

# LEARNING HIS LESSON

*by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch*

"It happened at the end of two years to the day: Pharaoh was dreaming that, behold, he was standing over the river.[Yosef (Joseph) said to Pharaoh,] 'Now let Pharaoh seek out a discerning and wise man and set him over the land of Egypt.'" (Beraishis/Genesis 41:1, 33) For placing too much faith in the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers to secure his release from prison, and not relying on G-d for his salvation, Yosef was Divinely punished with two additional years of incarceration (see Rashi's explanation of 40:23). G-d punishes with the intent of the recipient learning the appropriate lesson so he may correct his errant ways. But Yosef's suggestion of the necessary skill set of a candidate for viceroy appears as an appeal to Pharaoh to release him so he may himself assume the position. Once again, Yosef requested salvation from a fellow human. Did "Yosef the Tzaddik (Righteous One)" not learn his lesson during his two years in prison?

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (1) explains we know that Yosef did learn that G-d exclusively controls the success and destiny of all the world's inhabitants, as evidenced by his reply to Pharaoh's request. "And Pharaoh said to Yosef (Joseph), 'I dreamt a dream but no one can interpret it. Now I heard it said of you that you comprehend a dream to interpret it.' Yosef answered Pharaoh saying, 'That is beyond me; it is G-d who will respond with Pharaoh's welfare.'" (v. 15-16). Indeed, by stating so unequivocally that he played no active role in the deciphering of the dreams, he completely undermined the misconception that "you comprehend a dream to interpret it", likely destroying his last opportunity to ever be released from prison.

By doing so, concludes Rabbi Dessler, Yosef demonstrated the completeness of his dependence on a Divine resolution to his crisis, negating all reliance on his own actions. Working within this mindset, Yosef's suggestion to Pharaoh regarding the viceroy did not constitute a breach. A lack of faith is not demonstrated by a particular action but by the mindset behind that action. Giving Pharaoh the "opportunity" to release him while maintaining a complete unswerving reliance on Divine kindness is, indeed, the embodiment of exhibiting faith in G-d.

*Have a Good Shabbos!*

(1) in Michtav Me'Eliyahu, his collected writings and discourses; 1891- 1954; of London and B'nai Brak, one of the outstanding personalities and thinkers of the Mussar movement.

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