

“And you will return unto Hashem, your G-d, and listen to His voice.” (30:2)

Repentance – the opportunity to return to Hashem, to once again be accepted by Him and be able to appeal to Him – is the ultimate kindness that Hashem offers us. The following analogy, cited by *Horav Yaakov Beifus, Shlita*, demonstrates this idea. Rebelling against the king is without a doubt the most egregious transgression one can do to a monarch. The punishment is commensurate with the level of rebellion and the relationship of the rebel to the king. The closer one is to the king, the greater and more serious the infraction and eventual punishment. In one of the provinces, the king’s closest friend was indicted for treasonous behavior and incarcerated in the local prison until he could be brought to trial. It became the biggest event in the country; everybody was talking about the act of treason perpetrated by the king’s closest ally.

As angry as the king originally was, with time his feelings of kinship prevailed, and he no longer sought to punish his friend harshly. However, neither could he simply mitigate the act of treason nor ignore the effect it would have on the country. His hands were tied. How could he ignore the country’s laws and not punish his friend?

The rebel was acutely aware of the king’s predicament. Yet, he felt bad. He realized the error of his ways, the folly of his actions – and with deep remorse and fear, he waited for his impending punishment.

One night, he awoke to hear what sounded like digging coming from beneath the floor of his cell. He was frightened that the ground beneath him was caving in. He stared at the ground as it shook and rumbled. Suddenly he heard a crack, and then a hole broke through the floor. None other than the king himself appeared, “Quick, escape while you can. This is your only opportunity to leave this cell alive!”

Overcome with relief and joy, the prisoner embraced the king and kissed him. Together, they covered the hole and escaped into the night. As they traveled through the forest to safety, the king said, “For a while now, I have been thinking of how I could rescue you. I knew that because of the gravity of your sin, I could do nothing to compromise my position to help you. The only thing I could do was to dig a passageway from beneath my throne room, which no one enters, to your cell. Every day, I dug deeper and farther until I reached you.”

This is what *teshuvah*, repentance, is all about. Once a person sins against Hashem, there is really no way he can reinstate himself – unless he is granted a special dispensation, a favor that goes beyond the rules. In the *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Chazal* teach us that when “Wisdom” was asked, “What is the punishment for the sinner?” the response was negative: no hope, the ultimate punishment. Similar responses were received from “Prophecy” and “Torah.” When Hashem was asked, He responded, “Let him repent, and he will be forgiven.”

According to the principles of Justice, there is no forgiveness for one who sins against Hashem. It is Hashem Who forgives when we repent with sincerity, because He is a loving father and friend.