

They had left the city...and Yosef said to the one in charge of his house, "Get up, chase after the men...and you are to say to them, 'Why do you repay evil for good?'" (44:4)

Yosef's choice of words, "*Why do you repay evil for good?*" is questionable. One who does evil in place of good is not "repaying." He either did not do good, or he performed evil. The term simply does not apply when one is acting wrongly. One does not pay evil for good. *Horav Yitzchak Goldwasser, Shlita*, explains that when we delve into the psyche of a *kafui tov*, one who denies the gratitude he owes and instead acts inappropriately, we note a remarkable phenomenon of human nature. One who has benefitted from another fellow is literally in debt to him. By failing to recognize the debt of gratitude which he owes, he thinks it will disappear. This is not, however, an easy task. The favor which he received stares at him, demanding appreciation, compelling him to respond in some way for the service he availed himself of. He attempts to hide from this debt, to cover it up. Hence the phrase *kafui tov*, derived from the word *kafah*, to cover. This concept is not that simplistic, because the idea of "*tovah*" is very compelling.

How does one deal with this "problem"? Psychologically speaking, a person's emotions respond to his actions. In other words, if one acts inappropriately or in a vulgar manner, in due time his personality will begin to conform to his actions. He will become a vulgar, negative person. While the *kafui tov* may not be a psychologist, he still feels that if he acts towards his benefactor in a disgusting manner, he will ultimately break the emotional hold that he has on him, and he will no longer feel beholden to him.

Indeed, it is said over in the name of the *Chasam Sofer*, that he once passed by a Jew who made it a point to make life miserable for him. He remarked, "I do not know why he causes me such anguish; I never did him a favor!" The understanding is that a perverted mind that does not want to return a favor, will instead be inconsiderate to that individual. Thus, we now understand the underlying meaning of Yosef's statement. One who is a *kafui tov*, who refuses to recognize and appreciate the favor he received, will pay back his debt of gratitude with a disservice.

QUESTIONS and ANSW