



*“I am Yosef
Is my father
still alive?”*

YadAvNow.com Weekly Audio Series: Vayigash

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

The Predicament of Yehudah & Binyamin

CLICK TO VIEW!



Placing Their Future on the Line for Binyamin’s Sake

CLICK TO VIEW!



Yehudah Approached Yosef

CLICK TO VIEW!



Responsibility Shortens One’s Life

CLICK TO VIEW!



Ramchal: The Knowing Heart

CLICK TO ACCESS
THE FULL SERIES





*“I am Yosef
Is my father
still alive?”*

YadAvNow.com Weekly Audio Series: Vayigash

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

The Ultimate Display of Statesmanship

CLICK TO VIEW!



1. Binyamin is accused of stealing the silver goblet of the viceroy.
2. Yehuda's response: Whoever took the goblet shall die.
3. How could he say that?
4. Lavan accused Yaakov of taking his fetishes, said whoever took the fetishes should die, understanding it was an impossibility.
5. Yaakov raised his family with exceptional level of integrity and holiness; that would be impossible.
6. Rachel took the fetishes to separate her father from idolatry.
7. Rachel, our Matriarch, passed away due to Yaakov's statement.
8. Yehuda, and his brothers, being raised by them, knew that this could not be.
9. Torah: "Yaakov was left all by himself."
10. Midrash: As it says, "G-d is exalted unto Himself," Yaakov is also unto himself.
11. Yehuda to the viceroy: "He (Binyamin) is left by himself to his mother."
12. Binyamin was the antagonist of Edom because he was the son of Rachel.

Dissipating The Trauma To Perpetuate A People

CLICK TO VIEW!



1. Yosef revealed himself to his brothers and they were overwhelmed with shame.
2. He consoled them to not be saddened as G-d had sent him as their provider.
3. Yosef as Viceroy provided food for Egypt and all of the surrounding countries.
4. Yosef knew he was sold specifically for this purpose and prepared his family for the Egyptian exile.
5. Yosef names his first-born Menashe. G-d caused him to forget his family and strife he experienced.
6. The trauma and suffering his brothers caused was beyond repair and forgiveness.
7. If so emotionally scarred, it would have been impossible for Yosef to be a proper provider.
8. He wouldn't be selflessly dedicated without a trace of negativity towards them.
9. Yosef realized a miraculous transition began to occur: memories of his brothers' abuse faded as if it never happened.
10. To commemorate this miracle, Yosef named his son Menashe.
11. This was the basis for Yosef knowing beyond any doubt that he was sent to Egypt for this mission.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Vayigash



*“I am Yosef
Is my father
still alive?”*

Yosef’s Tears of Joy

Torah: After Yosef had revealed himself to his brothers, they were overwhelmed and were not able to respond.

Rashi citing the *Midrash*: The brothers were overwhelmed with embarrassment. When the brothers had realized that the Viceroy was in fact their brother Yosef, they understood that what they had initially attempted to reject and destroy was rooted in their own arrogance. They felt that they were culpable for all the suffering that they had caused their brother. The embarrassment was at a level that caused them to be dumbfounded.

Torah: “He (Yosef) then kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; afterwards his brothers conversed with him.”

Midrash: “Yosef kissed each of his brothers and wept upon them. As a result of Yosef’s weeping, they were appeased and understood that he had truly forgiven them. Similarly, when G-d will ultimately redeem the

Jewish people He will do so through their crying. As it states, ‘They will come with tears and with great beseeching I (G-d) will lead them...’”

Eitz Yosef (commentator on *Midrash Tanchuma*): “The *Midrash* explains that just as Yosef’s brothers were appeased through his weeping so too will the Jewish people be ultimately redeemed by their crying. What is the correlation between Yosef’s weeping and the appeasement of his brothers? When Yosef wept upon his brothers, it was not due to pain, but rather it was from joy. Similarly, the Jewish people at the end of time will cry at the time of their redemption not because of pain but as a result of joy. As it states, ‘Those who G-d redeems will return to Zion with song...’”

The tears of Yosef were from joy that his brothers had realized and appreciated the wrong that they had done. He understood that their embarrassment and weeping was as a result of appreciating their failing. Yosef thus

rejoiced. When his brothers understood that Yosef's tears were from joy, that he was truly happy for them, they were appeased. Similarly, at the end of time, when G-d will bring about the ultimate redemption the Jewish people will cry from joy because they will understand and appreciate what is the ultimate objective of creation. Because the Jewish people will cry, from joy, it will be a confirmation of their priority and perspective.

