

Parshas VaYigash

The past two weeks, as we read *VaYeshev* and *Mikeitz*, we read about the conflict in *Yaakov's* family, both collectively and as individuals. As we begin *Parshas VaYigash*, we enter in the middle of the dramatic showdown between *Yosef* and his brothers. Once it ends with *Yosef's* revelation of his identity, the story shifts to the resolution of much of the conflict that the *Torah* had described previously.

There is another transition which happens after *Yosef* is rejoined with his family. *Yaakov's* family descends to Egypt as 70 souls and, once they arrive there, they begin to act as a distinct nation within a nation. They negotiate to settle in an isolated part of the country and to engage in their own vocation of raising sheep. During this process, they separate themselves as a people. At the same time, *Yosef* who is again part of the family is very much engaged in running the country as the viceroy.

These two transitions are very much related. If we want to exist as a flourishing nation, we need to resolve the internal conflicts and pain which we inflict upon each other. We are then strong and grow as a nation. We have the capacity to nurture our identity and unique spiritual destiny. At the same time, we can share our talent, wisdom and morality with our neighbors and compatriots. We need that reservoir of strength and resilience created by harmony within our family to excel at these challenging tasks.

Parents always hope that their children will get along and show each other love and respect. When that happens, it is the greatest *nachas*. It doesn't happen automatically. Parents need to foster tolerance, acceptance of differences, and the basic need for respect that all social units need in order to thrive. We should work on it at an early age and continue to guide our children throughout life to seek and to sacrifice for peace and harmony.