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## פרשת וישב

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פרק מ פסוקים יד וכג

(יד) כִּי אִם-זָכַרְתִּי אֹתְךָ כְּאִשְׁרֵי יַיִטֵב לְךָ וְעָשִׂיתִי-נְגָא עִמָּדִי חֲסֵד וְהִזְכַּרְתִּי אֶל-פְּרִעָה וְהוֹצֵאתִנִי מִן-הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה:

(כג) וְלֹא-זָכַר שְׂרֵה־הַמְשָׁקִים אֶת-יֹסֵף וַיִּשְׁכַּחְהוּ:

רש"י

וַיִּשְׁכַּחְהוּ: לְאַחַר מִפְּאֵן. מִפְּנֵי שֶׁתְּלָה בּוֹ יוֹסֵף לְזָכְרוֹ הַזְקַק לְהִיּוֹת אֲסוּר שְׁתֵּי שָׁנִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר “אֲשֶׁרִי הִגֵּדְר אֲשֶׁר שָׁם ה' מִבְּטַחוֹ וְלֹא פָּנָה אֶל רְהָבִים” (תהלים מ:ה), וְלֹא בָטַח עַל מְצָרִים הַקְּרוּיִם רַהֲבִים.

מושג

מִפְּנֵי שֶׁתְּלָה בּוֹ יוֹסֵף לְזָכְרוֹ הַזְקַק לְהִיּוֹת אֲסוּר שְׁתֵּי שָׁנִים.

### Translation:

Since Yosef depended on him (the butler) to remember him, he was compelled to remain imprisoned for two (more) years.

### Explanation:

Normally we are required to be active in trying to help ourselves and not sit back and wait for Hashem to do it all by Himself<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, Yosef seemed to be doing the right thing in urging the butler to remember him to Pharaoh. However, in this instance Yosef did not do the right thing. For he knew he needed a miracle for the butler to be put in the position to help him. Once Hashem was fashioning one miracle, Yosef should have realized that Hashem did not need his assistance in order to fashion another<sup>2</sup>.

### Looking in the Pasuk:

The Midrash that Rashi quotes is commenting on the extra word וַיִּשְׁכַּחְהוּ. For the Pasuk had already written וְלֹא זָכַר, that the butler did not remember Yosef, why add, “And he forgot him”? The Midrash answers that not only did the butler not remember Yosef, but Hashem made sure that he remained forgotten, as his reliance on the butler resulted in Yosef being jailed for two additional years. Interestingly, the double wording matches the double wording used by Yosef וְהִזְכַּרְתִּי אֹתְךָ and כִּי אִם זָכַרְתִּי אֹתְךָ, relating the message that Hashem reacted to Yosef’s pleading to be remembered by ensuring that he would be forgotten<sup>3</sup>.

### Musag Learning Outcomes:

Know: One’s בטחון - trust - in Hashem should be complete and he should not question Hashem’s ability to fashion miracles.

Understand: Under normal circumstances Hashem intervenes through natural processes, which are called גִּיסִים נִסְתָּרִים. However, in times of open miracles, גִּיסִים נְגִלִים, one must rely on Hashem’s unlimited ability to fashion any required miracle.

Think: When reading text, look for seemingly needlessly repeated words, both within Pesukim and within surrounding Pesukim. Focus on these words reveals hidden messages.

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1 See Musag פרשת וישב in השלח in התקין עצמו לשלשה דברים דברים, note #1 for a fuller discussion of this topic.

2 See note #1

3 See note #2

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## NOTES

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1. Almost everyone asks, “Do we not have an obligation to do our part?” What of our requirement to do our *השתדלות*? Don’t we go to work and not depend on food to fall from Heaven? Aren’t we told not to depend on miracles<sup>4</sup>?

