

“I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt. I shall rescue you... I shall redeem you... I shall take you to Me for a people and I shall be a G-d to you; and you shall know that I am Hashem, your G-d, Who takes you out from under the burdens of Egypt.” (6:6,7)

Horav Yechezkel Abramsky, zl, observes that it is only after *V'lakachti eschem li l'am*, “I shall take you to Me for a people,” which is a reference to *Kabbolas HaTorah*, Accepting the Torah, that the Torah follows up with *V'yidaatem ki Ani Hashem*, “And you will know that I am your G-d Hashem, Who takes you out.” Until we received the Torah, we viewed life's occurrences, even the spectacular miracles that overwhelmed Egypt, as supernatural events – but, we did not equate them with Hashem, nor did they bring us any closer to Him. It was after we donned the lenses of the Torah that we developed a perspective for understanding current events and their *Halachic* ramifications.

It is possible for the most earthshattering events to occur right before our very eyes, yet, the deeper meaning of what just occurred passes right over our heads – unless we view them through the lens of Torah. Tragedy can be devastating, shaking our faith at its very foundation – and, it often does, unless we view it through the lens of Torah. Likewise, a miracle of epic proportion can be intoxicating and go to our heads, unless, we view it through the sobering effect provided by the Torah lens. The Torah's dictums must be applied to everything we see and hear. Every incident, both local, personal, international, collective, must be rendered through the Torah's perspective. Throughout every generation, we have looked to the Torah, its lessons and expositions of its disseminators for guidance in interpreting the events which occur around us. Without the Torah we are myopic in our vision.

Looking at an occurrence through the eyes of the Torah is quite different than viewing it through eyes of flesh and blood. Let us take the *middah*, attribute, of *bitachon*, trust in Hashem. On a simple level, this means that we are grateful to the Almighty for delivering us from trouble. On the Torah's level, it behooves us to thank Hashem for the trouble as well, because our *bitachon*, trust, in Hashem, demands that we believe that everything has a reason; everything is good. We may not see it, but we trust it. Thus, we not only thank Hashem for taking us out of Egypt – we thank Him equally for bringing us there. We believe that it was necessary for us to have been enslaved. Otherwise, it would not have happened.

Jewish history, explains Horav Simcha Wasserman, zl, does not move according to the same principles which dominate secular history – or secular perspective of world history. History as seen through the lens of secular historians, who have over the years revised history to serve their defective vision, view history as the product of cause and effect. Indeed, some historians of Jewish birth have attempted to falsify and revise Jewish history to suit the purpose of their ill-conceived

beliefs. Their desire to have Jewish history answer to the principles of cause and effect have led them to alter the truth and deny the basic verities of the principles of our faith. This is because they want to be accepted among the gentile nations as one of them.

This, of course, is not Jewish, because Jewish history does not ascribe to the rules of natural cause and effect. Our history is based upon *Hashgachah*, Divine Providence. Whatever takes place does so because this is the Will of Hashem. We must introspect to determine what it is that we have done that might warrant such a response. This does not mean that if we cannot figure out the “why” that it loses its validity. Hashem has His reasons. Just because we are not privy to them does not in any way impugn His involvement throughout. Hashem has selected us from among all of the nations of the world to be His. We are His treasure. We are different – and our history is likewise different.

Just because we do not know or understand why something happens, or how everything fits into the Divine Plan does not mean that it is not true. This is where *emunah*, faith, and *bitachon* come into play. *Rav Simchah* relates the following story to prove this point: The saintly **Horav Elimelech, zl, m’Lishensk**, lived during the time of the Russian Czar’s oppressive regime. The government was far from friendly to its Jewish citizens, and from time to time, they came out with anti-Jewish regulations. Whenever these decrees came out, the *Rebbe’s Chassidim* entreated him to pray for their removal, which he did – successfully. During the *Rebbe* Elimelech’s lifetime there were no persecutions of Jews in his part of Russia. Sadly, when the *Rebbe* passed away, the persecutions began. The *Chassidim* had difficulty with this phenomenon. They had been taught that a *tzaddik*, righteous person, is more powerful after death than during life. Why were there persecutions following their *Rebbe’s* death?

Undeterred, a group of *Chassidim* went to the *Rebbe’s* grave and prayed for an answer to this question. The following night, the *Rebbe* appeared to one of the *Chassidim* in a dream. The *Rebbe* said to him, “You came with your friends to my grave with the request that I pray for you. I cannot do so. As long as I was with you in the world of the living and I saw an evil decree surfacing against our people, I immediately prayed to Hashem to have it rescinded. Hashem listened to my prayers. Now that I am in Heaven, my perspective has been altered. I see now that, in fact, these decrees are not bad. Thus, you will have to pray for yourselves.”

