



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת וישב

וַיִּמְצָאֵהוּ אִישׁ וְהָיָה תַעֲהָ בַשָּׂדֶה, וַיִּשְׁאַלְהוּ הָאִישׁ לֵאמֹר מַה תִּבְקֹשׁ. וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת אַחֵי אֲנֹכִי מִבְּקָשׁ, הֲגִידָה נָא לִי אִיפֹה הֵם רְעִים. וַיֹּאמֶר הָאִישׁ נָסְעוּ מִזֶּה כִּי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֲמָרִים נִלְכָּה דְתִינָה. (בראשית לז, טו-יז)
A man discovered him, and behold, he was blundering in the field; the man asked him, saying, "What do you seek?" And he said, "My brothers do I seek; tell me, please, where they are pasturing." The man said: "They have journeyed on from here, for I heard them saying 'Let us go to Dosan.'" (Bereishis 37:15-17)

This week's *Sidrah* recounts the rivalry between the Shevotim and Yosef HaTzadik and the tragic outcome that followed. Yakov Avinu sent Yosef to visit his brothers, who were tending to the family's flocks. The brothers, convinced that Yosef sought to create discord and undermine the family's spiritual destiny, believed that he deserved the death penalty. Ultimately, they decided to sell him to passing merchants, leading to Yosef becoming a slave to an Egyptian official.

The *possuk* recounts how Yosef became lost while wandering off the path into a nearby field. He encountered a man – the angel Gavriel – who directed him to his brothers. The Midrash, cited by Rashi, interprets the angel's words as having a deeper meaning. When he said, נָסְעוּ מִזֶּה, *They have journeyed on from here*, he intimated, "They have distanced themselves from brotherhood." When Gavriel repeated the brothers' words, נִלְכָּה דְתִינָה, 'Let us go to Dosan', they were not actually intending to go to the place Dosan; instead, they were seeking דְתִינָה, legal pretexts, to justify putting him to death.

Rashi asserts that the *possuk* should not be understood as departing from its simple meaning; indeed, they travelled to a place called Dosan. The angel's words were clearly intended to be taken literally and not as an indication of the brothers' malicious intent. If that were the case, the angel would have warned Yosef about the dangers that awaited him and would have prevented him from making the journey. This raises an important question: If Yosef was not meant to grasp this hidden message, what was the purpose of the deeper meaning in the angel's words?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* address this question by introducing a fundamental concept derived later in the *parshah*. After the Shevotim planned to kill Yosef, Reuven sought to save him and suggested that they throw him into a pit instead of killing him. Chazal inform us that the pit was filled with venomous snakes and scorpions. The Meforshim ponder whether Reuven was aware of this fact, and if he was, what benefit could there be in throwing Yosef into a pit rather than allowing him to be killed by his brothers.

The Ohr HaChaim and other Meforshim, citing the Zohar, assume that Reuven did indeed know about the infestation. Yet, he still advised throwing Yosef into the pit and did not express concern about the potentially fatal bites from the deadly creatures. Reuven's rationale was based on the distinction between harm caused by a human being and harm caused by an animal. A human, who has בְּחִירָה, *free will*, can harm even someone righteous who is not חַיִּיב מִיָּתֶה, whereas an animal acts merely as a messenger from Above, serving as an agent of punishment for those who have sinned. Reuven, confident in Yosef's righteousness, reasoned that he would be protected from harm by the snakes

and scorpions, as they only act when directed by Hashem. Therefore, he advocated for throwing Yosef into the pit rather than leaving him at the mercy of his brothers, as humans with free will have the power to harm even when a person is innocent.

When the *possuk* states, *וַיִּצְלֵהוּ מִיָּדָם*, and *he rescued him from their hand*, this is to be understood that Reuven intended to save Yosef from those with *בְּחִירָה* and in this manner leave his fate in the hands of Hashem. Through this act, Reuven countered the Shevotim's ridicule of Yosef, where they said, *וְנִרְאָה מָה יִהְיֶה חֲלֹמֹתָיו*, and *we shall see what will become of his dreams*. Had Yosef died through the actions of a *בְּחִירָה*, *בעל בחירה*, this would not have cast doubt on the validity of Yosef's dreams, as they could be overridden by those capable of making choices.

The Meforshim emphasise that, of course, nothing can occur against Hashem's will; no human can act contrary to Hashem's intentions. Rather, for an individual to be saved from harm caused by another person, they must possess greater merit. Even someone who deserves protection from a natural disaster or a dangerous animal may not be on the necessary level to be safeguarded from harm inflicted by another human being.

This concept can be understood through the teaching of Chazal (see Rashi 42:4): *הַשָּׂטָן מְקַטְרֵג בְּשַׁעַת הַסִּכָּנָה*, *the Satan prosecutes at a time of peril*. This means that when a person finds himself in a dangerous situation, he requires more merits to be rescued. One reason for this is that rescuing someone from a perilous circumstance necessitates a change in the natural course of events. To achieve such a change, significant heavenly assistance is needed, which is not something that everyone is entitled to.

The change in nature that occurs when Hashem intervenes and acts contrary to a person's free will is of the highest order and requires a profound miracle. This is because the concept of *בְּחִירָה* is fundamental to our existence in this world. The only way for man to earn reward for his actions is by Hashem allowing the existence of free will. Therefore, altering the course of action of someone exercising their choice demands a substantial level of Divine intervention. As a result, one must possess significantly more *zechusim* to be deserving of such miraculous intervention.

With this concept, the Rosh Yeshiva resolves the difficulty we initially presented. Indeed, the veiled message in Gavriel's words was not meant for Yosef to comprehend at that moment while he was searching for his brothers. Instead, it would be later, during his time in the Egyptian jail, that Yosef would reflect on his experiences and the series of events that had unfolded. He would likely replay his interaction with the angel, analysing every nuance, and eventually understand the hidden message behind those words. Through this reflection, Yosef would come to realise that his suffering was not caused by his brothers, who were *בְּעָלֵי בְּחִירָה* - acting by choice. He would recognise that the entire sequence of events was ordained by Heaven, which would help him let go of any negative feelings he might have harboured towards his brothers. Realising that Gavriel was aware of the traumatic experiences that were to befall him inspired Yosef to acknowledge Hashem's direct role, and resulted in what he said to his brothers when he was finally released: *וַיִּשְׁלַחנִי אֱלֹקִים לִפְנֵיכֶם לְשׁוֹם לָכֶם שְׂאֵרֵי בְּאֶרֶץ וְלִהְיוֹת לָכֶם לְפָלִיטָה גְּדֹלָה*, *Hashem sent me ahead of you to ensure your survival in the land and to sustain you for a momentous deliverance* (45:7).