

# JUST SAY NO

*by Rabbi Dovid Green*

The Torah places a great deal of emphasis on self-control. "Who is mighty? He who conquers his inclinations." as the verse states (Proverbs 15) "greater is the one who is slow to anger than a mighty warrior, and (greater is) one who rules his spirit than a conqueror of a city." (Chapters of the Fathers, Chap. 4).

The Yalkut Lekach Tov quotes Rabbi Meir Rubman in his work Zichron Meir in his relating this to Yosef in this week's parsha. He notes that we see from the aforementioned that greater strength is required to rule over oneself than that required to conquer a city. One's inclination to wrongdoing (each on one's own level) is so strong that one cannot defeat it without great strength and strategy.

With whom do we see this greatness? We find it with Yosef. When Yosef's brothers came to Egypt the Torah states "and he recognized them." Immediately afterward in the next verse the Torah repeats "and Yosef recognized his brothers." (Genesis 42:7-8) The repetition is meant to convey something extra to us. That is, that Yosef recognized them as brothers, and felt brotherly toward them, as Rashi explains.

This is proven by the statement that Yosef made when he named his son Menashe. "For G-d has made me forget all of my troubles, and even my father's house." (Genesis 41:50) How can Yosef forget his father's house, and how would he know he has forgotten his father's house? Obviously that is not the plain meaning. Rather, the meaning is that Yosef has forgiven his brothers for their having sold him.

Yosef understood that his dreams had to be fulfilled, that he rule over his brothers, and that he had to hide his identity from them. This took great control on the part of Yosef as he really wanted to reveal himself to them.

The message is that Yosef used self-control in order to do G-d's will - the right thing. Self-control is basic Judaism. We learn it from Yosef.

This point is may seem trivial, but in today's world the trend seems to be to continually add to the list of things one no longer needs to say no to. Self-control seems prudish and somewhat out-dated, but it is really revolutionary and innovative.

If I may add my own two cents, I would even say that emotional happiness is tied in with self-control, because when people give in to themselves, and they violate the convictions of their souls, it brings

them sadness.

Self-control is a key to happiness and greatness. This is one of the great lessons which Yosef continues to impart to his generations, and it is ever so relevant.

Good Shabbos!

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