

"And Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him." (42:8)

The nature of Yosef's encounter with his brothers for the first time after many years of estrangement is truly enigmatic. True, it had been many years since they had last seen one another. In addition, the circumstances by which they had been separated were unpleasant to recall. The fact that ten brothers who were exemplary in wisdom and perception did not recognize their lost brother seems difficult to accept. *Horav Meir Bergman, Shlita*, cites *Horav Yechezkel Levinstein, z.l.*, who explains their meeting. Man has the ability to see and perceive, recognize and remember, only by virtue of *siyata d'shmaya*, Heavenly assistance. If it is not Hashem's will that we see a given object, then even though it may be directly in front of our eyes, we will simply not see it!

We readily accept that two plus two equals four only as a direct result of *siyata d'shmaya*. Hashem, the source of all wisdom, enables us to understand and accept the reality of this axiom.

Horav Bergman relates an innovative response to a simple question posed to him by his *rebbe* in elementary school. It was prior to *Chanukah*, and the students had all made little *menorahs*. Affixed to each *menorah* were eight little cups to hold the oil and the wick which would serve as the candle. The *rebbe* asked the class, "Why do you place the cup with the rim facing upward? Why not affix the cup to the *menorah* upside down?" When the boys responded that the oil would leak out, the *rebbe* retorted that they were wrong. "It is not because the oil will leak out, it is because the oil could never have been poured into the cup if it had been affixed upside down!" declared the *rebbe*.

The same is true concerning Yosef's encounter. Hashem did not create a situation in which the brothers could not recognize Yosef. Rather, Hashem had withdrawn the special assistance which He ordinarily bestows upon us -- the ability to see and perceive. Consequently, the brothers could not recognize Yosef. They had been temporarily relieved of the Divine gift of visual perception.