

He replied, “What you say now is also correct.” (44:10)

Rashi explains that Menasheh was told by the brothers that if one member of a group has stolen an object, the entire group is held liable, just as the brothers themselves had said. “Nevertheless,” he said, “I will be lenient with you and make only the one in whose possession the silver goblet is found my slave. The rest of you can go home.” This statement is enigmatic. No law holds an entire group accountable for the actions of an individual. Even if Yosef and his brothers had agreed to abide by such a rule, it certainly was not the law.

Horav Moshe Feinstein, z.l., posits that while according to earthly law it is the individual who is culpable, according to *Shomayim*, Heavenly law, all of them share in the blame. If all members of a group are properly fastidious regarding the sin of theft, the aversion they have for the sin should be so clear that no one associated with them would ever think of stealing from someone. The fact that a member of the group performed an act of theft is a reflection of a lack of scruples in that regard and points the finger at all of them. Indeed, only through Hashem’s benevolence is the rest of the group spared.

What a powerful statement this is. By implication, *Rav Moshe* is telling us that anyone who notices a friend or relative acting lax in any of the *mitzvos*, regardless of its origin or level of severity, must view himself also to be responsible. He must review his actions to see how he has failed to serve as a proper example of fear of sin for those around him. We do not live in a vacuum. What we do is watched constantly and emulated. Our actions are not our own. They leave an impression on others. We, therefore, must act in a positive manner, so that the effect will be similar.

The *Gaon m’Vilna* compares this to the first question we will all be asked when we reach the gates of Heaven. “Did you deal/carry out your business endeavors with integrity? Were your dealings above reproach?” It is regarding the money that we are first brought before the Heavenly Tribunal.