

He cried in a loud voice. Egypt heard and Pharaoh's household heard. (45:2)

When Yosef wept, the entire country heard; so respected was he in Egypt. Word quickly spread throughout the palace and then throughout the country: Yosef was weeping! *Chazal (Bereishis Rabbah)* state that Yosef's cries were conciliatory in nature, meant to assuage his brothers' feelings of guilt and shame. Why was he appeasing them? He was the victim. They were the "aggressors." It should be the other way around. *Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl* (cited by *Bad Kodesh*), posits that herein lies an important concept concerning interpersonal relationships. Just as the "*Shulchan Aruch*," Code of Law, addresses the rights of the victim who was slighted, hurt by his fellow, so, too, a complete set of laws addresses how the victim should act *vis-à-vis* his assailant. We have laws concerning the method and the amount of payment that the *mazik*, damager, must pay his victim. We have laws that teach how one asks for forgiveness, and how he expiates his sin. Likewise, we have laws regarding the manner in which the victim should accept the apology, admission of guilt and ensuing penance in order to absolve the perpetrator.

Let us face it; when someone harms us, we neither jump for joy, nor are we ready to forgive the aggressor. Let him sweat it out, just as I sweated it out. I suffered; let him suffer. I am going to stretch this out for all it is worth. This is human nature, and it is, thus, natural for people who have been hurt to act in this manner. We are different. Our Torah, as interpreted by *Chazal*, teaches us not to be vengeful, not to make our provoker, assailant, antagonist, suffer as we have suffered. When someone seriously offends me, I am not interested in his apology. Let him leave me alone. He has done enough damage. I am neither interested in seeing his face, nor in hearing his contrition. If anything, I want to see him squirm. I would like him to owe me forever. Let him not feel that he has gotten off with an apology.

People often employ a similar attitude when it comes to paying back a favor. Since I want the person for whom I did a favor to always be in my debt, I do not accept favors from him. Of course, the official "reason" is that I do not like to accept favors, because I am not comfortable being beholden to others. The real reason, however, is that I enjoy when people "owe" me. This is wrong. When someone wants to give me a gift, I should accept it with a smile.

Likewise, when someone begs my forgiveness, I should respond positively, with a smile: "Sure, I forgive you." This was Yosef's message to his brothers: "I bear no grudge. I forgive you wholeheartedly. As I have nothing against my younger brother, Binyamin, so, too, are my feelings toward you amicable."