“Indeed, we are guilty concerning our brother inasmuch as we saw his heartfelt anguish when he pleaded with us.” (42:21)

If we peruse the preceding *parsha,* which relates the story of the sale of Yosef to the *Yishmaelim*, we notice that there is no mention of Yosef pleading with his brothers. It is only from their

vidui, confession, that we are able to derive that he pleaded with them not to sell him. *Horav Yosef Konvitz, z.l.,* observes, that it is implicit in the brothers’ statement that this pleading must have taken place only at the moment that they decided to sell him to the Arab merchants. Why? Why did he not implore them earlier, when they were throwing him into the pit? Was his life not in danger then? What delayed his plea? *Horav* Konvitz explains that as long as the danger was concentrated on his physical well-being, Yosef was prepared to accept the pain and suffering as *yesurim shel ahavah*, pain inflicted by Hashem out of deep love. Yosef was willing to accept Hashem’s decree, as long as his spiritual status-quo remained intact. When his brothers decided to sell him to the Arabs, Yosef became afraid. He was experiencing a clear and present danger to his *neshamah*, soul. If he were sold to the pagans, there was the distinct possibility that by living among them, he would slowly acculturate and eventually assimilate. Now he began to beg. He implored his brothers, “Please do not sell me. Please do not cast me off to live among the nations of the world.” This is implied by the brothers’ statement when they said, “We saw *tzoras nafsho*,” translated as heartfelt anguish, but quite is possibly referring to the anguish of his *nefesh*, soul, the fear that his soul would now suffer. As long as the danger was only to his physical being, Yosef accepted his fate. However, when his *neshamah* hung in the balance, he poured out his heart to them to listen to him. Regrettably, they did not.