

Parshas VaYeshev

Parshas VaYeshev is the first of four *parshiyos* that discuss *Yosef HaTzaddik's* travails when he was sold into slavery by his brothers and the repercussions it had on the family and indeed on the course of world history. The *posssuk* seems to attribute the brothers' resentment toward *Yosef* to *Yaakov Avinu's* favoritism that he showed *Yosef* and also to *Yosef's* own conduct toward his brothers, i.e., relating bad information to their father and telling them of his dreams of grandeur. Indeed, the *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 10b) says that a person should be careful not to show favoritism to one child over the other since "...for two *selahs* weight of fine wool which *Yaakov* gave *Yosef* more than his brothers, they were jealous and ultimately this led to our ancestors being enslaved in Egypt."

This *Gemara* seems to blame *Yaakov Avinu's* choice to favor as the catalyst for the entire *Galus Mitzraim*, the terrible suffering and enslavement in Egypt. The question is why did *Yaakov* overlook such a seemingly obvious dictum in raising children?

The *Chassam Sofer* (*Rabbi Moshe Sofer* of Pressburg, Slovakia 1762-1839) explains that *Yaakov's* error was that he had a very different perspective of *Yosef* and of his position in the family. He saw *Yosef* as the scholar and *Torah* leader in the family. The *Torah* says that the reason *Yaakov* loved *Yosef* was because he was a "*ben zekunim*." The *Targum's* translation is that he was the wise son, the one to whom *Yaakov* transmitted all his lifetime learning. Since *Yaakov* saw *Yosef* this way, he thought that his children saw this as well and that they recognized *Yosef* as a leader deserving of special status.

What *Yaakov* did not realize is that *Yosef* had a different relationship with his brothers. He acted like a "typical" brother even displaying an immaturity and perhaps a frivolity which did not make them feel that he was worthy of the leadership position to which he clearly aspired. The *posssuk* says he acted as a lad with the sons of *Bilha* and *Zilpa*. This created the rift between *Yosef* and his brothers since they believed that he wasn't more worthy than they were of their father's affection and attention.

As parents and as people of influence, we need to consider that other people may have a different perspective of an issue or of a person and that they may be very passionate about that perspective. If we are unaware or indifferent of this disparity, we might end up with a very damaging situation. We need to stay aware of feelings and attitudes of those whom we seek to influence, or we might be creating some very negative unforeseen consequences.