

# ESTRANGEMENT FROM SIBLINGS - A KINDNESS?

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

*"And Yosef was the ruler over the land... and Yosef's brothers came and bowed twice before him, down to the ground. And Yosef saw his brothers, and he recognized them, but he made himself a stranger to them..." [42:6,7]*

Many commentators examine Yosef's behavior and explain why he felt it necessary to display cruelty towards his brothers. But the Kedushas Levi takes an entirely different approach, demonstrating that Yosef was in fact demonstrating maximal kindness as well as self-control.

The Kedushas Levi points out that when someone loses any sort of battle or contest against another, he usually feels pain and regret. When Yosef had his dreams which prophesied that his brothers would come and bow before him, they had mocked him terribly. At this point, if the brothers would have known, when they were fulfilling his dream and bowing before him, that this was their brother Yosef -- why, they would have felt tremendous emotional pain in proportion to the laughing they had done previously.

Thus the Torah is showing us Yosef's tremendous character. Any normal person would have been delighted to take maximal advantage of a situation like this, for revenge if nothing else - to let those who hated him feel low and subjugated to him. Yosef does precisely the opposite. Specifically at the moment when they were bowing before him, fulfilling his prophecy, he hid his identity from them to save them from that pain and embarrassment.

May we all merit to follow in the footsteps of Yosef.

Good Shabbos and a very Happy Chanukah,

Rabbi Yaakov Menken