



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת a collection of maamarim on
תנא דבי אליהו given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Vayeshev 5774

In this week's *parsha* when Yosef Hatzadik sees that the *Sar Ha'mashkim* and the *Sar Ha'ofim* look depressed, he asks them, מדוע פניכם רעים היום?
(Why do your faces look so bad today?)

This *pasuk* reveals Yosef's goodness, and the his great *midah* of *chesed*. At first glance, Yosef's question seems pointless. It should have been obvious to him that their faces expressed sadness because they had been privileged ministers of Pharaoh, and now they find themselves in prison. It is certainly reasonable to expect that their faces would reflect their misery. Even if they looked worse than usual that day, it's not a *chidush*. If their faces had expressed happiness, that would be a *chidush*.

Above all, what did their bad mood have to do with Yosef?

The Torah teaches us that the goodness of Yosef Hatzadik's heart led him to feel the pain of everyone, even a lowly Egyptian. Despite Yosef's great *kedushah*, and natural inclination to distance himself from negative people, he noticed their facial expression and empathized with them. Even though he had no ability to assist them, he asked them what was wrong, for he knew that the very fact that someone cared about their suffering could at least slightly ease their pain.

This important lesson teaches us to be sensitive and notice the pain of those around us. The faces of those around us express their internal suffering, and if our friend's face seems particularly sad one day, we should ask him what is troubling him, and share his pain. Even if we have no practical ability to improve his situation, our very interest and



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sympathy fulfills the Mishnah's instruction to be *nosei b'ol im chaveiro*. (Avos 6/6). The Gemara in Bava Metzia also teaches us that one who encourages a poor man with kind words, receives more reward than one who give him money.

It is difficult to expect people in our generation to reach the level of Yosef Hatzadik who had mercy even on the non-Jews he encountered. However, we should certainly expect every Jew to at least notice the suffering of his friends and those close to him. We must not surround ourselves with walls that prevent us from seeing and feeling the pain of others. There are so many suffering people in our communities, and nobody pays attention to them.

My grandfather, whose *yohrzeit* comes out on the first night of Chanukah, exemplified this *midah* of Yosef Hatzadik. Not only did he feel the pain of every Jew, even a *rasha*, he also shared the *simcha* of every Jew, whether from his own community, or from a vastly different group.

I remember that when I learned in the Tshebiner Yeshiva, a group of us who were Gerer chasidim organized a *seuda* in honor of the *yohrzeit* of the *Sfas Emes* zy" a. We planned to have the *seuda* in our dormitory room. Just before the *seuda*, my grandfather came to the yeshiva to speak with me about something. When he saw all of the preparations, he asked the *bochrim* what the occasion was. When they told him that they were preparing a *seuda* for the *yohrzeit* of the *Sfas Emes*, he asked them why they weren't making the *seuda* for the entire yeshiva, in the dining room.

When the *bochrim* told him that the *seuda* was only meant for "*heimishe*", (meaning only Gerer chasidim), he objected. He said that there is no *taam* for the Gerer *bochrim* to make a *seuda* just for themselves. "Why", he asked, "shouldn't everyone sit together and hear beautiful words about the *Sfas Emes*?" Eventually one of the boys told him that the Rosh Hayeshiva (Hagaon R. Boruch Shimon Shneerson zt"l) wouldn't allow a yeshiva-wide *seuda*.



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My grandfather responded by going up to the Rosh Hayeshiva and asking for permission to make a *seuda* for the entire yeshiva. The Rosh Yeshiva enthusiastically agreed, and the *yohrzheit seuda* took place in the dining room. Both the Rosh Hayeshiva and my grandfather spoke.

My grandfather's approach shows us how a Jew should behave. We have to remember that (as the *shevatim said*), כולנו בני איש אחד נחנו, we are all children of Yaakov Avinu. We all serve the one and only *Borei Olam*. All of us help accomplish *avodas hamelech* in one way or another. Therefore, it is forbidden for us to allow anything to separate the hearts of Jews from each other.

Im Yirtzeh Hashem, when we will soon be *zocheh* to the *geula* and the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash, the *avoda* will be a great equalizer. The Leviim will play and sing nigunim that don't belong to any particular *chasidus* or community. The *kohanim* performing the *avoda* will come from all of the different groups and communities. They will all join together to perform the *avoda*. Jews of all communities will join together in *aliya l'regel* for Yom Tov. We have to start now, by opening our hearts to our fellow Jews, sharing their suffering and their joy. With this we will merit גאולת עולם במהרה אי"ר.



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