

“AND NOW, FEAR NOT, I [YOSEF] WILL FEED YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN...” (BEREISHIS 50:21)

AFTER YAAKOV'S DEATH, Yosef reassured his brothers that he bore no grudge against them. He then promised that he would continue to provide food for them and their families. He overlooked the wrongs that the brothers had perpetrated against him and instead of punishment, he treated them with kindness

Six hundred years later

Six hundred years later, Dovid HaMelech pointed to Yosef's righteous conduct as he beseeched Hashem to have compassion on B'nei Yisrael despite their improper behavior. Dovid said (Tehilim 80:2), “Shepherd of Israel, hear us, [You] lead Yosef like sheep.” The Metzudas Dovid explains that Dovid asked Hashem to lead and sustain Yosef – a reference to the Jewish people – like a shepherd tends to his sheep. The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni Tehilim 80), however, explains this *pasuk* on a deeper level: “Yosef” is used because Dovid was pleading with Hashem, “The brothers treated Yosef badly, yet Yosef treated them well; so too, Hashem, we have treated You poorly, nevertheless, act kindly to us.” In other words, Dovid HaMelech holds Yosef up as a role model worthy of emulation, asking Hashem to follow suit and deal kindly with us despite our sins.

Isn't Dovid's request disrespectful?

Isn't Dovid's request disrespectful? Imagine a rebellious subject appearing before a powerful monarch, pleading to save his own life and to receive continued sustenance. Aware that his criminal behavior would justifiably provoke the king to deny his request, he turns to the King and proclaims, “Your majesty, last year the mayor of a small village was kind to a citizen who, decades earlier, had severely beaten the mayor as a child; now you too, your majesty, be as kind and forgiving as he was.” This would surely be considered insolence and disrespect! “How dare you compare the king to one of his servants and tell him to act in the same manner?! Are you trying to tell the king what to do?” These would be understandable reactions of the king to such a brazen request. How could Dovid HaMelech have uttered such a prayer?

He fully understood Hashem's infinite love for us

In truth, Dovid HaMelech's entreaty **would** have been improper with a mortal monarch. It **is** *chutzpa* to ask a king to emulate the example of one of his subjects. However, Hashem's relationship with us is far beyond that of a human king and subject. Dovid was able to offer a prayer in this direct fashion because he fully understood Hashem's infinite love for us. In fact, Hashem's love for the Jewish people is even greater than the love of a father for his son, for it would be insolent even for a son to make such a request of his father. Hashem is so eager to hear our *tefilos* that we can pray with a different set of rules than would normally apply. He desires nothing more than to shower us with His blessings and give us our needs; He doesn't need our supplications to motivate Him to agree. Our *tefilos* are an additional *chesed* from Hashem that allows us to draw closer to Him by standing before Him in prayer.

May we appreciate how beloved we are to Hashem, as His chosen people and His precious children. When we have the privilege of speaking to the King of all kings in prayer, let us always feel His affection towards us, despite our mistakes and shortcomings. Let us beg Him for all that we need, knowing in our hearts that He waits so longingly to grant us blessings of peace, health, happiness and all that is good for us