

# NO OLD FRIENDS

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

*And a new king arose on Egypt that did not know Joseph. (Shemos 1:8)*

And a new king arose: Rav and Shmuel argue. One says he was actually a new king while the other says he created new decrees. (Rashi)

...that did not know Joseph: He made himself as if he didn't know! (Rashi)

"The person that denies the kindness of his friend will tomorrow deny the kindness of his Maker. So it says by Pharaoh, "that did not know Joseph"...in the end he denied the beneficence of the Holy One Blessed be He, as it says, "And Pharaoh said, 'Who is HASHEM that I should listen to His voice?'" (Mishnas Rebbe Eliezer)

Why and how does it work that way?

In the Siddur HaGra, the Siach Yitzchok asks, why after declaring HASHEM Echod, G-d's Absolute Unity, in the daily Shema, does the verse then demand, "And you should love HASHEM your G-d with all your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your might..." How can the Torah legislate about love? From where does all this fountain of love suddenly spring by simply stating - "HASHEM is One"?

We tend to have affection for those who constitute the constellation of our support system. Our love is distributed to all these facilitators of our good. However when we close our eyes and contemplate the notion that all these agencies of our happiness are actually emanating from one sublime source, those feelings are then focused into a rich concentration of love. Then the expression follows more naturally, "And you should love HASHEM your G-d..."

If one recognizes the good done to him by his friend, he can more easily register thanks to HASHEM. This may help explain why the 5th Commandment of honoring parents is on the side of the tablets designated for Mitzvos between man and G-d.

I once heard from Rabbi Avigdor Miller ztl. that if one bentches (says the after blessing for food) and yet fails to express thanks to the chef, waiter, mom, wife, who sweated to meet his needs, then his bentching is, considered according to "mussar" standards worthless. Why? Since we tend to experience life in concrete terms, it is not likely that we can bypass the local tangible actors that serve our immediate needs and then sincerely leap to the loftiest level of abstract thought. The blessing is presumed to be lacking authentic gratitude.

There was a fellow who stepping out onto the golf course removed a brand new Top-Flight ball from a cellophane wrapper and proceeded to hook it deep into the woods. He moved ahead, took out another new ball and sliced it "Kerr-plunk" into the middle of a pond. A third time he unwrapped a brand new golf ball, and in typical fashion whacks it onto a highway where a passing hay truck carries it to destinations unknown. About to take out a fourth new ball in as many swings, the caddie diplomatically interjects, "Why don't you use an old ball?" He wryly replies, "I don't have any old balls!"

Joseph had not only saved Egypt from famine but he collected the wealth of the world and consolidated Pharaoh's empire. Yet Pharaoh revised the historical record to purge away any appreciation for what Joseph had done. Having burned his bridges with the past, Pharaoh now needed to invent a new paradigm of reality. Blind to contributions from the more recent past, he is surely in denial of the most "Ancient One" from the deepest past. Such a person has to keep changing the rules, searching desperately for new solutions and allies because he has left himself in the end with no old friends. Text Copyright &copy 2004 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.