

## Yosef gathered all the money on hand in the land of Egypt... and Yosef brought the money to Pharaoh's house. (47:14)

The *Ramban* notes that Yosef was an *ish emunim*, man of impeccable integrity, refusing to take one penny for himself if it did not belong to him. Yosef could easily have justified “dipping into the till.” If not for him, there would be no money. This earned him the respect and admiration of Pharaoh and the Egyptian people.

One who lacks integrity, even if it is with regard to a simple misdemeanor in which there is no real monetary loss, is still, in effect, a liar and a thief. It might only be theoretical in nature, since the loss is superficial, but it still taints the individual. This blemish has an effect on the individual's DNA to the point that it will have a character – altering effect on his descendants. Let the following comment shed some light on the concept to which I am alluding.

The *Alter, zl, m'Slabodka*, **Horav Nossan Tzvi Finkel**, was wont to say, “If people relate that a certain person, who happens to be the scion of an illustrious lineage, is guilty of stealing a bouquet of flowers from a street vendor, one must be acutely aware that this infraction did not occur overnight. This is not some isolated incident. The thief's actions are rooted in generations. He is acting out a pathology that has been festering in his family tree. The chances are that his grandfather had plagiarized a *dvar Torah*, a seemingly innocuous theft. When the grandfather perpetuates such an infraction, over time, the grandson will steal flowers.” We may add that, regrettably, it only gets worse with time and each ensuing generation.

Parents are a child's first mentors. At birth, a child acts selfishly and is self-centered. This can advance to lying, cheating and stealing. The next step is disrespect, defiance and all-around disobedience. A child learns integrity at home. Therefore, integrity must be an essential component of each parent's lifestyle. When children observe their parents manifesting high moral integrity, they will follow suit. These life lessons are a critical part of a child's development.

It can also go the other way. A parent who instructs his child that cheating is wrong, will have little chance of success, if his child sees him acting in a less than honest manner. Even if what the parent does may be justified in his own eyes – this will not convince his child. It goes without saying that any unjustified act of deceit, dishonesty and theft cannot be countenanced by a child. So, why is it that some people continue along their merry way committing acts of disrepute against other members of the community, demonstrating complete disregard for their own reputation and in blatant disdain for what their children, who are innocent observers, become subject to imbibe into their own mindsets? I have yet to unravel the mind of such a person.