



Rav Mendel Futerfus was a well-known *chasidish* Yid, who constantly risked his life to sanctify Hashem's name he was therefore imprisoned a lot in Soviet Russia for the "offense" of spreading Yiddishkeit. He later recounted the following story:

During his imprisonment, he was once sitting another few people, when a fellow inmate stood up one day and announced, "I am going to escape today!".

The others stared at him in disbelief. "You intend to escape? How? We are surrounded by guards monitoring us day and night. An escape is impossible!"

He responded, "You are mistaken. There are several minutes each day when we are not watched. Those moments occur during the changing of the guard shifts. When one group leaves and the other arrives, they lose focus on us for a brief period. I will escape during those minutes."

They questioned him, "What about the massive guard dog stationed at the gates? Even if you exit the prison, the dog will be right after you...That savage animal will hunt you down and tear you apart."

He replied cryptically, "I have a plan for that too," but offered no further details.

Everyone watched with an intensity bordering on terror to see what would unfold. During the shift change, the inmate began sprinting out of the facility. And to no surprise the guard dog gave chase, the escapee pulled a large piece of meat from his pocket and tossed it to the ground. The dog immediately pounced on the meat and ignored the man, allowing him to escape successfully.

When the head guard discovered what had happened, he became livid. He was so enraged by the dog's failure that he drew his weapon and shot it instantly. This deeply confused the other inmates. They could not fathom why the guard would kill a valuable, trained animal for failing to catch a prisoner just once.

The guard screamed in fury, "What use do I have for this dog? It is a constant burden to me. I must care for it every single day. The only reason I keep it is for the moment a prisoner tries to flee, so it can pursue him. I maintain it all year for those two minutes when it is actually valuable. If it cannot control its impulses for those two minutes, then it is worthless to me. I see now that I have no use for it. I certainly don't need a useless animal wandering around here!"

Reb Mendel concluded: This is a powerful lesson in *avodas Hashem*. A person must realize that his entire descent to this world is solely for those few critical moments when he faces a *nisayon* (challenge); that is the time when you are truly needed. For those two minutes when a person faces a challenge, it was for this exact purpose that you came down to this world! A Yid must always remember this: to utilize these moments and fulfill the primary purpose for which we are here.

For that difficult moment when one suddenly finds himself in the midst of a *nisayon*, upon this the entire world stands. And if one is privileged to withstand the *nisayon*, it is a merit beyond measure and beyond description.