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Yosef's prison sentence lengthened by his wavering trust in Hashem

וְיָהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנַתִּים יָמִים וּפְרָעָה חֹלֵם וְהָנָה עַל הַיָּאָר: (מא א)
It came to pass at the end of two full years, that Paroh was dreaming, and behold, he was standing by the Nile. A Medrash on Tehillim 40:5 comes into play here: וְלֹא־פָנָה אֶל־הַיָּבֵּים: ... Praiseworthy is the man who made Hashem his trust, and did not turn to the haughty ... "THIS REFERS TO YOSEF, WHO ASKED THE BUTLER REMEMBER ME AND MENTION ME TO PAROH (40:14) -- AND HAD HIS SENTENCE LENGTHENED BY TWO YEARS." At first blush, this Medrash seems to be making a startling statement, which begs explication. At first, Yosef is praiseworthy, a *ba'al bitochon* (drawing on the source Tehillim) only to be cast on the spot as one NOT trusting in Hashem to the exclusion of all human agents -- in light of his asking the butler to intercede on his behalf with Paroh. The Kotzker Rebbe illuminates: Hashem's purpose was to ingrain in Yosef that one should trust only in Him -- because on the heels of saying "Remember me to Paroh", Yosef was slapped with a two-year extension of his sentence. What better lesson could there be of having *bitachon baShem*, and acting on it: "Happy is the man whom Hashem has personally shown *bitachon* -- that *bitachon* is the ultimate foundation."

(אבני זהב- גראנאדאשטיין-פיעטריקוב תרפ"ד)
With this deep insight in hand, we can understand two seemingly disparate occurrences: We have seen the present *אשרי הגבר* fortunate is the man whom You, Kab, chastise, and from Your Torah You teach him. This is precisely in line with the Kotzker's teaching, and we parse the posuk accordingly: "Happy indeed is the man whom Hashem punishes immediately in the wake of his transgression, for with that penalty Hashem shows him that he must attain perfect *bitachon*/trust." And we see this inescapably, as the posuk concludes, teaching from the Holy Torah, which Yosef's episode illustrates. (שמח ובלון)

Paroh's idolatry shown subtly at the Nile

וּפְרָעָה חֹלֵם וְהָנָה עַל־הַיָּאָר וְהָנָה מִרְהִיָּאָר עֲלֹת שֶׁבַע פְּרוֹת יָפוֹת מִרְהִיָּאָר וּבְרִיאֹת בָּשָׂר... וְהָנָה שֶׁבַע פְּרוֹת אַחֲרוֹת עֲלוֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶן מִרְהִיָּאָר רְעוּת מִרְהִיָּאָר: (מא א-ג) וְיָדְבַר פְּרָעָה אֶל־יוֹסֵף בְּחֻלְמֵי הַנִּי עֹמֵד עַל־שֵׁפֶת הַיָּאָר: וְהָנָה מִרְהִיָּאָר עֲלֹת שֶׁבַע פְּרוֹת בְּרִיאֹת בָּשָׂר... וְהָנָה שֶׁבַע פְּרוֹת אַחֲרוֹת עֲלוֹת אַחֲרֵיהֶן דְּלוֹת וְרָעוּת: (מא יז-יח)
... Pharaoh was dreaming, and behold, he was standing by the Nile. And behold, seven cows, of handsome appearance and robust flesh were coming up from the Nile, And behold, seven other cows were coming up after them from the Nile, of ugly appearance and lean of flesh... ... And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream, behold, I was standing on the bank of the Nile. And behold, seven cows of robust flesh and handsome form were ascending from the Nile... And behold, seven other cows were ascending after them, emaciated ...

There are subtle, noteworthy discrepancies here. [We know there are no superfluous words or even letters in the Torah. The same holds true for "unexplained" discrepancies. [DPR]] In direct narration, the Torah mentions, regarding both the fat and the scrawny cows, that

