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GO FOR IT ALL THE WAY!

SHABBOS CHANUKAH

After 22 years, Yaakov found out that his beloved son, Yosef, was still alive and was a ruler in Egypt. Yaakov went to Egypt to see Yosef.

Rashi says when Yosef heard that Yaakov was approaching, Yosef harnessed the horses to his chariot. He did it himself even though he had many servants because he was so eager to show honor to his father.

Rabbeinu Bachya, quotes **Midrash Tanchuma** (Vayigash 7) that Yaakov was about to be honored in a special way. As soon as the Egyptians saw that their ruler, Yosef, had harnessed his chariot to go to welcome his father, the entire nation accompanied Yosef.

As Yosef was nearing Yaakov, the pasuk states, "*he appeared before him*". **Rashi** explains that Yosef appeared before his father.

The commentaries wonder what **Rashi** was adding. Of course, Yosef presented himself to his father. To answer this question **Rav Chaim Shmulevitz** z"l gives a beautiful insight.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz z"l (**Sichos**

Mussar) describes the emotions that Yosef must have felt as he was about to see his father. Yosef yearned to see his father whom he had not seen in 22 years. Yosef had an especially strong bond of love with his father. As the pasuk tells us, "*And Yisrael loved Yosef more than any of his sons....*" (37:3) Yaakov taught Torah to all his children. In addition, Yaakov taught the Torah of Shem and Ever only to Yosef and not to his other children.

Da'as Zekainim adds that the pasuk says, "ויעל ישראל לקראתו", "*He (Yosef) went up to meet Yisrael.*" The reason that the word "ויעל" is used is to teach us that for Yosef it was tantamount to a spiritual ascent to go and greet his father and to pay him this honor. These were Yosef's feelings as he was about to see his beloved father.

But Yosef had mixed emotions. Yosef also understood his father's emotions. He knew of Yaakov's anguish at not seeing his son for so long. Seeing Yosef again

"Yosef harnessed his chariot, and went up to greet his father, Yisrael in Goshen. [When] he appeared before him, he fell on his neck and wept, on his neck, for a long time."
(Bereishis 46:29)

would bring Yaakov feelings of extreme joy and happiness. It would be a moment of unsurpassed excitement for Yaakov. In fact, Yaakov had said, "*It is too much! My son Yosef still lives. I will go and see him before I die*" (46:28). And, after seeing Yosef, Yaakov said to him, "*Now I can die, after I have seen your face that you are alive.*" (46:30).

Yosef was feeling both these emotions. He had an overwhelming desire to see his father. Yet, Yosef also understood the great desire that Yaakov had to see him, his long lost, beloved son. This conflict in emotions is what **Rashi** is addressing. **Rashi** is teaching us that Yosef suppressed all his emotions and yearning to see his father. He went to see Yaakov solely to bring Yaakov happiness.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz zt"l asks the obvious question. Why did Yosef have to suppress his own, personal feelings? Why couldn't he have gone to see his father with both emotions simultaneously? Why couldn't he go with the idea of bringing his father happiness as well as bringing happiness to himself?

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz's answer gives us an insight into the greatness of our illustrious ancestors and serves as a lesson for us as well. Had Yosef gone to see Yaakov with the thought of also satisfying his personal feelings, that would have had a slight degree

of “selfishness”. Yosef’s act of going to see his father would have then lacked some degree of purity in the mitzvah of honoring his father. Yosef sought to act TOTALLY to honor his father. Thus, he suppressed his own feelings and desires to see his father. Of course, once Yosef appeared to his father, then he allowed his feelings and emotions to be expressed. **Rashi** says that Yosef wept copiously when he saw his father. **Chizkuni** also says that Yosef continued weeping while embracing his father.

This gives us an insight into the ideal way that we should be performing a mitzvah with a total and complete heart, with 100% purity.

There is a somewhat similar idea in the story of Chanukah. We are all familiar with the miracle of the oil. The Jews found one pure jar of oil that was sealed with the mark of the Kohain Gadol. There was enough oil to last for one day and miraculously it lasted for eight days. The Jews were unable to press olives to make new oil right away because they had become defiled by contact with the dead in the war. Thus, they had to wait for 7 days until they could become pure. Then, on the 8th day, they were able to press new olives to make oil for the lights of the Menorah.

There is a principle in halacha that “defilement is repealed for the community”. That means, if the majority of Jews are impure, they may still perform the services in the Beis HaMikdash. If that is so, why was it necessary for the Jews to wait seven days until they were purified and were able to press olives to make new olive oil? Weren’t they permitted to press oil immediately?!

The answer is that although they were permitted to light the Menorah even with defiled oil, they did not want to do so. This was to be the first lighting after a lengthy interruption of this *avoda*, holy service.

Lighting the Menorah was an act of dedication, and the Jews wanted it to be done with the strictest requirement of purity.

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (on Torah.org based on the lectures of Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman zt”l, quoting Sefer Pri Chadash and Pnei Yehoshua) asks a similar question and says something fascinating. According to Torah law, for the oil to become impure it would have had to have been offered as a sacrifice to idols. It was the rabbis who decreed that even if an idolator just touched the oil it would become impure. Although the Greeks had set up an idol of Zeus in the Beis HaMikdash, they did not take the containers of oil that they broken open to use them as offerings to the idol. As such, the oil that they defiled was only considered to be impure by Rabbinic law. Had the rabbis not made their decree, the oil would have been perfectly acceptable to be used to light the Menorah! At the time of the battle with the Greeks, a group of Jews called the Sadducees was gaining in popularity. They accepted the authority of the Written Torah but rejected both the Oral Torah as well as any Rabbinic decrees. Sadly, as a result of the influence of the Greeks and that of the Sadducees, many Jews began to question the validity and authority of the Oral Torah and Rabbinic decrees.

That was why Hashem performed the miracle of the oil. According to the Written Torah, the oil was pure and could have been used to light the Menorah. It was only due to the Rabbinic decree that the Jews had to obtain new oil. The miracle of the oil was only needed to enable the Jews to follow the Rabbinic decree. Until new oil could be obtained, the one-day supply of oil miraculously burned for eight days! That miracle strengthened the faith of the Jewish People in the very area where it was weakest. Hashem showed them the importance of following rabbinic decrees.

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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