

The Temptation of Joseph

Thought for the Week:

If a person falls prey to sexual temptation, he should immediately confess his sin, renounce it and start over. He should say to himself, *I will begin again. In Messiah, I am a new creature. I will start over right now, cleansed of sin, a new creature in Yeshua, who removes my sin.* Even if he needs to do this several times a day, a person should never give up the fight. Though you may stumble, never give up the fight.

Commentary:

Sexual temptation is persistent. Especially for men, it seems to be the most common obstacle to living a life of godliness. Perhaps the average man does not need to worry about being harried by sexually deviant Egyptian women like Joseph was, but men are daily assaulted by all manner of temptation. Yeshua warns that even looking on a woman with lust is an adultery of the heart.

The worst thing about sexual temptation is its pernicious nature. Though a person may conquer it one day, it returns the next day for another round. So, too, Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce Joseph day after day.

Sometimes a person tells himself, *It's hopeless; I cannot stand against this temptation.* When a person has tried, failed, tried again and failed again, he may feel that he is incapable of walking in purity. The Apostle Paul encourages such a person by saying, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). If we despair in the battle with our flesh, we will surely fail. The trick is to never give up on oneself.

Joseph faced unrelenting temptation day after day. One of the strategies he employed was distance. Not only did he refuse to lie with Potiphar's wife, he refused to even be with her. Sometimes when a person has prevailed over temptation, he tells himself, *I can withstand it. I don't need to worry about it anymore.* The Apostle Paul warns us, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). A person who struggles with sexual temptation should take whatever precautions are necessary to ensure that he will not fall victim.

The goal of every person should be to persevere against sexual temptation:

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. (James 1:12)

Middot U'Mitzvot (Character and Deeds)

Flee from Temptation

And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside. (Genesis 39:12)

When Joseph found himself alone in the house with Potiphar's wife, he tried to leap out of the house, but she caught his garment and it slipped from his body. He did not even bother attempting to retrieve it. Instead, he fled from her presence. It was not a passive resistance to sexual temptation or a rigid determination that brought him through the test. Rather, he fled from the possibility of sin.

Joseph's leap from the adulteress lies behind the Apostle Paul's admonitions to "flee immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18) and to "flee from youthful lusts" (2 Timothy 2:22). In regard to other temptations, Paul tells us to stand firm. In 1 Corinthians 16:13 he says, "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong." In regard to sexual temptation, though, he tells us to run for our lives. Like leaping Joseph, our goal should be to get out of any situation where we face sexual temptation as quickly as possible.