

And Eisav raised his voice and wept. (27:38)

Yaakov *Avinu* received the blessings from his father, Yitzchak *Avinu*. He had barely left the room before Eisav returned with his father's meal. Eisav had been sent to prepare a special meal for his father, so that his father would bless him. Following his mother, Rivkah *Imeinu's* instructions, Yaakov entered the room first, giving the impression that he was Eisav, and preventing the blessings from falling into the hands of the evil Eisav. Understandably, Eisav did not react kindly to this scenario. Feeling that he was the victim of fraud, having been outsmarted by his brother, he let out a cry. (According to one *Midrash*, he emitted two tears; another source says it was three tears.) Eisav was quite upset at the loss of the blessings. He conveniently forgot that he had sold the right to the blessings to Yaakov, but that is to be expected of a *rasha*, evil person.

Eisav asked his father if he had any blessings left for him. Yitzchak intimated that his brother, Yaakov, had taken them all. When Eisav began to weep, Yitzchak suddenly began to bless him with the "fat of the land and dew of the heavens." He "gave" him Yaakov and his descendants if they were to wane from their relationship with the Torah (if they slacken in their *mitzvah* observance). What happened from one minute to another? At first, Yitzchak indicated that he had no remaining blessings, and suddenly he blessed Eisav.

The *Chezkuni* explains that originally Yitzchak had told Eisav, "All of the blessings that I received from my father, Avraham *Avinu*, I transferred to your brother, Yaakov. However, once you began to weep, I saw *b'Ruach Ha'Kodesh*, through Divine Inspiration, that Hashem had created for you (sort of) a new world of blessing in which you will be endowed with material wealth and reign over Yaakov if his descendants falter in their spiritual dimension."

It was all about Eisav's tears. We see how a sincere expression of emotion overturned a negative decree and engendered blessing – even after it had been sealed against him. We also cry. Indeed, throughout the millennia, the Jewish People have wept away an ocean of tears, but have we cried for the same reason that Eisav cried? Have we wept because we did not receive more of Hashem's blessing, or was it because we were in pain, in need? When was the last time we wept as a result of not understanding a *blatt Gemorah*? Have we ever cried because we are bothered that *kavod Shomayim*, the honor of Heaven, is being impugned? Do we weep when Orthodoxy is disparaged by those who are either secular in practice or in theory? No – we only cry when we are in need. Eisav has one over us; he cried for spirituality. Sadly, we do not.

Horav Yaakov David, zl, of Slutzk was famous for his fiery talks. He had an uncanny ability to melt the hearts of his listeners and bring the most hardened heart to tears. He was once invited to speak in a community which was not well-known for its passionate observance of *mitzvos*. The people were observant, but barely and, at best, dispassionate. The *Rav* ascended to the lectern and spoke incredibly well. His eloquence was only surpassed by his content. There should not have been a dry eye from the assembled. Regrettably, the stone-cold hearts of the members of this community proved him wrong. They listened - respectfully, but were unmoved. Afterwards, he was asked how

it was possible for such a *derashah*, speech, to fail to penetrate their hearts. He replied, "Let me explain. My goal is to locate the faucet and open it up. I release the pressure and the water/tears flow freely. If the well is empty, however, no water will flow. That is not my fault."

Some people do not express themselves emotionally – for whatever reason. Others, however, are *oisgevent*, "cried out." They have wept so much that they literally have become numb, hopeless, spent. The water in the "well" seems to have dried up. Both are to be pitied. The ability to weep is a gift. The ability to express oneself emotionally, to release pent up emotions, is a necessary function of the human psyche. One who keeps it in, one who has lost his ability to express himself, has lost part of his humanness.

There is no dearth of stories which underscore the tremendous effect of tears. I came across a simple, but compelling, story in "A Touch of Warmth," by Rabbi Yechiel Spero. I have chosen this story because of the lessons to be derived from it. Incidentally, I have derived lessons which do not necessarily coincide with those intended by the author. Every incident touches different people in various ways. Much of this is based upon their focus and what they want to learn from the incident.

The story takes place concerning the venerable *Chozeh, zl, m'Lublin*. One point of consideration: *Chassidic* stories often have different versions, based upon the source of the tale. Also, *Chassidic* stories, over time, have taken on a life all of their own. A story is meant to be a lesson, to convey a message. It may not always stand the test of scientific scrutiny. If one acknowledges and believes in the saintliness and Heavenly – endowed miraculous powers of these holy people, the story is then true. For the skeptic who looks for an opportunity to scoff and degrade, he will always take issue.

