

## Reuven heard, and he rescued him from their hand; he said, “We will not strike him mortally.” (37:21)

Two of his brothers attempted to save Yosef from his fate: Reuven and Yehudah. Yet, it is only Reuven who has been recognized as the one who made the attempt, and it is he alone who has received credit for his effort. Why? *Chazal* (*Makkos* 10a) explain, *She'hu posach b'hatzalah techilah*, “He was the first to initiate the rescue of Yosef.” Yehudah made the attempt by convincing them to sell Yosef. Should he not also have received credit for his good intentions?

The *Ponevezer Rav*, **Horav Yosef Kahaneman, zl**, teaches us a profound lesson concerning the true meaning of “saving a Jew.” Regarding Reuven, the Torah writes that his goal was to save Yosef from the hands of his brothers, *l'hashivo el aviv*, “in order to return him to his father.” Reuven's goal was not simply saving a life; it was to return Yosef to his pre-capture idyllic state of *ruchniyos*, spirituality. Yosef had been ensconced in Yaakov's *bais hamedrash*, studying Torah with his father. This is where he belonged, and this is where Reuven sought to return him.

Concerning Yehudah, the Torah writes that his goal was to have him sold, rather than have him killed. True, this would have spared his life, but what would his life have been without Torah? Undoubtedly, Yehudah was not overjoyed to see the saintly Yosef in the morally bankrupt environment of Egypt, but, at least, Yosef would be alive. His concern was for Yosef's *hatzalah gashmis*, physical survival, while Reuven's concern was also for his *hatzalah ruchnis*, spiritual survival.

Justifying Yehudah, he clearly read the situation differently than Reuven. Surely, if Yehudah could have successfully returned Yosef to his father's embrace, he would have done so. He did what he felt he could do at the time. Nonetheless, the lesson is significant for all those involved in reaching out to those in need. While they certainly have physical/material issues which must be addressed, we may not ignore their spiritual needs. A hungry person is not concerned with *Tefillin*, but the one who supplies him with his next meal must remember that his Jewish *neshamah*, soul, is hungry as well.

One can satisfy his spiritual needs in various ways. We are, of course, aware of the usual outreach efforts which bring those who never knew – or those who have, for some reason, become alienated – closer to Torah Judaism. What about when it is supposedly too late, when the subject of the outreach has passed from the world. Is it too late? Do we make an “x” and go on to the next person? *Rav Moshe Porush* was one of the leaders of the Agudath Israel party in *Eretz Yisrael*. *Rav Shlomo Lorincz* writes that he once saw *Rav Moshe* reciting *Kaddish*. Startled, he asked him which relative had passed away. *Rav Moshe* replied that he had undertaken to say *Kaddish* for a certain individual who was one of the leaders of an extremely anti-religious party whose virulent diatribe against Orthodox Jewry was infamous. He had even served as a cabinet minister.

“Rav Moshe, what was your connection with him?” Rav Shlomo asked.

“I had no connection with him,” replied Rav Moshe, “but he left over no one to say *Kaddish* for him. Regrettably, his son is following in his footsteps. I simply felt sorry for his wretched soul, suffering without anybody to say *Kaddish* for it. It occurred to me that it was my *achrayos*, responsibility, to say *Kaddish* for his *neshamah*. When it applies to a *meis mitzvah*, a deceased person who has no relatives to attend to his burial, all Jews are regarded as his relatives. Why should *Kaddish* be different? He has no one, so I will be his relative. Why should his *neshamah* suffer?

Incidentally, the deceased's grandson had been born and raised in the *kibbutz* founded by his grandfather. As a boy, his education reflected the myopic, single-minded Marxist ideology staunchly espoused by the members of the *kibbutz*. When he joined the Israeli army he was the product of two generations of animus to Torah, with an education in anti-Torah rhetoric to boot. In the army he discovered that the world contains a wide diversity of viewpoints, and, lo and behold, there are intelligent people whose opinions actually oppose the ones he had been taught on the *kibbutz*. He began researching and investigating until he found his way to a *kiruv*, noted outreach, seminar.

After some investigation, the young soldier/ex-*kibbutznik* discovered that his family name evoked extreme reverence – especially in Orthodox circles. Apparently, his great-great-grandfather had settled in Yerushalayim over a century earlier. He was a well-known, highly respected Torah scholar whose Torah insights were quoted by the last generation's most illustrious *rabbanim*. His two sons had established one of the most prominent *yeshivos* in Tel Aviv. Something had happened along the way, as a few of their descendants had become alienated from the Torah way of life. Yet, their descendant returned to the fold – and to the *kibbutz* where he was born and raised. He started a Torah *shiur*, which incidentally began on the *yahrtzeit* of his grandfather!

Did the *Kaddish* have something to do with it?