



HAPPY CHANUKAH

Menorah Courtesy of
JudaicaMasterpieces.com

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Mikeitz Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

When Personal Initiative Belies Cosmic Intervention

CLICK TO VIEW!



1. Yosef was imprisoned by Potiphar for 10 years.
2. In year 10, 2 ministers of the king were also incarcerated.
3. Yosef was appointed to attend to their needs.
4. One was the wine steward, the other, the baker.
5. They both dreamed the same perturbing dream one night. Yosef offered interpretation.
6. The wine steward would be reinstated in three days and the baker would be hanged.
7. Yosef requested the wine steward remember him, mention his innocence, & how he was sold into slavery.
8. Midrash: because of this request, Yosef spent two more years in prison for a lack of faith. Why?
9. When one sees that it is G-d catapulting him to the top, taking initiative is a lack of faith.
10. When Yosef was sold as a slave to Potiphar, his level of success was extraordinary.
11. When incarcerated, he rose to unofficial warden.
12. As it was clear beyond doubt that G-d was directing Yosef's life, his initiative was considered a lack of faith.

The Catalyst For Love That Is All Embracing

CLICK TO VIEW!



Processing Life Through One's Own Prism

CLICK TO VIEW!



1. Pharaoh dreamt two dreams that were not interpreted to his satisfaction.
2. The wine steward informs Pharaoh there is someone in prison with him who has the ability to interpret dreams.
3. When he describes Yosef to Pharaoh, he depicts him in the most denigrating context to indicate that he has no qualifications other than interpreting dreams.
4. Each depiction was intended to disqualify him from rising to power.
5. Midrash: we are able to draw from the wine steward's depiction that when evil people do a good deed they cannot do it appropriately.
6. Yosef asked the wine steward to mention him to Pharaoh when reinstated hoping to be released.
7. The wine steward failed Yosef thus causing him to remain in prison an additional two years.
8. The wine steward believed if Yosef rose to power, he would put him to death as an act of revenge.
9. He therefore depicted him as an unqualified person not fit for royalty or any position of leadership for self preservation.
10. Yosef, as a Tzadik, understood his extended incarceration was only due to his own failings.
11. A Tzadik doesn't look for scapegoats to blame because of his belief and faith.
12. An evil person who doesn't have belief, attributes everything to cause and effect to oneself and others.
13. The wine steward being evil processed Yosef's predicament within his own purview thus concluding what he would do under the same circumstances.

Weekly Video: Deciphering the Encrypted Code

CLICK TO VIEW!



Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Mikeitz



HAPPY CHANUKAH

Menorah Courtesy of
JudaicaMasterpieces.com

Yosef's Unusual Level of Humility

The *Torah* tells us that Pharaoh had dreamt dreams. When he awoke he sought to have them interpreted. He summoned the Egyptian dream interpreters who were unable to interpret the dreams to his liking.

The *Torah* states, "Then the wine steward spoke up before Pharaoh, 'My transgressions do I mention today... We dreamt a dream on the same night, I and he; each according to the interpretation of his dream did we dream. And there with us, was a youth, a Hebrew, a slave of the chamberlain of the butchers; we related it to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us... and it was that just as he interpreted for us so did it happen...' When the wine steward mentioned Yosef, within the context of having the ability to interpret dreams, he referred to him in a most denigrating and demeaning manner.

The *Torah* states, "'So Pharaoh sent and summoned Yosef...I dreamt a dream, but no one can interpret

it. Now I heard it said of you that you comprehend a dream to interpret it.' Yosef answered Pharaoh saying, 'That is beyond me; it is G-d Who will respond with Pharaoh's welfare.'" Rather than attributing the ability to interpret dreams to himself in order to ingratiate himself to the king and establish his own credibility, Yosef unhesitatingly attributed his ability to G-d.

It is interesting to note that although Yosef was addressing Pharaoh, who was a pagan and the mightiest monarch in the world, he nevertheless was not intimidated to any degree to reveal his belief in G-d. Yosef did not consider that perhaps he was inappropriately stating his monotheistic beliefs to someone who had proclaimed himself as a god. Why did Yosef attribute his ability to G-d rather than to himself?

Chazal tell us that Yosef needed to remain in prison an additional two years as a punishment for a lack of faith. When Yosef had interpreted the wine steward's dream, Yosef had made a request of him, "If only you

would remember me with yourself when he (Pharaoh) benefits you, and you will do me a kindness, if you please, and mention me to Pharaoh, then you would get me out..."

