

“So Yosef’s brothers, ten of them, went down to buy grain from Egypt.” (42:3)

Rashi questions the *Torah*’s usage of the term “Yosef’s brothers,” as opposed to “Yaakov’s sons.” Furthermore, why does the *Torah* state that ten brothers went down to Egypt? We are told in the next *pasuk* that Binyamin went down. Is there a reason that the *Torah* emphasizes the number ten? *Rashi* explains that by referring to them as Yosef’s brothers, the *Torah* seeks to emphasize that they all were remorseful over the sale of Yosef. Consequently, they went with brotherly affection to find and redeem him at all costs. Their sentiments towards him were not uniform, since some brothers had stronger filial feelings towards Yosef than others. We are, therefore, told that there were *ten* brothers with ten distinct levels of concern about their brother. Yet, they were totally united in their quest to purchase grain from Egypt.

Horav David Feinstein, Shlita, supplements this exegesis. He observes that the Hebrew word “*ach*,” brother, is etymologically related to two other words, one meaning “sorrow” and the other meaning “to sew together.” A brother’s obligation encompasses both of these concepts. A brother has a natural inclination to be sensitive to the worry or sorrow of his brother. Likewise, when one brother has a problem, his brothers are obligated to join together with him to minister to his needs.

With this in mind, *Horav Feinstein* posits that the term “*achei Yosef*,” Yosef’s brothers, has an additional connotation. Had the *Torah* referred to them simply as Yaakov’s sons, we might be led to believe that their desire to liberate Yosef reflected their concern for their father’s feelings. Now that the *Torah* emphasizes that they came as Yosef’s brothers, it attests to their genuine concern and sorrow as true brothers who were naturally trying to help him. Their collective feelings notwithstanding, they were still ten brothers with ten individual degrees of sensitivity. It would serve us well to keep this thesis in mind regarding our interpersonal relationships with our friends. After all, are not all Jews brethren?