

“Yosef called the name of his firstborn Menashe, for G-d has made me forget all my hardship... And the name of the second he called Efraim for, G-d has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.” (41:51-52)

As Yosef named his second son, he chose to emphasize that Egypt was not his home; it was “*eretz anyi*,” land of my suffering, even though this land had been the source of his eminence. Here, he had become known; here, he had become wealthy and powerful; here, he went from being a lowly slave to associate ruler of the country. Yet, he wanted to remember and inculcate this idea in his children: Egypt is not our home; it is *eretz anyi*, the land of *aniyus* – affliction, suffering and poverty. *Horav Chizkiyahu Cohen, z.l.*, comments that the greatest “*ani*,” poor man, is an “*ani b’daas*,” one who is deficient in his mind, one who lacks wisdom. In Egypt, Yosef was far-removed from *daas Torah*, the *Torah* perspective of his father. Yosef sought to convey to his sons that Egypt was the land where they happened to live. It was not, however, their home. It was a land whose values, culture and lifestyle was antithetical to the way of life mandated for a Jew. Egyptian “*weltanschauung*” did not represent the *Torah* point of view and way of life.

Horav Cohen supports this thesis with an exposition of the *Daas Zekeinim m’Baalei Tosfos*. They attribute Efraim’s name to the root word “*eifer*,” which means dust. The Patriarchs, Avraham and Yitzchak, Yosef’s ancestors, had a distinct relationship with “*eifer*.” In his humility, Avraham compared himself to the dust of the earth. Yitzchak, as the perfect sacrifice, is considered before Hashem as if his *eifer*, ashes/dust, had been on top of the *Mizbayach*, Altar, as atonement for *Klal Yisrael*. The name Efraim, which is a plural form of “*eifer*,” recalls the two Patriarchs, the legacy that they bequeathed to their descendants. Yosef underscored this legacy in naming his son, telling him to follow in the Patriarch’s footsteps by perceiving Egypt as *eretz anyi*, a land foreign to the Jewish way of life.