In our prayers on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* we say that the various classifications of righteous people will rejoice after G-d will instill fear in all of mankind. We then say, that G-d will vanquish evil from existence. Seemingly, one would think that the joy of the righteous is from witnessing the destruction of evil.

However, the order of events is that we first mention; the righteous will rejoice when mankind will recognize G-d and then G-d will vanquish evil. It is only after each classification of righteous individuals rejoices, outby declaring their essence, will G-d bring evil to an end. The rejoicing is a confirmation of their worthiness, which will bring about the ultimate redemption and the end of evil.

Every day we recite in the "*Modim* – prayer of thanks in the *Amidah* (Silent Prayer)," – "We gratefully thank You for it is You Who are Hashem, our G-d and the G-d of our forefathers for all eternity..." We are not initially thanking G-d for what He continuously provides for us, as stated in the *Modim*, but rather we are acknowledging the privilege of having an exclusive relationship with G-d the Omnipotent One. A Jew needs to feel grateful and fortunate for this alone. When the Jewish people will internalize the reality of their privileged status, they will weep from joy. This is what is meant to take place at the time of Redemption.

Yosef's Failing

Midrash: Yosef was initially meant to live 120 years. However, his life was shortened by ten years and he passed away at the age of 110. When *Yehudah* initially had argued his case before the Viceroy of Egypt, not realizing that it was his brother Yosef, *Yehudah* had referred to his father as, "my father, your servant". This was repeated ten times.

Midrash: Because Yosef had remained silent when he had heard his father being referred to as "your servant",

he had lost ten years of his life because his silence was considered a disrespect. Seemingly, the disrespect was that Yosef's father was being referred to as "his servant." However, from the words of the *Midrash* we are able to understand it in a way that gives Yosef greater culpability.

Midrash: Yosef's silence was "*shteeka k'hodaah*," which means that his silence was the equivalent of an admission. When Yosef heard his father being referred to as "his servant" there was an element of agreement and embracing of this identification of *Yaakov*. Although there is no question that Yosef had an appreciation and understanding of his father, which surpassed his brothers; nevertheless, he had a prophetic dream in which his father was meant to bow before him. Yosef's dreams actually came to fruition. Consequently, when Yosef had heard his father being referred to as "his servant" he felt that in a limited context his father had relevance to that quantification.

Chazal: Yosef's silence was considered a disrespect because believing to any degree that his father was meant to demonstrate subservience to him was the ultimate disrespect.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh at the beginning of *Shemos*: The bondage of the Jewish people in Egypt came upon them in stages. As long as *Yaakov*, our Patriarch was still alive they were insulated and unaffected by the spiritual impurity of Egypt. His presence created an insular environment that could not be penetrated. When *Yaakov* passed away, although the spiritual erosion had begun, they were nevertheless revered by the Egyptians because they were considered to be the family of Yosef, the Viceroy. Thus, the status of the Jew was royalty.

When Yosef passed away, the royal status of his family was lost. Although at that time the physical bondage had not begun, they were no longer seen noach as special by the Egyptian people. Had Yosef lived an additional ten years, the Jewish people would have retained their status as royalty during those years. Thus, postponing the spiritual deterioration of the Jewish people.

Torah: "*Rachel* saw that she had not borne children to *Yaakov*... so she said to him 'Give me children—otherwise I am dead.' *Yaakov*'s anger flared up at *Rachel*, and he said, 'Am I instead of G-d....?'"

Chazal: Because *Yaakov* had reacted to *Rachel's* comment in an insensitive manner, not relating to her pain, G-d said to *Yaakov*, "Is this the manner in which you speak to one who is in such pain? Because you replied to *Rachel* in this way, I swear that your children will bow to her son." It was because *Yaakov* had responded to *Rachel* in a harsh manner, that *Yosef* had dreamt that his father and brothers were destined to bow before him. *Yaakov* was the cause for all the events that presented themselves. Ultimately, this led to a moment of choice: would *Yosef* remain silent when hearing his father being referred to as "his servant, or not? *Yosef* failed – thus shortening his life by ten years.

The Sanctification Process Pertaining to the Jew

The performance of a *mitzvah* is predicated on the recitation of a blessing. The text of the blessing that is recited before performing a *mitzvah* is, "... Who has sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us..." One concludes the blessing by specifying the particular *mitzvah* that is to be performed. The mention of the sanctification of the Jew is only found within the context of this type of blessing. Meaning, it is only through the performance of a *mitzvah* that a Jew is sanctified. What is the process of this sanctification?

