# VAYESHEB: Faith requires patience

YOSEF, THE MANAGER

Yosef was sold by his brothers and transported to the slave market in Egypt, where Potiphar, a minister in Pharaos court, acquired him. In Potiphar's house, Yosef stands out. His master realizes that the slave he had bought for manual labor was a genius at administration. And he also inspired trust. Potiphar leaves all his assets and household, probably hundreds of people, in the hands of Yosef. Seemingly, Yosef had found his final destination; even though he was away from his family, at least he was in a privileged position. Being promoted to "manager" was the ultimate dream, the utopia, of any slave. However, got worse for Yosef. Potifar's wife provokes him. But Yosef does not succumb, and he rejects her advances with great subtlety but firmness. He tried to reason with the woman and explained to her that what she wanted to do would be a great sin against her husband and, above all, against God. "How could I do something so wrong and sin against God" (Gen. 39:9). But Potiphar's wife did not take Yosef's rejection well: she felt offended that a man, a slave under her command! rejected her. And she falsely accused Yosef of abuse. Potiphar, I think, did not believe his wife – if he had, he would have killed Yosef on the spot – but he could not ignore her and had to save his family's honor, so he sent Yosef to a dungeon.

YOSEF, IN AND OUT OF PRISON

Yosef's situation is now desperate. His sentence is for life. Yosef goes from being a successful manager with privileges to the lowest level a human being could reach in Egypt: a slave sentenced to prison. In Egypt, the value of a slave's life was probably less than that of a horse or a dog. What can be said

then about the insignificant value of a slave in prison? However, thanks to his personality and hardworking character, Yosef also wins the trust of the head of the prison, who, like Potifar, leaves the administration in the hands of Yosef.

Yosef takes care of two VIP prisoners, Pharaoh's ministers. Both had very strange dreams. And Yosef, who knew a lot about dreams, tells one of the two ministers, the one in charge of Pharaoh's beverages (making sure that the drinks were not poisoned), that he was going to be released and restored to court. And Yosef takes advantage of this fortuitous circumstance and asks the minister to remember him, and as payback for interpreting his dream positively, he begs him to tell Pharaoh, through one of his officers, to release Yosef from prison, since he is innocent!

A HAPPY END

But as the days or weeks go by, Yosef realizes his hope is a fantasy. Pharaoh's minister forgot Yosef and consciously erased him from his memory. Because, naturally, the last thing the minister would have wanted was something to remind his boss – who had given him a second chance – of his days in jail! One day, however, Pharaoh has a disturbing dream, and no one can interpret it. At that moment, the minister –knowing that now he was not "asking" but "doing" Pharaoh a favor– informs him that there is a young Hebrew man in jail who knows how to interpret dreams. Yosef is brought into the palace and then, as we all know, becomes Pharaoh's right-hand man, which allows him to identify his brothers and eventually reconcile with them.

WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF…?

One of the great life lessons that Yosef's story teaches us is that we often desperately want something to happen NOW. We pray and beg HaShem and do everything we can to achieve it… and in the end, it might NOT happen. But after a while, we

might be looking at our lives and realize that THANKS TO WHAT WE WANTED TO HAPPEN AND DID NOT HAPPEN, we now have a better opportunity, or we are now in a better position!

Yosef desperately wanted Pharaoh's minister to exert all his influence to get out of prison. I suppose that Yosef must have waited impatiently day and night for someone to come and get him out of jail on behalf of Pharao's minister. But imagine for a second if that had happened: Yosef would be now out of jail, with no money, no family, and with the record of an ex-convict slave. He could not have gotten very far…. He would have been sold as a slave a second time. And in the best of cases scenario, he would have ended his life being a good slave manager in someone's household. The same would have happened if Potiphar's wife would not have accused Yosef of improper behavior.

PATIENCE AS A FORM OF FAITH

Yosef learns and teaches us that patience is a form of Emuna, faith. Because many times, things that happen or are not happening to us are eventually for our own good. All the negative experiences that Yosef lived at first made him get lower and lower, to the point of despair. But when Yosef hits rock bottom unexpectedly, and without Yosef ever dreaming of such a scenario, Yosef's life improves meteorically.

Not all of us have the same privilege as Yosef. It is not always possible to see an excellent final resolution for all our problems in life. However, this lesson is so important. I hear virtually every day of someone who did not get the job he so much wanted or someone who failed in a potential shidduch date or in a business deal. We might feel then that God has abandoned us. But then, I hear many people saying, "thanks to the fact that what I so much wanted didn't happen, HaShem helped me to get something better. "Now I realize that God protected me from a terrible business/job/shidduch, etc."

This is a critical attitude to cultivate in life. Knowing that (or even: strategically acting as if… ) when what I pray for is not happening, ultimately, something better might be waiting for me around the corner.