

It happened at the end of two years to the day. (41:1)

Chazal (*Midrash Rabbah* 89:3) quote a *pasuk* in *Sefer Tehillim* (40:5) which they feel relates to Yosef's still being incarcerated two years after the release of the chamberlain: *Ashrei ha'gever asher sam Hashem mivtacho*; "Praiseworthy is the man who has made Hashem his trust." This alludes to Yosef, who as a result of asking the chamberlain twice to remember him, had two years added to his imprisonment." *Chazal's* statement begs elucidation. It begins by intimating that Yosef was the exemplar of *bitachon*, trust, in the Almighty, then concludes that Yosef was punished precisely for relying on the chamberlain. Not only was Yosef not lauded for his *bitachon*, but two years were added to his sentence, as a consequence of his reliance on mortal assistance. Furthermore, what did he do that was inconsistent with Torah outlook? One should not sit back comfortably and wait for the "cavalry." He must do some sort of *hishtadlus*, endeavoring, upon which Hashem's blessing will rest. This is precisely what Yosef did.

The simple explanation, upon which the commentators expound, is that it all depends on who is voicing his *bitachon*. *Horav Ezra Barzal, zl*, observes that when a person becomes ill, he calls the doctor, who prescribes medicine. Indeed, is this the way a Jew should live? The illness was not generated by the doctor. It came from Hashem. Thus, it would be appropriate that the person pray directly to Hashem. Why go to the doctor? Apparently, this depends on the spiritual level of the sick person. One whose *bitachon* level is very high should turn to Hashem. Most of us, however, have yet to reach this pinnacle of spirituality. Therefore, the *hishtadlus* requisites that apply to us are different. The question is how much *hishtadlus* is too much? It all depends upon one's level of trust. Clearly, Yosef had achieved an unparalleled degree of *bitachon*, which demanded that he place his unequivocal trust solely in Hashem.

The *Chazon Ish, zl* (*Emunah u'Bitachon*), explains that, indeed, we must all place our trust and faith in Hashem. *Hishtadlus*, undertaking endeavors, does not conflict with *bitachon*, but rather, facilitates it. We do not sit back and place our order for Heavenly assistance and wait for it to arrive. The question is what form of *hishtadlus* does one employ? It must be *hishtadlus* that, under the right circumstances, can be the vehicle for salvation. For example, grabbing onto a piece of straw, a string – something that cannot possibly be the medium for salvation -- does not only defeat the purpose of *hishtadlus* – but it is a ludicrous act of hopelessness, which is the opposite of *bitachon*.

The critique of Yosef was founded in his turning to the chamberlain for help. How can one rely on an Egyptian to support a Jew? Yosef should have known better than to turn to such a person for support. Such action is not *hishtadlus* – it smacks of *yiush*, despair. The chamberlain was the wrong address for *hishtadlus*. One who requires brain surgery does not seek a blacksmith.

Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl, relates that during his escape from Europe to *Eretz Yisrael*, the *Brisker Rav, zl*, refused to eat the food that was served on the ship because of his *kashrus* concerns. After a few days of travel, one of the sailors on the ship approached the *Rav* and said,

“*Kavod haRav*, I have a solution for his Honor. We catch the fish daily from the ocean. The *Rav* can easily check for signs of *kashrus* (fins and scales). Fish do not require ritual slaughter, so the *Rav* can eat.”

The *Rav* listened, then asked, “What about preparation? How will the fish be cooked?” The sailor replied that they had a brand new pot in the ship’s galley which had never been used. It was, thus, kosher. The *Rav* replied, “This might suffice for the young children. It is necessary, however, to have a Jew light the fire; otherwise, it is *bishul akum*, cooked by a non-Jew, rendering it *rabbinically kashrus* deficient.” “*Rebbe*, I am Jewish! I will be happy to light the flame and prepare the fish for his honor.”

“If that is the case,” replied the *Rav*, “it all makes sense. I would not understand why a gentile would be concerned whether I eat or not. Now that you inform me that you are Jewish, I am able to eat. Thank you for enabling me.”

Yosef HaTzaddik was not in any way deficient in his *bitachon*. His oversight was in turning to the Egyptian chamberlain as his medium of *hishtadlus*.