

# FAMILY VALUES

*by Rabbi Dovid Green*

This week's parsha is the dramatic climax of the story of Yoseif and his brothers. First, they sell him as a slave to Egypt. Afterwards, Yoseif achieves phenomenal success in his position, only to end up in prison for 12 years, accused of a crime he didn't commit. Then again he goes from the despair of prison to become Prime Minister of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. Now Yoseif's brothers are standing before him, and they don't even know he is Yoseif. They reluctantly brought Binyomin as he requested, and now Binyomin is accused of stealing Yoseif's silver cup, and the punishment is that he must remain in Egypt as his slave.

Yehudah committed himself to bring Binyomin back to his father Yaakov, and as a result, he enters into a dialogue with Yoseif with the goal of convincing Yoseif to take him in exchange for Binyomin.

At the end of Yehudah's request, Yoseif is moved. He can no longer conceal his identity. He sends everyone else out, and only he and his brothers remain. "I am Yoseif, is my father still alive?" "And his brothers could not answer him, because they were devastated before him."

The Talmud in Tractate Chagiga (4b) states as follows. "When Rabbi Elazar came to this passage he cried...'if the rebuke of people is such (that Yoseif's brothers were so devastated by his rebuke), the rebuke of G-d, how much more so'."

Rabbi Avraham Pam, the Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vodaas, asks, what was Yoseif's rebuke to his brothers? Didn't he just say "I am Yoseif"? Rav Pam quotes the Maharsha's answer that the brothers were devastated by the thought of what they expected to come next, namely his rebuke for what they did to him. They were embarrassed that they could not bear his rebuke.

Rav Pam also quotes the Bais HaLevi who answers that Yoseif's subsequent words were his rebuke. "Is my father still alive?" That is to say: is it possible that after all of the pain you caused my father by selling me to Egypt, that he is still alive?

Rav Pam offers his own explanation of what Yoseif's rebuke was. "I am Yoseif." I'm the Yoseif that you hated and denigrated. You didn't consider who I really might be. You didn't think that my dreams would be completely fulfilled. You never imagined that I would end up being the Prime Minister of Egypt! In your wildest dreams you never thought that I would be G-d's messenger to save the entire land with food during these years of famine!! Can you imagine that you sold such a person as a slave, with such a mission in life!!

Rav Pam quotes the Talmud (Tractate Bava Basra 10b) which states that Yoseif, son of Rabbi Yehoshua, saw the next world, and said "I saw a reverse world, the higher-ups were low, and the low were high." It means that the things we place value on in this world are the opposite of what has true value according to the view in the world of truth.

Rav Pam concludes that the lesson to us is that in our view of others, and in our view of ourselves, we need to understand that we often attribute much less worth than what is truly there. We often treat others with much less respect than what is due them. Imagine how we will feel when we see how special these people really are!

When we stop to think about Rav Pam's insightful words, and consider who we most need to apply them to, many will agree that it is to those we are closest to. We should take to heart that our family members; our parents, our spouses, our siblings, and our children often bear the brunt of an under-evaluation of their true worth. Let us take these words to heart. In the future when we will see their true worth in terms of the bigger picture, we will be glad we made our efforts to treat them as they truly deserve.

Good Shabbos.

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