The story begins with the *Chozeh* being a passenger on a horse-drawn carriage that was supposed to take him and its other passengers to a nearby town for *Shabbos*. Apparently, the horses had a mind of their own, and, galloping at great speed, they passed their intended destination. The weather outside was foul, with a strong wind blowing. The travelers who were accompanying their holy *Rebbe* were clueless concerning their destination. The *Chozeh*, however, recognized the town where the horses halted as the village where he grew up as a youth. The *Rebbe* did not know why he was here, but he did not ask questions. If Hashem wanted him to arrive in this town shortly before *Shabbos*, He had a good reason. In due time, he would discover the reason.

Not clothed in his *Rebbishe* garb, the *Rebbe* appeared to be a Jewish traveler who happened to be in this village for *Shabbos*. Therefore, as was the custom in all Jewish communities, when *davening* was concluded, various members of the community would approach the guests and invite them for *Shabbos* dinner. The *Rebbe* remained in the background, waiting for Hashem's plan to unfold. He still did not know why he had ended up in the city of his youth.

The *davening* in the *shul* was quick and simple, quite unlike the *davening* in Lublin. The *Rebbe* was hosted by an elderly gentleman, a fine, sweet man, for whom talking was not his greatest strength.

The meal went by quickly, in silence. When the *Rebbe* inquired as to the man's vocation, the response that he received was woodcutter and then shoemaker, neither position demanding great cognitive acumen. Still not knowing why he was here, the *Chozeh* began to suspect that perhaps his host was one of the *lamed vov tzaddikim*, thirty-six righteous individuals, in whose merit Hashem maintains the world. All the while, the man was silent. Perhaps he was hiding something. Finally, after *Maariv Motzei Shabbos*, the man broke down in bitter weeping. It took some time, but the elderly Jew finally calmed down, and he shared the reason for his emotional breakdown. When the *Rebbe* heard the man's story, he understood why Hashem had brought him to this home. The man began his tale. He had been an accomplished *melamed*, effectively teaching youngsters for years. He enjoyed an enviable reputation until, one day; he had decided to give it all up. This was due to one student whom he had wrongly punished.

He had a student who was always coming to class late. It was not as if he did not have a good excuse, but how many excuses can a *rebbe* tolerate? The *rebbe* insisted that the boy come to school in a timely fashion, just like everybody else. The boy said that he would try. The next day, the boy once again came late. When asked by the *rebbe* for a reason, the boy replied that he had overslept. Truthfully, the reason for all of his lateness issues was not a lack of caring or disrespect (which is often the case). He was late because his mother had been seriously ill for some time. He helped her, often staying up until the wee hours of the morning. This was why he had overslept. Regrettably, the *rebbe* did not wait for another round of excuses, whose validity he questioned anyway, and, fed up with the boy's tardiness, he slapped him across the face!

The *rebbe* had lost it. He was not one to slap a child and certainly not out of anger. Although corporeal punishment was not uncommon in those days, this *rebbe* had never before resorted to it. He did, however, and now, years later, the elderly man whose life and career were ruined because of this error looked the *Chozeh* in the eyes and said, "Nary a day goes by that I do not wish that I could see that boy once more and beg him *mechilah*, forgiveness, for the terrible wrong that I committed. I would do anything to know what became of him. I want to be absolutely certain that I was not the cause of his leaving *Yiddishkeit*."

When the *Chozeh* heard the story, he immediately asked the man for the name of the child. "His name was Yankel," the man said. Hearing this, the *Rebbe* gave a big smile. He put his arm around the elderly *rebbe* and assured him that he had nothing about which to worry. He knew Yankel quite well. Indeed, he was a devout Jew, a *yarei Shomayim*.

"Are you sure that he is a fine upstanding Jew?" the man asked. "I am certain," the *Chozeh*, *Horav Yaakov "Yankel" Yitzchak*, replied. Hearing this wonderful news brought a large smile across the man's face, as he now felt a heavy stone being lifted off his heart. He cried again, only this time the tears were tears of joy. The *Rebbe* now understood why he was "brought" here for *Shabbos*.

Now, for the lessons: A: One never strikes a child. It could have grave ramifications, causing the child ultimately to turn his back on *Yiddishkeit*. B: One who suspects that, by his actions, he has

adversely affected a child should do everything in his power to beg that child's forgiveness. He should leave no stone unturned until he locates that child. Regardless of the humiliation, he must seek his forgiveness. This *rebbe* went through life bitter, broken, and sick because he had hurt a child, and he now no longer knew how to locate him. C: We see the bond of love that exists between *rebbe* and *talmid*. The mere thought that he had caused him irreparable damage devastated this man for years. D: We see that if a person cares enough, Hashem will somehow manipulate events so that the two can come together and make peace.