

COVER STORY

By Ozer Bergman

"She grabbed [Yosef] by his garment... and he fled outside" (Genesis 39:12).

"The sea saw and fled" (Psalms 114:3).

Because Yosef fled, the sea fled (*Bereishit Rabbah* 87:8).

If we pay attention and do it right, wearing clothing is a big *tikkun* (correction) for the sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge, when we lost the ability to see the reality of things and began to mistake the surface for the depth, the wrapper for the content. Adam's heels shone like the sun (*Tanchuma, Acharei* #2), so certainly the higher body parts shone with more glory, the face most of all (*Pesikta d'Rav Kahana* 12:1). Clothing filters the bright spiritual "lights" of the various body parts, especially those that can create and nourish human life. Dressing right means that anyone who sees you can tell from your wardrobe that you're Jewish. It means that you don't wear torn or dirty clothing and that you take proper care of your clothes.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) grabs a person by his clothing. We need to wear clothing, but the *yetzer hara* creates in our mind unnecessary "needs" for clothing. These "needs" become distractions, disturbing and hindering a person's service of God. Such "needs" arise if one lets the outside become more important than the inside.

Yosef HaTzaddik faced a natural temptation and had an opportunity to show his power and importance. But that was the outside, the "clothing" that was external to him, not his truly defined self. When the Israelites reached the bank of the Red Sea, the sea saw Yosef HaTzaddik's coffin and understood that the outside—showing its power and running its natural course, what God usually intended it to do—was not as important as the inside—i.e., the ultimate purpose, doing what God wanted it to do now.

For Yosef HaTzaddik, as tzaddik (one who protects his [and the world's] connection to God by being scrupulous in his moral behavior), clothing plays an especially important role. In this week's reading, Yaakov gives Yosef the many-colored robe, his brothers strip him of that (and all his clothing), and his boss' wife also grabs him by "his garment." Mrs. Potiphar's craving was not 100% material lust. From her astrology, she knew that he and she would have a common descendant (*Bereishit Rabbah* 85:2). (This does not absolve of her crimes.) For a year's time, this wicked woman tried hard to seduce the tzaddik by changing her outfit every morning and evening (*Yoma* 35b).

Indeed, Yosef was on the verge of caving in, of doing "the job" (*Bereishit Rabbah* 87:7). But he ran outside, he changed his place (*Aleph-Bet Book, Hirhurim* B:23). The consequences weren't pretty. He suffered the humiliation of being discovered in public in his birthday suit (*Me'am Loez*, p. 313), he was libeled and publicly maligned for ten years, and he was jailed, without parole. (And there in jail, Mrs. Potiphar continued her evil efforts [*Bereishit Rabbah* 87:10]!) Yet by shaking himself free, Yosef is bedecked in all manner of royal raiment, by Pharaoh himself (Genesis 41:42). Although Yosef understood the *tikkun* of clothing, he saw that it could be usurped and misused, that if grabbed by the *yetzer hara*, it has to be discarded.

The lesson for us? Our use of an "external" *tikkun* is vulnerable to attack. We have to be wise enough and flexible enough to know when to abandon it even if it means a drastic and unforeseen change in circumstances for the worse. In the merit of the genuine tzaddikim, may God grant us the wisdom and strength to make every tough decision we will ever need to make. Amen!

*a gutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!*

—Based on *Sichot HaRan*
(*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom*) #100

SIDEPATH

Extremism, in any form, is totally unnecessary (*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #51).

Rebbe Nachman teaches: About those who are overly strict in serving God, it is written, "You shall live [and not die] by them" (Leviticus 18:5). Such people have no life. They are constantly depressed, because they never, ever feel they've fulfilled their obligations while performing the *mitzvot*. Because of their stringencies, they don't experience any vitality—any life—from their deeds (LM II, 44).

PARASHAH PEARLS

By Chaim Kramer

37:1 Jacob dwelt in the area where his fathers had stayed

Making Converts and Dwelling in Peace Cannot Coexist

The words *MeGuRei Aviv* (מגורי אביי, in the area where his fathers had stayed) allude to *MeGiyuRei Aviv* (מגירי אביי, where his fathers made converts). Just as Abraham and Isaac made converts to God, so did Jacob (*Bereishit Rabbah* 84:4).

Jacob wished to dwell in tranquility. Immediately the troubles with Joseph and his brothers began (Rashi).

Jacob was unable to dwell in tranquility because one who works to spread the word of God cannot sit in peace. The dynamic of a convert is one of struggle—of struggling with his lifelong beliefs and accepting God through faith. (Our Sages teach that in the Messianic era, converts will no longer be accepted, since then there will be no more struggle, for Godliness will be revealed for all to see; *Yevamot* 24b). Thus, the effort to make *ba'alei teshuvah* and converts precludes dwelling in peace (LM I, 228).

