

A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

<u>פרשת מקץ</u>

וַיָהִי מִקֶּץ שָׁנָתַיִם יָמִים וכו'. (בראשית מא, א)

It happened at the end of two years to the day ... (Bereishis 24:10-21)

"וּדְבַר שְׂפָתַיִם אַךְ לְמַחְסוֹר" (משלי יד), עַל יְדֵי שֶׁאָמַר לְשֵׂר הַמַּשְׁקִים (מ, יד): "זְכַרְתַּנִּי וְהִזְּכַּרְתַּנִּי" נִתּוֹסַף לוֹ שְׁתֵּי שָׁנִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וַיְהִי מִקְץ שְׁנָתַיִם יָמִים.

אַשְׁרֵי הַגֶּבֶר אֲשֶׁר שָׂם ה' מִבְטַחוֹ" (תהלים מ), זֶה יוֹסֵף. "וְלֹא פָנָה אֶל רְהָבִים" (שם), עַל יְדֵי שֶׁאָמַר ' לְשַׂר הַמַּשְׁקִים (מ, יד): "זְכַרְתַּנִּי וְהָזִּכַּרְתַּנִּי" נְתּוֹסַף לוֹ שְׁתֵּי שָׁנִים. (מדרש רבה פט)

"But talk of the lips brings only loss," (Mishlei 14) – because he said to the chamberlain of the cupbearers, "Remember me ... and mention me [to Pharaoh]" (40:14), two years were added, as the possuk says "It happened at the end of two years."

"Praises to the man who made Hashem his trust," (Tehillim 40) - this refers to Yosef. "And turned not to the arrogant - because he said to the chamberlain of the cupbearers, "Remember me ... and mention me [to Pharaoh]" (40:14), two years were added, as the possuk says "It happened at the end of two years." (Bereishis Rabbah 89)

Chazal tell us that Yosef's time in prison was extended for two years as punishment for relying on the cupbearer's promise to remember him. Accordingly, the *possuk* is indicating that at the precise end of those two years, Yosef's salvation finally came.

Let us examine the nature of Yosef's sin and see what lessons we can learn from it.

The possuk in last week's parshah (40:14-15) brings Yosef's plea to the cupbearer: פָּי אָם זְכַרְתַּנִי אָתְּךְ הָעָרִים הְוֹצֵאתַנִי מִן הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה. כִּי גֻנֹּב גֻּנַּבְתִּי מֵאֶרֶץ הָעָבְרִים בְּאַשִׁירִ נָּא עָמְדִי חָסֶד וְהִזְּכְּרְתַּנִי אֶל פַּרְעֹה וְהוֹצֵאתַנִי מִן הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה. כִּי גֻנֹּב גֻּנַבְתִּי מֵאֶרֶץ הָעבְרִים בְּבוֹר פַּאֲשֶׁר יִיטֵב לְךְ וְעָשִיתִ נְּא עִמְדִי חָסֶד וְהִזְּכְּרְתַּנִי אֶל פַּרְעֹה וְהוֹצֵאתַנִי מִן הַבַּיִת הַזָּה. כִּי עֻמוּ אֹתִי בַּבּוֹר you, and you will do me a kindness, if you please, and mention me to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this building. For indeed I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing for them to have put me in the pit. The Midrash above implies that most of Yosef's lengthy impassioned plea was not what the possuk in Mishlei termed "talk of the lips." Yosef was held accountable and punished solely for that which he beseeched - זְּכַרְתַּנִי וְהַזְּכַרְתַּנִי וְהַזְּכַרְתַּנִי וְהַזְּכַרְתַּנִי וְהַזְּכַרְתַּנִי וְהַזְּכַרְתַּנִי וְהַזְכַרְתַּנִי וְהַזְּכַרְתַּנִי וְהַזְּכַרְתַּנִי וְהַזְכַרְתַּנִי וְהַזְכַרְתַּנִי וְהַזְכַרְתַּנִי וֹהְזְכַרְתַּנִי וֹהְזְכַרְתַּנִי וֹהְזְכַרְתַּנִי וֹהְיְכָרְתַנִי א he mention me. Why was his entire plea not considered a lack of bitachon, and why does the Midrash only criticise Yosef for this double request to be mentioned to Pharaoh?

