

## But his brothers could not answer him, because they were left disconcerted before him. (45:3)

*Rashi* explains that the brothers were overwhelmed with shame. The humiliation of confronting Yosef after all these years, facing the error of their original decision, was too much. It agitated them to know that before them stood Yosef. It brought dread to their minds, and prompted their anxiety: "What is going to happen now?" All of this is understandable. Fear is an acceptable reaction at such a time, but shame? Why should shame take center stage over fear? Indeed, at the end of *Parashas Va'yechi* (50:15) when the brothers acknowledged that now that Yaakov *Avinu* had left this world, and it was they and Yosef – without any parental interference – they had reason to become anxious. They wondered if now that their father's protection was history, Yosef might take revenge. Even after years of reconciliation with Yosef, and living in Egypt as beneficiaries of his extraordinary generosity, they feared repercussions. If this is how they felt now, they surely felt fear when they first heard the words, "Ani Yosef, I am Yosef." Why does *Rashi* say that they were disconcerted due to the *bushah*, embarrassment?

*Horav Gershon Liebman, zl, Rosh Yeshivah* of Novoradok in France, explains that this allows us a window into the extraordinary level of *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, evinced by the *Shivtei Kah*, tribes of Hashem, the brothers/sons of Yaakov *Avinu*. For them the emotion of embarrassment superseded the emotion of (personal) fear. Fear is an unknown: Will I be punished? Will I not be punished? Will I get into trouble for what I did? Will I not? *Bushah*, embarrassment is an absolute reality. It is the cognitive realization and acknowledgement that one has done something negative for which he is ashamed. When this *bushah* involves men of such spiritual stature as the *Shivtei Kah*, it constitutes *bushah nitzchis*, eternal shame. Such shame trumps any physical fear that they might have felt. Thus, all they were concerned about was the spiritual humiliation with which they would now be compelled to live.