

Yosef harnessed his chariot and went up to meet his father in Goshen. He appeared before him, and fell on his neck. (46:29)

Rashi explains that neither did Yaakov *Avinu* fall upon Yosef's neck, nor did he kiss him, because, at the time of their meeting, Yaakov was preoccupied with reciting *Shema*. Yosef was not. This leads up to the obvious question: Was it the time for reciting *Krias Shema* -- or not? If it was not *Krias Shema* recital time, why did Yaakov find it necessary to choose this unique moment of their meeting to capitalize on *Krias Shema*? Could the meeting not have waited a few moments? The commentators grapple with this question, each offering his own insight into this seeming anomaly. I take the liberty of relating the *Sandlor's* explanation due to its remarkably innovative approach: Concerning the *pasuk* (*Bereishis* 37:33), "He (Yaakov) recognized it (Yosef's multi-colored tunic) and he said, 'My son's tunic! A savage beast devoured him! Yosef has surely been torn to bits!'" The *Midrash* explains: "This is a reference to the wife of Potifar (Zuleeka, who attempted to seduce Yosef – unsuccessfully)."

Yaakov was now confronted with a serious quandary. Did Yosef sin with Potifar's wife – or not? *Chazal* teach that once one has been involved in an immoral liason, he becomes disqualified from ever becoming a monarch. Thus, *Rashi* (ibid 49:7) explains that the tribe of Shimon never saw a king or judge descend from them as a result of their involvement with the Moavite women in *Shittim*. Accordingly, if Yosef had sinned he could not have risen to a royal position. The *Talmud Chagigah* 9b elaborates on the *pasuk*, *Me'ugas lo yuchal liskon, v'chisaron lo yuchal limnos*, "A crooked thing cannot be straightened, and a lack cannot be counted" (*Koheles* 1:15). Two interpretations are given. The first concerning an individual who omitted the reading of *Krias Shema*, in the evening or in the morning. Once the *zman Krias Shema*, time for the recital of *Krias Shema*, has passed, it cannot be rectified. The other case which represents an irreparable situation is one who cohabited with an *ervah*, an illicit relationship. Once the sin has been committed – even if there is no pregnancy (hence, no illegitimate child born of this sin), the woman is forever prohibited to return to her husband.

Now, let us determine what coursed through Yaakov *Avinu's* mind when he met Yosef – the viceroy of Egypt, sitting in his royal chariot, bedecked in his royal robes. Yaakov had a problem with *chaya raah ahchalshu*, "a wild beast devoured him," which he interpreted as – Yosef succumbed to Zuleeka, Potifar's wife's, blandishments. She seduced him, and Yosef had a liaison with her. If this would be true, then it was a crooked thing that could not be straightened: How, then, could Yosef have become viceroy? If his sin was irreparable, he could never have achieved a position of royalty. It makes sense that the crooked thing that cannot be straightened must be omitting *Krias Shema*.

When Yaakov realized that the meaning of "a crooked thing that cannot be straightened" was a reference to omitting *Krias Shema*, he was not taking any chances. The moment that the *zman*,

time, for reciting *Krias Shema* arrived, he immediately began to recite *Krias Shema*.

Yosef, however, had nothing to prove. He knew that he had committed no sin with Potifar's wife. Thus, the "crooked thing that cannot be straightened" could be referring to illicit relationships. *Krias Shema*, on the other hand, can be made up later on. Thus, he had time to recite *Krias Shema* later on when he returned to the palace.

According to this exegesis, Yaakov's recital of *Krias Shema* was founded on the faulty assumption that Yosef had sinned. Yosef, who knew the truth, did not have to rush to recite *Krias Shema* at the time of his first meeting with his father.