

בשבת

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A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

Parshas Vayeishev tells us the story of Yosef and his brothers. They had a terrible dispute, culminating in the *Shevatim* selling Yosef into slavery. Yet, Hashem has His ways, and not only does Yosef survive, but he thrives, realizing the dreams that he had when his brothers indeed bow to him, in the later *parshiyos*.

When we analyze the Torah's narrative, we find a slight discrepancy between Reuven's behavior, and that of his brothers. Though it appears all the brothers are of one heart, Reuven speaks up in Yosef's defense, convincing his brothers not to commit murder, rather, they should cast him into a pit.¹

Why did Reuven not share the same passion as his brothers? What led Reuven to recognize that Yosef might not actually be the villain they had thought, especially considering that as the firstborn, Reuven may have had the most to lose?

The Medrash² explains the very same dream that caused the brothers to disdain Yosef sparked the affinity Reuven felt. After Rochel's death, Reuven moved Yaakov's living quarters into Leah's tent, without first consulting Yaakov. This was improper conduct on Reuven's part — so much so that Reuven felt that he may have lost the worthiness to be counted amongst the *Shevatim*, the great builders of *Klal Yisrael*.

Thus, when Yosef recounted his dream and specified there were eleven stars bowing to him, Reuven was delighted to hear that he was still included as one of the *Shevatim*.

R' Aharon Kotler³ points out a very basic lesson in human emotions. Two people can experience the same exact event, but depending on a subtle difference in one's mental state, interpret the event in a totally different light. Though this is generally well-known, it appears that even the greatest of the great, the *Shevatim* themselves, were subtly influenced by this aspect of human nature. Reuven's perspective simply did not match that of his brothers, because of his own personal experience.

When we approach events in our lives with a Torah perspective, that clarity will dispel any darkness and confusion and give us the ability to grow further in our *avodas Hashem*.

¹ Bereishis 37:22

² Bereishis Rabbah 84:15

³ Mishnas Reb Aharon Al HaTorah, pg. 64

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It is probably common knowledge that events don't change or affect us, rather, our perspective of events changes or affects us. That being said, what tools do we have to have to change our perspective into the perspective of the Torah?

Perhaps the most powerful tool we have is the study and deep understanding of *mussar*.¹

Proper *mussar* study has the ability to develop one's mindset to the point where they approach life with a different attitude — the attitude of *bitachon*, *yiras Shomayim* and *avodas Hashem*.

Unfortunately, many people think that *mussar* learning is telling oneself how terrible they are, or other manners of self-rebuke.²

Mussar study done correctly is a process where a person learns about themselves, their Creator, and how to further that unique relationship.

¹ Mishnas Reb Aharon Al HaTorah, pg. 66

² Mesillas Yesharim, Introduction

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We are told that the Maharal of Prague created a golem. That was a wonder. But it is an even greater wonder to create man from a golem, and that is what Mussar can achieve. - Rav Yisrael Salanter zt"l, *Depth of Judgement* (ArtScroll publishers), pg. 13

INSPIRED TO DESIRE

Avi* and Yedidya hadn't seen each other in a few years, ever since Avi moved out of town to take a position at a small but promising law firm. They were close friends, the type of friends who perhaps hadn't spoken in a long time, but could always pick up right where they left off.

But now Avi had come back to Los Angeles for a few weeks, and made sure to stop by Yedidya's residence, just to catch up.

The discussion jumped from topic to topic, kids, work, traffic, everything and anything. There was a lot to talk about. Then the discussion turned to their *yeshiva* days, the connections they made, and the lasting effects.

"I'll tell you, Avi, I still keep in touch with Rabbi Kessler. He gives a weekly *shiur* and I try to go as often as I can. It's on Sunday nights, but it's important to me, so I do what I can to make it out there."

Avi nodded. "Yeah, honestly, when I first joined my firm, I couldn't find a moment to learn. But something happened to me about four years ago. Because of that, I found myself a *chavrusa*, and go out every night."

"Every night! Wow, there's no way I could do something like that."

"That's what I thought. But listen to this. I had a great uncle — he was more like an uncle to me. The youngest brother of my grandfather, and we grew up near him. He wasn't particularly focused on learning, which is why I was shocked when he called me up and invited me to a *siyum* he was making."

"Invited you? But you're living in Dallas."

"I know. I didn't go, but it was nice for him to invite me. Anyway, I regretted my decision, as he passed away about a month later. No sickness or anything, just old age. I went to visit my cousins who were sitting *shiva*, and they told me the story about the *siyum*. They said that about two years before, he was inspired to finish *shas*. They don't know what got to him, but he set out to do it. The *siyum* was on *Berachos*, and he had started *Shabbos* when he passed."

"Oh my. How... depressing! He finally decided to get down to business, and he passed away!"

"Depressing? I guess I can see why you would say that. But I felt inspired. Very inspired. I realized that if my uncle could make such a commitment, so could I. And I'm younger than he, maybe I could actually finish *shas* as well!"

Yedidya smiled. "I like your angle. I guess the difference between depressing and inspiring is a matter of perspective."

*Loosely based on a true story, names have been changed.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Because he misinterpreted a particular event, *Yannai HaMelech* joined the *Tzedukim*, and persecuted the *Chachamim*.¹
- Reuven's *aveirah* was so subtle, he is considered the first person to do *teshuvah*, since he is indeed the first person to recognize they did something incorrect when it wasn't evident.²

¹ *Kiddushin* 66a

² *Shnei Luchos Habris*, Vol. I, 370