

“Peeking Out From Behind the Curtain”

What a stirring saga! Yosef is betrayed and conspired against by his brothers and then thrown into a dark pit where he is doomed to die. At the last moment, the brothers pull him out. Broken in body and spirit, he endures the additional humiliation of being sold as a common slave to a passing trading caravan. What could possibly be more devastating? How utterly hopeless Yosef's plight appears to be!

In the midst of this hellish scene, the Torah tells us, G-d lightened Yosef's suffering by arranging for his journey down to Egypt to be in a fragrant, scented environment. The caravan of traders that had purchased him were carrying fine perfumes and spices. A pleasant fragrance wafted through the air around him as he made his way down to Egypt.

What are we to make of this information? Here Yosef is being sold into slavery with no prospects of ever being freed. Betrayed by his brothers, he is at the mercy of lawless people who could abuse and exploit him at will. At such a harrowing time, would he be likely to notice the scent around him? And if he did, what difference would it make to him in his pain and misery?

Yet, we must bear in mind that the Torah informs us about the spices in the caravan for a reason. Embedded in this dire and painful event was a secret note from Hashem to Yosef: 'Don't worry Yosef, I love you and I will spare you whatever suffering I can. Look, even here, in your miserable and wretched condition I will show you that I am peeking out from behind the curtain by sending you this little ray of positive encouragement. If only you can decipher my message of caring and love!'

Our lives are a long chain of challenges and difficulties. Although these hardships may be divinely ordained to tone up our spiritual muscles and help us grow, it is often difficult to recognize them as such.

Yet, if we are attuned, we can pinpoint moments in our lives when Hashem demonstrates that he is watching from behind the curtain. All of us can be grateful for the seemingly small but infinitely valuable daily gifts and special messages with which Hashem lets us know that He is taking care of us.

Be it with the blessings of good health, our precious children, beloved family and friends or the innumerable other gifts we enjoy, we are constantly graced with Hashem's loving beneficence.

By training our emotions to always operate in thankful mode, we can weather life's disappointments. However, if we allow ourselves to fall into the mode of "entitlement," as if we are owed life's blessings and luxuries, we will inevitably suffer a spiritual and emotional setback. (*Rabbi Naftali Reich*)