Rashi cites *Chazal* who explain that because *Yosef* had expressed his request to the wine steward through two expressions; "remember me" and "mention me," he was destined to spend an additional two years in prison for those two statements. Thus, one may conclude that *Yosef* had attributed his abilities to G-d, regardless of Pharaoh's beliefs because he had learned his lesson well, regarding relying on the wine steward. He understood that regardless of the precariousness of his predicament, he needed to have faith in G-d and not resort to his own initiative. Thus, *Yosef* chose not to ingratiate himself to Pharaoh. However, it is clear this is not the correct understanding.

The *Torah* tells us that when *Yosef* was imprisoned with the wine steward and the baker he saw that they were both in a saddened state. As it is stated, "*Yosef* saw that that they were aggrieved...he asked, "why do you appear downcast today...they responded, "We dreamt a dream, but there is no interpreter for it." *Yosef* responded, "Do not interpretations belong to G-d?..."

Yosef offered to interpret their dreams because it is G-d who gives one the ability to decipher dreams. We see that *Yosef* had no reason to ingratiate himself to these two ministers, but rather he was stating his position of belief, that only G-d has the ability to interpret dreams, unrelated to his own ability. It was clearly an expression of his own humility. Therefore, when *Yosef* had expressed himself to Pharaoh regarding his dreams, it was unrelated to anything that had previously occurred. It was purely an expression of his humility and his belief in G-d.

The *Torah* states after *Yosef* was bought by *Potiphar*, "...His master saw that *Hashem* was with him, and whatever he did *Hashem* made succeed through him." *Potiphar* was a pagan and as some commentators explain, he was the head executioner in the court of Pharaoh. Thus, in addition to being a pagan he was an executioner who had almost no regard for human life. If *Potiphar* was a pagan who was devoid of spirituality, how was he able to sense that G-d was with *Yosef*?

Rashi cites *Chazal*, "It was because the name of heaven was continuously in his mouth." The *Midrash* states, "*Yosef* was constantly murmuring under his breath.

His master initially believed that he must be evoking incantations of witchcraft. *Potiphar* asked him, 'What are you saying?' *Yosef* responded, 'I am acknowledging my master G-d.'"

One would think that being a slave in the house of a minister of Egypt, who was a pagan, one would conceal his monotheistic beliefs for fear of his life. *Yosef*, despite all of the reasons to conceal his monotheistic beliefs, did not do so. He openly acknowledged G-d as his Master. To *Yosef*, his predicament of being a slave of a minister of Egypt was only a circumstance that was Willed by G-d. This was the basis for *Yosef*'s inner strength.

In every situation *Yosef* was in, regardless of its state of hopelessness at the time, he rose to a leadership position. For example, when he was placed in the house of his master *Potiphar* he quickly became the one responsible for his entire household and fortune. Although *Yosef* was exceptionally gifted in every respect, he understood that all the successes in his life were due to G-d Willing it to be so. Having this belief and mindset, *Yosef* did not consider attributing the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams to his own abilities. *Yosef* was therefore not concerned to express his beliefs in a manner as to not offend the Egyptian monarch. He continuously saw himself as being in the Hands of G-d.

It is interesting to note that the dreams of Pharaoh were truly prophetic. The *Gemara* in Tractate *Berachos* tells us that, "a dream goes after the mouth." Meaning, a dream will be actualized depending on how it is interpreted and expressed. If a dream is interpreted in a positive manner, it will be actualized in a positive manner. That same dream, if it is interpreted in a negative manner, will come to have negative consequences as interpreted.

Seemingly, according to this understanding, the dream interpreters of Egypt had already interpreted Pharaoh's dreams in a negative manner, before *Yosef* was summoned. If so, the dreams should have been actualized as interpreted. They had said that he would have seven daughters and he would bury all of them. He would conquer seven cities that would be recaptured. However, since his dreams were prophetic, their initial interpretations were irrelevant.

If Pharaoh had dreamt ordinary dreams that were not prophetic, then regardless of what *Yosef* would have

said, his interpretation would have had a limited effect. However, because they were prophetic, Yosef was only communicating what G-d had revealed through his dreams.

