

## And, without you, no man may lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. (41:44)

Pharaoh handed exemplary powers of monarchy to Yosef. He retained for himself the power associated with the crown, meaning that he, Pharaoh, granted these powers to Yosef. What Yosef achieved was by his grace. Thus, Yosef, and by extension, the people, would never forget that the true Egyptian monarch was none other than Pharaoh. Nonetheless, this was an incredible step for Pharaoh. The Egyptians did not hold the Jews in the highest esteem. In fact, they reviled the Jews, as evidenced by the chamberlain's description of Yosef. Yet, Pharaoh was not like that: he recognized greatness; he appreciated wisdom; he respected brilliance and he perceived virtue. He was not going to allow bigotry to stand in the way of acknowledging the man who had the qualities necessary for saving Egypt. Anti-Semitism would not play a role in diminishing Yosef's qualities. Pharaoh knew when he had a winner in his circle – and he was not letting him go. To permit blind hatred to stand in the way of progress is utter foolishness – and Pharaoh was no fool.

Moral hypocrisy dates back to the beginning of time. Was it not Kayin that killed Hevel in *Gan Eden*? Brother killed brother in the holiest place in the universe. Furthermore, when one delves into the reason *Chazal* give for their individual choice of sacrifice, we see even greater hypocrisy. Hevel brought *m'bechoros tzono*, from the finest of his sheep, while Kayin brought *mi'pri ha'adamah*, from the fruit of the land. Kayin refused to offer an animal, because he felt that it was not right to take a life. He could not hurt a poor sheep, let alone sacrifice it. Yet, he had no problem killing his brother to get him out of the way.

Whether one considers this to be moral hypocrisy or – as a professor of philosophy at an Australian University coined the term – “selective compassion,” we seem to have a character flaw through which we decide who and what to love and, inexplicably, we decide whom to hate and hurt. As pointed out by a professor at Princeton University, the archenemy of the Jews, the Amalek of Nazi Germany, was a vegetarian. He could not bear killing animals. He had no problem, however, murdering six million Jews. In 1939, the ASPCA, the Animal Protective League of Germany, sent a letter to their Fuhrer complaining that, by taking away all of the Jews to labor and extermination camps, there would be no one left to take care of all of the dogs and cats which they owned. Imagine! Animals took precedence over people. Last, the author writes about an incident which he personally witnessed in India, a country in which the cow is venerated as a deity. Cows walk around unimpeded by anyone. Yet, when a young child's ball rolled onto the temple grounds and the boy chased after it, the vegetarian priest beat the child to death.

Far be it from me to allow the reader to think that I am so well-read. The above citation is sponsored by a member of the pseudo-Orthodox movement, who has no problem castigating *gedolei Yisrael* and putting down anyone who devotes his life to Torah learning and dissemination, while lauding the sacrifices of the women who defame the *Kosel* and who call themselves members of the clergy. Whether one calls it “selective compassion” or “moral hypocrisy,” or hides

behind a “veil of ignorance,” the message is still present. Pharaoh rose above this. It does not necessarily mean that he was a man of integrity. He simply was no fool. He had certain standards to which he adhered.

**Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl**, underscores this idealism, distinguishing contemporary society from earlier generations. Even Pharaoh had certain standards. The *Mashgiach* comments that it is not unusual for individuals of low repute to manifest conflicting standards, to talk out of both sides of their mouth. He says this in response to an article written by a responsible Jewish author who questioned the standards of famed German author and poet Johann Wolfgang Goethe. The writer questioned the various contrasting remarks made by Goethe concerning the Jewish People. Was he an anti-Semite, as evidenced by many of his statements? Or was he not, as noted from other comments that he made praising Judaism?

The *Mashgiach* wonders why the writer bothered to discern and explain the nature of this person’s mindset. He was not an enigma. Indeed, he was following a pattern common to most people. This is supported by an incident related in the *Talmud Shabbos* 116A, concerning a judge who had “earned” the reputation that he would not accept bribes from litigants who appeared before him. The *Talmud* relates how *Rabban* Gamliel and his sister, Imma Shalom, were able to trick him into revealing the truth about himself. The man was a fraud who would happily pervert justice for the right price. This man was well versed in putting on a show to fool people into believing that he was a saint. Undoubtedly, based upon his reputation, he was adept at concealing the truth about himself. Like so many others of his ilk, he spoke from both sides of his mouth. Therefore, when Pharaoh did the improbable and acted straightforward with integrity and decency, it was truly cause for praise. Interestingly, we see that even the *reshaim*, wicked people of old, had standards.