

# FACING THE CHALLENGE

*by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch*

"Yaakov (Jacob) settled in the land of his father's sojourns, in the land of Canaan." (Beraishis/ Genesis 37:1) As the term "settled" is inconsistent with the Torah's usual verbiage, Rashi notes, "Yaakov sought to dwell in tranquility, but then the ordeal of Yosef (Joseph) was thrust upon him. The righteous seek to dwell in tranquility; the Holy One Blessed is He said, 'Do the righteous not consider that which is prepared for them in the World to Come to be enough for them that they seek to dwell in tranquility in this world as well?'" G-d decided that despite Yaakov's righteousness he should suffer the twenty-two year ordeal of believing Yosef was dead. This suffering was not a punishment for misdeeds; why did G-d want to afflict Yaakov in such a way?

The Talmud (Brachos 5a) teaches: If a person suffers, he should check his deeds to find what he may be doing wrong. If he finds nothing wrong he should assume he wasted Torah study time (i.e. perhaps he is not proactively doing the right things he should). If he finds that he is wasting no such time then his afflictions are afflictions of Divine love. In what way is causing people to suffer an expression of G-d's love?

Malbim (1) explains that through one's trials he becomes an improved person. It is only by facing life's challenges that he can actualize his potential. Furthermore, by overcoming this test he can serve as a role model and is in a better position to help and guide others in their time of need. While we can never completely understand why G-d runs the world the way He does, we can gain some invaluable insights. Our Sages teach us that this world is comparable to a corridor leading to the next world (Avos 4:21). Our life's objective is to realize our potential in this world to achieve the true spiritual rewards for our good deeds in the world to come. We think we would love to be able to do so without suffering, but in truth, we understand that an extra push is often needed to encourage our growth and to help others do the same.

*Have a Good Shabbos!*

(1) acronym for (Rabbi) Meir Leibush ben Yechiel Michel; 1809-1879; Rabbi in Germany, Romania and Russia, he was one of the preeminent modern Bible commentators, often demonstrating how the Oral Tradition is implicit in the Torah's text.

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