Yosef's Qualification to Become King

The *Torah* states, "'So Pharaoh sent and summoned Yosef...I dreamt a dream, but no one can interpret it. Now I heard it said of you that you comprehend a dream to interpret it.' Yosef answered Pharaoh saying, 'That is beyond me; it is G-d Who will respond with Pharaoh's welfare.'" Rather than taking credit for his own ability to interpret dreams, Yosef unhesitatingly attributed it to G-d.

The *Midrash* states, "Initially, Yosef was imprisoned in iron shackles, but he was ultimately exalted and elevated to greatness. As it states, 'Yosef was the ruler over all the land...' G-d said, 'Since you did not in any way elevate yourself (by attributing your ability to yourself), I swear on your life that you will merit to rise to greatness and kingship.'"

King Solomon writes in Proverbs, "A King through justice establishes the land..." It is the role of a Jewish king to establish and institute justice. According to Jewish law he is not permitted to waive his honor because he represents G-d. As G-d's representative he must be cognizant that his role is only to implement G-d's Dictate and Will. The power he possesses is not his own.

If the king were to take the power of his position for himself to further his own interests, then he would become corrupted because power corrupts. In order for the king not to be enticed by his exalted position as monarch, he must be continuously be cognizant of G-d's Presence, to have fear of heaven and reverence for Him. The Jewish king must always have in his presence a *Torah* scroll so that he should read from it to fear G-d. He thus will not attribute his position as king as his own domain but rather only to facilitate G-d's Will.

Prior to interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, Pharaoh said to him, "I understand that you have the ability to interpret dreams." Yosef responded, "It is not I, but rather G-d." When Pharaoh had suggested that he had the ability to interpret dreams, Yosef had the opportunity to ingratiate himself to the most powerful monarch in the

world by attributing his abilities to himself. However, because of his exceptional level of humility, Yosef attributed his ability to G-d.

It is because of Yosef's recognition that everything with which he was endowed was due to G-d's beneficence he was worthy to ascend to become king. Yosef was most qualified to be king because as the king, he would be a representation of G-d's Presence in existence. If Yosef had not attributed his abilities to G-d, he would not have been qualified to become the king because he would no longer be a representation of G-d.

We see that when Yosef was a slave in the household of *Potiphar*, his pagan master recognized that G-d was with Yosef, because he continuously uttered His Name, thus attributing everything to Him. *Potiphar* thus realized that all of Yosef's success was truly due to Yosef's connection with G-d. As it states, "...His master saw that *Hashem* was with him, and whatever he did *Hashem* made succeed through him." Yosef was a display of G-d's Presence in every context in which he would be found.

The *Torah* tells us that initially Yosef talebared to his father regarding his brothers' behavior. Yosef shared with their father *Yaakov* that he suspected that his brothers had been involved in illicit relations. *Chazal* tell us that Yosef was punished measure for measure for his tale bearing. For example, because he had said that his brothers were engaged in illicit affairs, the wife of his master *Potiphar* noticed his beauty and attempted to seduce him.

The *Torah* tells us that after Yosef had succeeded in his master's home and was given the responsibility to oversee all of his master's affairs, the *Torah* states, "Now Yosef was handsome of form and handsome of appearance..." *Rashi* cites *Chazal* who explain that Yosef had noticed himself and began to groom his hair (beautify himself).

The *Midrash* states, "When Yosef had assumed his position of power he began to eat and drink He groomed his hair... G-d said to him, 'Your father is covered in ash and dressed in sackcloth and is grieving for his son, and you eat, drink and groom yourself? Therefore I will send the bear after you...'" Meaning, the wife of *Potiphar* would notice Yosef's beauty and pursue him as a consequence of his insensitivity towards his father *Yaakov's* state of grieving. It was due to this

insensitivity that G-d punished *Yosef* by allowing the wife of his master to take an interest in him.

Seemingly, this is contradictory to the *Midrash* that had stated that *Yosef* was punished measure for measure with the wife of his master because he talebeared to his father about his brothers having illicit affairs. Factually, *Yosef* needed to be punished because of the insensitivity that he displayed by grooming himself while his father was in a state of mourning. However, because of his tale bearing regarding his brother's illicit affairs the punishment manifested itself in the form of measure for measure. Thus, his master's wife attempted to seduce him after noticing his beauty.

