

**"And they said one to another, we are surely guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the distress of his soul when he beseeched us, and we would not listen. Therefore this distress has befallen us. And Reuven answered them saying, did I not say to you do not sin against the child."  
(42:21-22)**

When Yosef accused his brothers of spying, they quickly comprehended that this distressful situation was brought upon them as retribution for their involvement in the selling of Yosef. Consequently, it seems puzzling that when the silver with which they purchased the corn was returned in their baggage, they were not able to see that this development was a sign of further retribution from Hashem for their sin. The *Midrash* explains that every act demonstrating Yosef's behavior and attitude towards his brothers was to serve as a reminder of their previous ill-treatment of Yosef. This enabled them to repent which led to an expiation of their sins. From the brothers' words, "*we are surely guilty*", it would seem that this objective was achieved. After careful examination of the text of Reuven's retort, however, we see that their act of contrition was not complete. This missing link is the key to Yosef's additional act of pressuring his brothers by placing their money in their baggage.

Reuven refers to their sin as "tyj" a term which is applied to a sin committed by mistake. The brothers feel that their mistake lies in not heeding Yosef's cries of distress and pleas for mercy. They now realized that they had wronged Yosef, and were, therefore, being unjustly accused by the Egyptian viceroy. They still feel, however, that their actions towards Yosef were the result of an innocent error on their part. At no point did they feel their error was malicious in nature. This was Yosef's message to them. He deliberately ordered his servants to return the money to his brothers' baggage, so that when they opened their sacks and discovered their money, they would realize that the Egyptian viceroy was not really a moral person as he had claimed. They would rather perceive him as a wicked man, who was maliciously attempting to malign and destroy them. This would bring them to reflect upon their own treatment of him, causing them to realize that they were not impartial, but that they were motivated by hatred and jealousy. One who is not objective and neutral may not pass judgment over another. This insight ultimately paves the way for complete contrition and penance.