

Dvar Torah Parshat Vayeishev

written by Yossi Katz

November 25, 2010

Based on Likutey MoHaran II, #108 and #110; Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom #114

"The wife of Yosef's employer had her eye on him. She said to him, 'Sleep with me.' He refused...She spoke to Yosef daily, but he wouldn't listen to her...She grabbed him by his clothing saying, 'Sleep with me.' He left it with her and fled outside."

(Genesis 39:7-12)

We all have temptations, to a greater or lesser degree, more often than not. For some of us, those temptations are strong enough to be called addictions. Can we overcome the temptations? What is the difference if we do or don't?

Rebbe Nachman writes that it is easier nowadays to withstand temptation than it was, once upon a time. He explains that a temptation is laden with kelipot (shells, forces of unholy energy). When a person overcomes the temptation, the kelipot are broken to such an extent that when the next person faces a similar test, s/he finds it easier to overcome. That is why "What was a major challenge for Yosef was a small matter for Boaz" (Sanhedrin 19b). Because Yosef had overcome his test, Boaz found his situation less of a temptation and easier to overcome (Ruth 3:8).

And so, as time passes, and more and more tzaddikim (saints) overcome temptation it becomes easier for ordinary Joes like you and me to withstand ours. "So how come I'm so drawn to my favorite vice? Why do I feel so imprisoned by it, so unable to overcome it? Why can't I overcome my bad habits?!"

You can. Someone once asked Rebbe Nachman to explain the subject of free will. "It's very simple," said the Rebbe. "If

a person wants—he does. If he doesn't want—he doesn't." Reb Noson writes that he recorded this because many people feel that because they are used to doing things in a certain manner, or because they have particular habits, they can't change their ways. They feel as if they have no free will. This is not the case. A person always has free will concerning everything, and what he wants, he does.

Of course, it helps to occasionally remind yourself of the consequences of caving in to desire. The Rebbe once commented: "For a little pleasure of 15 minutes a person can forfeit both this world and the next." So we must look back to Yosef and the other heroes of our glorious past to recall that they have, to a great extent, cleared the way. And we must decide what sort of future we want—in this world and the next—so that we will be ready to break away from temptation the next time it grabs us by the shirt.

agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!