Yosef understood that his father was grieving for him. Despite this awareness, he chose to beautify himself. What was the value of this beautification? *Yosef*, the son of Rachel was the epitome of beauty. Despite his unique level of beauty, he was devoutly righteous and holy. The *Gemara* in Tractate *Yomah* tells us that *Yosef*, due to his exceptional level of beauty and spiritual dimension will be a basis for prosecution for all those with exceptionally beautiful who transgress the *Torah* due to their beauty. When one comes before the heavenly court, he will not be able to argue that he failed because of his exceptional level of beauty that G-d had given him. The court will say to him that *Yosef*, despite his exceptional level of beauty did not transgress and remained devout.

Although beauty is typically associated with physicality and desire, *Yosef* consecrated his beauty for the sake of G-d. He was a representation of G-d's Presence even within the context of his physicality. The *Gemara* in Tractate *Megillah* enumerates the four most beautiful women who ever lived. *Tosfos* asks, "Why is *Chava* not mentioned as one of the women listed in the *Gemara*? It is because her beauty was as a result of being the handiwork of G-d (G-d Himself created her), she could not be compared to any other woman in existence. It would be similar to comparing an ape to a human being."

Yosef, in his beauty, was the closest thing to the handiwork of G-d. Combined with his level of holiness, he was truly a sanctification of G-d's Name. Therefore, when *Yosef* assumed a position of power to oversee all the financial affairs of his master, he began to address his physicality by beautifying himself for people to appreciate that the value of the material is only to serve G-d. Nevertheless it was considered a claim

against him because if he had internalized his father's pain, he would not have addressed his beauty (despite it being for the sake of G-d).

Yosef, Integral to the Evolvement of the Jewish People

The *Torah* tells us that *Yosef* was appointed to be the Viceroy of Egypt, which was a position of great power. The *Torah* states, "Pharaoh said, 'See! I have placed you in charge of all the land of Egypt.'" The only condition placed upon *Yosef* by Pharaoh was that he should acknowledge him as the king. Other than that, *Yosef's* decisions regarding every aspect of Egypt was his domain.

The *Torah* states, "And to *Yosef* were born two sons... *Yosef* called the name of the firstborn *Manasseh* for, 'G-d has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's household.'" *Yosef* was thanking G-d for causing him to forget the hardships and anguish that he endured through his brothers and all that ensued. *Yosef* understood that it was truly miraculous that he was able to forget all the trauma and ridicule that he had experienced at the hands of his brothers.

One would think that the pain and emotional scars that *Yosef* had endured from the time he was thrown into a snake pit and sold into slavery due to his brothers' decision to remove him from their presence would be indelibly emblazed on his emotion and conscience. Nevertheless, G-d caused him to forget all that had transpired, as if it had never happened. Why was *Yosef* so thankful to G-d for causing him to forget that he named his firstborn son to acknowledge this fact? Was it merely because he felt relieved that he no longer experienced the trauma and pain of the past?

Yosef's brothers had hated and despised him, because they believed that all of his tale bearing to their father was to disenfranchise from being part of the future of Jewish people. It reached a point that they considered killing him. It was only because there was a caravan of Ishmaelites that was passing by that *Yehudah* suggested that they not should not leave *Yosef* in the pit to die, but rather sell him into slavery.

After being sold as a slave, *Yosef* experienced many levels of suffering. His greatest pain came from being denied his special relationship with his father *Yaakov*.

Yaakov's love for Yosef was greater than for all of his other sons because he saw him as the spiritual heir regarding guaranteeing the spirituality of his family and the Jewish people. The teachings and the spiritual mentoring that Yosef was denied was incalculable.

Yosef was mentored by his father to address all of the spiritual issues of the Jewish people in exile. He understood that his mission, as the son of Yaakov, was to prepare Egypt for the Jewish exile that was going to take place. He was to create an insular spiritual environment to guarantee the spiritual and material survival of his family in Egypt. Had it not been for Yosef's selfless dedication and sacrifice for his family, the Jewish people would not have evolved into a people who would stand at Sinai and declare, "Naaseh v'nishma (we will do and we will listen)."

It was only because of Yosef who was uniquely qualified and sensitive to contend with all of the issues of exile, were the Jewish people able to maintain themselves as a spiritual family. This was similar to what Yaakov had done for his family in the home of Lavan. All of the *Torah* that Yaakov had studied in the *Yeshiva of Aiver*, which was the *Torah* specific to the spiritual challenges that existed outside of the Land of Israel, was transmitted to Yosef.

