

"And he (Yosef) became a successful man, and he stayed in his Egyptian master's house." (39:3)

The epithet "Egyptian," is repeated several times in this chapter as if to draw our attention to the immense transformation taking place in Yosef's life. From the sublime heights of holy life in Yaakov's home, Yosef was dragged down to the abysmal depths of the depravation that was Egypt. The immoral character of the Egyptian lifestyle was the direct antithesis of the upbringing in Yosef's home. Potifar's wife, rejecting all moral scruples, was the prototype of the Egyptian woman.

Horav Eli Munk, z.l., suggests that the *Torah* intentionally set out to emphasize this contrast. In order to fully appreciate the profound piety of Yosef *Ha'tzaddik*, one must first reflect upon what he was confronting. Yosef must have possessed exceptional qualities in order to have reached this exalted position in Potifar's house.

Similarly, we should consider the background of those who have braved the counter-currents of an assimilationist society and have discovered the road which leads them to the *Torah*. Their resolute courage is to be lauded. The travail which they had to experience in order to reach and be accepted by the observant community should be appreciated. Perhaps the most significant aspect of their endeavor is the world from which they came. When one perceives the distorted sense of values which has caused the moral breakdown of society, one can truly admire *baalei teshuvah*. Their superhuman courage and strength of character should be a lesson for us all.