

Behold! We were binding sheaves in the middle of the field, when, behold! My sheaf arose and remained standing. (37:7)

The Torah's narrative teaches us how Hashem's ways (of dealing with the world and with us) must be accepted with love. A superficial, cursory perusal of the stories in the Torah will not do anyone justice; the reader is left clueless, and the profundity of the narrative remains concealed and ambiguous. The *Midrash* and *Zohar*, the *Talmud* and its many commentators, offer us powerful insights into the behind the scenes workings of the narrative, their hidden meaning, and the message for the reader. Concerning Yosef *HaTzaddik*, *Chazal* (*Bereishis Rabbah* 84:10) teach, *Kamah alumas*; my sheaf stood up – “My *alumah*, alternatively – silence, stood for me.” An *ileim* is a person who is mute or harnesses his speech to the point that he is virtually mute. Regarding Yosef, *Chazal* are intimating (as explained by *Sefas Emes*) that the quiet acceptance manifest by Rachel *Imeinu* (Yosef's mother) when Leah *Imeinu* replaced her as the bride who would marry Yaakov *Avinu*, gave Yosef the power (ability) to accept the Divine Will.

Until seventeen years of age, everything seemed to be going Yosef's way. Doted on by his father, who not only taught him Torah, but also imbued him with a powerful, life-sustaining perspective on how to live in a morally bankrupt society in a world where the Jew was not recognized, and, in some instances, reviled by many. Such depraved culture and feelings of animus can have a deleterious effect on one's spiritual connection to Hashem. Yaakov precluded this with the life lessons that he imparted.

It all changed when Yosef's brothers, who felt that he was a spiritual threat to them, stripped him of his position and degraded him. During all this, he remained silent, recognizing the hand of Hashem guiding the events surrounding his life. This was followed with the fictitious claim that he had attempted to seduce Potifar's wife. In reality, he had had to muster up every ounce of spiritual strength to ward off her advances. Yet, Yosef remained silent. This was his hallmark – the hallmark of his family – silence, acceptance, because it is the Divine Will.

Yosef remained in spiritual darkness, in a pit filled with the dregs of Egyptian society, the lowest of the low. Yet, he retained his *tzaddik* status, paving the way for the Jewish People to look for and see Hashem's guiding hand during the darkest of times.

Aharon *HaKohen* merited to see his son, Elazar, dressed in the vestments of the *Kohen Gadol*. This was a miracle: since Moshe *Rabbeinu* removed Aharon's vestments one-by-one, Elazar immediately donned them, despite the fact that Moshe placed Aharon's outer garments onto Elazar first. Why did he merit such a miracle? True, Aharon was a holy man who dedicated his life to the preservation of peaceful co-existence among people. This extraordinary display of *nachas*, however, was unprecedented. I think it was the result of Aharon's silence, *Va'yidom Aharon*; “Aharon was silent” (*Vayikra* 10:13), his acceptance of the Divine decree which claimed the lives of two of his sons. His countenance did not alter one iota as he submitted himself to Hashem. Those

few moments of acquiescence earned him a few moments of novel *nachas*.

Everything that happens in our lives constitutes a message from Hashem. At times, our essential response should be passive, as indicated above. During other instances, however, Hashem expects an active response – which might be forthcoming if we would only listen. The following sad story underscores this idea. A rabbi attended the funeral of one of his congregants – a fine man who left behind a son who was a source of *nachas* to him. After the internment, the rabbi returned home with the son, who was not only inconsolable at the service, but his deep melancholy continued in the car. A seasoned rabbi, who had attended his share of funerals and dealt with many a family member, he was somewhat concerned about the intensity of grief the son was expressing. The rabbi asked the son, “Did something unusual happen?”

“Yes. I will never forgive myself,” the son began. “Shortly before my father passed away, he became quite ill. As such, he was very anxious to be in touch with me at all times. I assured him that he could call me 24/7, any time of day or night. I would be there to talk to him. My father was very considerate and hardly called. He did not want to bother me. When he took a turn for the worse, however, shortly before he left this world, with his last ounce of strength, he picked up the phone to call me to say goodbye – but my line was busy. I never got to talk to my father! I never said goodbye!”

Very sad, but unfortunately more common than we care to admit. With respect to Hashem, who is our Heavenly Father, He, too, sends us messages, which we either tend to ignore, because our ability to listen is stunted, or our life is busy with something else. The difference between the story and our relationship with Hashem is: He “lives” forever; we unfortunately, do not. This should serve as a fitting wake-up call.