

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT VAYIGASH

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT!

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk once said "If you believe in the Creator there are no difficulties, but if you do not believe there are no excuses!"

When a person has faith in a Higher Power, they approach obstacles with the belief that they can overcome them because of their faith and attachment to G-d.

When they do not, then every occurrence is up to their own personal responsibility and there are no excuses.

Parashat Vayigash is one of the shortest in the entire Torah, yet it contains the climax of the story of Yosef and his brothers, it is where Yosef reveals himself, and finally Yaakov is reunited with Yosef. Within this story there is a profound lesson for all of us which will enable us to better understand our daily behaviour.

Twenty-two years had passed since that day when Yosef was seventeen years old and his brothers despising their younger kin, kidnapped him, threw him into a pit, and then sold him as a slave to Egyptian merchants. In Egypt, he spent twelve years in prison, from where he rose to become Viceroy of the country that was the superpower at the time. Now, more than two decades later, the moment was finally ripe for reconciliation. He was ready to reveal himself – the Egyptian Viceroy they were speaking to all along was none other than Yosef!

"Yosef could not hold in his emotions," "He dismissed all of his Egyptian assistants from his chamber, thus, no one else was present with Yosef when he revealed himself to his brothers. He began to weep with such loud sobs that the Egyptians outside could hear him. And Yosef said to his brothers: 'I am Yosef! Is my father still alive?' His brothers were so horrified that they could not respond. (45:1-7)

There are many emotions that run wild when reading these Pesukim reflecting moments in our lives where similar feelings have surfaced. Moments of unexpected reunions, reconciliations, or even confronting deep-seated emotions that bring a mix of joy, sorrow, and introspection.

However, amidst these intense emotions, a powerful question emerges;

Why did the brothers not notice Yosef before?

Throughout their encounters with the "Viceroy" in Egypt (Yosef), the brothers encountered numerous unmistakable signs that should have revealed his true identity to them. Yosef accused them of being spies and delved into probing questions, prompting even Yehuda to express surprise at the intensity of the interrogation. Additionally, the viceroy's insistence on seeing Binyamin was a glaring clue—one that should have triggered the realization that this powerful figure was, in fact, their long-lost brother.

As events unfolded, Binyamin was falsely accused of stealing the goblet and brought back, a situation that should have sparked the thought that Yosef might have had a deeper motive involving his brother. Moreover, one of their responses to the circumstances was an admission of guilt regarding the sale of Yosef many years prior. Surely that should have led them to entertain the possibility that the Viceroy was, indeed, Yosef himself?

Despite these apparent hints, their perception seemed clouded, leading to their incredulity. Even when Yosef openly revealed his identity, their disbelief persisted to the point of needing further proof. The puzzling part remains: How could they remain so blind to the undeniable signs and fail to recognize their own brother, standing right before their eyes?

The Degel Hamusar (quoted in Chochmat Hamatspun) explains their lack of willingness to understand stemmed from a deeper reluctance to confront the truth. This reluctance subtly clouded their perception, preventing them from seeing the evident signs, as they consciously avoided acknowledging what they did not want to comprehend. They did not want to see Yosef ruling over them. They had denied his dreams in the past and negated them, banishing them from their conscious. Hence, despite numerous signs, their minds were unable to absorb them due to this inner resistance.

The Kehilat Ya'akov (Birkat Peretz P. Vaera) explains we see a similar idea from the seventh plague (hail) that Hashem brought on the Egyptians.

Despite being forewarned to shelter their



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animals to protect them from the plague, many disregarded the advice. "And he who did not pay attention to the word of God left his servants and livestock in the field" (Shemot 9:21).

After experiencing so many plagues and seeing that every word Moshe had said had come true, why didn't they just bring them in before the plague. What would they have lost by doing so?

The reason is because they had self-interest and their actual desire wasn't to do what G-d wants, rather to do what they wanted. Despite their intelligence, they couldn't act against their self-serving instincts, resulting in their loss during the hailstorm.

In the same vein, Rabbi Elhanan Wasserman Zts"l, (Kovets Haarot 1:6) explains the prohibition against taking bribes as linked to how it distorts perception. When someone accepts a bribe, their ability to grasp the truth is

compromised if it contradicts their desires. Once swayed by the bribe, their judgment becomes fixed. This analogy likens them to a drunk person: just as intoxication impairs judgment, the bribe clouds their reasoning. Even the most learned sage, when intoxicated or swayed by personal desires, struggles to discern matters clearly. This concept explains how even renowned philosophers could propose theories negating G-d's existence; their wisdom became tainted by their personal desires conflicting with the concept of a Higher Power. Their intellectual pursuits were influenced by their inclinations, distorting their ability to perceive truths that contradicted their fundamental desires.

The Gaon Rabbi Chaim of Brisk Zts"l once met a heretic, who said to the Rabbi, I have some questions about G-d and how/if he runs the world.

