



## PARSHAS VAYIGASH – MR MICHAEL ISRAEL

And Yehudah approached him, and he said, “Please, my lord, permit your servant to speak a word in my lord’s ears, and do not become enraged with your servant, for you are like Pharaoh.” (44:18)

Rashi notes that Yehudah wanted his words to “enter directly into the viceroy’s ears.” What does Rashi mean to say?

Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik explains that Yehudah wished to speak directly to the Egyptian viceroy, instead of through an interpreter. His was essentially a plea for clemency; he spoke of matters having no bearing on the case itself, of his “old father,” of the “child born in old age,” of the “brother who had died.” All were appeals to the mercy of the viceroy, who “like Pharaoh” (as Yehudah emphasized), possessed the extralegal jurisdiction to pardon a defendant, regardless of his liability in the eyes of the law. Pleas of this sort must be directed to the heart more than to the mind, and therefore, they must be heard directly, without go-betweens or interpreters.

The question remains, though: The brothers spoke only Hebrew, a language the viceroy supposedly did not understand. How then could the interpreter be dispensed with? How would Yosef understand their message?

This can be explained by means of a real-life story which transpired between the Chofetz Chaim and the President of Poland. The Polish government had just rescinded the independent status of the Jewish schools, placing them instead under the authority of the Ministry of Education. This new arrangement threatened the very future of Torah education in Poland, and the leading rabbis of the era sought ways to having it repealed. Among other things, an audience was arranged between the Chofetz Chaim and the Polish head of state, at which time he would plead the Jewish cause.

In the presence of an interpreter, the Chofetz Chaim delivered an impassioned plea, straight from his pure and holy heart. Though he spoke in Yiddish, the president listened attentively throughout; at one point, when the Chofetz Chaim grew particularly emotional, the President actually burst into tears.

After he had finished speaking, and the interpreter was preparing to translate his words into Polish, the President waved him off.

“It is not necessary,” he said. “Although I do not speak the language, certain things do not require translation. These words are straight from the heart.”

This was the language which Yehudah wanted to use with the Egyptian Viceroy – the language of the heart. (Talelei Oros)