

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT VAYIGASH

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
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WHAT MAKES A LEADER?

The eleven sons of Yaakov stood accused and threatened, before one of the most powerful men in the world, the Viceroy of Egypt - a regime not known for compassion or forgiveness. They had to make a decision, and their options, though seemingly straightforward, were actually quite complex.

Binyamin had been "caught" (in reality set up by Yosef) stealing the cup of the Viceroy and his brothers were faced with several possible choices. Self-preservation would dictate that they part ways with their brother Binyamin just as they did with Yosef years ago; however, their present situation seemed much more complicated. The only reason Binyamin joined them in Egypt was to serve as proof that they were, in fact, brothers, and not spies. Like true brothers, they could close ranks and follow Binyamin wherever fate took him, be it incarceration or even death, and demand that they all be treated as one family, sharing the same fate. Perhaps gambling this option would convince their Egyptian tormentor that they have been speaking the truth, that they were, in fact, brothers, and that they should all be set free?

Their other option would be to choose the opposite path offered to them by the Egyptian justice system, and simply walk away, washing their hands of their brother, the last remaining favoured son of the favoured wife - Rachel.

Faced with this quagmire, Yehuda suggests a third solution - a solution that seems, given his personal track record, completely uncharacteristic and unexpected. Yehuda suggests that he and Binyamin change places: Binyamin will go home to his father, while Yehuda will face a life of servitude.

This is the Parasha that Yehudah becomes the **leader** of Klal Yisrael.

Many years earlier soon after the sale of Yosef the Torah relates how Yehudah 'went down from amongst his brothers' (38:1). He was the one that suggested that Yosef should be sold. The brothers had listened to him as the official leader, and thus the buck lay on him as to Yosef's doom and Yaakov's ultimate pain.

The turning point in Yehudah's life came when his daughter in law Tamar chose not to openly embarrass Yehudah. Rather than publicly exposing Yehudah as the father of her yet to be born twin babies, she sent a cryptic message that hinted at the identity of the father. Only Yehudah could decipher this message and once he realised, he exclaimed "Tsadka Mimeni" - she is more righteous than me. With his announcement despite the embarrassment of being wrong he transformed himself into a selfless individual who focussed on the bigger picture.

This story grew on Yehudah eventually developing into the leader that was able to suggest exchanging himself to be a slave and letting Binyamin go free. This is the making of a leader.

Let's take two wonderful concepts from our

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KIDS ZONE
Quiz & Comic

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sages that help fortify this idea.

The Mishna in Keilim 17:13 speaks of how all sea fish skins can be used to make pure vessels. There is one exception the Kelev Mayim – literally the ‘sea dog’ loosely understood to be something like a seal or a sea lion. The Mishna asks why? And explains that it escapes to dry land when being chased.

Rabbi Gifter Z'l asked why if the animal spends most of its life in the water, do we place so much emphasis on where it goes when it is being chased. Surly its status should follow the majority of its life in the water. Why base its status on the rare occasions it is being chased?

Rabbi Gifter offers an awesome understanding.

Where we go under pressure, how we act under pressure tells us who we are and what we aren't.

No one's essence is defined by what do as second nature. It's great we do good acts so well. But that doesn't define us. What defines us is when we are being chased, when the heat is on, where do we run and how do we react.

Let us look at a further idea that

enhances this awareness.

The Gemara in Menachot (29a) cites a Brayta, in which Tana Devei R. Yishmael lists three things which Moshe found difficult to understand, and which the Torah therefore describes with the word "zeh", to indicate that Hashem showed Moshe with His finger: 1. The Menorah; 2. Rosh Chodesh (the New Moon); 3. The eight forbidden Sheratzim (rodents). Tosfot adds that the Half a Shekel coin was also difficult for Moshe to comprehend.

Looking at these commandments in the Torah and their wording the Vilna Gaon offers a brilliant interpretation.

What's the first letter of those three words?

Menorah – Mem, **Sheratzim/Shekalim** – Shin, **Rosh Chodesh** – introduced by the Torah with the word **Hachodesh** – Heh.

How we do in a difficult situation is our essence. The first three letters of these words together spell Moshe. Furthermore looking at the last three letters of these words we note that they also spell Moshe!

The true sign of who you are is how you do in the beginning of a situation, in the middle and at the end.

If it worked for Moshe Rabenu surely it will work for us.

How we do when we hear news, when we find ourselves in tough situations, the changes that we make, tells us who we are.

Before his death, Yaakov assembled his sons blessed them, sharing with each a vision relating to their destiny.

Yaakov told Yehuda that his descendants would possess the sceptre of kingship.

True leaders don't control their people they inspire them to do great things.

It is in this Parasha that Yehudah earned the leadership – Hayta Yehudah Lekasho Yisrael Mamshelotav – it is when Yehudah made a Kidush Hashem and stood instead of his brother Binyamin rectifying his past involvement with the sale of Yosef, that he became a Moshel – ruler in Am Yisrael.

We are all leaders in our own right. Whether we lead a company, a team of people, a group of friends, our families or even just ourselves. Yehudah's actions are there to show us we are defined by those tough moments in life when we decide where to run and how to act.

