

"And Yosef died and all his brothers and all that generation. And the land was filled with them... and there arose a new king who did not know Yosef." (1:6-8)

The opening *pesukim* of this *parsha* deal with the history of the first generation of *Bnei Yisrael* in the Egyptian exile. They imply that there are three stages in the process of the spiritual decline of Jewish life. First, the entire generation of immigrants dies. The "old school" passes on and disappears. Some children, even if they are not "practicing Jews," will not exhibit their indifference to Judaism in the presence of their parents out of fear that it would break their hearts. Often children refrain from breaking with their heritage until immediately after their parents' death. Such behavior illustrates a profound sense of respect for one's parents. As *Chazal* maintain, however, there are no limitations to this *mitzvah*, respect applies even after a parent's death (*Kidushin 31b*).

The second stage is represented by "*a new king arose who did not know Yosef*". "*Did not know*" reflects an ignorance of past history. This represents a complete severing of past ties and relationships. The second stage leads directly to the third stage. prompted by "*the land was filled with them*". The theaters, the clubs, the seasonal parties, with all the abominations they bring in their wake were filled with Jewish people, acting as Egyptians. This suggests a total loss of Jewish identity, the obliteration of Jewish characteristics. "*And Yosef died*" - the old generation is gone, followed by the ignorance of "*who did not know,*" leading to "*the land was filled with them*" - total assimilation. This, unfortunately, constitutes the recipe for the self destruction of the Jewish community.

Jewish parents must realize that no child can go out into the world and stand resolute, defying its influences, unless his home has been impervious to all alien influences. By cultivating Jewish values, we can equip ourselves to reverse these three stages of decline. We can then look forward to the redemption from the "Egypt of assimilation" on our way to the *Har Sinai* of true faith in Hashem.