

This week's Dvar Torah was sponsored L'iluy Nishmas R' Yisroel ben R' Yaakov

REMOVE THE BLINDFOLD AND FEEL THE LOVE!

PARSHAS VAYESHEV

One of the Indian tribes had a specific ritual of manhood. When a young boy would pass the "test" he would be considered a Man and would receive certain benefits as well as responsibilities. The "test" was to remain alone in the forest, blindfolded, while sitting on a tree stump. If the young man would leave the forest or remove the blindfold, he failed the test. The young man was not allowed to tell any specific details of the test to anyone!

One youngster was in the middle of his test. The forest was cold. The sounds of the animals nearby, scared him. They scared him a lot. However, he wanted to be considered a man, so he fought off the urge to remove his blindfold. Somehow, he managed to pass the night. When he felt the heat of the sun on his face and heard the sounds of the chirping birds, he knew that it was morning. He felt proud that he passed the test. When he removed the blindfold he was shocked. He saw that his father was sitting nearby. Apparently, his father had been there the entire night, watching so that no harm befalls his son.

Hashem is like the loving father in this story. Even though we may not be aware of it, **Hashem is always watching us, to protect us.**

There is a beautiful poem called *Footprints in the Sand*:

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with G-D. Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.

In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there was one only.

This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints, so I said to G-D,

"You promised me G-d, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life there has

*"... a caravan of Ishmaelites came from Gilad, with their camels carrying spices ...going to bring them down to Egypt..."
(Bereishis 37:25)*

only been one set of footprints in the sand. Why, when I needed you most, have you not been there for me?"

G-d replied, "The years when you have seen only one set of footprints, my child, is when I carried you."

We all experience periods of suffering and anguish in our lives. Knowing that Hashem is always watching over us is comforting and can help us rise to life's challenges [Hashem, our loving Father, has a good and loving reason, unknown to us, for the suffering and challenges that we experience in life].

Sometimes Hashem also sends us signals that He is there with us so that we shouldn't be nervous. Yosef was sold to a caravan of Ishmaelites. Their camels were carrying various nice smelling spices.

❖**Rashi questions** why the Torah felt it necessary to tell us what the camels were carrying. Who cares? Rashi explains that these caravans usually carried oil and resin that had an unpleasant odor. Being around that smell for an extended time could be injurious to Yosef's health as well as be uncomfortable for him.

Yosef was being sold as a slave. Why would it make a difference what the camels were carrying? Rabbi Mordechai Porgaminsky from Telz explained that **this was a signal from Hashem** to Yosef. It was as if Hashem was telling him, you were sold as a slave, but I, Hashem, am watching you and helping you along the way. I made sure that these Ishmaelites would carry something they never do, to protect your health.

We should always look for signals from Hashem.

Our sorrows and troubles in life will be easier to manage when we realize that Hashem is always with us, holding our hand.

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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