

From the desk of Rabbi Baumann



DO YOU LOVE ME?

Erev Shabbos Parashas Vayeegash 5783

Dear Parents,

The heartwarming climax to the drama and saga of the brothers re-uniting with *Yosef*, was their return to *Yaakov Avinu* with the news that *Yosef* was alive and second to the king of Egypt. The *pasuk* describes the brothers' informing *Yaakov*, in a somewhat cryptic manner. The *pasuk* tells us (*Bereishis* 45:27) that the brothers told over what *Yosef* said and then continues that "... and *Yaakov* saw the wagons..."

To explain this seemingly irrelevant piece of information, *Rashi* says that in sending the wagons, *Yosef* was hinting to the last Torah topic that he learned together with his father *Yaakov* – that of *Eglah Arufa* – the ceremony performed when a corpse is discovered abandoned along the way. It was this hint from *Yosef* that finally convinced *Yaakov* that the brothers were being truthful and accurate with the news they were sharing, and that *Yosef* was in fact, still alive.

The *Daas Zekeinim M'Ba'alay Tosfos* (commentary) finds it necessary to elaborate upon the words of *Rashi* as to what is behind the reference to *Eglah Arufa*. The *Daas Zekeinim* says that when *Yaakov* sent *Yosef* to check up on his brothers, he accompanied *Yosef* at the beginning of his journey. *Yosef* turned to his father and suggested he go back home, that he was fine on his own. *Yaakov* responded that escorting a person on his way is a very big deal, which we see from the fact that the Torah writes an entire *Parsha* dedicated to this mitzvah of accompaniment.

The *Mishnah* in *Sotah* (45b), quoted by the *Daas Zekeinim*, explains in greater detail. The Torah requires the elders of the town nearest to where the corpse was discovered to declare that their hands did not shed the blood of the victim. They declare that they did not accompany this unfortunate person, because they did not see him or know of him, therefore they are innocent of any crime. The *Daas Zekainim* points out that what we see from this, *Yaakov Avinu* explained to *Yosef*, was how important accompaniment is, for had the elders indeed seen the person and neglected to escort him, and he subsequently was murdered, they would be liable for his death!

If we were to stop and think about the import of accompanying a person on his way, we would be hard pressed to see the great value in it. There is no tangible or material benefit to the one being accompanied. Once the escort leaves, the traveler is seemingly no better off than before. Why does the Torah attach so much importance to it?

"... someone else thinks I'm important enough to escort me."

What does accompanying someone accomplish for that person? There are most assuredly several valuable benefits. The person feels cared for. This creates a stronger feeling of self-worth – someone else thinks I'm important enough to escort me. It thereby builds his self-confidence – I must have capabilities that another human being finds to be of value. The cumulative effect could ultimately spell the difference between this wayfarer's success in fighting off an attacker or succumbing to the assault.

If an adult can be transformed through acts of encouragement, how much more so is this true of children! Our children are desperate for our approval, encouragement and love. That love should be the default setting, that the child feels and appreciates from their very infancy. Additionally, it's never too late to start. When a child feels that love, regardless of their behavior or lack of success in school and elsewhere, they will still emerge with enough self-confidence to become successful adults.

However, if they don't receive that love in abundance from us, they will begin to probe us to see if we really do love them. They may make themselves very un-lovable to put their insecurities about our love to the test. They may become rebellious, obnoxious and disrespectful. They are researching - to test the limits of our love. Will we love them even when they behave poorly and achieve little? It is precisely in those moments that they need us to 'accompany' them. We need to show them unconditional love. No matter how bad the behavior, no matter how much you criticize the behavior, you still love the child, for who he is.

"It is precisely in those moments that they need us to 'accompany' them."

Understanding the value of encouragement, confidence and love is critical in our role as parents. Children are discovering what life is all about and are determining where they fit in based upon their self-assessment. When they feel the parents' unconditional love they will know they are people of value, people who can aspire to great things because very important adults have shown them how much they esteem their essence and their potential.

May Hashem grant us the clarity and capability to convince our children beyond a shadow of a doubt – yes, we do love them.

Best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos,



Rabbi Kalman Baumann
Principal