At those times in life be the leader, make the decision, know the way, go the way and show the way.



RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

PARSHAT VAYIGASH

When Yosef brings his father, Yaakov Avinu, before Pharaoh, it is a moment charged with expectation. Pharaoh has already encountered Yosef's brilliance and leadership, and now he meets the man who raised him and shaped his wisdom. One might anticipate a conversation about faith, governance, or the nature of wisdom itself.

Instead, Pharaoh asks a simple question: "How old are you?"

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains that this was not a request for information. Pharaoh was asking

something far more meaningful: How much of your life was truly lived? How much of your time was invested in the wisdom and purpose you carry? Not how many years passed, but how fully those years were used.

Yaakov answers, "The days of the years of my life are 130," and then adds with humility that his days were fewer and more difficult than those of his forefathers. When a person understands what life is meant to be, time never feels abundant. There is always more that could have been done, more growth still possible.

This exchange reframes how we measure a life. We tend to count years, milestones, accomplishments, and visible success. Yaakov teaches us

that the true measure is purpose. A day is not significant because it was busy, but because it was meaningful.

A meaningful life is one in which a person is needed, by their family, by others, and by something higher than themselves. When life is about serving a purpose beyond one's own comfort or recognition, every day carries weight. Such a life does not seek applause; it seeks responsibility.

The question Pharaoh asked Yaakov is quietly asked of us each day: Did I merely exist today, or did I live? Was I useful? Was I present where I was needed?

And that is how a life becomes full, by being lived with purpose.



RABBI BENJI STONE, TAL Chavruta Program

Tehillim for Our Times; Chapter 15: מְזַמֵּר לְדָוִד יְהוָה מִיַּגִּיד בְּאֵהָלָךְ מִיִּשְׁכַּן בְּהַר קְדֹשֶׁךְ

THE REAL DEAL

In this chapter King David considers what it takes to elevate oneself to the level at which one is considered to be "living" in the "tent" of Hashem or at least "dwelling" on His "holy mountain" (15:1).

We are not talking here about somebody who manages to keep away from sin and ensure to uphold his mitzvah observance, however praiseworthy that may be. The focus here instead is on the one who goes the extra mile; someone who sincerely values a Torah life and takes his avodah to a new level. King David sets out the defining characteristics of one who is part of this elite group.

Bein Adam Lemakom

In the first instance, his actions in the arena of bein adam lemakom (relations between man and G-d) are "tamim" ("simple"; 15:2). There is no complicated mix of motivations in play when this individual prays, learns Torah or gives charity. He simply wishes to connect to Hashem and do His will.

Bein Adam Lechavero

When it comes to his actions in the

context of bein adam lechavero (relationships with other people) he is a "doer of righteousness" (ibid). The case of Abba Chilkiyahu, a labourer in the employ of others, is a case in point.

He was extremely careful not to divert his attention from his work - even to greet a passerby (Makot 24a). An employee shudders at the prospect of their employer forgetting to pay them on time. They should also shudder at the prospect of delivering anything other than complete dedication to the job at hand which is the "payment" owed by them to their employer.

"He speaks truth in His Heart" (ibid)

This is a very interesting verse. If the intention here was that our devout individual performs mitzvot with great sincerity, then the verse should have stated something like "his actions reflect what is in his heart". Instead, the language used here implies that the private thoughts of our individual are "true". What does it mean to say that a person's thoughts are true?

We all try to keep to our word in our business dealings - and only someone of pretty poor character will purposely break a commitment given in word or in writing. But how would we approach a scenario in which the challenge was more subtle in nature? Imagine you

resolved to provide a service to a potential client at your standard rate of £75 per hour. During the initial consultation it became clear that your client-to-be had been charged £150 an hour by his previous service provider and would certainly be prepared to accept that fee from you. What do you do now? There is certainly no contractual obligation to provide services at the lower rate. But is there any merit in doing so?

Rav Safra was in the marketplace with a view to selling a particular item and was approached by a customer who made an offer to buy it. Rav Safra had just begun to recite Kriat Shema and did not respond to the offer, not wishing to interrupt his prayers. The buyer took Rav Safra's silence as a rebuttal of his approach and proceeded to increase his offer to a greater figure. Rav Safra concluded his Kriat Shema and responded

"Please take the object at the initial price you offered as it was my initial intention to sell it to you at that price" (Makot 24a; Sheilta 36).

This is the intention of our verse when it states;

"He speaks truth in His Heart"; If one decides to deal with another person in a specific way then they have a moral obligation to follow through.



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Saying "Amen" at the End of Yishtabah

Our practice is to say "Amen" at the conclusion of the blessing of Yishtabah – the blessing that ends the morning Pesukeh De'zimra service. Some people mistakenly say "Amen" after the Hazan recites the words "U'mehulal Ba'tishbahot," but this is incorrect. "Amen" is recited at the very end of Yishtabah, after "Melech Kel Hai Ha'olamim."