Upon a closer look at the Midrash that Rashi quotes, another question arises. The Midrash reads as follows:

”אשרי הגבר אשר שם ה' מבטחו”, זה יוסף, ”ולא פנה אל רהבים”, על ידי שאמר לשר המשקים זכרתי והזכרתי נתוסף לו שתי שנים (בראשית רבה פט ג)

*“Fortunate is the man who places his trust in Hashem” - this refers to Yosef - “and does not turn to the proud” - since he said to the butler remember me, 2 years were added.*

The Midrash seems to contradicting itself. It begins by quoting the first half of the Pasuk, which talks of one who trusts G-d, and says this is Yosef. And, it then goes on to say that he was compelled to remain in jail for “turning to the proud”! Did he trust Hashem or did he depend on the Egyptian?

We might answer that both are true. Yosef did place his trust in Hashem but he did also depend on the Egyptian.

Yosef realized that he had a skill. He could interpret dreams. However, what good is his skill unless someone has a dream that needed interpreting? Yosef knew that his skill would only be valuable if Pharoh had a dream that bothered him to the extent that he was desperate for an interpretation, *and* his cadre of interpreters would not be able to interpret. Only then could the butler step forward and say, “I know this guy....”. So, Yosef knew he would need a miracle. He knew that Hashem had to first place such a dream in Pharoh’s head so that the rest of his plan would work. Hence, the Midrash says, Fortunate is the man who trusts Hashem, this is Yosef.

However, once Yosef realized that he needed direct Divine intervention to have any chance of gaining his freedom, he should have depended on continued Divine assistance and had no need to ask for human intervention<sup>5</sup>. In fact, by asking for human intervention he did not sin, but rather, restricted his salvation to that very human response. Hence, Yosef was not punished for his request that the butler remember him, but once he depended on the butler for that part of his release, he now would have to wait for events to play out in a quasi-natural fashion (which took 2 years) the way he requested. He would now have to wait for Pharoh to have the dreams, and for the butler to remember him. A careful reading of the Midrash, and of Rashi, bears out this idea, as neither says Yosef was punished. The Midrash says *לו נתוסף* and Rashi writes *הווקק*; neither uses the word *נענש*. What Yosef should have done is simply to say, “Hashem, I know I can’t do this without you; please get me out tomorrow!”

2. This idea is found in the *מדרש תנחומא* which seems to go so far as to directly connect the two *זכירות* to the two years Yosef remains in prison. The Midrash reads:

ולמה נתוספו לו שם שתי שנים? אמר הקב"ה אתה השלכת בטחוני ובטחת בשר המשקים ואמרת לו שתי זכירות, כי אם זכרתי והזכרתי, תשתכח שתי שנים בבית הסהר, לכך כתיב ויהי מקץ שנתים ימים, שתי שנים ליציאת שר המשקים מבית הסהר.

3. Questions for further discussion:

Are there times in our lives when we depend on man and not on Hashem?

Can you think of other times when Yosef should have realized that his life was being led in a miraculous way?

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4 See the Musag על השלח לביא, where we discuss the issue of *הנס*.

5 This idea answers a famous question posed concerning the miracle of Chanukah. The Jews found the one bottle of oil that could last for one day, but they knew it would take an additional 7 days to produce pure oil. They had the following choice: Pour all the oil in the Menorah, use regular sized wicks, and light only one day, or pour 1/8th of the oil in the Menorah for each of the next 8 days, and make the wicks only 1/8th the regular size. Sure, the smaller wicks were not the preferred way to light the Menorah, but isn’t that better than no light at all? We all know which way they chose. They poured it all in the Menorah, and hoped for a miracle. Why? Because they already knew they were living in an age of miracles. Finding the one jug of oil was an incredible miracle, as was the victory over the Greeks. In an age of miracles there is no need to depend on the natural state of things, one can continue to depend on miracles. And, in fact, it is preferable to do so. Because once one depends on the natural order, he is restricted to that order and will not benefit from above-natural. (This last idea is developed by the Ramban (ויקרא כ:יא) who uses it to explain why those who depend on doctors will only be healed through them.)