both came "from the River Nile". But when Paroh relates his dream to Yosef, he speaks of only the fat cows emerging from the River, whereas the scrawny cows merely "ascended after them" -- with no mention of the River. Further: the Torah's description of the dream's locale is "על-היאר"; Paroh relates that he was standing "על־שֵׁפֶת הַיָּאָר" "on the bank of the Nile"--?-- The Egyptians worshipped the Nile as an object of pagan worship. As such, Paroh was wary of speaking about the Nile, seeking not to disparage it in any way. His use of prepositions revealed his attitude. In his thwarted, euphemistic version, the sickly cows did not emerge "FROM the River" -- they just came up from somewhere; he did not stand "ON the River," (as if to say 'over above' the River, which could be disrespectful) but rather on its BANK. The Torah HaKedosha does not mince words, and related the events exactly as they happened. A Medrash Rabbah (ד' פ"ט ט) reflects this beautifully: הרשעים מתקיימו על אלהיהם, ופרעה חולם והנה עומד על היאור. ונצב עליו אבל הצדיקים אלקיהם מתקיים עליהם, שנאמר: והנה ה' נצב עליו. (THE WICKED STAND OVER THEIR FALSE GODS [AS DID PAROH]. BUT AS FOR THE RIGHTEOUS, THEIR G-D STANDS OVER THEM, HASHEM STOOD OVER HIM)
(בן לאשרי המקובל מרעננה)

The cupbearer's multiple offenses

וַיְדַבֵּר שֵׁר הַמִּשְׁקִים אֶת־פְּרָעָה לֵאמֹר אֶת־חֶטְאִי אֲנִי מִזְכִּיר הַיּוֹם: פְּרָעָה קָצַף עַל עֶבְדִּי ... (מ"א ט)
The chief cupbearer spoke with Paroh, saying, "I call to mind my offenses today. Paroh was angry with his servants..." Why did the butler feel compelled to recall his offenses against Paroh? Were they better not left unsaid, since "what's past is past?" And for that matter, why "offenses" in the plural? We have only been informed of one "crime." --?-- Actually, the butler's words were important. Recall Yosef's interpretation of the cupbearer's dream in prison: וְנָתַתְּ כוֹס־פְּרָעָה בְּיָדוֹ כַּמִּשְׁפֵּט הַרְאִשׁוֹן אֲשֶׁר הָיִיתָ מִשְׁקָהוּ: כִּי אִם־זָכַרְתִּי אֶתְּךָ [Paroh] will restore you to your position, and you will place Paroh's cup into his hand, according to [your] previous custom, when you were his cupbearer. But remember me when things go well with you... The Medrash explains that the butler's "felony" lay in the fly that Paroh found in his royal cup! Was that supposed negligence really so grievous that it warranted a stint in prison? The clear truth is that the butler's "misconduct" was a link in the chain of Hashem's plan for Yosef's elevation. Paroh was "pre-programmed" to become enraged at a trivial, near-unavoidable oversight. Yosef informed the man: "You will tender the goblet to Paroh, as in the past, and a fly will again fall into it, but that next time will not trigger his rage. So realize that you are here because of me, so you had best intercede for me with Paroh." So now the picture is clearer: He sinned twice with the nuisance-flies, and that's why Paroh was angered. But the first time it happened, the anger triggered the events of Yosef's elevation. The second time -- "no problem!" (ברך משה סאטמאר בשם הרה"צ ר' אלעזר ניסן, בן הישמח משה)

A simpler, but no less plausible explanation of "my transgressions (plural)": The first was my being negligent about the fly in the goblet. The second was my forgetting until now about my promise to Yosef to mention him favourably at Paroh's court. (בני בנימין רייך- תלמיד בני יששכר)

The renowned tzaddik Reb Leib Sarah's Z"l [he alone of all the renowned Chassidische Gedolim has always been referred to by his vernacular Yiddish patronymic [DPR]] was engaged in itinerant fund-raising on behalf of the Thirty Six Hidden Tzaddikim (the Lamed-Vav'niks). After his passing, Rav Mordechai the Chernobler Maggid, (son-in-law of Rav Aharon HaGodol of Karlin) assumed the yoke of this holy tzeddaka campaign. A wealthy chossid named Chaim Mendel was generously supporting the Rebbe and enjoyed a close bond with him. Chaim Mendel had extensive commercial holdings, including many forests and fields, as well as a string of *kretschmas*/country inns. Apart from profits, his business interests yielded good jobs for many of his poorer Jewish brethren. He had one sprawling lumber forest in particular which needed a watchman and an interesting fellow named Boruch Leib secured the post. This chap spoke little and exhibited no special spiritual levels but was a true *yoireh shomayim*/G-d-fearing Jew. The Maggid's practice was to circulate among the many shtetlach, collecting funds for his worthy cause. His itinerary encompassed Chaim Mendel's town. His annual visit called forth a Yomtov'dik atmosphere among the residents, so eager were they to encounter a famous tzaddik at first hand, deliver their gifts and receive a bracha or piece of much-needed life's advice. The Maggid told Chaim Mendel that he knew full well that Chaim often found himself in Chernobyl and was more than capable of gathering and delivering the town's contributions to him there, but that he saw his visits to the town as an important spiritual *chizuk*/uplift for the dear locals. And so for years, Chaim Mendel received the Rebbe in his town, but never burdened him with any troubles, since, in his eyes, he lacked nothing in life. But there came one year when he informed the Rebbe that two matters had arisen which he wanted to lay on the Rebbe's table. "You may speak freely", said the Rebbe. "First, Rebbe, all these years I have been helping with the Rebbe's tzeddaka drive to help the Thirty Six Hidden Ones. I now have a strong yearning to encounter one of them personally. The second matter is the proper match for my only son Sholom Shachna. This bochor has everything to recommend him. He is a talmid chacham with the best character traits, of fine appearance, and is comfortable with managing worldly matters. In other words, he has "alle mailos/all the perfect credentials". We have candidates from the very finest and wealthiest families, but my son is deaf to the matchmakers' entreaties. He seems to have his heart set on the daughter of Boruch Leib, the watchman in my nearby forest. Now she is no doubt a worthy lass, but the father seems coarse and rough-hewn, never comes to town to hear our Rav's drashas, and has all the hallmarks of an *am haaretz*/ignoramus. In light of the Gemara's exhortations against marrying the daughter of an *am haaretz*, I am truly perplexed and beg the Rebbe to show me the path to the best shidduch for my dear son."

