



RABBI MOSHE HAUER ZT"L

ORTHODOX
UNION
התאחדות
אורתודוקסית
Enhancing Jewish Life

The Root of Positivity

An environment in which people speak negatively of one another becomes rife with tension, distrust, and toxicity. Indeed, the original exile of the Jewish people came about due to the tension between Yosef and his brothers and Yosef's badmouthing them to their father. Moshe would later attribute the Jewish people's bondage to their failings in this same area of toxic speech (see Rashi to Shemot 2:14).

Yet, when we reencounter Yosef later in his life, he has completely changed this behavior. A Midrash (Pesikta Rabbati 3) goes so far as

to say that Yosef avoided being alone with his father for the 17 years that they lived together in Egypt to avoid having to answer his questions about what had transpired between him and his brothers. In fact, he hardly spoke ill of anything, with the notable exception of his complaint to the butler and baker about his imprisonment.

How did Yosef turn around so dramatically?

In Egypt, as the Torah clearly attests, Yosef developed the ability to see the divine hand in everything. This enabled him to see and articulate the good in his situation, how even the difficulties he experienced were all positioning him to provide salvation for his family. In his eyes all was good, and so there was little motivation or urge to speak negatively about his situation or about others.

This idea is expressed in the critical verses (Tehillim 34) that discourage us from badmouthing others: "Who desires life, **loving each day to see good?** Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit, turn from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it." It is indeed difficult to refrain from letting out the negativity and bitterness that may reside inside us. If, however, we can follow the path of Yosef and allow our faith in G-d to inform our outlook, we can succeed in transforming our perspective and therefore our words to reflect positivity and sweetness, creating a beautiful environment around us. ■



No matter where we live in the world, we are one nation. When Jews are hurt in one place, hearts ache everywhere. Today, we hold close the families and victims in Australia. Their pain is felt far beyond where the attack took place, because they are not strangers to us, they are our brothers and sisters. In moments like these, we turn to HaKadosh Baruch Hu for comfort and strength, and we are reminded that the Jewish people are bound not by geography, but by responsibility, care, and an unbreakable sense of belonging. *Am Yisrael Chai*