

WHEN TO ASK FOR ADVICE

Background

We are taught that Yosef, at the tender age of 17, had absorbed all of the Torah that his father took decades to master. The Siforno tells us that Yosef was given the coat of many colors because his father saw him as the wisest of the brothers and had appointed him as the person in charge of the family. The coat was a sign of leadership. So Yosef was quite wise at this time and had the ability to think through the issue and reach the correct conclusion. The reason that he didn't was simply that he didn't go through the mental process of asking himself, "What will the results of my actions be?"

Questions

How is it possible for someone as wise as Yosef to blunder so? Isn't thinking about the results of an action a basic function of wisdom?

ספר בראשית פרק לז

(ב) אֵלֶּה תִּלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בֶּן שִׁבְעַ עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה הָיָה רָעָה אֶת אָחָיו בְּצֹאן וְהוּא נָעַר אֶת בְּנֵי בְלָהָה וְאֶת בְּנֵי זִלְפָּה נְשֵׁי אָבִיו וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת דְּבָרָתָם רָעָה אֶל אָבִיהֶם

ספורנו עה"ת ספר בראשית פרק לז פסוק ב

והוא נער. ומפני נערותו חטא להביא דבת אחיו כי לא נסה ולא התבונן לאחרית דבר אע"פ שהיה אז משכיל מאד ושהיה אחר כך מורה לזקני הדור כאמרו וזקניו יחכם וזה כאמרם ז"ל ולא בדרדקי עצה. ויבא יוסף את דבתם רעה. באמרו לאביו שאחיו היו טועים ומפסידים בבלי דעת כראוי במלאכת המקנה שהית' אז עקר השתדלות' בקניי' עושר ונכסי'

Siforno – "He was a lad."
Because of his youth, he [Yosef] sinned in bringing the mistakes of his brothers to Yaakov's attention and didn't reflect on the end of the matter. Even though he was very wise, and later even was the eyes to the elders of the generation, as the expression says, "Not to babies is advice."