

Now Yosef could not restrain himself in the presence of all who stood before him... Thus no one remained with him when Yosef made himself known to his brothers. (45:1)

If ever a passage in the Torah has been laden with ambiguity, it is the episode of Yosef with his brothers. Clearly, whatever explanation we offer is superficial. The story of Yosef and his brothers is replete with profound esoteric principles that absolutely defy our ability to understand. These are the ways of G-d. We are not capable of understanding Hashem's reasons for causing Yaakov's troubles, Yosef's loneliness, and the brothers' envy which precipitated the twenty-two year separation of the father from his beloved son. The manner in which Yosef and his brothers finally became reunited and reconciled is no less difficult to grasp. Among the many questions with which we grapple is the reason that Yosef withheld the information from his father. Why did he not immediately notify him that he was alive and well, living amid royalty and success in Egypt? Such behavior is not sensible, or so it seems to the casual reader. As originally mentioned, however, nothing in this *parshah* is simple, nor does that which appears to the naked eye represent the reality and hidden purpose of Hashem's Divine plan.

One question that is elementary in nature, but no less compelling, is: Why did the brothers not recognize Yosef during their encounter in Egypt? Does a person's appearance change that much in a span of a little over two decades? Furthermore, we know that Yosef's countenance matched that of his father, Yaakov *Avinu*. How could the brothers not notice this? The *Midrash* records much of the dialogue that ensued between Yosef and his brothers. He seems to have known so much about their family background. Why did this not raise suspicion in their minds?

The **Alshich HaKadosh** explains that everything Yosef did was in order to expunge his brothers' sin, so that they would not have to be punished in *Olam Habba*. By making them suffer in this world, they would atone for selling Yosef. Every aspect of the sin was cleansed *middah k'neged middah*, measure for measure. For example, the brothers caused Yosef to fear for his life. Likewise, Yosef gave them reason to be anxious about their own futures. They attempted to cover up their ruse concerning Yosef's disappearance by producing his bloodied tunic. Yosef repaid them with his own guile, concerning the silver goblet that was planted in Binyamin's sack. Shimon was the one who first suggested that Yosef be killed. Thus, he was the one whom Yosef imprisoned. It was tit for tat, for the purpose of atoning for their sins. The pain experienced in this world is nothing compared to that which one sustains in the World to Come.

Yosef understood that Heaven had given him a role to play in order to help his brothers. The dreams were part of the scenario. Thus, he was compelled to wait it out and not notify his father prematurely. It reached the point that he could no longer contain himself; he could not stand idly by as his brothers suffered. This, however, does not explain why the brothers did not recognize Yosef. How was he able to conceal himself from them?

In his *Nachal Kedumim*, the **Chida, zl**, teaches an important principle. As a result of the overwhelming animus that emanated from the brothers towards Yosef, they were blinded from the apparent truth that stood before them in all clarity without embellishment. This was why the truth evaded them. When enmity exists between people, they become blind to one another. The ability to discern and recognize one another is the direct result of the relationship which exists between them. If there is hatred – over time – they will no longer recognize one another. Yosef, however, did not hate his brothers. Thus, he recognized them. In contrast, they were blinded by *animus*. They could not see him standing before their eyes.

What was Yosef to do? He made all kinds of references to their family past, in the hope that something would click in their minds, and they would recognize that he was none other than Yosef standing before them. When this did not work, he became concerned. He understood what this psychological blindness meant: they still hated him. He could no longer constrain himself, feeling that he might as well reveal himself to them. Apparently, they were not going to realize who he was on their own. Their eyesight was limited by a strain of myopia that had its roots in the “heart.” The brothers were not emotionally tuned into him. Despite all of the joy generated by Yosef’s revelation, the pain that his brothers’ envy and hatred had not yet been completely expunged distressed Yosef. He knew that the hatred that his brothers harbored towards him would not cease. The scourge of animosity fueled by envy and bitterness would fester until it would ultimately bring down the *Bais Hamikdash*.

This is why all of them – Yosef, as well as his brothers – broke into bitter weeping. They were overwhelmed by the truth, as they saw the “fruits” of the tree of prejudice.