

Now Yosef could not restrain himself in the presence of all who stood before him. (45:1)

Yosef was ready to reveal himself, to share his identity with his brothers, but he could not bear to do so in the presence of so many bystanders. He was concerned for his brothers' dignity, lest he shame them in public. Veritably, there was nothing holding him back from revealing himself – or was there? Furthermore, following his revelation, the Torah writes that he fell on Binyamin's neck. *Rashi* explains that, in this expression of emotion, Yosef wept over the destruction of the two *Batei Mikdash* which would be destroyed in Binyamin's portion of *Eretz Yisrael*. Why was mourning over the destruction of the two *Batei Mikdash* appropriate at this moment of reconciliation?

The *Imrei Shammai* quotes the *Sefas Emes* who gives a powerful explanation for what appear to be anomalies. The punishment which Heaven metes out for an individual's transgression is exact. Yosef was careful not to exact greater punishment from his brothers than they deserved. He sought for them to atone for his sale – no more – no less. Just shy of a few more moments, Yosef could no longer hold out. It bothered him so to see his brothers suffering so much that he revealed himself to them – prematurely.

That extra drop of misery that they would have experienced, had he held himself back, had to be paid. It was too late then. Someone had to be the surrogate for the *Shevatim* to accept the rest of the punishment that they warranted. Otherwise, their atonement would be incomplete. This occurred years later when the *Asarah Harugei Malchus*, Ten Martyred *Tanaaim*, were brutally murdered, taking the unfinished punishment in the place of the *Shevatim*. That was not all. Added to that was the destruction of the two *Batei Mikdash* and the two thousand year exile which we continue to experience.

This is why, as soon as Yosef deferred to his emotions and revealed himself to his brothers, he fell upon his brothers and wept over the destruction of the *Batei Mikdash*. He acutely felt the pain associated with their destruction, because he knew that, had he waited just a little bit longer... it would have had a different ending.

We see now how distant we are from the spiritual plateau of the *Shevatim*. In order for them to atone for all of the travail they had caused Yosef, they had to spend one week in Egypt, with the pain and misery which they would endure for one week sufficient to atone for their error. We, on the other hand, have suffered for thousands of years during which millions have died – all because of those few minutes that Yosef could no longer hold out. We pray daily and lift up our eyes Heavenward for the moment that Hashem will declare: "The *galus*, exile, is over. Atonement has been achieved!"