

Vayeshev

The Biblical drama of Joseph the Pious and his brothers has always attracted the younger and older student of the Torah. This strange and unprecedented act of brothers being involved in hatred of their own flesh and blood and subsequently arranging for his sale as a slave to foreign tribes seems to be out of step with our Patriarchs and their family way of life and training.

True, there was bitterness and resentment between Sarah and Yishmael, between two brothers, Jacob and Esau, yet, now in this family structure of Yaakov, it seems rather strange and unbecoming. The narration of the life of the future Tribes is described as it took place. This in itself is the greatness of Torah and the setting of foundations of Jewish life and the structure of future family association. How many beautiful *Chazal* and Commentaries are quoted concerning Yaakov's act of presenting Yosef with a special garment of many colors and showing favoritism to one of his children?¹ How beautifully our *Chazal* describe Yosef's message to his father and the tales of their unbecoming acts.² While we read and study them in the negative sense they really carry a message of caution and direct future generations in a manner of positive conduct.

Even the sale of Yosef and the description of the bold and very cruel conversation of the brothers as they see Yosef approaching and plan his death carry an impressive lesson. "And let us see what will become of his dreams." Says *Rashi*: "Let us see whose words will come true—yours or mine!" In every act of man we are tempted to see the cold and bare facts as they appear at the moment. They are committed but have little or no imagination as to the consequence of the ways of the Almighty in determining their true results.

Reuben the oldest hears of the plan: "And Reuben heard and

he saved him from their hands." The *Midrash*³ offers a profound comment, and a beautiful testimony to the eldest of the tribes:

Had he known what the Torah would write about him for all generations to know his quality of concern and real brotherly love he would have carried him on his shoulders to his aged father Yaakov.

Here, too, is a forceful message to all of us. How often do we neglect to perform an act of kindness, an act of good will, of *Chesed*, of charity, because in our own minds we belittle the importance of such a Mitzvah. Is it not a daily occurrence that we have a habit of procrastinating or pushing a good deed into the realm of responsibility of a friend or neighbor, never realizing that the future will record our greatness, our performance. We see it all with our own present evaluation, never elevating our deeds and its intentions to higher spheres of accomplishments and perhaps thinking, subconsciously in our minds—*Lu hayiti yodea*, "Were I to know that future record will list me as a Torah true, observant, *Zariz*, ever ready Jew to perform a Mitzvah. Would I not forfeit all and give up trivial stumbling blocks to come forward and act now!

Let us concentrate on learning every aspect of *mechirat Yosef* in order to elevate ourselves to higher spheres of attaining *Yirat Shamayim* and *Kiyum Hamitzvot*.

FOOTNOTES

1. Shabbos 10b
2. Rashi, Bereishis 37:2
3. Ruth Rabbah Ch. 5