The defining factor which draws the line between Torah perspective and worldview is *emes*, truth. The Torah is Divinely Authored and as such is the essence of Divine Truth. What more is there to say? Our perspective, outlook, *weltanschauung* are all predicated on the Torah (or, at least they should be). Thus how we view a situation, circumstance, issue, concept, are through the eyes of truth. Why would we want anything less? There is an inspirational exegesis from the **Maggid of Dubno** which so meaningfully characterizes the difference in perspective between Yaakov and Eisav, and, by extension, their descendants.

In describing the relationship of the prodigal twin brothers, our Patriarch Yaakov and his brother,

the wicked Eisav, the Torah relates: “And Yitzchak loved (*va’yehehav*) Eisav, for game was in his mouth; and Rivkah (*o’hevess*) loved Yaakov” (*Bereishis* 25:28). Yitzchak loved – in the past tense; Rivkah loves in the present tense. What is the reason for this grammatical inconsistency? The *Maggid* explains that a primary difference (which is the source of so many other differences) between our world and the world of Eisav’s descendants is that in the latter, people are defined by what they do; while the Jewish world evaluates a person not by what he is doing, but rather by what he is.

Children say that they want to grow up to be members of various professions; their vocations being similar to those of the heroes they venerate. Is this what they want to be – or is it what they want to do? One who plays baseball is not a baseball player. Playing a sport does not define a person’s essence (even though in contemporary society it might well be). It depicts what he does; what is his vocation; his profession. If we say that he is kind, benevolent, compassionate, humble, virtuous, etc. we are describing what he is, his essence.

Sadly, we are being influenced by the materialistic society in which we live, to the point that we too are preoccupied with what one does – not with what he is. We no longer seem to care about the type of person one is, but what he is doing for a living. Achievements are defined by their significance in the secular world – not in the world of Torah, ethics and morality.

This, explains the *Maggid*, is to what the Torah is alluding when it expresses Yitzchak *Avinu*’s love for Eisav in the past tense. Eisav wrote the book on non-Jewish values. One is defined only by what he does. When he ceases to do what he usually does, he is no longer that person. Yitzchak loved Eisav because “game was in his mouth.” This does not last forever. Thus, his true love is temporary – past tense.

A Jew is not what he does, but rather what he is. It is not how much money he earns, but how he spends it that determines his true worth. It makes no difference if he makes the news every week – or never. It is his *mentchlichkeit*, ethical character, morality, fear of Heaven and love for his fellow that determines his true worth. The character of a person lives on. Thus, the love for Yaakov *Avinu*, whose positive character traits are constant, is expressed in the present tense. It is here to stay.

We take what seems to be simple achievements for granted. What about the simple, ordinary Jew, who never made headlines, was never the guest of honor at a dinner, whose primary accolades are the wonderful children that he, together with his wife, raised? Does he deserve recognition? I recently came across a story related by *Horav Yissachar Frand* that answered my question.

The *Ostrovitzer Rebbe* was one of the preeminent *Admorim*, *Chassidic* leaders of pre-World War II Europe. His *Chassidus* was intense, highly demanding in Torah and *avodah*, spiritual service, with the *Chassidim* leading a highly austere lifestyle. Thus, it was no surprise that *Ostrovitzer Chassidim* were members of an elite *Chassidic* guard. They were highly respected by everyone.

The *Ostrovitzer Rebbe* had one son and he was *m'shadech*, chose as a daughter-in-law, one of the daughters of the *Melitzer Rebbe*. The *Melitzer Rebbe* was father to twelve outstanding children, each one having earned an enviable reputation in his/her own right. *Melitz* is a *Chassidus* whose approach towards serving Hashem is quite unlike that of *Ostrovitze*. *Melitz* is into the abundant expression of joy, primarily through song. Thus, the singing and dancing at the wedding was mostly one-sided, with the *Melitzer Chassidim* dancing and singing up a storm, while the *Ostrovitze* maintained their rigid posture. The *Ostrovitze Rebbe*, observing that his *Chassidim* were aloof in their attitude towards the *Melitzer Chassidim*, became agitated – but said nothing.

That *Shabbos*, during the *Sheva Brachos*, post-wedding seven-day festive celebration, the *Ostrovitze Rebbe* spoke: “We are all aware of the appellation granted to Yaakov *Avinu* – *B'chir she'b'Avos*, the most chosen of the Patriarchs. Is he greater than Avraham *Avinu* who was prepared to slaughter his son, Yitzchak, at the *Akeidah*? Can we begin to compare Yaakov with his own father, Yitzchak *Avinu*, who, with complete devotion, stretched out his neck for the slaughter? True, Yaakov sustained much trial and tribulation in his life, but does this compare to that of his forebears? Why is he called *B'chir she'b'Avos*?

The *Rebbe* said, “The reason is because it is no small feat to raise twelve outstanding sons! This incredible achievement is even greater than the *Akeidah*!” The *Chassidim* understood their *Rebbe's* message. Do we? There are many simple, ordinary Jews, who have succeeded in an area which sadly eludes some. They did all of the right things and merited *siyata d'Shmaya*, Divine assistance, to raise outstanding children. They might not make the front page, but according to the Torah's perspective, they have truly made it. They are the true honorees.