

And without you, no man may lift up his hand. (41:44)

Thirty years of servitude is a harsh sentence for a young man in the prime of his life. Yosef knew it was not going to be easy, and he was prepared to live with the consequences of his sale to the Yishmaelim. When it was decreed by Heaven that it was time for Yosef to be released, it came all of a sudden. Yosef had no warning that he was leaving. He never despaired of being released one day. The last thing on his radar was being released, and – almost overnight – the slave becoming the Egyptian Viceroy. This teaches us that one should never lose heart, despair of hope, because Hashem's salvation can come at any time.

Chazal stress that Yosef's release from prison took place on *Rosh Hashanah*. They intimate a parallel between Yosef's release and the pending decision concerning our own future. What relationship exists between Yosef's release on *Rosh Hashanah* and our prayers for a happy and healthy new year? **Horav Mordechai Eliyahu, zl**, explains that, throughout the year, man incarcerates himself in a self-imposed makeshift prison under the control of the *yetzer hora*, his evil-inclination. As long as the *yetzer hora* rules over him, enticing him to sin, man remains in prison. If he is able to break free of the *yetzer hora*'s hold over him, he liberates himself from the prison.

On *Rosh Hashanah*, man is reminded that Yosef had also been in prison and was released. He eventually went on to become the Egyptian leader, controlling the lives of every man, woman and child in that country. As Yosef arose from the abyss of prison on *Rosh Hashanah*, so, too, do we escape from the grip of the *yetzer hora*. Man, however, has a way of justifying his weakness in succumbing to the *yetzer hora* by saying that, after all, "I am only human. The evil inclination is stronger than I am." To him, Hashem replies, "You begin. You make the attempt at breaking the grip the *yetzer hora* holds on your life." Once you start the process, Hashem will do the rest. We must begin the motions down here; Hashem will complete the process.

On *Rosh Hashanah*, we tell man that he must break out of prison. Otherwise, he remains a prisoner to his inclinations. When the *yetzer hora* sees him breaking free of his ties, he leaves him alone. The *yetzer hora* is not interested in wasting its time. Only someone who manifests a sense of servitude to the *yetzer hora* will be its focus. If he sees a person attempting to repent, to rise out of the morass of sin, he will move on to someone else. Man must have control over his destiny. *Som tasim alecha melech*, "Place upon yourself a king" (*Devarim* 17:15), is the injunction for the nation to select a proper leader. It may also be used as a personal exhortation for one to reign over himself. Hashem helps those who exhibit strength – not cowardice. To declare that one has erred and wants to return takes incredible strength. It is but the first step. Hashem will lend a hand to he who is sincere.