

# **Dvar Torah** by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

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## **VAYIGASH**

There are the first times in history that have had a tremendous impact in our world for generations to come. There have always been discussions that Yosef, when matured, worked on a more global level how to improve the world around him. Yosef is accredited with initiating a resolute act that has shaped people for years to come. When Yosef revealed his identity to his brothers, he stated:

"I am your brother Yosef, whom you sold into Egypt. Now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it is to save lives that G-d sent me ahead of you. For two years now, there has been a famine in the land, and for the next five years, there will be no plowing and reaping. However, G-d sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but G-d." (B'reishit 45:4-8) Rabbi Johnathan Sacks z"l addressed these words as the first recorded moment in history in which one individual forgives another. Even though Yosef had forgiven, the brothers were still distressed

because he did not explicitly use the word "forgive". He had said that it was not them but G-d who brought him down to Egypt. That is why the brothers arranged a meeting with Yosef, sharing with him a made-up story. They sent word to Yosef saying, your father left instructions before he died "I ask you to forgive your brothers for the sins and wrongs they committed in treating you badly. Please forgive the sins of the servants of the G-d of your fathers." (50:16-18)

Even though the story was concocted, the brothers use the word "forgive". Can someone really forgive after such things happen to him? Yosef did make amends with his situation. We see in this week's Parsha why Yosef actually forgives his brothers. It was an inherent aspect of Yosef that drove him to forgive, after all that was done to him. We see that in Judaism a new form of morality was born. As Rabbi Sacks pointed out, Judaism has a culture of "guilt" as opposed to "shame". One of the fundamental differences between them is that shame attaches to the person while guilt attaches to the act. With shame, a mark or stain remains with the person. However, with guilt, the doer is not to blame, rather the act. There is a need to right the wrong. That is why by guilt there is a process of forgiveness.

**This can explain Yosef's behavior from the moment he met his brothers in Egypt. He announces who he was and forgives his brothers. The Torah is teaching us through Yosef the process of receiving forgiveness. First, the brothers needed to admit they had done wrong after Yosef locked up Shimon and accused them of a crime they did not commit. Then they needed to confess and now the change of behavior as we find in Yehuda willing to protect his brother in need. Now Yosef can forgive his brothers who made this metamorphosis in their repentance. Forgiveness transformed the human world. For the first time one is not marked for eternity for one's action but can change and move forward. Yosef taught us that by forgiving other, as he had to his brothers, you then become worthy of being forgiven by others. 🏰**