

## **And now, neither be distressed, nor reproach yourselves for having sold me here, for it was to be a provider that G-d sent me ahead of you.” (45:5)**

Yosef appeases his brothers, explaining to them that they were all part of a Divine Plan, in order to have him precede them to Egypt. By “trailblazing” the Egyptian exile which *Klal Yisrael* was destined to experience, Yosef was able to mitigate their and their descendants’ ordeal to some extent. Yosef was addressing his brothers, but it is a worthy lesson that is applicable to – and should be reviewed over and over by – us all. Hashem controls and guides the world. He has a Divine Plan in which we all have a role. We must be patient and trust in Hashem because, at the end of the day, we really are unable to alter the plan. We should open our eyes and minds to see how all of the inexplicable parts of the puzzle ultimately fit together.

The *Divrei Yisrael* (cited by Horav *Elimelech Biderman, Shlita*) writes (*Parashas Beshalach*), “When one believes that everything happens as a result of *Hashgachah Pratis*, Divine Providence, and not by chance, even the most minute detail, such as how many footsteps one takes (this means that he believes that each and every footstep is taken by Divine designation), then he will be spared from sadness and distress... because he firmly believes that nothing happens by man’s will, but rather, by Divine Decree.”

The *Divrei Yisrael* goes so far as to say that if one does not believe that each step that he takes is ordained by Divine Providence, then the *brachah*, blessing, of *Hameichin mitzadei gaver*, “Who prepares the steps of mankind,” is a *brachah levatalah*, unauthorized *brachah*, a blessing uttered for no reason. Often we go somewhere where we sustain a bad experience. We ask ourselves, “Why did I go there? I should have stayed away. I bumped into someone that caused me heartache.” We *kvetch*, complain and feel sorry for ourselves. If we would pause long enough to realize that Hashem is *meichin mitzadei gaver*, however, we would realize that Hashem was the One Who sent us there.

*Horav Yitzchak Hershkowitz, Shlita (Nitzotzos)* relates the story (allegory) of the man who was the only survivor of a shipwreck. He was able to swim to an uninhabited island. In order to provide shelter for himself, he gathered branches to build a small hut. It was not much but, at least, it would serve as a refuge from the animals that roamed the island. His belongings, which consisted of the clothes on his back and whatever he could grab before the ship went down, were placed into his new home.

One day, after he regained his health (his wounds that he suffered during the ship’s sinking had healed), he went searching for food or whatever would serve as a substitute. While he was in the woods searching, he saw flames coming from his makeshift hut. By the time he returned, nothing remained of his home and worldly possessions. He began to cry uncontrollably, beseeching Hashem, “*Ribono Shel Olam*, I am now alone in the world, bereft of my family, friends, and all my

worldly possessions. Where do I go from here?" Miserable, he cried himself to sleep on the parched ground.

The next morning, he woke up to see sunlight and an approaching ship. He jumped up, as he saw men alighting from the ship and running towards him. "We are here to save you!" they declared. "But how did you know that I was here?" he asked incredulously. "We saw the fire and smoke that you sent up as a signal of distress," they replied.

How telling. We do not realize that what we think is a moment/period of adversity is actually the catalyst for our salvation. The *Ramchal* interprets this perspective into the words of the *Midrash* that questions Yaakov *Avinu's* reaction to his sons' relating to him that they had told the Egyptian viceroy that they had an elderly father and a young brother at home. *Lamah hareioseh li*, "Why did you treat me so ill (by telling the man that you had another brother)?" (*Bereishis* 43:6) The *Midrash* wonders: "Yaakov had never spoken in such a manner. Hashem said, 'I am occupied with coronating his son (Yosef) as a monarch, and he questions 'Why I treated him so badly.'"

The *Ramchal* explains that, undoubtedly, this was a *tzarah*, a case of adversity. Yaakov's sons descend to Egypt to purchase food for the family. The end result of this trip: Shimon is incarcerated and now he is told that he must send Binyamin, if he ever wants to see Shimon again. The reaction should have been: Pray to Hashem so that He "sweetens" the *Din*, Justice, that whatever decree hangs over the family be ameliorated. Certainly, someone of Yaakov's stature should not complain, "Why did You do something that would cause me such harm?"

*Ramchal* continues that, on the contrary, from here we may derive that all good things are preceded by pain. *Chazal* state: "Three gifts have been granted to *Klal Yisrael* as the result of *yissurim*, troubles, pain: Torah, *Eretz Yisrael* and *Olam Habba*, the World to Come." Therefore, when adversity strikes, we must take it with a grain of salt, secure in the knowledge that it is the precursor of good.

The problem is that we view life through a myopic lens. We are plagued by spiritual astigmatism that distorts what we see in such a manner that we only perceive bad when, in fact, what we see is really to our benefit. A well-known story, publicized by *Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl*, involved his mother, who was well-read and one of the few women in her neighborhood who could read the Jewish newspaper, *Der Yiddishe Tagblatt*. The women of the neighborhood would gather at her home for a "reading", during which she read the newspaper out loud for the women.

One day, when Mrs. Galinsky was in her kitchen peeling potatoes, a woman visited and was waiting for Mrs. Galinsky to conclude her kitchen work so that she could "hear" the news. Meanwhile, the woman began flipping through the pages of the newspaper. Suddenly, she came running into the kitchen in a panic, "How can you be so passive, peeling potatoes, when a large ship has sunk?" She brought in the paper which had a picture of a ship submerged in the water. Mrs. Galinsky patiently took the paper from her, turned it around, and said, "Since you do not know

how to read, you failed to realize that you were holding the newspaper upside down.” Once the paper was put in the upright position, it was clear that the ship was not sinking.

The lesson of the story (as explained by *Rav Galinsky*) is simple: If one does not know how to look at a picture, he might conjecture that terrible things are happening, when, in fact, the opposite is true. Thus, matters which appear to be tragedies are really the precursors for good events. One just has to know how to read the picture.