

**"And may G-d Almighty give you mercy before the man that he may release unto you your other brother and Binyamin."  
(43:14)**

The text of the *pasuk* is questionable. Why does Yaakov say that Hashem should give you mercy "before the man"? Why does he not simply say, "from the man"? What is the significance of having mercy "before" the man? *Horav Mordechai Rogov, z.l.*, suggests a profound thought. Yaakov *Avinu* taught his sons a valuable lesson. If they sense that the "man" has no mercy on them, it is because they are being punished for their own lack of *rachmanus*, mercy. If they have mercy "before" the man, if they are sensitive to the needs of others, Hashem will reward them by satisfying their needs. If they lack mercy, then they will be punished *midah k'neged midah*, measure for measure, with an equivalent response.

The way people act towards us is a mirror image of what we deserve. Why should we be worthy of a kind response if we turn a stone-cold heart to others in need? Hashem does not "overlook" our behavior towards others. He responds to us in the same manner that we treat others. Yaakov instructed his sons to have *rachamim*, sympathy, for others before they entertain the thought of requesting sympathy for themselves. When we entreat Hashem on our behalf, we should be certain that we are not negligent in adhering to this rule ourselves.