The *Meforshim* question what Yosef did wrong. One is obligated to do *hishtadlus* as Chazal expound upon the *possuk* (*Devarim* 14:29): לְמֵעַן יְבֶרֶכְךְ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךְ בְּכֶל מֵעֲשֵׂה יָדְךְּ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה, *In order that Hashem, your God, will bless you in all your handiwork that you may undertake*. The implication of the *possuk* is clear that one *may* – indeed, *should* - work for a livelihood, and that Hashem will bless him, not punish him, for doing so. We see this in the example of Yakov, who took the necessary steps to be saved from Eisav by sending him numerous presents. If so, why was Yosef punished for taking the initiative to secure his freedom? Surely Yosef had the right, if not the duty, to seek his freedom!

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* teaches that by understanding the deeper meaning of Yosef's plea, we can grasp the crux of the matter here. The *possuk* (40:14) states: כָּי אָם זְּכַרְתַּנִי אָתָּךְ כַּאֲשֶׁר יִיטֶב לְךְ וְעָשִׂיתָ

נָּה וְהוֹצֵאתַנִי מִן הַבּיִת הַזֶּה (בָּיִת הַדָּי חָסֶד וְהִזְכַּרְתַּנִי אֶל פַּרְעֹה וְהוֹצֵאתַנִי מִן הַבַּיִת הַזָּה when he benefits you, and you will do me a kindness, if you please, and mention me to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this building. The Seforno and Sifsei Chachomim explain that Yosef was directing the cupbearer that when he is restored to his former post, he would be in such a position of influence that merely mentioning Yosef's fate would secure his release.

This was the error of Yosef. Surely one can, and *must* do all necessary *hishtadlus*, but must simultaneously have *bitachon* and acknowledge that everything comes from Hashem. While Hashem wants us to make an attempt, we must realize that our efforts cannot accomplish anything and that ultimately, everything is in the hands of Hashem. If it is Hashem's will, even the most unlikely means can lead to success, and if it is not meant to be, even the most proven avenue will lead to failure.

Accordingly, Yosef was right in seeking help from the cupbearer, and it was also reasonable for him to assert his innocence when asking for assistance. However, the mistake was focusing too much on the specifics of his salvation and the cupbearer's role in it. Stressing the influence the cupbearer was to have, and how exactly he was to be saved revealed an imperfection in his *bitachon*. He was showing that he was not merely doing his obligation of *hishtadlus*, but believing that his salvation would come about through his own efforts. As a result of this deficiency, Yosef, on his elevated level *madreigah*, was punished with an additional two years in prison.¹

Furthermore, Yosef urging the cupbearer to remember him was unnecessary. Naturally, the cupbearer would not have forgotten Yosef. How could he fail to recall and recognise the one who brought him joy and relief in his misery by interpreting his dream so positively? Rather this too was an oversight on Yosef's part. Whilst one is obligated to do *hishtadlus*, going beyond what is natural shows a lack of *bitachon*. Therefore, Hashem chose that the cupbearer forget Yosef - אָר שַּׁר הַמַּשְׁקִים אֶת יוֹסֵף (40:23). This forgetting was completely out of the ordinary and beyond what can be explained by natural means.

We learn from this Chazal the limits of *hishtadlus*. We must make all necessary efforts but we should also be aware that the ultimate success is only in the hands of Hashem. We should not place our hope in our actions, and moreover, we can only do what is sensible. Going overboard with excessive efforts is not a part of *hishtadlus*, but rather a lack of *bitachon*. Therefore, we should strive to strike a balance between our efforts and trust in Hashem. May we all be granted the wisdom to find this balance and experience true *bitachon*!

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¹ When referring to Yosef's sin, it is important to note that it occurred on his elevated level of *bitachon*. This is evident from the Midrash which states how Yosef was a model of one who lives with trust and faith in Hashem.