

## And so it was – just as she coaxed Yosef day after day. (39:10)

The *Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 67:6)* teaches: “The descendants of Rachel *Imeinu*, in the following two instances, their tests which they endured and their greatness with which they were consequently rewarded were equivalent.” Yosef was coaxed, day after day, to sin. Mordechai (of the tribe of Binyamin) refused to bow down to Haman, day after day. “Their greatness with which they were rewarded, Pharaoh removed his signet ring and appointed Yosef as viceroy. The Persian king removed his signet ring and gave it to Mordechai, granting him a position of unparalleled importance and power.” We wonder why *Chazal* consider Yosef and Mordechai’s tests to be equivalent? Just because they were challenged day after day? Their challenges were completely different. Yosef was seduced to act immorally, while Mordechai was being intimidated to bow down to the evil Haman. Furthermore, the similarity of their rewards implies that they employed similar methods to resist sin. What were those methods, and what is the connection between these methods and the ensuing reward, such that they were both elevated to such closeness with the premier ruler of the day?

The *Maharal* explains that both the repeated ability of Yosef and Mordechai to withstand the tests with which they were confronted was rooted in their unshakable fidelity to Hashem. No one and no situation could ever sway their loyalty. He explains that this extraordinary ability to withstand the assault on their loyalty was the result of the special closeness Yosef and Mordechai had with Hashem. The fact that the three Sanctuaries – *Mishkan Shiloh*, and both *Batei Mikdash* – were all in the portions of *Eretz Yisrael* belonging to either Yosef or Binyamin, Rachel *Imeinu*’s two sons, indicates this closeness. [Perhaps, it was Rachel’s loyalty to her sister that was passed down to her two sons. No compromise can exist concerning one’s fealty. Otherwise, he/she is not loyal.] Hashem repaid them by orchestrating the transfer to each of them of the signet ring of the most powerful ruler of the day. Distinction goes to the one who is totally devoted to Hashem in an unbreakable bond.

*Horav Baruch Dov Povarsky, Shlita*, views the words, *yom yom*, day after day, as holding the key to Yosef and Mordechai’s worthiness of such reward. *Temidius*, consistency, and allegiance determine one’s true adherence. It is one thing to overcome adversity – once, but to do so regularly without fail and change indicates that the individual is prepared for leadership. A leader may not falter. Consistency helps one progress towards his goals – taking small steps and building momentum, thus increasing his chances for success. Furthermore, a leader who consistently delivers on his commitments fosters trust and reliability. People will consider him a dependable and trustworthy leader. [It is important to note that a leader must strike a balance between consistency and adaptability. Being open to opportunity and innovation (in accordance with *halachah*) allows one to adjust his approach to better serve his constituents and facilitate greater personal achievement.]

The *Rosh Yeshivah* interprets this idea into the *pasuk* in *Tehillim* (24:3), *Mi yaaleh b'har Hashem, u'mi yakum b'makom Kodsho*, "Who may ascend the mountain of Hashem, and who may stand in the place of His sanctity?" Why is it necessary to be (seemingly) redundant? Whoever ascends to the top of the mountain remains there. David *Hamelech* teaches us that, while it is possible to overcome challenge, desire and adversity, to climb the mountain while maintaining one's position/status is another thing altogether. Not everyone is able to maintain his perch. One who is able to maintain his perch is worthy of *malchus*, monarchy, leadership.

We may add to the *Rosh Yeshivah's* exposition. What was it about Rachel *Imeinu's* children that engineered this unique attribute? What was it about Rachel that catalyzed their ability to rise to such consistency and immutable devotion to Hashem? I think it was our Matriarch's incessant weeping – day in and day out – praying for a child. This copious weeping was the catalyst for Hashem's blessing her two sons, Yosef and Binyamin. *Rachel mevakeh al banehah meianah l'hisnacheim*, "Rachel weeping for her children, she refuses to be comforted" (*Yirmiyahu* 31:14). Our Matriarch has not ceased weeping. She cries over the plight of her children suffering in exile. She will continue crying until the Redemption, when we will all be liberated from our troubles. What about weeping makes it such a strong, impactful expression of emotion?

Weeping is real. It is a natural expression of intense feelings, serving as a release valve for emotions which we otherwise suppress. One does not fake tears. It is an honest human response to the pain we suffer. It is our release from the complexities of our emotional life – which we either no longer want – or are unable – to suppress. One thing, however, is certain: Each discharge of emotion is novel, brand new. It is not merely a continuation, but rather, a fresh expression of pain. Likewise, "day after day" is a term describing innovation and novelty. Today's weeping is not yesterday's. Likewise, Yosef was confronted with a new challenge, a fresh seduction and onslaught on his moral character. Mordechai was confronted and overcame every new challenge to wear him down and bow to Haman. They both withstood the challenge with the power of consistency they inherited from Rachel *Imeinu*.

*Hasmadah*, diligence in Torah, means not wasting a moment – day after day – minute after minute. One could write a book about the *hasmadah* of our *gedolei Yisrael*, to whom Torah is life, and every minute of Torah is breathing. As one cannot survive without the air that he breathes – consistently, likewise, he cannot survive without Torah. I chose an anecdote about *Horav Ovadiah Yosef, zl*, because it conveys his inexorable relationship with Torah. Until the age of thirty-one, *Rav Ovadiah* did not own a watch. While he may have been too poor in his teenage years to purchase a watch, by the time he was twenty-seven he was already the *Av Beis Din* of Egypt, which earned him a salary that could pay for a watch.

Someone remarked, "How could he be without a watch? How does he know the time?" A close student replied, "What does he need a watch for? He learns every second of the day and night – except when he is engaged in *tefillah*. He has no need for a watch to tell him when to go to sleep, because he goes to sleep only when he feels too exhausted to continue learning."

Why did he get a watch when he was thirty-one? It seems that his students who attended his nightly shiur were concerned when it went overtime. These men had obligations – both personal and familial. The shiurim were so fantastic that no one could just pick up and leave. They got together and raised the money to buy the Chacham the watch as a gift. Thus, he would be aware when the scheduled one-and-a-half-hour shiur was to end.