Despite the depravity of Egypt and its pagan culture, Yosef remained unaffected as "Yosef ha'tzaddik (Yosef the devoutly righteous)." In order for Yosef to assume his role, as the sustainer and provider for his family, he could not have any sense of negativity towards his brothers and their. The hardships and suffering that he had endured due to his brothers' initiative would have hindered and interfered with his mission. The degree of dedication that was needed for Yosef to succeed was overwhelming.

Since Yosef's positive mindset was an imperative for the future of the Jewish people, for the specific purpose of existence (meeting its objective that there should be a Jewish people who would accept the *Torah* at Sinai), G-d caused him to forget all that he had suffered at the hands of his brothers as if it never happened. Yosef, recognizing this fact, acknowledged and declared his thankfulness to G-d for bringing about something that under normal circumstances would have not been possible. Forgetting the trauma and pain that his brothers had brought upon him was the equivalent of a miracle. By naming his firstborn *Manasseh*, Yosef

declared his thankfulness to G-d for allowing him to be the effective agent to bring about a Jewish people.

The *Torah* tells us that Yosef spent twelve years in prison. He was incarcerated for ten years, because his master's wife had accused him of attempting to rape her and he spent an additional two years because he had put his faith in a heathen, the wine steward, to assist him to be released from prison. Had Yosef not spent twelve years in prison, he would have risen to power twelve years earlier to begin addressing the preparations that were needed for the Jewish exile. If he had done so, the Jewish people would have been even more spiritually insulated, to be affected to a lesser degree from the exile in Egypt.

Chazal tell us that Yaakov was meant to live 180 years; however, because he had uttered thirty-three words that were considered inappropriate for one of his spiritual dimension to Pharaoh, G-d deducted thirty-three years from his life for each one of the words that he had said. The *Torah* tells us that after Yaakov passed away, "The eyes and hearts of the Jewish people became sealed..." This indicated that even at the most subliminal level there was no spiritual decline whatsoever as long as Yaakov was alive.

Had Yaakov not passed away thirty-three years earlier, the spiritual erosion of the Jewish people would have begun thirty-three years later. They would have thus been less affected by their bondage. Despite the spiritual drawbacks of Yosef being imprisoned for twelve years and Yaakov passing away thirty-three before his time, which were both the Will of G-d, the Jewish people were sufficiently spiritual prepared and insulated to survive the long and arduous exile.

Pharaoh Securing His Position as Monarch

The *Torah* states after Yosef was appointed to be the Viceroy of Egypt, "And Pharaoh removed his ring from his hand and put it on Yosef's hand, He then had him dressed in garments of fine linen and he placed a gold chain upon his neck. He also had him ride in his second royal chariot...Pharaoh called him, 'Zaphenaspaneach and he gave him Asenas daughter of Potiphera...for a wife.'" Why did Pharaoh give the name "Zaphenaspaneach" to Yosef? *Rashi* in his commentary explains that the name means, "the one who reveals the hidden."

Seemingly, it is an appropriate name for *Yosef*, because he was the one who was able to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh when the Egyptian dream interpreters could not. Because *Yosef* was able to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh, Egypt was able to sufficiently prepare for the difficult famine that was going to come upon the region and to survive it. Not only did Egypt survive the famine, because of *Yosef's* initiative, it became the wealthiest nation in the world because all civilization needed to purchase their grain from Egypt during the years of famine.

Why did Pharaoh give *Yosef Asenas*, the daughter of *Potiphera*, to be his wife? It is something that is unusual to be given a wife such as this because he had been a slave in her mother's household and she attempted to seduce him. In addition, when her advances failed, she accused him of attempting to rape her. It was because of her accusation that *Yosef* needed to spend many years in prison.

Pharaoh was amazed by *Yosef's* abilities. He recognized that *Yosef's* dimension of genius came from the Divine. As it states, "Pharaoh said to his servants, 'Could we find another like him- a man in whom is the spirit of G-d?'" Pharaoh understood that *Yosef* had the capability to recognize the issue and fully resolve it instantaneously. Because of *Yosef's* extraordinary abilities, Pharaoh had faith in him and believed that Egypt would be saved due to *Yosef's* genius and leadership.

