

## Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. (42:8)

Horav Tzvi Hirsch Ferber, *zl*, explains this *pasuk* practically. Yosef always viewed his brothers through the lens of filial love – as brothers. Indeed, whenever the Torah mentions Yosef's relationship toward his brothers, it always uses the word *ach*, brother: *Es achai anochi mevakeish*, "I am searching for my brothers" (*Bereishis* 37:16); *Va'yehi kaasher ba Yosef el echav*, "And it was when Yosef came to his brothers" (*Ibid.* 37:23); *Va'yeilech Yosef achar echav*, "And Yosef went after his brothers" (*Ibid.* 37:17). Yosef never once lost his relationship with his brothers, but – *v'heim lo hikiruhu*, "They (however) did not recognize him." They did not recognize/view him through the lens of brotherhood. Whenever the Torah mentions the brothers' relationship vis-à-vis Yosef, it never mentions the word *achvah*, brotherhood, brother, anything that would imply that their relationship was any different than that of two strangers.

A well-known quote asserts: "Because I have a brother, I will always have a friend." This is a powerful statement which defines the relationship that should exist between brothers, a relationship that can never be severed, one that transcends envy, rivalry, success and failure. Brothers stand by one another through thick and thin. Nothing the brothers did to Yosef would engender a break in his love for them. Sadly, they did not reciprocate his feeling. He recognized/acknowledged them as his brothers, *v'heim lo hikiruhu*, but they no longer recognized him as a brother.

When Yosef *HaTzaddik* declared, *Es achai anochi mevakeish*, he characterized the definition and criteria for care: A) We view everyone as a brother, deserving of unquestionable, non-judgmental filial love; B) We do not wait for the supplicant, fellow in need, to come to us; we seek him/her out. To an extreme, the life of Yosef modeled the core Jewish value of caring: It was all about the one in need. If one *gadol b'Yisrael*, Torah giant, exemplified extraordinary success in laying the groundwork and building Torah in Holy Land post-Holocaust and reaching out to all segments of Jewish society, penetrating hearts of the most assimilated Jew – it was the *Ponovezher Rav*, *zl*. Whenever he addressed a group of Jews, his opening words were, "*Briderlach*, My dear brothers." This was his essential outlook on Jews: my brothers; my family, regardless of their background or religious persuasion. When he spoke to a group of Jews, he, by his very opening remarks, declared his undiminished love for them as family. He was every Jew's friend, every Jew's advocate. Indeed, this was the power of his success – be it in his spiritual influence over people or in his ability to fundraise for his institutions from people throughout the world; it was his fierce, overflowing love for his people. They were all his *briderlach*.