



Looking Down the Road

Adapted from a Shmuess by Rabbi Stulberger

Parshas Vayeishev

By Elan Perchik

In Parshas Vayeishev, we are introduced to the long and riveting story of Yosef and his brothers. Beginning with Yosef being given the *Ketones Pasim*, a special coat of many colors, receiving special attention from Yaakov and relating dreams foreshadowing his future ascendancy to power, his brothers grew jealous of him. In their view, he was threatening their spiritual and physical existence as part of the eternal future of Klal Yisroel. He needed to be removed from scene, they concluded. Consequently, Yosef was thrown into a pit and eventually sold into slavery. And with that, Yosef begins a life-long odyssey fraught with many challenges.

At the very beginning of our Parsha, the Torah offers an intriguing glimpse into the personality of Yosef Hatzaddik. Shepherding his father's sheep, the Pasuk depicts Yosef with the words –“*V'hu naar*” –“And he was a young boy.” Rashi, picking up on this phraseology, explains that Yosef would behave as any youthful child would –beautify his hair and eyes in order to improve his good looks.

Although the Torah does not commonly reveal information about the teenage years of figures in Tanach, here the Pasuk goes out of its way to stress the point. The question is what relevance does it have to the overall picture of Yosef's life? Why is it integral to know that at age seventeen Yosef acted youthful?

The Sforno addressing the issue offers a most incisive view into human nature, particularly relevant to teenagers. Yosef in no way displayed a lack of intelligence or ineptitude. What the Torah means to highlight by stating that Yosef was a young boy was that he fell short of ascertaining and foreseeing the results of his actions. Returning with reports of his brothers' behavior to his father, Yosef should have considered that his actions may cause resentment and negativity on their part. One of the primary foibles of youth is rash decision making and short-sighted thinking. It is such a character trait, says the Sforno, that the Torah intends to draw attention to when describing Yosef as a “*naar*.” Despite Yosef's towering greatness, at this stage in his life, his capacity to envision the outcome of his choices was blurred.

Considering this should weigh heavily in our overall perspective of life. Especially when it comes to our youth, they should be taught that decisions should only be made after careful deliberation. Impetuous and flippant decision-making often carries with it undesired results. We certainly do not wish to wake up too late and realize that we acted with insufficient forethought.

Notwithstanding this reality, there is most definitely a panacea to prevent such heartache from ever setting in. And that is taking advice from those older and wiser than us. Receiving guidance from those who have life experience

and can point us in the right direction is an invaluable resource. Parents, educators and genuine friends are all in position to steer others down the right road. In line with the Talmudic dictum (*Tamid* 32b), “Who is wise? One who can foresee the future,” we would be wise to reach out to others for help in maneuvering along life's course. This is a most useful tool when dealing with teenagers. In a situation where it is deemed appropriate to offer parental guidance, telling our youth, “You are very smart; however, in this case experience has shown...” may prove to be a most effective method of communication. On the one hand, we are recognizing their intelligence, yet at the same time wisely directing them and increasing their chances at success.

Rav Avrohom Yehoshua of Kopichnitz was known to be close friends with a number of *gedolim*, particularly Rav Moshe Feinstein and the Ponovezher Rav. His relationship with other Torah luminaries only grew when his granddaughter married the son of Rav Shomo Zalman Auerbach zt”l.

Arriving in Eretz Yisroel for the wedding, he met Rav Shlomo Zalman for the first time. It was from then on that a close relationship developed. Following the wedding, as the Kopichnitzer Rebbe readied himself to return to America, he went to Rav Shlomo Zalman to say goodbye. After speaking for a few minutes, they heard a honk from outside. Assuming that it was the car which was supposed to take the Kopichnitzer Rebbe to the airport, they both headed outside.

As the door opened to the street, they were soon to realize that the honk emanated from a different car than the one the Kopichnitzer Rebbe was waiting for. Now assuming that they would need to wait for a little while, Rav Shlomo Zalman sent for a chair to be brought for the Rebbe to sit. But he refused to sit. Explaining his rationale, he said, “When I was a young boy I learned a very important life principle from my father. He said, ‘Before you do anything, imagine that a photographer is standing right next to you and taking your picture. Then imagine you would get to look at the photo. If you like the picture, then carry on with what you intended to do. However, if you are dissatisfied with the picture, avoid doing that which you planned.’”

“I thought about it,” said the Kopichnitzer Rebbe, “and I said to myself, ‘How will I be able to look at a picture of me sitting down while Rav Shlomo Zalman is standing up right next to me!’”

Such is the attitude we are to adopt. Always thinking what our picture would look like will leave us thinking twice before we make any decision. And when this is done, we can be assured that the pictures taken throughout our lives will be breathtakingly beautiful. They will shine forth with accomplishment and life fulfillment and always keep us smiling.