



Mikeitz: Finding the Strength to Forgive

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The Torah states in this week's Parsha Perek 42 Pesukim 6-7:

וַיֹּסֵף הוּא הַשְּׁלִיט עַל-הָאָרֶץ הוּא הַמְּשָׁבִיר לְכָל-עַם הָאָרֶץ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֵתֵי יוֹסֵף וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ-לּוֹ אַפַּיִם אֶרְצָה:
וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת-אֶחָיו וַיִּכְרָם וַיִּתְנַפֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם וַיְדַבֵּר אֲתָם קִשּׁוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מֵאֵין בָּאתֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן
לְשִׁבְר-אֶקֶל:

Yosef was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold to all the people of the land. Yosef's brothers came and they prostrated themselves to him with their faces to the ground. Yosef saw his brothers and he recognized them, but he acted like a stranger to them. He spoke harshly to them, and said to them, "Where did you come from?" They said, "From the land of Canaan to buy food."

Many of the commentaries raise the question: "Why didn't Yosef immediately reveal himself to his brothers? Why the protracted drama and intrigue?"

Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev explains this dynamic in a homiletic fashion. The Rebbe explains that defeat engenders a feeling of grief and despair in the heart of an individual. Yosef understood that the brothers would feel incredibly humiliated if they were to learn that the lord before whom they were bowing "with their faces to the ground" was Yosef, the brother who they ridiculed when he shared with them his dreams. It was in order to spare them this humiliation that Yosef did not make himself known to them immediately. It was only after demonstrating that the events of the last two decades were Divinely ordained did Yosef feel comfortable divulging his identity to his family.

Another person in Yosef's position would have taken full advantage of this opportunity to take (much deserved) revenge, to make the enemy feel true defeat. But Yosef did the opposite. When his brothers bowed down to him, he recognized them immediately, but he made himself a stranger to them in order to spare them the shame of defeat. Yosef understood that to rebuild a fractured family he would have to dispense with one-upmanship; to rebuild this family would require love, understanding and empathy.

We all find ourselves in situations where we feel wronged or taken advantage of. Let us each learn from Yosef to take these moments as an opportunity to swallow our pride, rise above, and spare the other from shame and embarrassment. In the merit of efforts, may we be zocheh to see the final geulah immediately, in our days.