Yosef was the only human being who had the ability to secure Egypt and cause it to survive and thrive. Understanding that *Yosef* had this level of ability and power, Pharaoh was concerned that if he were to rise to power, it could be that *Yosef* would take over Egypt and dethrone him. It was because of this that Pharaoh felt the need to reiterate to *Yosef*, "...only by the throne shall I outrank you." It is clear that Pharaoh was insecure giving *Yosef* this level of power, although he understood that there was no other way for Egypt to survive without him being in this position.

The way Pharaoh ensured and secured his monarchy, so that *Yosef* would never be in a position to dethrone him is that he gave him the name "*Zaphenas-paneach*." By doing so, *Yosef* was labeled as the one who rose to power only because he was the one who was able to interpret the dreams of the king. He did not rise to such a position because of his own stature or ability, but rather because Pharaoh appointed him. Thus, it

would not be forgotten that that *Yosef* was a commoner that was empowered by the king, thus guaranteeing Pharaoh's monarchy.

Keeping with this strategy to ensure his position as monarch, Pharaoh gave *Yosef Asenas* daughter of *Potiphera* to be his wife. By establishing this relationship, all would be continuously reminded that *Yosef* initially was a slave in the house of his wife's parents. However, by emphasizing this fact in *Yosef's* background in an attempt to keep in from rising beyond his appointed station, Pharaoh created a problem for himself. It was written in the protocols of Egypt that a slave could never ascend to a level of power in Egypt.

The ministers of Pharaoh complained that it was against the Egyptian protocol to appoint *Yosef* as the Viceroy if he had the pedigree of a slave. To this claim, Pharaoh responded to his ministers that *Yosef's* family was in fact royalty. Although he had never met *Yosef's* family, he believed that by telling his ministers this, it would quell their complaints and allow him to continue with his appointment of *Yosef*.

The *Torah* tells us that when *Yaakov* and his family came to Egypt, and it was obvious that they were a family of royalty, Pharaoh was relieved. As it states, "It found favor in the eyes of Pharaoh and his household." It was thus confirmed that *Yosef* was indeed from royal lineage and not that of a slave. However, initially because of his insecurity, Pharaoh needed to identify *Yosef* as one who had been a slave in order to keep him at bay. After *Yosef's* integrity and level of humility became obvious to Pharaoh he no longer was concerned that he would attempt to dethrone him.

Contending with the Influences and Evils of Society (from *Vayeishev*)

The *Torah* tells that the wife of *Potiphar* continuously attempted to seduce *Yosef*, who was taken into the service of her husband as a slave. *Potiphar*, who was a minister in the court of Pharaoh, recognizing *Yosef's* special abilities placed *Yosef* in the charge of his household and all of his assets. The *Midrash* tells us that as a method of seduction, she would change her clothing several times a day in order to entice *Yosef*. As time went on, her advances became increasingly more bold and threatening to *Yosef*. When he refused her

advances, or even to gaze upon her, she threatened to harm and destroy him. Despite all of her threats, *Yosef* was not intimidated by the wife of *Potiphar*, his master.

The *Torah* states, "After these things, his master's wife cast her eyes upon *Yosef* and she said. 'Lie with me.' But he adamantly refused..." The cantillation that is on the word "But he adamantly refused" is a "*shalsheles*." The *shalsheles* is a cantillation that is rarely found in the *Torah*. This cantillation is to indicate that the subject is experiencing a nearly impossible inner struggle with his inclination. *Yosef* needed extraordinary self-control and inner strength not to succumb to her beauty and advances.

The *Torah* continues, "He said to his master's wife, 'Look - with me here, my master concerns himself about nothing in the house, and whatever he has placed in my custody. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has denied me nothing but you, since you are his wife; how then can I perpetrate this great evil and have sinned against G-d!' It is interesting to note that the order that *Yosef* chose to the rebuff the advances of his master's wife. He first assumed the posture of rational and logical reasoning, to explain to her that *Potiphar*, had given him responsibility over his entire household, and had fully trusted him. If he were to lie with her, as she had requested, then he would be considered an ingrate. Such a degree of disrespect and lack of appreciation towards his master was unacceptable to *Yosef*. However in conclusion, *Yosef* explained that if he were to acquiesce to her request and lie with her, he would have "sinned against G-d."

