

## **"Yosef is a charming son, charming to the eye." (49:22)**

The commentaries offer varied interpretations of Yaakov's blessing to Yosef. They all share the common concept that Yosef's blessing is imbued with the warmest terms of affection. Yaakov keeps his most commendatory blessing for Yosef, the one who is twice referred to as "son." After all his suffering, Yosef receives his due acclaim and reward.

*Horav Eli Munk, z.l.*, defines Yosef's distinction in the following manner: Yehudah was proclaimed the undisputed leader over the brothers. He demonstrated natural authority and enjoyed uncontested popularity. Yosef, however, whose spiritual and physical attributes were greater, always provoked the jealousy and hatred of the brothers. Consequently, he could not aspire to the position of leadership, even though he was spiritually superior to Yehudah. It was Yosef, not Yehudah, who merited the title of *tzaddik*, righteous one. His father referred to him as "the crown among the brothers." He was the one who, unnoticed by his brothers, wore the diadem of moral perfection. Yaakov conferred this exceptional tribute upon Yosef as a result of the strength of character which Yosef exhibited on two decisive occasions in his life. Yaakov was able to recall these instances through the euphemisms presented in his blessing.

Yosef's first moral triumph was his ability to maintain his purity in Egypt, despite the daily temptations. Egypt was a land where moral perversion was practiced in the most ignoble form. Yosef, however, remained unaffected by this decadent environment. He was able to resist the constant flirtations of his master, Potifar's, wife. Even at the risk of death, he did not yield to these temptations.

The self-mastery and stoicism demonstrated by Yosef in his struggle against the attractions of the senses was reaffirmed in the realm of moral virtue. His brothers had harassed him, and they eventually sold him as a slave to be forgotten forever. The pain and sorrow which Yosef experienced during this time of separation from his father and family, the constant travail to which he was subjected, would have driven a lesser man to revenge. Yet, as viceroy of Egypt with unlimited powers, he was still able to forgive the perpetrations of his suffering. He proved himself capable of generosity by renouncing the opportunity to display hatred, however justifiable it might have been. Instead of turning away from his brothers, he magnanimously showed compassion by welcoming them with open arms.

On his deathbed, Yaakov venerated his son who had understood the meaning of mankind's moral mission more deeply than the others. His nobility of heart and exceptional natural gifts combined to form the character of a true *tzaddik* and heir to the crown of Yaakov. He merited the appellation of honor, *tzaddik*, because during moments of great temptation he exhibited a mastery over himself by remaining absolutely faithful to the tenets of his moral belief.