

AS AMAZING AS YOSEF HATZADIK

by Rabbi Label Lam

And Yosef could no longer hold himself back in front of all that were standing by him and so he called, "Go out all men from nearby me!" and no man stood near him when Yosef let his brothers know. And he gave a cry out with his weeping voice, and the Egyptians heard, and the house of Pharaoh, and Yosef said to his brothers, "I am Yosef! Is my father still alive?" And his brothers were not able to answer him because they were confounded from him. (Breishis 45:1-3)

Yosef took an awful risk by sending away the Egyptians and leaving himself unprotected before a desperate and dangerous audience. Why did he do it? The Midrash asks and answers: "Go out all men from nearby me!" Why did Yosef do this? Rabbi Shmuel Bar Nachman said, "Yosef put himself in mortal danger, leaving himself without protection, that his brothers might kill him. After all, no one recognized him. So why did he say, "Go out all men from near by me!"? So said Yosef in his heart, "It is better that I should be killed, only that I should not embarrass my brothers in front of the Egyptians!"

Amazing! The most powerful instinct in a person is to remain alive and yet Yosef was willing to risk everything just so as not to embarrass his brothers. Any doubts we might have had about the purity of his motive for the torturous game of "cat and mouse" he played with his brothers were also clarified in those moments before he revealed his true identity. Not only was not it not done out of cruelty or callousness but it was certainly based on love and compassion. 1) He wanted to make sure they had done a complete Teshuva which can only be determined if they find themselves in the exact same situation and they react differently. 2) Since they had judged him to be a false prophet based upon the pronouncements of his dreams, he needed to see the fulfillment of at least one dream, eleven bundles bowing down to his, even if he had to manipulate the last percentage manually.

How did Yosef do it? How did he muster the courage to hold his ocean of emotions from bursting forth just long enough till the Egyptians had left? How did he develop the instinct to not shame his brothers?

When Reb Moshe Feinstein ztl. was already an elderly man he was asked as many sages of the Talmud, "Why have you merited such a long life?" He answered, "I tried my whole life never to hurt another human being." The following story illustrates to what extent this principal was installed into

the very psyche of his being: A group of Yeshiva students were respectfully escorting the Reb Moshe to a car that was waiting curbside. As soon as he was in and the door was slammed shut, the driver started on his way. A few blocks away, Reb Moshe urged the driver to pull over to the side of the road and stop for a moment. Once the car halted Reb Moshe opened the car door and removed his fragile and aged hand from where it was crushed when the door was shut by one of the students. The drivers was aghast and so he asked Reb Moshe, "Why didn't the Rabbi say something back there?" Reb Moshe replied, "If I would have reacted just then, the poor fellow that closed the door would never have forgiven himself." Wow! How can one ever be prepared enough for such a test!? It's certainly a principled decision and the work of a lifetime!

Stronger than the reactivity to his own physical pain, having sensitivity to the feelings of others. That's **as amazing as Yosef HaTzadik!** DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.