

Dvar Torah by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at
Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe
Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

VAYIGASH

After the brothers had shown genuine remorse for what they had done, Yosef then revealed his identity to them.

VAYOMER YOSEF EL ECHAV, ANI YOSEF, HA'OD AVI CHAI

"And Yosef said to his brothers, I am Yosef, is my father still alive?"

The pasuk continues:

V'LO YACHLU ECHAV L'ANOT OTO KI NIVHALU

"And his brothers were unable to answer him because they felt disconcerted before him."

My Chavruta of old, Rabbi David Movsas, asked why is Yosef asking if his father is still alive? Yehuda had just used the plea of the sorrow of his aged father if Binyamin would not be released home. Why then was it necessary for Yosef to ask if Yaakov was still alive?

We can find the answer in the Talmud Chagiga. The Talmud discussed that when Rabbi Eleazer came to the pasuk, "But the brothers could not answer him because they felt disconcerted before him", he wept

and said, "if such is the result of the rebuke from a human being, how much more so must it be when someone is rebuked by the Holy One Blessed Is He!"

The Rabbis taught us that Yosef's words of "I am Yosef, is my father still alive?" is considered a rebuke to the brothers. But how? Rabbi Yosef Ber Soloveitchik (Beit HaLevi) explains that the word Tochacha - Rebuke is learnt out from the word Hochacha - "Proof". The essence of rebuke is to convince the person to realize on his own that he has done wrong. By recalling to them the words that they themselves had spoken, he convinced them that they had sinned.

Yehuda had wanted to arouse compassion in Yosef for his aged father. Yosef, now, wanted Yehuda to realize that his own argument was inconsistent with the brothers' own action of selling Yosef into slavery. With the words "Is my father still alive?", Yosef was saying... if it did not occur to you when you sold me into slavery that it would kill my father, why are so worried about him now? This was the reproach implied in his question. Thus, Yosef refuted the arguments of his brothers with their own words, and this is the reason why the brothers became so frightened that they were unable to answer him.

Rabbi Soloveitchik continues to say that a similar rebuke will be admin-

istered in the days to come by G-d himself. In this manner, everyone will be shown the folly of his ways, through his own deeds and words. In the confusion and flurry of life, rationalization comes very easily to our lips. Either it is lack of time or lack of money or lack of talent. However, on the Day of Truth those invalid excuses will be challenged with the other actions and interests we did accomplish, for which there was always sufficient time, money, and talent. It will be our own deeds that will accuse us. That shame can be avoided if we attempt in a sincere fashion to harmonize our live with the Will of G-d. 