



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

## JUDAH & THE JEWS

The sidra opens with Judah as the spokesman for the family. From the name Judah come the words Jews and Judaism.

There are historical reasons for this nomenclature, but there is also an ethical and emotional aspect.

It takes Judah-like courage to stand up before the world and proclaim the love of God and fellow man.

It doesn't make for popularity and never did. But not even the yearning for a quiet life can warrant shrinking back from one's ethical duty.

From the emotional point of view, a Jew cannot resile from admitting his or her Jewishness.

When others sneer, "You're a Jew!", the answer has to be, "So?"

## IS MY FATHER ALIVE?

At last the riddle unfolds.

Yosef's brothers have been immensely puzzled by the way they were treated by the Egyptian Minister of Food, in whom they did not recognise their own long-lost brother Yosef.

Now, in this week's Torah portion, Yosef reveals himself: "I am Yosef! Is my father still alive?" (B'reishit 45:3).

The brothers are struck dumb, though Rashi explains, "They were not able to answer him because they were overwhelmed with shame."

What is not easy to work out is why Yosef asks after his father.

From the emotional point of view, he has wondered for years about the fate of the father he loves. But surely he has deduced that Yaakov was indeed alive, since one of the brothers, Judah, had already said quite clearly, YESH LANU AV ZAKEIN - "We have an aged father" (44:20). And Yosef had actually asked at that earlier stage, "How is the aged father of whom you have spoken?" (43:27).

The explanation is implicit in what Rashi says. Yosef was not unaware that Yaakov was alive, though by now the patriarch must be showing signs of old age, but he wants to know how the father has coped throughout all

these years with the burden of callous children and the sudden disappearance of a loved young son.

Basically, Yosef is uttering a rebuke. What he is saying is, "Have you no shame about what you did to our father? I myself have got through the hard years, but did you ever think of what your behaviour must have done to our father?" -OZ

**Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH**