

## Yosef called the name of the firstborn Menashe for Hashem has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's household. (41:51)

Clearly, Yosef could not have been so crass as to praise the fact that Hashem had allowed him to forget the *tzaros*, troubles, that had plagued him in his father's home. While forgetting troubles, pain and anxiety is a good thing, what about his home did he want to forget? He was the son of Yaakov *Avinu*, not just any son, but his *ben zekunim*, son born to him in his old age, the son of Rachel *Imeinu*. He was the favorite son. Was all of this something he wanted to forget? On the other hand, unquestionably, life for Yosef in the Patriarchal home was not pretty. He was the subject of much self-inflicted discord with his brothers. Clearly, when the family gathered together, it could not have been a happy time for Yosef. Those were experiences that he probably wanted to forget. An old secular proverb asserts, "Let sleeping dogs lie," which means: Do not stir up old conflicts or problems; if something is quiet, leave it alone. Right now, Yosef was viceroy over the land of Egypt, the second most powerful person in the kingdom. Why stir up old memories by calling attention to them by mentioning his son's name?

*Horav Raphael Soloveitchik, zl*, explains in the name of the *Brisker Rav, zl*, that had Yosef remembered his father's home, he would not have been able to stand resolute against the moral, emotional and spiritual onslaught he confronted in Egypt. It was only because Hashem had "stunted" his memories of the Patriarchal home that he could withstand the challenges. Coming from a home steeped in *kedushah* and *taharah*, sanctity and purity, to confront such a stark contrast would have been too much for Yosef *Ha'tzadik*. The agonizing reality of being compelled to be submerged in moral profligacy in a spiritually defiled environment, having to live with the dregs of society, will gnaw at a person's *neshamah* and being to impugn his *emunah*. The more elevated a person is spiritually, the greater his moral and ethical refinement, the more difficult it is for him to confront the filth that permeates every echelon of society. Indeed, at times, the higher one travels in the strata of modern society, the exposure to profligacy is more common and less abashed. When you are "up there" you feel you do not have to be ashamed. You can do whatever your heart fancies.

The *Brisker Rav* is teaching us a powerful *chiddush*. Let us face it, life for Yosef at home was far from an idyllic walk in the park. He was tormented by the jealousy and hatred of his brothers – painful, no doubt, and enough to destroy a lesser person, but the pain was buffered by the spiritual surroundings, the sanctity of Yaakov's household. He was living in a sanctuary amid a sea of agony. Yet, given the "choice" between the challenge of living with hatred and living in a society steeped in spiritual corruption, Yosef would rather have been home. For a *tzadik* to be exposed to spiritual impurity is more challenging than living with hatred and jealousy, of being the subject of scorn and ridicule. The only thing that somehow ameliorated Yosef's challenge in Egypt was that he forgot what it was like at home. Living in Egypt becomes much more challenging when one acknowledges his roots. Perhaps, if we would realize our roots, life in modern society might have

much less appeal.