

How to Avoid Becoming Bitter

Genesis, Chapter 37

23. Now it came to pass when Joseph came to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his shirt, of the fine woolen coat which was upon him.

24. And they took him and cast him into the pit; now the pit was empty there was no water in it.

25. And they sat down to eat a meal, and they lifted their eyes and saw, and behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, and their camels were carrying spices, balm, and lotus, going to take [it] down to Egypt.

26. And Judah said to his brothers, "What is the gain if we slay our brother and cover up his blood?"

27. Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, but our hand shall not be upon him, for he is our brother, our flesh." And his brothers hearkened.

Genesis, Chapter 39

1. Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, Pharaoh's chamberlain, chief of the slaughterers, an Egyptian man, purchased him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.

2. The L-rd was with Joseph, and he was a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master.

3. And his master saw that the L-rd was with him, and whatever he (Joseph) did the L-rd made prosper ...

7. Now it came to pass after these events that his master's wife lifted up her eyes to Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."

8. But he refused, and he said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me my master knows nothing about anything in the house, and all he has he has given into my hand."

9. In this house, there is no one greater than I, and he has not withheld anything from me except you, insofar as you are his wife. Now how can I commit this great evil, and sin against G-d?"

Genesis, Chapter 40

1. Now it came about after these events that the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and the baker sinned against their master, against the king of Egypt.

2. And Pharaoh became incensed at his two chamberlains, at the chief cupbearer and at the chief baker.

3. And he placed them in the prison of the house of the chief of the slaughterers, into the prison, the place where Joseph was imprisoned.

5. Now both of them dreamed a dream, each one his dream on the same night, each man according to the



פרק לו

כג. וַיְהִי בָּאֶשֶׁר בָּאָיוֹסֵף אֶל אֲחֵי
וַיַּפְשִׁיטוּ אֹתָהּ יוֹסֵף אֶת גְּתֻנָתוֹ אֶת
כְּתַנְתַת הַפְּסִים אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו:

כד. וַיַּקְהַלְלּוּוּ וַיַּשְׂלַכוּ אֹתוֹ הַבָּرֶה וַיַּהֲבֹרּוּ רַק אֵין בָּו מִים:
כֵה. וַיַּשְׁבְּבוּ לְאַכְלָל לְחֵם וַיְשַׂאֲרֻ עִינֵיהֶם וַיַּרְאֻ וְהַנָּהָרָת
וַיִּשְׁמַעְלִים בָּאָהָמָגָלָעָד וְגַמְלִיקָם נְשָׁאִים נְכָאת וְצָרִי נְלָטָה
הַוּלְכִים לְהַוְרִיד מַצְרִימָה:

כו. וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מֵהֶם בְּצֹעַר כִּי נִהְרגָּת אֶת אֲחֵינוּ וְכַסְפֵינוּ
אֶת דָמוֹ:

כז. לְכֹו וְנִמְכְרְנוּ לְיִשְׁמַעְאלִים וְרִבְנוּ אֶל תְּהִי בָו כִּי אֲחֵינוּ
בְּשָׁרָנוּ הוּא וַיִּשְׁמַעְוּ אֲחֵינוּ:

פרק לט

א. וַיַּעֲשֵׂה יוֹסֵף הַוּנְדָמָה וַיַּקְהַלְלֵה פָּרוּפֵר סִירִיס פְּרֻעָה שֶׁר

הַטְּבָחִים אִישׁ מַצְרִים מִיד הַיִשְׁמַעְאלִים אֲשֶׁר הַוּלְכִים שָׁמָה:
ב. וַיְהִי הָאֶת יוֹסֵף וַיַּהֲבֹרּוּ אֶת יוֹסֵף וַיַּהֲבֹרּוּ אֶת
הַמַּצְרִים:

ג. וַיְהִיא אֶת יוֹסֵף כִּי הָאֶת יוֹסֵף וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר הוּא עֲשָׂה הָאֶת
מַצְלִיחַ בְּידָוֹ:

