

And to his father, he sent the following: ten he donkeys laden with the best of Egypt. (45:23)

We often neglect to acknowledge that we are pawns in a cosmic chess game, all of us part of a Divine plan. Each and every one of us has his/her designated place as the various moves are made, until the ultimate move, when the advent of *Moshiach Tzidkeinu* takes place. Commentators express this idea time and again as they address the story of Yosef *HaTzaddik*: his alienation from his brothers; his sale as a slave, which led him to Egypt; his descent to Egypt as the precursor for his family's departure from *Eretz Yisrael* in order to be reunited with him in Egypt; our forced bondage which lasted 210 years, until the experience of our redemption, which led to our receiving the Torah and returning to *Eretz Yisrael* forty years later. History in a nutshell. All history is actually the ability to observe Hashem's Divine Hand in the manipulation of events – and our open-minded ability to learn from these experiences.

Having said this, we cite the *Maharal m'Prague (Gevuras Hashem 10)*, who offers a powerful insight into Yosef's gift which he sent his father, Yaakov *Avinu*. The Torah states: "And to his father he sent the following: ten he-donkeys laden with the best of Egypt" (45:23). Yosef expected Yaakov to descend to Egypt. Why was he sending him such gifts? Why did he specifically send ten donkeys? *Maharal* offers a powerful insight. Everything that Yosef did had a deeper meaning, an allusion from which Yaakov would derive the true meaning. While donkeys are animals of burden who are able to work very hard, they do not know what they are doing. (It is not as if other creatures are powerful intellectuals; donkeys seem to be characteristically devoted more to laboring than to thinking.) Their masters load them with merchandise, but they are unaware of what they are carrying, or why. The donkey is the proverbial animal that is led around, follows orders, "asks no questions," carrying out its mission with total equanimity.

Yosef was indicating to his father that he should harbor no animus towards his ten sons for what had happened to him— both his ill treatment and eventual sale, for they knew not what they were doing when they sold him. This was all part of Hashem's plan to bring Yaakov and his family down to Egypt. Yosef's descent into the spiritual and moral wasteland of Egypt was the beginning of the process. When the brothers sold Yosef, they were not aware of what they were doing.

The *Maharal* writes that Yosef was intimating to his father, "Do not punish them. They were unaware what they were doing. It was a Heavenly decree." His brothers were no different than a loaded donkey that does not know why it is carrying a load.

If Yosef was a great *tzaddik* who could see through the veil of ambiguity surrounding his life experiences, then certainly Yaakov, *b'chir ha'Avos*, chosen one of the Patriarchs, was availed this perspective. Why was it necessary for Yaakov to be "reminded" by Yosef that everything that

happens is part of a Heavenly decree?

Perhaps Yosef's message was: "I know why you are not rebuking my brothers. I know that you are not ignoring my painful experience. I understand that you care about me and my pain, but you need to see what happened as a Heavenly decree." There are times when children expect and even demand a reaction from parents to support their claims. When they receive no such reaction, they are hurt, feeling that their parents do not care enough about them. Unfortunately, they are so involved in their own little worlds that they are unable to see the larger picture – as the parents see it. This engenders anger and strains relationships. Yosef intimated to Yaakov that he knew; he understood; there were no *taanos*, complaints. He accepted his father's decision, because, in fact, he agreed with it.