

## **“So now, please forgive the spiteful deeds of the servants of your father’s G-d.” And Yosef wept when they spoke to him. (50:17)**

Yaakov *Avinu* had passed from this world. Feeling a sense of foreboding, the brothers asked Yosef to forgive them for what they had done to him. They recalled the suffering which had resulted from his sale to a degenerate nation that relegated him to live in miserable dungeons with individuals of base character. Their choice of words (“so now”) intimates that from now on – since Yaakov’s death – they will be seeking Yosef’s forgiveness. What does Yaakov’s passing have to do with the need for forgiveness?

In his volume, *A Vort From Rav Pam*, Rabbi Shalom Smith quotes the *Rosh Yeshivah*’s explanation. When a father passes from this world, the children are understandably left in flux. On the one hand, they have a sense of loss. The individual whom they revered, who was their mentor, their confidant, their friend, is gone. They must now fend for themselves. They must also seek ways to perpetuate his memory, by means that will serve as an enduring legacy for them and an eternal merit for him. Clearly, this is not a time when one takes revenge against a brother. Indeed, this is why the brothers entreated Yosef to forgive them. Whatever unity existed within this fragile family unit would be dismantled if Yosef were to seek revenge. Additionally, this would cause Yaakov’s *neshamah* great pain in *Olam Habba*. Imagine the shame Yaakov would experience in The World of Truth when it became known that his sons had been fighting. This would be a sad commentary on the education he gave them. The *neshamos* would begin to talk. Yaakov would be blamed for not providing an appropriate education. Clearly, this hatred did not just happen. It must have been there for quite some time, simmering, waiting for an opportunity such as Yaakov’s death. He was not here to prevent Yosef from openly hating them. What could be a greater disgrace for the memory of a parent than to “look down” and see bitter acrimony prevailing among his children. When Yosef heard the implication of their words, he broke down and wept, hurt that they would suspect him of such discriminatory behavior.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* is not afraid to address a problem that plagues and ultimately destroys some families. As long as the parents are alive, appearances of unity and congeniality are maintained. A parent passes from the world and, suddenly, the children all seek avenues for perpetuating his/her name. *L’ilui nishmas*, to elevate the soul, is the catchword used by those who study *Mishnayos*, give charity, establish free-loan funds and perform manifold acts of *chesed*. All of these are wonderful expressions of *kavod*, honor, for a parent, but what one must never forget is that: *the greatest respect one can give to a parent’s memory is to live harmoniously with his / her siblings*. This will be a clear indication and positive testament to their parents’ education. People will see that these parents raised their children in the most positive manner – in such a manner that is expected of a Jew. *What good is a son’s Kaddish if he does not talk to his brother or sister?*

We understand now why Yosef wept – the mere thought that his brothers would suspect him of such malevolence hurt him deeply.