ד. וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֶלָה וְתַשְׁא אֶשְׁת אֶדְנִי אֶת עִנְיָה אֶל
יוֹסֵף וְתַאֲמֵר שְׁכַבָּה עָמִי:

ה. וַיִּמְאַן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל אֶשְׁת אֶדְנִי הָן אֶדְנִי לֹא יַדְעַ אֶת
בְּבִית וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלַח לְוָנְמָן בְּיַדְךָ:

ט. אַיִלְנוּ גָדוֹל בְּבִית הַזָּהָר מִפְנֵי וְלֹא חַשְׁפַּק מִפְנֵי
אָמָרְתָה אֶת אֶדְנִי אֶת אֶשְׁתוֹ וְאֶיךָ אָשְׁתָה הַקְרָעה הַגְּדָלָה הַזֹּאת
וְחַטָּאת לְאַלְקִים :

א. וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֶלָה חַטָּאוֹ מִשְׁקָה מֶלֶךְ מַצְרִים וְהַאֲפָה
לְאֶדְנִים לְמֶלֶךְ מַצְרִים :

ב. וַיִּקְצַּח פְּרֻעָה עַל שְׁנֵי סִירִיסיו עַל שְׁר הַמְּשִׁקִים וְעַל שְׁר
הַאֲופִים :

ג. וַיִּתְאַנְחֵם בְּמִשְׁמָר בֵּית שְׁר הַטְּבָחִים אֶל בֵּית הַסְּהָר מִקְוָם
אֲשֶׁר יוֹסֵף אָסֹור שָׁם :

ה. וַיִּמְלַמְדּוּ חָלוּם שְׁנֵי הַמְּשִׁקִים אֲשֶׁר חִלְמָו בְּלִילָה אֶחָד אִישׁ בְּפֶתַרְוֹן
חָלוּם הַמְּשִׁקָה וְהַאֲפָה אֲשֶׁר לְמֶלֶךְ מַצְרִים אֲשֶׁר אָסֹונִים בְּבִית

interpretation of his dream, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison.

6. And Joseph came to them in the morning, and he saw them and behold, they were troubled.

7. And he asked Pharaoh's chamberlains who were with him in the prison of his master's house, saying, "Why are your faces sad today?"

Genesis, Chapter 45

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me," and they drew closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. But now do not be sad, and let it not trouble you that you sold me here, for it was to preserve life that G-d sent me before you.

The pit was empty, no water was in it (37:24)

Rashi

From the implication that the "pit was empty" do I not know that "no water was in it"? It says this to imply that there was no water in it, but there were snakes and scorpions in it.

The L-rd was with him (39:3)

Rashi

The name of G-d was fluent in his mouth, i.e. he would regularly refer to G-d in conversation.

"...How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against G-d?" (39:8-9)

Midrash

Said Joseph to her: "I am afraid of the Holy One, blessed be He." Said she: "But He is not here" ... She drove him from room to room and from chamber to chamber, until she brought him to her bed. Above it was engraved an idol, which she covered with a sheet. Said Joseph to her: "You have covered its face... How much more then should you fear Him of whom it is written (Zechariah 4:10), "The eyes of the L-rd, that run to and fro through the whole earth"!

Why are your faces so downcast today? (40:7)

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

Joseph had suffered terrible humiliations. We would expect him to become absorbed in his own pain, angry at the world. We wouldn't imagine that he would notice the pain of others, especially that of Pharaoh's courtiers, whose colleague had sent him to prison. Yet Joseph remained sensitive to others and to his Divine mission in life. Not only did he perceive the anguish of the courtiers, he reached out to help them. Little did he know, that this seemingly minor act would eventually lead him to become the viceroy of Egypt and ultimately save the civilized world from famine.

SUMMARY

- Anger and self-pity rob us of our serenity. Bitterness and victimization blind us from seeing another's pain.
- The conviction that G-d is directing all that happens, helps us shift our focus from, "why is this happening to me?" to "how can I use this as an opportunity?"
- Despite so much suffering in his life, Joseph wasn't angry, not at his brothers, not at Potiphar's wife, not at the government.
- Ultimately, Joseph's genuine act of care brought salvation to an entire world.