When one is conflicted with temptation, although on a rational basis it is something that one could not consider because its wrongness, because of one's conflict of interest one could rationalize and justify the wrong and see it as something that is permitted. Therefore, *Yosef* initially addressed the issue on a rational level; however, he understood that the only way he would retain control over himself and see the act as an evil that could not be justified, was to regard it as being contrary to G-d's Will and therefore prohibited. Why did *Yosef* initially approach the issue on a rational level and then resorted to the position that he could not transgress was because it was against G-d's Dictate?

The *Torah* tells us that after *Yaakov* had become very wealthy in the home of his father-in-law *Lavan*, due to an agreement that they negotiated between them.

Yaakov had overheard the murmurings of his brothers in law saying that he had taken the wealth of their father. Then he noticed that the countenance of his father in law had also changed. Immediately after realizing his precarious situation, G-d appeared to *Yaakov* and said to him that he must to his father's household.

Upon hearing G-d's command, *Yaakov* summoned his wives into the field and said to them, "I have noticed that your father's disposition is not toward me as in earlier days...with all my might I served your father..." He continues to explain to them that despite all of his hard work and sacrifice, their father *Lavan* had cheated him multiple times. At night he was consumed by the cold and in the day he was scorched by the heat. Nevertheless, *Yaakov* remained selflessly dedicated to their father *Lavan*.

After presenting all the reasons for the need to leave their father's household, which were compelling facts, *Yaakov* concludes that they needed to leave because G-d had instructed him to return to his father's household in *Canaan*. Why did *Yaakov* need to provide a rational explanation to Rachel and *Leah* who were Matriarchs prior to telling them that it was due to G-d's dictate that they needed to return to *Canaan*? Why did he first present them with a rational understanding for why they needed to leave?

Although Rachel and *Leah* were Matriarchs, maybe one would say that *Yaakov* felt that it would be too difficult for them to leave their father's household solely based upon G-d's command for them to do so. Thus, *Yaakov* first presented them with a rational understanding for them to fully embrace the dictate of G-d.

Similarly, we can say that *Yosef* was following the methodology that was taught to him by his father *Yaakov*. He had first rebuffed the wife of his master in a rational manner and then conclude that he could not submit because it was contrary to the Will of G-d. However, what must be understood is how did *Yaakov* himself come upon this understanding?

The *Torah* tells us that after *Yaakov* had become enormously wealthy, he had overheard the murmurings of his brothers in law - the sons of *Lavan* who said, "*Yaakov* has taken all that belonged to our father, and from that which belonged to our father he amassed all this wealth..." *Yaakov* understood that G-d had made him privy to this information for a reason. It

was because G-d wanted him to hear what they were saying. After this event, he saw that the countenance of his father-in-law was no longer the same towards him, which was a further indication that it was time for him to leave.

However, after coming to this realization on his own that he needed to leave, G-d said *Yaakov* that he needed to return to *Canaan*. If it were the Will of G-d for *Yaakov* to leave the household of *Lavan*, then why did G-d first want him to be privy to all the indicators that he must leave before commanding him to do so? It was evident to *Yaakov*, through his own personal sequence of events that G-d wanted him to understand that one must first understand rationally his own predicament and then after appreciating this, one must submit to G-d's Will. Thus, when *Yaakov* spoke to his wives regarding their departure, his order of presentation was identical to what G-d had exposed him to.

Yosef, being the disciple of his father, was taught all of the special *Torah* that *Yaakov* had learned in the *Yeshiva* of *Aver*. This *Torah* was not taught to any of the other children of *Yaakov*. It dealt specifically with how to contend with all the trials and tribulations of exile and to survive its challenges. Thus, *Yosef* understood that the first approach is to deal with one's predicament on a rational bases and then ultimately act upon it because it is the Will of G-d. Therefore, when *Yosef* explained to the wife of *Potiphar* why it was unacceptable for him to acquiesce and submit to her advances, he first presented her a rational argument. Ultimately, he concluded that he could not do such evil, because it would be a "sin against G-d."

We, being in exile, need to learn from *Yaakov*, who was considered the Patriarch of exile, how one must deal with negative influences. We must first appreciate the negativity and the detriment of the values and behavior of society. This can only be achieved through the study of *Torah* to understand and internalize the value and meaning of spirituality and the destructive nature of a sin. However, this alone is not sufficient. We must always conclude that the reason one is not permitted to transgress is because one cannot violate the Word of G-d, which is one rooted in one's fear of G-d.



Yad Avraham Institute