

And to Yosef were born two sons....and Yosef named the firstborn Menashe, for Hashem has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house. (41:50,51)

It would be terribly wrong to think for a moment that Yosef sought to “forget” all of his past, his family, his troubles. Although he certainly would not have wanted to spend too much time remembering his bitter childhood and his strained relationship with his brothers, how could he have sought to forget about his aged father and the *Torah* environment in which he grew up? Walking out onto the streets of Egypt should have evoked pangs of homesickness for his family and the community of which he was no longer a part. Why then does he give his child a name that implies forgetting his past?

We suggest that Yosef had good reason for expressing his gratitude over “forgetting” the past. Regrettably, remembering the traumatic events of one's past can have a devastating effect upon a person. In many cases it can effect a tragic “turn off” from one's religious observance. One must be able to transcend his past, literally to forget it, so that it does not continue to haunt him. Yosef was grateful that he was able to “forget” his suffering and look beyond his pain to the future rebuilding of his family. He realized that he had survived for a reason. He was saved by design, to have a family that he could raise in the *Torah* way. He was to be a beacon of salvation to his father and brothers as they entered into the Egyptian exile. Yosef remembered what was important for the future. He only forgot that which would hinder his spiritual growth.