

have a

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First Last Impressions

by Rabbi Dani Locker

First impressions are important, right?

What if I told you that the great Joseph wanted his family to make the worst first impression possible?

Yuh-huh.

Joseph was one of the top guys in Egypt, second only to King Pharaoh. When his family, the children of Israel (later called Jews, but that name didn't exist yet) arrived in Egypt, they would have immediately become important, influential members of Egyptian society. They probably would've gotten floor seats at all the Cairo Clippers games. Instead, Joseph purposely tried to make sure his family made as bad first impression on Pharaoh. Hey, what?

It was a big family, and Joseph only brought half his brothers to meet the king. The odd thing is that he purposely brought the weaker, less impressive brothers! He also told them to announce that they were shepherds, which in ancient Egypt was a pretty embarrassing job. Why would he do this? Didn't Joseph want his brothers to have honor and comfort in their new country?

Sure Joseph wanted his family to be comfortable, but it was more important to him that they be good. Let me explain what I mean. Ancient Egypt was a great civilization. They made great progress in construction and science (for back then, anyway. I doubt they knew what would

happen if you combined Diet Coke and Mentos). They were also a civilization that did not share the values of the Torah. Joseph knew the dangers of his family, the ancestors of the Jewish people, getting too friendly with their Egyptian hosts, and so he made sure the Egyptians



would want his family to live in a private area, away from mainstream Egyptian culture. The great Rabbi known as the Chofetz Chaim points out, based on this story, that Joseph felt it was worth making his family uncomfortable in order to preserve our values.

Many cities, throughout Jewish history have enforced laws that made

Jews live in a certain area of the city. In some areas that was called a "Jewish Quarter" and in some, a ghetto. Some of these places were violent and dangerous places, and the Jews in these cities were made very uncomfortable by their inability to live where they chose. But looking back, it was these small communities, where Jews had to shop with other Jews, go to school in private Jews institutions, and live in close proximity to one another that helped a great deal in keeping our people alive! Joseph realized that a society in which Jews live completely together with everyone else and share the same streets, schools and hangouts, is a society where Jews start forgetting that we're Jews.

Nobody wants to make a bad first impression. But what's really important is that it doesn't turn into the last impression.

VERY PUNNY

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