

Yosef's brothers perceived that their father was dead... (50:15)

Yosef's brothers felt that now that their saintly father, Yaakov *Avinu*, was gone, their protection from what they felt would be Yosef's wrath had also come to an end. It seemed to them that Yosef's attitude toward them had abruptly changed. No longer were they the beloved family whom he invited to dine with him in the palace.

They feared that it was all because their father had been alive. Now that he was gone, Yosef's lingering animosity toward them was becoming apparent. (This was in their perception. It was not true.) Indeed, Yosef had a reason for everything he did (or did not do). When Yaakov was alive, he would grace the head of the table. Now that he was gone, Yosef felt awkward taking the place that rightfully belonged to Reuven and Yehudah. On the other hand, as viceroy of Egypt, it would be a violation of protocol for him not to sit at the head of the table.

Anxious about Yosef's feelings of (perceived), animus, they said that their father had asked that, he forgive them for what they did to him. (They felt that it was permissible to alter the truth in order to promote peaceful relations.) We see that they were now preoccupied with how Yosef was treating them. The *Midrash Tanchuma* teaches that it was not only the lack of invitations for dinner that caused them angst. It is what preceded this change that troubled them. Apparently, on their return from their father's funeral, they passed the site (the pit) in which they had originally placed Yosef, prior to their selling him to the Midyanim. Yosef halted the group, so that he could go over to the pit and recite the *brachah*, blessing, *She'asah li neis ba'makom ha'zeh*, "Who made a miracle for me in this place." Yosef paid gratitude to the Almighty for sparing his life. *Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl*, wonders why they were so concerned. After all, he was simply following the *halachah* that instructs us to bless and pay gratitude for Hashem's favor.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that the brothers were well aware that to make *hodaah*, praise and give gratitude properly, one must reflect and reiterate his reflections concerning what could have happened and how he was spared. The brothers feared that too much delving into the near-tragedy of Yosef's sale might arouse Yosef's original feelings of pain, fear and deprivation. This would in turn arouse antipathy toward them. (I reiterate again that this was perceived by the brothers. It was not a reality.)

This is a powerful observation concerning *hakoras hatov*. Most people are not ingrates, but do we take the time to truly acknowledge the favor? Do we think it through in such a manner that we ask ourselves: What if? What if we would not have been beneficiaries of his favor? Where would we be today? Our *hakoras hatov* must be commensurate with the favor. To do this we must reflect upon the favor. Those who fail to do so, likewise, fail to execute the obligation of *hakoras hatov* properly.