37:3 He was a child of his elder years

We Must Start Anew Each Day

Zekunim (elder years) refers to an "elder of holiness" and an "elder of the Other Side." Jacob always tried to give strength to the side

of holiness, to add fear of God that “adds to one’s days” (Proverbs 10:27). One must always endeavor to start anew each day, taking a fresh approach to his devotions, lest he “grow old” with “the same old devotions” and give strength to the Other Side. Joseph was the *ben zekunim*, the son of the elder years, since his name, *YoSeF* (יֹסֵף), means “he will add [to the realm of holiness]” (LH II, p. 154a).

37:7 We were binding sheaves in the middle of the field

The Tzaddik Connects With Those Who Are Far From God

The bundles of sheaves in Joseph’s first dream represent knots with which the tzaddik binds and draws close those who are distant from God. Joseph’s “knots” were superior to those of the other tzaddikim—his brothers—in that they remained firm. The sun and moon in his second dream represent the benefactor and beneficiary, the Rav and his closest disciple. The Rav draws his great intellect from Above and illumines his student, who receives directly from him. The stars represent those who are distant from God (LH I, p. 14a-28).

37:24 The pit was empty; there was no water in it

Suffering Sent From Heaven Is Easier To Bear Than From Human Beings

It was empty of water, but it contained snakes and scorpions (Rashi).

It is better for a person to fall into a pit filled with snakes and scorpions than to fall into the hands of his enemies (*Zohar* I, 185).

There are two types of suffering. The first type—symbolized by the snakes and scorpions—is suffering sent by Heaven. Though it is hard to endure, a person can look beyond this type of suffering and come to recognize God’s message and His kindness that transcend the suffering. The second type is that caused by human beings. When a person suffers due to human beings, it is harder to look beyond the suffering, because his enemies are bent on deflecting him from thinking about God altogether. Thus, suffering caused by human beings is far greater than suffering sent directly from God (LH V, p. 92a).

39:8 He adamantly refused

One Can Overcome Immorality With His Intellect

Joseph withstood the test of Potiphar’s wife’s attempts to seduce him. Yet the fact that the Torah considers this a test is a mystery. Rationally speaking, since Joseph was wise, this should not have presented any difficulties for him. For anyone with even a bit of intellect can overcome immoral thoughts and deeds (LM I, 72).

39:12 She grabbed him by his garment

Material Worries Distract A Person From Serving God

The forces of the Other Side and the Evil One grab a man by his garment. The necessity of obtaining garments and clothing can disturb a person greatly and prevent him from serving God. Thus, “she grabbed him by his garment.”

If you are a master of your soul and have your heart strongly bound to God, you will pay no attention to this. You may have no clothing to wear, but it will not disturb you, for you do not allow yourself to be distracted by such things. It is written, “He left his garment in her hand and fled.” You must leave your worries of garments and clothing behind and flee from the forces of evil. Pay no attention to what you lack. Do what God requires of you and serve Him to the best of your ability (*Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom* #100).

KITZUR L”M WEEKLY

7 — “And these are the laws” (Exodus 21:1) (continued)

9. The advice that a person receives from the tzaddikim is analogous to a marriage relationship and to holy coupling. For one takes in the “drops” of the tzaddik’s intellect with the advice he receives from him. This entails a rectification for sexual transgression. On the other hand, the advice of those who oppose [the tzaddikim], those impeters [who keep others from them] and their ilk, who speak cunningly to entice and seduce people away from the point of truth, represent a blemishing of sexual purity. Therefore, a person who has blemished his sexual purity must guard himself vigilantly against the faulty advice of those who oppose the truth, so as not to lose his whole life in a moment, God forbid.

10. One must studiously avoid the counsel and stratagems of the average person, since practically all of them are bad and flawed in the extreme. This is even more true for the advice of the wicked and those who attack and oppose the truth—one must shun them even more. For all wrongdoing and all blemishes, may God save us, emanate from this sort of faulty advice, whose precursor is the counsel of the primordial snake [that seduced Eve]. When a person accepts the advice of these evil people, God forbid, they inject him with their foul pollution, and this is analogous to an illegitimate, impure marriage relationship. This concept is alluded to in the verse [where Eve says], “The snake misled me (*hiShiAni*)” (Genesis 3:13) [in Hebrew, the root letters of this word, *N, Sh, A*, form words meaning both “to marry” and “to mislead”]. Such a relationship [involving the giving and receiving of faulty advice] is tantamount to the transmission of sexual blemish and keeps a person from the truth, from the holy faith and from coming to the Land of Israel. This being so, a person must carefully avoid following the advice of such people, God forbid. Instead, he must cling to the true tzaddikim and to those who follow their pathways, since all their advice is the “seed of unadulterated truth” (Jeremiah 2:21). [This latter relationship] entails the transmission of sexual purity, and through this advice, one merits everything good, truth, faith, prayer and the Land of Israel, as well as [the ability] to perform miracles in the world.

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