature for other tourists. This man was not going to receive the "time of day" from Tuvia unless he asked for it. They were halfway between the airport and the tourist office, when the man yelled, "Stop the car! Pull over!" Obviously, Tuvia's cold, indifferent attitude affected a response from the passenger. Suddenly, someone was not bending over backward to impress him.

The man looked at Tuvia and curtly said, "You think I am a lazy, materialistic, American tourist, who comes to your country to throw his money around? Well, you are wrong. I paid my dues! I suffered plenty!" To prove his statement, he pulled up the sleeve of his shirt and pointed to the tattoo on his arm, "I lost my entire family. I had a brother behind me and a brother in front of me – all gone."

Tuvia was about to lose it. He saw Hashem's Divine Plan forming before his very eyes. "Was your brother's name Shimon?" he asked, the words shakily coming from his mouth. The man's face went from crimson to white. "I am not taking you to the tourist office. We are making a detour." The man did not complain. Suddenly, the boisterous American became still, as they traveled an hour and a half to the north, to the *kibbutz* where Tuvia had worked ten years earlier.

They arrived, and Tuvia inquired about the whereabouts of the carpenter who had befriended him. He did not even say, "Hello." He just asked, "Was your brother's name Reuven?" Another face turned white. Tuvia returned to the taxi and told the American tourist, "Come. I am taking you to your brother."

He led him to the carpenter's shed and left. He did not want to infringe upon the poignancy of the moment. Two brothers, who had been separated for years, both thinking the other had died, were finally reunited. Tuvia stood by his taxi and wept – first, tears of sadness, and then tears of joy. Why did he weep? How did he know? When the American tourist showed him his tattooed arm, he noted the last four digits of his number – 7402.

Hashgachah Pratis – Divine Providence.