



Adapted from the sefer **חמין במוצאי שבת** and **חדוותא דזעיר אנפין** collections of
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Seuda Shlishis Parshas Vayechi
(חדוותא דזעיר אנפין פרשת ויחי מאמר א)

In the beginning of our *Parsha*, Yaakov Avinu is told that his son Yosef has come to visit him.

וַיָּגֵד לְיַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בְנִי יוֹסֵף בָּא אֵלַיךָ וַיְתַחַזֵּק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיָּשֶׁב עַל הַמֶּטֶה
(בראשית מ"ח:ב)

And it was told to Yaakov and said, ‘Behold your son Yosef has come to you, and Yisrael strengthened himself and sat up on the bed

Rashi explains that Yaakov sat up in order to express *kavod malchus*, honor to the king.

“He said, even though he is my son, he is a king and I must honor him. From here we learn that we must honor *malchus*.”

Initially, it is difficult for us to appreciate Yaakov’s gesture. Certainly, if he had been able to rise and fully stand up in honor of his son the king, that would have been a clear expression of *kavod malchus*. However, since he was unable to honor Yosef in that way, what did he accomplish by simply sitting up a bit in his bed?

We can ask a similar question regarding Yaakov’s *bracha* to Ephraim and Menashe:



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וַיִּקַּח יוֹסֵף אֶת שְׁנֵיהֶם אֶת אֶפְרַיִם בְּיַמִּינוֹ מִשְּׂמָאל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת מְנַשֶּׁה בְּשְׂמָאלוֹ מִיַּמִּין יִשְׂרָאֵל
וַיִּגַּשׁ אֵלָיו. וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת יָמִינוֹ וַיִּשֵׁת עַל רֹאשׁ אֶפְרַיִם וְהוּא הַצְּעִיר וְאֶת שְׂמָאלוֹ עַל
רֹאשׁ מְנַשֶּׁה שְׂכַל אֶת יָדָיו כִּי מְנַשֶּׁה הַבְּכוֹר

And Yosef took both of them, Ephraim in his right to the left of Yisrael, and Menashe in his left to the right of Yisrael, and he approached him. And Yisrael stretched out his right hand and placed it on the head of Ephraim, the younger brother, and his left hand on the head of Menashe. He intentionally crossed his hands for Menashe is the *bechor*.

Rav Elimelech of Lizensk zy”a, in his *Sefer Noam Elimelech*, asks;

“He intentionally arranged his hands for Menashe is the firstborn.” It seems that the reason given in the *pasuk* is diametrically opposed to Yaakov’s action. (In other words, by crossing his hands Yaakov placed his right hand on Ephraim, the younger brother, and his left on Menashe, despite Menashe being the firstborn. His action reflects a decision to ignore Menashe’s *bechora*. Why then, does the *pasuk* say that he crossed his hands, “because Menashe is the *bechor*”?)

Rather, the Torah teaches us *derech erez*. A person should always honor his fellow man in the way that is befitting to him. So even though Yaakov Avinu, a”h could have moved Ephraim to his right and Menashe to his left, his intention was to avoid embarrassing Menashe. That is why he crossed his hands when he placed them on their heads.”

Once again, it is difficult to understand what Yaakov Avinu accomplished by not having the brothers change position, but still crossing his hands. While Menashe and Ephraim stood before him, Menashe heard Yaakov Avinu declare, וְאוֹלָם אַחִיו הַקָּטָן יִגְדֵל מִמֶּנּוּ וְזָרְעוֹ יִהְיֶה מְלֵא הַגּוֹיִם - And yet his younger brother will be greater than him, and his descendants will fill the nations.



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This must have been terribly embarrassing for Menashe. How did Yaakov's decision to cross his hands rather than moving Menashe to his left, save Menashe from embarrassment?

However, deeper examination of these two incidents enables us to learn a fundamental lesson in *Avodas Hashem*.

Each of us has to fulfill our obligations and do what is incumbent upon us according to our strength and ability. We aren't meant to concern ourselves with the realization that even when we invest all of our strength in a task, the results are often far from ideal. As R. Tarfon teaches us, (אבות ב:ט"ז):

"לא עליך המלאכה לגמור" - It is not incumbent upon you to complete the task. On the other hand, **ולא אתה בן חורין לבטל ממנה** - You are not free to abandon it."

We must simply do what we can according to our individual strength and ability.

Therefore, even though Yaakov Avinu wasn't able to fully stand up in honor of Yosef, he was able to honor him by sitting up in bed. Once he had done all that was in his ability, he wasn't obligated to honor him further. Under those circumstances, the strenuous act of sitting up was the most appropriate expression of *kavod*.