Torah: At the time of the receiving of the *Torah* at Sinai, the Mountain assumed a sanctified/consecrated status when the Divine Presence descended upon it. No one was permitted to approach the Mountain as long as the Divine Presence was associated with it. After the Divine Presence ascended from the Mountain, the Jewish people were permitted to approach it because it had reverted back to its ordinary status. We see clearly from this example, that the basis for sanctification/consecration is G-d's association with something.

For example, the day of *Shabbos* is considered holy because G-d's Presence entered and continuously enters into existence on that day. The Divine Presence ascends and departs at the end of the seventh day. Through the performance of *mitzvos*, one is sanctified. Does the sanctification come about as a result of doing the Will of G-d? When one does His Will G-d will have a relationship with him – thus causing sanctification similar to what had taken place at Sinai.

Torah: At Sinai, when the Jewish people accepted upon themselves G-d's *Torah* and its obligations, G-d referred to the Jewish people as "...holy nation." When G-d chose the Jewish people as His nation, the consequence was holiness/sanctification.

Midrash: "Reb *Shimon Bar Yochai* had said, G-d said to the Jewish people 'You should honor the *mitzvos*. Because the *mitzvah* is the equivalent of My Agent.' (There is a principle in Jewish law that states that an agent is the equivalent of the one who established his agency). 'When you honor the *mitzvos* it is the equivalent of honoring Me. However, if you disgrace them, it is the equivalent of disgracing Me.' There was no one who honored and revered the *mitzvos* more than *Yaakov*, our Patriarch. As the *Torah* states, 'He is the perfect man who sits in the tent (the tent of *Torah*).'"

We see that when one engages in a *mitzvah* it is the equivalent of engaging with G-d Himself, because He establishes the *mitzvos* as "His Agents." Thus, one becomes sanctified through the performance of *mitzvos* because of his direct association with G-d/*mitzvah*. An agent is appointed to be the equivalent of the one who appointed him. How is the *mitzvah* the equivalent of G-d?

King *David* in *Psalms*: "The prerequisite/beginning to wisdom is the fear of G-d." In order for one to perceive and comprehend the *Torah* in its proper context, one must first revere G-d.

Rabbeinu Yonah in his commentary on *Pirkei Avos* (*Ethics of Our Fathers*) and *Shaarei Teshuvah* (*The Gates of Repentance*): "All *mitzvos* of the *Torah* are the equivalent of 'parparaos – appetizers' to the essence which is the fear of G-d." Whenever one performs a *mitzvah*, regardless of whatever it may be, it is an expression of his fear of G-d. He is only performing the *mitzvah* because G-d had commanded him to do so. The *mitzvah* itself is the facilitator for one to fear/revere G-d, which causes one to cleave to Him. Consequently, the *mitzvah* itself in its essence creates the attachment to G-d, which is the equivalent of the agent.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos* differentiates between prayer (*tefillah*) and the recitation of the *Shema*. The *Shema* is a declaration of one's belief in G-d. Entering into prayer is the equivalent of having an audience with G-d Himself. Because of this difference, one's attire during the *Amidah* (silent prayer) must demonstrate

proper respect. However, during the *Shema* it is not a prerequisite. Based on the *Midrash* that tells us that when one performs a *mitzvah* it is the equivalent of engaging with G-d's agent, the moment one begins to perform the *mitzvah* it is (halachically) the equivalent of engaging with G-d Himself. However, one does not need to exhibit the same degree of reverence which one would if he were actually standing before the King (e.g. in prayer) because there is a degree of distance.

The Subtleties That Make The Differences

Torah: After Yosef had revealed himself to his brothers, "Yosef said, 'G-d has sent me ahead of you to insure your survival in the land...Hurry- go up to my father and say to him...G-d has made me master of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not delay. You will reside in the land of Goshen...'"

Yosef told his brothers that it was important for them to communicate to their father Yaakov, that he had ascended to the position of Viceroy and that he held supreme power over Egypt. By informing Yaakov of this fact, he would understand that his son Yosef was qualified to provide his family with all their needs. After appeasing his brothers and making them feel welcome, Yosef said to them, "You have seen with your own eyes...Therefore tell my father all my glory in Egypt and all that you saw..."