Rabbi Chaim said to him if you have questions, Bezrat Hashem I am ready to

solve them, but the questions you have are not difficulties rather they are excuses for your behaviour.

I can answer your difficulties, but I cannot answer excuses.

Although Yosef was always in front of his brothers, it never entered their mind that this could be him. The revelation of Yosef remind us that the truth, wisdom, and answers are often within reach. Yet, it requires a willingness to open our eyes—to confront our biases, acknowledge past actions, and approach life with genuine inquiry. By embracing introspection and seeking clarity beyond personal desires or preconceptions, we can uncover profound truths that may have been obscured by our own limitations.

Let us be ready to confront, question, and ultimately, to see the world as it truly is, for therein lies the essence of understanding and growth.



RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

PARSHAT VAYIGASH

Yoseph, after twenty-two years of being cut off from his family and his homeland, reaches the moment when he reveals his true identity to his brothers by saying: 'אני יוסף אחיכם אשר מכרתם אתי מצרימה'. 'I am your brother Yoseph, he whom you sold into Egypt'. In these moments, Yoseph's great power is revealed. Although he has every reason to be angry, to be hurt, to seek revenge. Yoseph could blame his brother, justifiably, for all the suffering and anguish, the concerns, fears, and all the ups and downs that he experienced for many years. Despite everything, we find him comforting

his brothers and reconciling them. 'ועתה אל תעצבו ואל יחר בעיניכם כי מכרתם אתי הנה'. 'Now, do not be distressed or reproach yourselves because you sold me hither'.

Where did Yoseph get these supreme powers from? How could the beloved child, the son of old age, the 'dreamer' withstand all the challenges, go through long years of separation and come out of them gaining the upper hand, stronger and more powerful?

Our sages on the verse 'ויסוף הויד מצרימה' explain that not only was Yoseph taken down to Egypt, but that he 'took' G-d down together with him. Wherever Yoseph went, whether willingly or unwillingly, even when he was taken down to the darkest and lowest place, even when he was led to

Egypt, G-d went down with him. In the lowest places as well as when he stood in front of the king, he never forgot that G-d was with him.

'ועתה אל תעצבו ואל יחר בעיניכם כי מכרתם אתי הנה כי למחיה שלחני אלהים לפניכם'. 'Now, do not be distressed or reproach yourselves because you sold me hither; it was to save life that G-d sent me ahead of you'. With these words Yoseph says to his brother: 'I was never sold but always sent by the Creator of the world'.

That was Yoseph's great power. This is what kept him successful wherever he went and with whatever he did. The understanding that G-d is always with him reminding him that 'You are never buried, but planted, never sold, but sent!'



RABBI YEHONATAN SALEM

TWO HALVES OF A WHOLE

After Yosef disclosed his identity to his brothers, he told them to return to Eretz Canaan and bring his father and their families down to Egypt, so that he could help them survive the famine prevailing in the region. The verse (Vayigash 46:26) tells us that the number of people in Yaakov Avinu's family who came down to Egypt was sixty-six. (This was apart from four members, who were in Egypt, making the number up to seventy: Yosef, his two sons and Yocheved, who was born upon their entry to Egypt.) The verse states that the wives of the sons of Yaakov were not

included in the list. Why were they not included?

A husband and wife are essentially two halves of a whole. Since they share a common soul, they are connected even before they are physically created, and remain connected forever. Thus, the Torah emphasizes how our forefathers went to great lengths to be buried next to their wives. A husband and wife are part of each other and forever inseparable, both in this world and in the next. Hence, it was not necessary for the wives of Bnei Yaakov to be mentioned independently of their husbands in the list of those who descended to Egypt.

Having said that, a husband and wife nevertheless have different roles, as in any

partnership, whereby each partner plays their role, helping to complete the whole unit. Moreover, just as in any given establishment, e.g. a school, synagogue or business partnership, the roles of the partners should be defined and not switched, as this may wreak havoc. So too, in a marriage, where each spouse was created with their unique talents, their roles should be defined and not switched.

From where did these differences evolve? At Creation, man was created from earth—an inert, soft and lifeless material, while woman was created from a hard, living substance – one of man's ribs. Additionally, her creation was from a rib, which comes from a concealed and modest place within a man, while earth from which

man was created, is to be found everywhere. Thus, we can understand that they have different roles to play, including in the partnership of marriage. A man's role, intuitively, is to initiate, create and attain. He creates the means to physically sustain himself and his family in this world, and through his drive for spiritual accomplishments, creates and achieves a portion in the next world for himself and his wife. His achievements are symbolized by the stories of a building. A woman's role, on the other hand, is to act as the basis and the

foundations of the home. Although foundations are concealed from the human eye, they provide the strength to support the whole building. Moreover, not only do the foundations provide stability, but they also define the shape that the building will take. The woman of the house acts "behind the scenes", using her intuition, input, nurturing and guidance to enable her husband to be a creator. She helps shape his achievements in the correct form, giving them life and energy. The man, who goes out to the marketplace, creates the raw material –

money, otherwise known as "dough," and she, the woman of the house, uses the money to make and form the dough in order to feed her family.

