

I will personally guarantee him; of my own hand you can demand him... and I will have sinned to you for all time. (43:9)

Rashi explains Yehudah's statement: "I will have sinned to you for all time" implies that Yehudah's sin will transcend this world and will be held against him even in *Olam Habba*, the World to Come. This is a powerful commitment on the part of Yehudah. He is willing to accept banishment from both worlds, should he fail to bring Binyamin back to his father. Why was it necessary for Yehudah to make such a strong promise? Yaakov *Avinu* would have believed him even had he not promised to relinquish his *Olam Habba*. *Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl*, explains that by accepting banishment from both worlds, Yehudah was intimating to Yaakov that absolutely nothing would stand in his way of returning Binyamin. When he is up against the proverbial wall, when he has nowhere to turn, every person pushes harder and is able to surge forward, because everyone has a reservoir of strength which he shores up when necessary. In other words, when all else fails, we still have within us the ability to go on, to continue, to succeed. Yehudah was establishing the barometer, the bar from which to continue. He set the bar so high, both worlds, that Yaakov was assured of Binyamin's return, because he knew that Yehudah would not leave any stone unturned in his quest to return Binyamin to his father. Whatever we promise to do, whatever limits we set for ourselves: we can do better; we can still go further and do more.

The *Klausenberger Rebbe, zl*, once asked a favor on behalf of Laniado Hospital from a prominent benefactor. This time it was not about money. The hospital needed help, and this individual was in a position to help them. It meant, however, jumping through some major and difficult hoops. The man replied, "I will do whatever I can." The *Rebbe* looked him straight in the eye, and, with a serious expression, asked him, "Do you know what you just implied? Do you have the slightest idea of what you are capable of doing? A person has no idea how much beyond his normal abilities he can actually go. 'I will do whatever I can' is a powerful commitment to do everything relentlessly – even those things that you have no idea you are able to achieve."

The *Rebbe* related that as a young man he was very sickly and weak. In fact, he was unable to even carry his volume of *Talmud*. One of his students carried it for him. He simply did not have the strength. This all changed when the Nazi's deported him to a labor camp where he was relegated to carry fifty-pound boulders on his back up and down a steep hill! How did he do it? The answer is: A person has no idea of what he is able to do, to achieve. He "thinks" that he has limited abilities. He is wrong! When push comes to shove, he has no limitations. Therefore, when one says, "I will do whatever I can," it is a major commitment.

This was Yehudah's assurance to Yaakov. Since he did not want to lose his portion in *Olam Habba*, he would do anything to return Binyamin to his father.

The ability to overcome obstacles emanates from the knowledge that not only is there a purpose, a reason to continue, to live, but that the actual life itself has meaning to it. Despair, *atzvus*, is a non-

reaction to suffering. *Aveilus* is mourning with meaning. We know why we mourn. We have a powerful reason for grieving. The eminent psychotherapist and Holocaust survivor, Viktor Frankl, would say that despair is suffering without meaning. Choosing what to do with one's suffering, choosing to continue with life, despite the misery and suffering, is the essential challenge and achievement for human beings. Thus, awareness of the meaning enables one to overcome a painful experience.

As faithful Jews, we are acutely aware that nothing in life "just happens." Everything has its source in Hashem and, thus, has powerful meaning. Knowing that it comes from Hashem should in and of itself suffice for the meaning. Some events, however, require a single thread of meaning, something to allow the participants to understand and to enable them to accept the pain. It then becomes bearable.

In February 1997, two helicopters crashed over Northern *Eretz Yisrael*, tragically taking the lives of 73 young Jewish soldiers. Jews throughout the world mourned this terrible loss. A Jew in South Africa recognized the last name of a fellow Sought African *oleh*, émigré, to *Eretz Yisrael*. A long distance phone call confirmed the worst: his friend's 20 year-old son was on one of the helicopters. The grief-stricken father continued, "I will tell you something else. Apparently, my son's name appeared twice on the manifest containing the names of all of the soldiers who were to be boarding the two helicopters. As a result, the commanding officer, thinking that he had one too many soldiers for the helicopters, ordered one young soldier to return home. The disgruntled soldier was compelled to hitchhike home, unaware how close he had come to being a victim of the crash. So, after all is said and done, my son's death was not entirely in vain. Because of him, the life of another Jew was spared." The father's grief was made bearable with the knowledge that there was meaning to his pain. His son perished – another young man would now live. The father's tears cannot be wiped away. Now, however, they can be consecrated with the realization that his son's tragic passing was the vehicle for *Kiddush Shem Shomayim*, sanctifying Hashem's Name.