

As for the nation, he settled it by cities, from one end of Egypt's borders to another. (47:21)

Rashi explains that Yosef moved the Egyptians from city to city for a specific purpose. He was concerned that when his family emigrated to Egypt, they would be made to feel as strangers, embarrassed and rejected by Egyptian society. By moving around the Egyptians, he circumvented this problem, since the Egyptians themselves were no longer considered the “natives.” The author of **Va'yevch Yosef** notes Yosef's remarkable *mesiras nefesh*, devotion and self-sacrifice, just to prevent his brothers from being humiliated. His concern for their emotional needs was incredible. He was prepared to move around an entire country, completely disrupt their lives, so that his brothers would not feel ill at ease.

A number of other instances demonstrate Yosef's extraordinary solicitude for his brothers' emotional well-being. When Yosef revealed his true identity to his brothers, he insisted that no Egyptian be present, so that his brothers' shame would not be public. He risked his life in doing so, because without the protection of the many Egyptians in the royal palace, his brothers could have easily overwhelmed him. Yet, he took the risk. Better he should be killed than to humiliate his brothers.

Chazal tell us that during the seventeen years that Yaakov lived in Egypt, Yosef never once came to visit his father. Never was he alone in a situation in which they could talk about the past. Yosef was afraid that his father might question him regarding his whereabouts during the period of time preceding his ascension to the position of viceroy over Egypt. He knew that if his father would have asked, he would have been compelled to relate the entire tragic story of his brothers

selling him. Rather than cause his brothers embarrassment, he was content not to see his father, from whom he had already been separated for so long. Can we imagine such devotion to his brothers' feelings? Yosef must have been heart-broken not to be able to spend time with his aged father. He certainly was aware that it was either now or never. Yet, he refrained, due to his unique sensitivity for his brothers.

Furthermore, *Chazal* tell us that Yaakov did not kiss Yosef. He suspected that because Yosef had been in Egypt for all of these years, his handsome son must have surely succumbed to the many advances of the pagan Egyptian women. Yosef, the *tzaddik*, the standard by whom our moral parameter is measured, withstood temptation and did not fall into the grasp of their blandishments. How he must have wanted to tell his father--I am innocent! I did not sin! Please kiss me as a father kisses his son! Being alone with his father, however, would also have entailed reviewing the past. The brothers' tragic mistake would have been revealed and their shame exposed. No! Yosef would suffer, he would live under suspicion, he would risk his life, but he would not shame his brothers. We have one more insight into the life and character of a true *tzaddik*.