

There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has denied me nothing but you, since you are his wife, how then can I perpetrate this great evil? (39:9)

The *yetzer hora*, evil inclination dressed in the guise of Potifar's wife, sought every avenue to ensnare Yosef *Ha'Tzaddik* in its trap. *Chazal* characterize Yosef's battle with Potifar's wife as more difficult than fighting with a large bear. Every day she attempted to coerce him through her blandishments. She tried to arouse him by changing clothes twice a day, beautifying herself constantly. She hoped that at one point his guard would be down and he would capitulate. When she saw that her cajoling did not work, she began to threaten Yosef, all to no avail. How did Yosef do it? How was he able to overcome the various challenges that the *yetzer hora* presented him with?

Horav Mordechai Kukis, Shlita, attributes Yosef's success to two things: First, Yosef's *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, reigned paramount in his life. The boundaries of right and wrong were clearly defined by his fear and awe of Heaven. The image of his father confirmed and encouraged his *yiraas Shomayim*. To paraphrase *Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl*, "The best and most effective agent for overcoming the challenges of the *yetzer hora* is to envision in one's mind that the entire world is enveloped with Hashem's Glory. He sees and takes note of every movement that he makes; and He hears every sound. Nothing one does goes unnoticed." This should serve as a successful deterrent to sin.

This, however, does not always work. Indeed, when one is embroiled in the passion of sin, he "seems" to forget Hashem's Presence. What else protects him? What was the second factor which guaranteed Yosef's success in battling the *yetzer hara*? Yosef told Potifar's wife, "Look - with me, my master concerns himself about nothing in his house, and whatever he has he placed in my custody. There is no one greater in this house than I- How can I perpetrate this great evil?" This thinking reflects one specific virtue - *hakoras ha'tov*, appreciation. Yosef was literally given the keys to the entire household. His master had placed his utmost trust in him. How could he pay him back by performing such a terrible act? The only "possession" that was off limits was his master's wife. How could he manifest such a lack of appreciation? How could he stoop so low as to take his wife from him? *Yiraas Shomayim*, coupled with *hakoras ha'tov*, were the contributing factors that saved Yosef from spiritual doom.

Another instance of *hakoras ha'tov* in this *parsha* demonstrates how far one should go in order to repay his debt of appreciation to someone from whom he benefitted, even indirectly. Reuven was an equal participant in the *Bais Din* that convened to decide Yosef's fate. Yet, when it came to final deliberation, he took a stand on Yosef's behalf and protested against killing him. He suggested they throw him into a pit, thinking to himself that he would return later and rescue him. What motivated this change of heart? Why did Reuven stand up against his brothers to save Yosef? *Chazal* tell us that when Reuven heard Yosef saying that in his dream eleven stars bowed down to

him, together with the sun and the moon, he said, "I thought that because of my actions regarding Bilhah's bed, I would be censured from the family. Now that I hear that Yosef includes me among the tribes, how could I not save him?" In other words, Reuven was driven to save Yosef as the result of a sense of appreciation for including him in the "family." Reuven's remarkable act of valor is commensurate with his incredible virtue in recognizing the benefits one receives from others and reciprocating in turn. Recognizing the good that one does for us is equally as important as the original action that stimulates this recognition. It seems, however, to be more difficult for some.