The Rebbe thought deeply for several minutes before answering. "Each of your requests presents difficulties for me. To arrange an encounter with a Lamed-Vav'nik is very unlikely, because they would have to agree in advance and that

they will not do, because it would compromise their concealment from the world. And as far as determining the best zivug for your son, I would need the Urim veThumim [the miraculous oracle stones from the Holy Temple] to do that, and that is also obviously beyond me. But one thing I can arrange for you. If you undertake to cleanse and purify yourself sufficiently, you may attend my Pesach Seder, and there see Eliyahu HaNavi personally. Come to Chernobyl two months ahead of Pesach and begin your preparations." And so he did. From early winter, weeks of ritual ablutions, many recitations of all the Tehillim, extended learning of both Hidden and Revealed Torah ensued and filled up Chaim Mendel's days and nights. After what seemed to him an eternity, Erev Pesach came and he sat in Beis Medrash the whole day waiting for the Yomtov to be ushered in. With awe and trembling, he took his place at the Maggid's Seder, among his illustrious sons. The atmosphere at the Seder was exalted beyond any words the man could command, and he felt that he was basking in the Upper Worlds. His bubble was broken when the Maggid announced "SHFOCH CHAMOSCHA. Eliyahu HaNavi will come in soon. Take a good look at him, because he will assume the appearance of a Lamed-Vav tzaddik!"

Chaim Mendel began trembling uncontrollably. Suddenly, the visage of a man entered, unlike any human Chaim Mendel had ever beheld. His face was exactly that of Boruch Leib, the forest watchman. After a few precious moments, Eliahu disappeared -- and Chaim Mendel fainted straightaway on the spot. The others revived him and they all completed the Seder, more or less on a "normal" level.

The next morning, the Maggid had a pivotal talk with Chaim Mendel. "So, Mendel, you see how both of your requests were satisfied?" "No, Rebbe, I fail to understand." "Listen to me. First, you saw one of the Lamed-Vav Tzaddikim, first-hand. Second, correct me if I'm wrong, but if your son wants to make his shidduch with Boruch Leib's daughter, I imagine that you would now be more than agreeable."

Of course, it did not take long for Chaim Mendel to finalize the shidduch between his son Sholom Shachna and the watchman's daughter. But the Chernobler Maggid warned him in the strongest possible terms that he dare not reveal Boruch Leib's true stature to anyone. Even if he would find himself pressed -- and embarrassed -- to explain his choice of such a lowly person as a *mechutan*/"parent counterpart", his lips were to be sealed, no matter what. The wedding was conducted with boundless simcha, attended by all of Chaim Mendel's entire town -- all wearing Shabbos regalia. All, that is, except the *mechutan* Boruch Leib, who attended wearing his usual rough weekday garb -- since he had nothing else. No matter; the two marriage-relatives embraced and circled the dance floor in rapturous joy.

Postscript: The next morning, Chaim Mendel received word that Boruch Leib had left his post in the forest watchman's booth and that he had best appoint a replacement. The businessman understood exactly what had unfolded. But Boruch Leib's secret was safe with him!

STORY OF THE WEEK: Rav Motte'le Chernobler oversees a shidduch with a Hidden Tzaddik

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