

Mikeitz- Kindness for Further Shame [From the Ahavas Sholom of Kossov]

By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

In Bereishis 43:18 we are told that the brothers became specially afraid when they were brought to the house of Yosef. They knew that many people besides them came to Mitzrayim to buy food. But none were ever brought to Yosef's house. They were truly worried that being brought to Yosef's house was a prelude to imprisonment or perhaps worse, *chas veshalom*. They assumed that the charge would be for stealing back the money they had used to pay for the grain that had bought the last time they had been there.

The Ahavas Sholom of Kossov explains that this whole experience was actually brought about to increase the shame of the brothers. He quotes the Baal Shem Tov's explanation of the verse in Tehillim 94:1 which reads Hashem is a G-d of revenge. The Baal Shem Tov brings the following parable. A simple villager insults the king by throwing a stone at the king's picture. This is a show of disrespect and therefore, a capital crime. Word gets to the king of the villager's display of contempt. However, instead of punishing the villager the king decides to befriend him instead. As time goes on, the king gives this villager a more and more elevated status. As the villager gets closer to the king, though, he becomes more and more ashamed of what he did. While on the outside the king's friendship may not seem like a punishment, in reality it makes the villager more and more embarrassed about what he did. The shame and awkwardness turn out to be a worse punishment than death. For in the case of death the pain would only be for a short time. This situation of being in the inner circle of the king is continual and never ending and actually a greater punishment. This was actually the king's intention all along. Similarly, Yosef wanted his brothers to feel the shame of what they had done by selling him as a slave. The embarrassment of being brought to the palace and being given stately, royal treatment would be their greatest price to pay.

The Ahavas Sholom then states that Hashem often works in a similar fashion. Very often, Hashem will show kindness to a sinner as a punishment. The very display of Hashem's kindness is to embarrass the sinner realizing his offence and this can be the greatest penalty.