

We know that the hero in פרשת וישב, in the very sad story of the sale of יוסף הצדיק, was יהודה. יהודה spoke up at the last minute and said, "Let's not kill him." How did that happen? The תורה brings in the name of the מלא העומר that the פסוק says (37:25): וְהָיָה אֶרְחַת יִשְׁמַעְאֵלִים בָּאָה - A group of ישמעאלים showed up, and then all of a sudden (37:26): וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה אֶל אֶחָיו מָה בָצַע, for the first time יהודה speaks up and gets directly and actively involved in מכירת יוסף.

The מדרש asks: Why was that? The שבטים wanted to kill יוסף. Why? There are many answers given. The most famous is that they viewed him as a מורד במלכות. Another explanation is that through רוח הקודש they saw that שבט ירבעם בן נבט would descend from יוסף. However, when the שבטים, and specifically יהודה, saw that ישמעאלים were coming, he saw a סימן from שמים to remember what it says about ישמעאל. What does it say about ישמעאל? באשר הוא. We judge a person by where he is now. הקדוש ברוך הוא does not judge us for our future עבירות - thank God! He judges us based on where we are and what we do now. Therefore, יהודה said מָה בָצַע, why should we kill יוסף because of someone who will descend from him דורות later? We cannot act on the עתיד for something that he is not responsible for now.

This idea is very interesting. When יוסף was looking for his brothers, the פסוק says (37:17): וַיִּסְעוּ מִזֶּה. The הקדוש ברוך. מידות ה' הקדוש ברוך הוא explains: וַיִּסְעוּ מִזֶּה, מִמִּדּוֹתָיו וְשֵׁל מְקוֹם. The brothers had left מידות ה' הקדוש ברוך הוא is to judge a person by where he is now - not by his future עבירות. This is the מידה of Hashem. However, the brothers failed in this regard. They left the מידה of Hashem and conspired to kill יוסף. They forgot the very important מידה of שם באשר הוא שם.

This מידה works both for us and against us. We have to work on our מידות so that we are worthy of באשר - to be judged by where we are now. We must strive to build ourselves up, to reach a level where we can withstand all the blandishments and threats of the שטן, and to overcome adversity by focusing on what we can do now.

I've said this many times: One of Hashem's greatest gifts is mentioned at the beginning of another parsha, - רָאָה אֶנֶכִּי נָתַן לְפָנֶיכֶם הַיּוֹם, רָאָה אֶנֶכִּי נָתַן לְפָנֶיכֶם הַיּוֹם. I've always found myself saying, רָאָה אֶנֶכִּי נָתַן לְפָנֶיכֶם הַיּוֹם. I've always found myself saying, רָאָה אֶנֶכִּי נָתַן לְפָנֶיכֶם הַיּוֹם. Hashem gives us a tremendous gift: the gift of today. Use today and make the most of it. Maximize its potential. Utilize it to its fullest to fulfill your purpose. Then, with Hashem's help, you will find success.

