

THE IDEAL ANSWER, OR THE ANSWER OF IDEALS

by Rabbi Dovid Green

This week's parsha begins with Pharaoh dreaming two dreams which he could not understand. All of Pharaoh's wise men could not adequately explain the dream to him. The Royal Butler then informs Pharaoh of Yoseif, who is languishing in jail, and who perfectly interpreted his and the Royal Baker's dream in last week's parsha. "And Pharaoh summoned Yoseif, and they rushed him from the prison...and he came before Pharaoh." Pharaoh addresses Yoseif: "I heard that you can interpret dreams." Yoseif replies, It is not I, but G-d who will speak for Pharaoh's well being." (Genesis 41:14-16).

Consider all that Yoseif has gone through. First he is sold to Egypt, then he is sold as a slave where he works for Potifar, the head butcher. Potifar's wife is attracted to him, and realizing that he will never reciprocate, she frames him and has him locked up in prison.

Twelve long years pass, and one morning the door opens and Yoseif is brought before Pharaoh. None of the wisest advisors in Egypt were able to explain Pharaoh's dream to him. Only Yoseif was able. The greatest honor was being done to Yoseif at this moment. "I heard you can interpret dreams." Even in Yoseif's wildest imagination he would not have imagined that he would find himself in this situation.

If we would be standing in Yoseif's shoes with a clear mind, how would we answer Pharaoh? We would be filled with such a feeling of self-importance, and at the same time, happiness at this opportunity to achieve our freedom. We would weigh every word very carefully. We certainly would not want to jeopardize in any way our possibilities of remaining free. We certainly would not interject anything seemingly irrelevant. Even more, we certainly would not correct Pharaoh regarding something we disagreed with him about. Yet Yoseif answers "it is not I, but G-d Who will speak for Pharaoh's well being."

The Alter of Kelm comments that this is the Torah's lesson to us regarding the profundity of the education we receive in our formative years. Yoseif was so imbued with the knowledge that G-d is the One who gave him the ability to interpret the dreams that he did not even consider any of the aforementioned concerns. The education which he received from his parents was such that even though he left home at seventeen years of age, he held fast to their teachings. From this we can see the deep roots which we can cultivate in children that even the strongest winds cannot uproot.

Another lesson we learn from this is that we should never be embarrassed to express our ideals, even if others would not understand. Just as Yoseif spoke his beliefs to people who could not at all

relate, we too should not be ashamed to manifest our ideals in tangible ways. In the long run people will attribute value to our efforts just as Pharaoh did with Yoseif. Pharaoh himself states this after Yoseif interprets his dreams, "Being that _G-d_ has made all of this known to you there is no one with wisdom and understanding such as you."

Are we imbuing those in our care with ideals which we hope will last? Is the exposure they are getting the kind that would give them strength and convictions? We should always keep in mind the wise words of the Alter of Kelm and the words of Yoseif, as the guides for the type of education we should give to our children and those who follow our example.

Good Shabbos!

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