

We are honored to have Rabbi Norman Lamm, President of Yeshiva University, as this week's contributor.

פסוק

וַיִּשִׁיטוּ לוֹ לִבְדּוֹ וְלָהֶם לִבְדָּם וְלַמִּצְרִיִּם הָאוֹכְלִים אֹתוֹ לִבְדָּם, כִּי לֹא יוֹכְלוּן הַמִּצְרִיִּם לֵאכּוֹל אֶת הָעִבְרִיִּם לָחֶם כִּי תוֹעֵבָה הִיא לַמִּצְרִיִּם. (ס"ג-ל"ב)

There is something faintly humorous about this complicated situation requiring three different tables -- for the Egyptians, the Hebrews (i.e., the sons of Jacob), and Joseph (whom the brothers did not recognize). One can understand the brothers -- they observed the mitzvot (according to the Gemara, even Eruv Tavshillin) and so would not dine with the Egyptians. The latter, too, had their food laws and would not eat with the Hebrews; Heroditus records that, at a much later date, they would not eat with the Greeks too. But Joseph is the "odd man out." He fits in neither with Hebrews nor with Egyptians.

Indeed, in the next verse we are told that Joseph seated them according to age, **וַיִּתְּכֶנּוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ**; they were astounded -- presumably, at Joseph's awareness of their chronological order. However, the **כֹּזֵב זָקֵנִים** (by the **בְּעֵלֵי תוֹסֵפוֹת**) suggests that there was nothing unusual about that, because they always acted in accordance with age, and Joseph might well have noticed that from previous experience with them. The source of their amazement was, rather, the strange seating pattern of three tables. Their wonder was directed at Joseph himself.

אָמְרוּ, הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה אֵינוֹ לֹא עִבְרִי וְלֹא מִצְרִי

In a sense, Joseph symbolizes -- in his appearance and position, not his essence and reality -- the Galut Jew who is trying to "make it" in the non-Jewish world. He cuts a pathetic figure -- he won't identify with his fellow Jews, and he is not accepted by the Egyptians in whose ranks he is so desperately trying to enroll. The Galut Jew, in his flight from Jewish authenticity and his failure to be accepted by others, is reduced to eating at his own third table; he is **לֹא עִבְרִי וְלֹא מִצְרִי**.

The major brunt of the Hasmonean revolution was not the Syrian-Greeks as much as the Hellenizing Jews who wanted to de-Judaize our people. At worst, they are a mortal danger to us and we resist openly and heroically. At best, they are a bitterly comical lot who will remain condemned to that third table, at home neither with Jews nor Gentiles.

Both Miketz and Hanukkah urge us to ponder that point well. There is no respectable way out of our destiny. We are real and dignified only when we embrace our own authenticity -- as **בני תורה וסודרי מצות**. We must choose the way of Torah -- the table of true Yiddishkeit. Any other choice holds the Jew up to eternal ridicule and mockery. In the words of the Sages,

**אוי להם לבנים שגלו פעל שלחן
אביהם (ברכות ג' ע"א)**