



## Parsha Perspectives RABBI LEIBY BURNHAM

שמני אלקים לאדון לכל מצרים

*"G-d has made me a lord over all of Egypt."* (Genesis 45:9)

**A**fter Joseph revealed his true identity to his brothers, he sent them back to their father Jacob, with the request that the whole family move down to Egypt where Joseph would support them throughout the seven-year famine. However, part of the message that Joseph sent back to his father seems strange: "G-d has made me a lord over all of Egypt" (Genesis 45:9). Understandably, Joseph was trying to persuade his father to come down to Egypt; but did he think that bragging about his vast power would impress Jacob? Did he think Jacob would be more inclined to move his holy family to a country filled with materialistic pagans just because his son had a good job and lots of power?

Rabbi Yaakov Neiman says that Joseph was not trying to brag about the great power he wielded, but his perspective on that great power. When the average person gets a raise or a promotion, they usually attribute it to their boss, the human resources department, or more often, their own hard work — "I got the raise for closing a major deal."

Joseph, on the other hand, shared none of these illusions. When he described the incredible promotion he got, he made it abundantly clear that "G-d has made me a lord over all of Egyptians," with the emphasis on the first part of the sentence. Jacob would see that despite Joseph's meteoric rise to power, despite being immersed in a culture whose leaders usually made deities out of themselves, Joseph was able to maintain his faith and recognize that everything

comes from G-d. He hoped that once Jacob understood that he could retain his Jewish beliefs and perspectives in Egypt, he would be willing to move his family there.

This message resonates today more than ever. People are being hired and fired, promoted and demoted, in a chaotic economic environment the likes of which we have never seen before. Like Joseph, it is important for us to recognize that G-d is the Ultimate Boss, the One who really decides our career path. He's the One to Whom we should speak to when we need a bit of career help, or to give thanks for our success.

Our forefather Joseph blazed a pathway for us, teaching that, despite the prevailing culture's attitude on success, we can maintain our perspective: the ultimate

success is a life lived with an awareness of G-d and all He does for us.

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### WORD of the WEEK רגז

When Joseph sent his brothers back to Canaan to bring their father, he said to them, "Don't תרגזו — *tirgezu* on the way" (Genesis 45:24). Onkelos translates this as "don't argue," probably connecting the word to the root רגז — *rogez* — anger. Similarly, the Ibn Ezra understands the phrase as "don't become angry with each other." Rashbam takes a completely different view and translates it as "don't be afraid of anything on the way." Rabbi David Kimchi (*Sefer Hashorashim*) connects both translations to the root רגז — *regez*, which he understands as "tremble or shake," like someone who is either very afraid or very angry. Rashi interprets the phrase either as a warning against excessive, deep Torah study on the road, which can be a dangerous distraction, or not to take very large steps. He agrees, however, that the simple reading means not to argue and engage in recriminations and accusations.

## Table Talk FOR DISCUSSION AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE

Jacob called for his sons and said, "Assemble yourselves and I will tell you what will befall you in the end of days." However, instead of relating what will happen at the end of days, instead Jacob changed the subject, introducing the blessings he would give to all his children (Genesis 49:1-3). Based on the Midrash, Rashi explains this change in course: Jacob intended to tell his children when the Messiah would come, but G-d removed His Divine presence, preventing him from sharing this information.

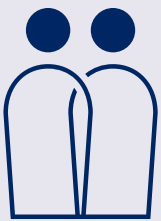
- א) Obviously, Jacob felt it important to speak about the end of days. Why, then, might G-d have prevented him from sharing this information?
- ב) Since G-d prevented Jacob from telling his sons about the end of days, the Torah is essentially relating an event that did not occur. It seems as though this section could simply have been omitted from the Torah. What important lesson can we learn from this?

### HEY, I NEVER KNEW THAT!

Joseph's brothers reported back to their father that Joseph was alive and well and that "he ruled over Egypt." Rabbi Moshe Sofer (Chasam Sofer) understood this verse to mean that although Joseph was involved in the government, politics, and society of Egypt, nevertheless he ruled over Egypt, Egypt did not rule over him. That is, his integrity and spirituality were not compromised or corrupted by Egypt. Rabbi Sofer invoked this idea when he eulogized Rabbi Joseph David Sinzheim (1745-1812) who was Chief Rabbi of France, presided over Napoleon's "Sanhedrin," and was heavily involved in French politics. Rabbi Sofer said that it could truly be said of Rabbi Sinzheim that "he ruled over France, France did not rule over him."

### A QUESTION FOR THE RABBIS

Rabbi Yehudah Hachasid (*Sefer Hasidim* 293) was asked if a Torah scholar who is engaged in continuous study of Torah, day and night, is obligated to pay his share of a tax levied upon the Jewish community by the king. He writes that the scholar should not be obligated to participate in the tax, and he cites the following from our *parshah*: All the land in Egypt was sold to Pharaoh in exchange for food, "except for the land of the priests" (Genesis 47:22), which Joseph did not buy. Rabbi Yehudah says that the reason the Torah felt it necessary to tell us of this fact was to teach us that just as Joseph exempted the priests of Egypt from the communal burden, how much more so should a community exempt an eminent Torah scholar from the communal tax.



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