The reason why "Amen" is recited at the end of Yishtabah is that this Beracha

concludes a "series" of Berachot, which began with the recitation of Baruch She'amar. Baruch She'amar is the introductory blessing of Pesukeh De'zimra, and Yishtabah is the concluding blessing of this section. Our custom is to recite "Amen" at the end of a Beracha which concludes a series of Berachot, and so we say "Amen" upon concluding Yishtabah.

Incidentally, this is also the reason why the Beracha of Yishtabah does not begin with the words "Baruch Ata

Hashem," like most Berachot do. There is a fundamental rule that a Beracha which follows another Beracha, as part of a series of Berachot, is covered by the introduction of "Baruch Ata Hashem" that opens the first Beracha, and so it does not require this introduction. Yishtabah is considered as though it follows Baruch She'amar, because everything in between – the chapters of Pesukeh De'zimra – are essentially the continuation of Baruch She'amar. We begin our praise of

Hashem with the recitation of Baruch She'amar, and we then continue with the praises of Pesukeh De'zimra, concluding with Yishtabah. Therefore, Yishtabah does not begin with "Baruch Ata Hashem."

Other examples of this rule include the Amida prayer, which consists of 19

Berachot, only the first of which begins with "Baruch Ata Hashem." All subsequent 18 Berachot are covered by the introduction of "Baruch Ata Hashem" that opens the first Beracha, and so they do not require this introduction. Similarly, among the blessings recited before and after Shema, only the first begins with Baruch Ata Hashem ("Yos-

er or" in the morning, "Asher Bi'dbaro" in the evening), as all the subsequent Berachot are the continuation, forming a series of blessings. Another example is the concluding Beracha of Hallel ("Yehaleluha"), which does not begin with "Baruch Ata Hashem" because it is the continuation of the introductory Beracha of Hallel.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Vayigash

With the discovery of the goblet in Binyamin's sack, the brothers are confused. Yehuda alone steps forward and eloquently but firmly petitions Yosef for Binyamin's release, offering himself instead. As a result of this act of total selflessness, Yosef finally has irrefutable proof that his brothers are different people from the ones who cast him into the pit, and so he now reveals to them that he is none other than their brother. The brothers shrink from him in shame, but Yosef consoles them, telling them that everything has been part of G-d's plan. He sends them back to their father Yaakov with a message to come and reside in the land of Goshen.

At first, Yaakov cannot accept the news, but when he recognizes hidden signs in the message which positively identify the sender as his son Yosef, his spirit is revived. Yaakov together with all his family and possessions sets out for Goshen. G-d communicates with Yaakov in a vision at night. He tells him not to fear going down to Egypt and its negative spiritual consequences, because it is there that G-d will establish the Children of Israel as a great nation even though they will be dwelling in a land steeped in immorality and corruption. The Torah lists Yaakov's offspring and hints to the birth of Yocheved, who will be the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu. Seventy souls in total descend into Egypt, where Yosef is reunited with his father after 22

years of separation. He embraces his father and weeps, overflowing with joy. Yosef secures the settlement of his family in Goshen. Yosef takes his father Yaakov and five of the least threatening of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh, and Yaakov blesses Pharaoh. Yosef instructs that, in return for grain, all the people of Egypt must give everything to Pharaoh, including themselves as his slaves. Yosef then redistributes the population, except for the Egyptian priests who are directly supported by a stipend from Pharaoh. The Children of Israel become settled, and their numbers multiply greatly.

Rabbi Sinclair,
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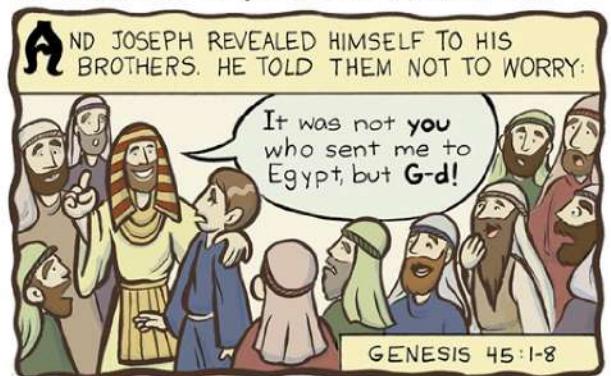
Q

1. What threatening words did Yehuda say to Yosef?
2. Why did Yehuda say his missing brother died?
3. Why was Yehuda the one to plead for Binyamin?
4. What do we learn from Yosef telling his brothers "Go up to my father"?
5. What two things did the brothers see that helped prove that he was really Yosef?

A

1. 44:18 - He threatened that Yosef would be stricken with leprosy, like Pharaoh when he took Sarah from Avraham; alternatively, Yehuda threatened to kill Yosef and Pharaoh.
2. 44:20 - Yehuda feared that if he said his missing brother was alive, Yosef would demand to see him.
3. 44:32 - He was the one who took "soul" responsibility for him.
4. 45:9 - We learn that Eretz Yisrael is higher than all other lands.
5. 45:12 - He was circumcised like they were, and he spoke Lashon Hakodesh.

Of Biblical Proportions by Chari Pere



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