Let us define our natural roles correctly, thereby enabling our partnership in marriage to achieve the most it can. He will be at the front line, initiating and providing, while she will be the backbone and the drive, shaping and energizing their aspirations and accomplishments, together merging as one unit.



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

SHABBAT CANDLE LIGHTING – TWO CANDLES; WHO LIGHTS IF THE MATRIARCH IS NOT HOME?

The obligation of Hadlakat Nerot, the Ereb Shabbat candle lighting, requires lighting at least one candle, but it is customary for women to light two candles. The most common reason given for this practice is that the two candles correspond to the two commands of "Zachor" and "Shamor" ("remembering" and "observing" the Shabbat).

Additionally, the Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909) explained that this practice alludes to the theme of Shalom Bayit (peaceful relations between husband and wife) which underlies the Mitzva of Hadlakat Nerot. The Sages comment that candle lighting is required with the onset of Shabbat because the presence of light helps ensure Shalom Bayit, as darkness often leads to tension and arguments. Lights must be kindled in the home before Shabbat begins so that an aura of peace and tranquillity will pervade the home. This concept, the Ben Ish Hai notes, is alluded to in the two candles that the

woman lights. The Hebrew word "Ner" ("candle") has the numerical value of 250, and thus two candles have a combined numerical value of 500. There are 248 "Ebarim" (limbs and organs) in a man's body, and 252 in a woman's body, which together combine to form a total of 500. Thus, the lighting of two candles alludes to the "togetherness" of the husband and wife, which is represented by the number 500, and which constitutes the fundamental reason behind the Mitzva of the Shabbat candles.

The time of lighting the Shabbat candles is an "Et Rason," a moment when a woman's prayers are more readily accepted by God. It is therefore proper for a woman when lighting the Shabbat candles to offer a prayer for Shalom Bayit, for her husband's success in earning a living, and for the well-being of her children, particularly that they should grow to become Torah scholars.

The custom among the Sephardim is that only the mother lights the Shabbat candles; single daughters do not light according to our custom. If the mother is away for Shabbat, such as if she had a baby and must spend Shabbat in the hospital, then the husband should light the Shabbat candles in her stead. He recites the usual Beracha of "Le'hadlik Ner Shel Shabbat." If both parents are

away for Shabbat and their children remain home, and among the children is a daughter above the age of Bat Mitzva, then she should light the Shabbat candles in the home with a Beracha. Hacham Ovadia Yosef rules that a daughter above the age of Bat Mitzva takes precedence over a son over the age of Bar Mitzva, even if the boy is older than the girl. If there is no girl over the age of Bat Mitzva, then a boy who is over the age of Bar Mitzva should light the candles, with a Beracha.

Of course, the parents must light Shabbat candles in the place where they spend Shabbat. But if they have children staying at home for Shabbat, then either a son or a daughter must light the Shabbat candles, as discussed.

Summary: It is customary for women to light two candles before the onset of Shabbat, and the time of Shabbat candle lighting is a time especially suited for praying for the well-being of oneself, one's husband and one's children. If the mother is away for Shabbat, then the husband lights the Shabbat candles. If both parents are away for Shabbat but the children remain home, then the candles should be lit by a girl above the age of Bat Mitzva. If there is no girl this age, then a boy above the age of Bar Mitzva should light the candles.



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 Hashem'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. Hashem 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 Hashem will establish the Children of Israel as a great nation although 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, Seasonsofthemoon.com



1 What threatening words did Yehuda say to Yosef?

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.

5 What happened to Yaakov when he realized Yosef was alive?

45:27 - His ruach hakodesh (prophetic spirit) returned.

6 What happened to the property that Yaakov acquired in Padan Aram?

46:6 - He traded it for Esav's portion in the Cave of Machpelah.

7 When listing Yaakov's children, the verse refers to Rachel as "Rachel, wife of Yaakov." Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah are not referred to as Yaakov's wives. Why?

46:19 - Rachel was regarded as the matriarch of the family.

8 Yosef harnessed his own chariot instead of letting a servant do it. Why?

46:29 - Yosef wanted to hasten to honour his father.

2 What do we learn from Yosef telling his brothers "Go up to my father"?

45:9 - We learn that Eretz Yisrael is higher than all other lands.

3 What two things did the brothers see that helped prove that he was really Yosef?

45:12 - He was circumcised like they were, and he spoke Lashon Hakodesh.

4 Why did Binyamin weep on Yosef's neck?

45:14 - Binyamin wept for the destruction of Mishkan Shilo built in Yosef's territory.



And Yosef said to his brothers, "I am Yosef ..." and his brothers could not answer him because they were startled ... From embarrassment

(Bereishis 45:3 and Rashi)

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