The same applies to Yaakov's attempt to avoid embarrassing Menashe. Yaakov Avinu had his reasons to give precedence to Ephraim. Therefore, he had to place his right hand on Ephraim's head and his left on Menashe's. He also had to explain that the younger brother, Ephraim would be greater than his elder brother Menashe. Nonetheless, he took great care to ensure that he wouldn't add to Menashe's embarrassment by actually moving him from his right side to his left. Yaakov realized that he could avoid that unnecessary embarrassment by crossing his hands.



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This teaches us that even when someone is already in an embarrassing situation, if you increase his embarrassment even minimally, you have transgressed the very serious *aveira* of embarrassing your fellow Jew.

It could very well be that Yosef had learned this approach from his father even before he was sold to *Mitzrayim*.

In *Parshas Vayeshev*, the Torah describes Yosef's time serving Potiphar as **וי היה איש מצליח** – And he was a successful man. The Torah also describes his time in prison as **ואשר הוא עשה ה' מצליח** – and whatever he did, Hashem made him successful. It is very difficult to view those periods of his life as *hatzlacha*. How can slavery in the home of an Egyptian or in Egyptian prison be viewed as success? That definition becomes even more difficult when we remember that he had been torn from the home of his beloved father, and sold to *Yishmaelim* by his own brothers. They in turn sold him as a slave in Egypt, a land of *tumah* that is antithetical to all of his values. How does that scenario match the Torah's description of Yosef as an **איש מצליח**?

We can understand this view of *hatzlacha* if we realize that Yosef was following the approach of his father. Even though he found himself in the lowly situation of slavery, he understood that accomplishing what he could under those circumstances, is truly *hatzlacha*. When he found favor in the eyes of his master Potiphar to the extent that he was placed in charge of the entire household, that was *hatzlacha*. When he found favor in the eyes of the *Sar Beis Ha'sohar* – the minister of the prison, who then treated him with kindness, that was *hatzlacha*.

Yosef was certainly aware that compared to his life of freedom in the house of Yaakov Avinu, his situation in *Mitzrayim* would be viewed as



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failure and calamity. However, he decided to measure his success based on his time, place, and circumstances. The Torah itself validates that choice by describing him as *ish matzliach*.

This lesson applies to every aspect of our lives in this world as well as in the next.

For example, someone plans to move to a new home in the near future. Therefore, he decides to refrain from fixing anything that is broken in his current home. Or, someone may need to fix something in his house, but since he can't afford to fix it in the best way possible, he gives up and doesn't even try to fix it at all, even temporarily. In both cases, the homeowner's family will continue to suffer.

A homeowner with the correct approach will try to fix the problem even if he will be moving soon, or even if he can't fix it in the best way possible. He realizes that by doing what he can, he will at least improve his family's quality of life at the current time.

The same applies to decisions relating to *Olam Haba*. Sometimes a person finds that he has a few free moments. He may think that it isn't enough time to learn any significant amount of Torah, so instead, he wastes those minutes on foolishness. The truth is that even the smallest amount of time should be viewed as an entire world. If he can utilize that time to learn one *halacha*, one word, or even one letter of Torah, he upholds the entire world.

When it comes to our *avoda* of *tikun hamidos*, a person may despair and feel that he will never fix a certain negative *mida*, because it has already



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become part of his inner identity. This leads him to simply give up and refrain from trying to improve even incrementally. As we have seen, he is gravely mistaken. He must focus on improving as much as he can in his current situation, even if he will barely progress at all. If he tries to do what he can, Hashem will send him the assistance he needs to eventually fix that *mida*.

We also require this approach when it comes to *milchemes ha'yetzer* – our battle with the *yetzer hara*. Often a person facing a *nisayon* thinks, “Even if I defeat the *yetzer* for a few minutes now, how long will I be able to resist? I know that the *yetzer* will eventually defeat me. What value can there be to fighting for a short-lived victory, if I face inevitable defeat in the near future?”

Once again, this is an entirely erroneous way of evaluating the situation. The truth is that even the tiniest, momentary victory over the *yetzer hara* has immeasurable value in *shamayim*. Therefore, the correct approach is for a person to fight the *yetzer* to the best of his ability, and to look to Hashem for the strength he needs to keep fighting until he emerges victorious.

Bez”H the more we try to recognize the immeasurable potential of each moment, and strive to take advantage of those minutes, and the more we realize the value of even the smallest, most temporary victory over the *yetzer hara*...

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בשמחה ובטוב לבב מרוב כל, אכי"ר



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