Rashi: What Yosef was saying to his brothers was, "You have seen with your eyes my glory, that I am circumcised as you are, and I speak the holy tongue (Hebrew)." Although Yosef had decreed that all of the Egyptians must be circumcised, his circumcision was different from theirs. The circumcision of the Jew has two elements – *milah* (cutting of the foreskin) and *priyah* (pulling it back). The circumcision that he had decreed for the Egyptians was similar to that of the Arabs, which was the cutting of the foreskin without pulling it back.

Although the obligation of circumcision for the Jew pre-Sinai was only the cutting of the foreskin (*milah*), the Patriarchs and their families observed the *Torah* in its entirety as it was meant to be post-Sinai, when the obligation of the Jew, regarding circumcision, entails both *milah* and *priyah*. By revealing his circumcision, which was unique to the family of the Patriarchs, and by speaking in the Hebrew language Yosef was communicating to his brothers that he was spiritually

untainted, despite the impurity of Egypt. Although he had been in Egypt for many years and had risen to great power, he had maintained his spirituality meticulously as the special son of Yaakov, our Patriarch.

Just as Yaakov had conveyed to his brother Esav, "... *im Lavan gartie*", to indicate that although he had been exposed for a period of twenty years to the evils of *Lavan* and his community, he remained spiritually unscathed. He was not diminished as much as an iota. So too had Yosef had shared this fact with his brothers that he was no less of a *tzaddik* as he had been in his father's house. Yosef then said to his brothers that they must communicate this fact to their father Yaakov. He said to them, "Take for yourselves from the land of Egypt wagons (*agalos*)..." Yosef wanted his brothers to return to their father with wagons (*agalos*).

Rashi citing the *Midrash:* Yosef, by sending wagons (*agalos*) to his father, he was alluding to him that although they had been separated for twenty-two years he had not forgotten the last *Torah* subject that they had studied together. This subject was the law of *eglah arufa* (the decapitated calf). The *agalos* (wagons) that were sent by Yosef were an allusion to this law.

Torah: "...When they related to him all the words that Yosef had spoken to them, and he saw the wagons... the spirit of their father was revived." At that moment, Yaakov's spirit had come alive and he regained his prophetic level. Why did Yaakov need wagons to convince him that this was truly Yosef? Why was the information that the brothers had communicated to him not sufficient?

Yosef's brothers told their father, that as Viceroy of Egypt, Yosef was in a position to insure that the Jewish people would be provided for in a way that they would be kept separate from the Egyptian people – thus not being exposed to their impurity. In addition, Yosef had showed his brothers that he was circumcised as they were and spoke Hebrew. The value of this information was to indicate that he was spiritually sound. One would think that this would be enough to give Yaakov the confidence to relocate to Egypt.

However, it was not sufficient. He needed to see the wagons, that alluded to the *eglah arufah* in order to be convinced that Yosef was not diminished. Yaakov was able to insulate and safeguard himself and his family from the negative influences of *Lavan's* community

only because he was continuously engaged in *Torah* study. Prior to entering *Lavan's* community, *Yaakov's* life had been fully invested in *Torah* study. Thus, giving him the ability to create an environment for his family that they should develop to be the foundation of the Jewish people.

Yaakov understood that *Yosef* had possessed his ability to create an identical environment to preserve the Jewish people in Egypt. However, *Yaakov's* concern was, *Yosef*, being all alone for a period of twenty-two years, may have been slightly affected by the impurity of Egypt. Therefore, being circumcised and speaking Hebrew was not a sufficient reassurance that his family would be protected. He needed to know that *Yosef* had the spiritual sensitivity to provide the necessary insular environment for the Jewish people. This was only possible if *Yosef* had continued on the path of his father. *Yosef's* intent when he sent the wagons to his father was to convey to him that he had not deviated as much as an iota from when he had last seen him.

Midrash: The wagons were a confirmation that *Yosef* was continuously engaged in *Torah* study while in Egypt.

Gemara: *Rebbe Akiva* had 24,000 students who were the leading *Torah* sages of that generation. During a period of thirty-three days between *Pesach* and *Shavuos*, all 24,000 of them passed away. The reason they passed away despite their greatness in *Torah* was, "they did not conduct themselves with proper respect towards one another." The students of *Rebbe Akiva* were most certainly respectful to one another.

However, there is a subtle aspect to which they were not sensitive. Each of the students had a unique dimension of *Torah* scholarship, which had to be acknowledged and respected. When one accords respect to a *Torah* sage it must be appropriate to that individual's level of *Torah*. *Rebbe Akiva's* students did not discern the subtle differences of greatness between them. They treated one another with the same level of respect, which was not sufficient.

Reb Aaron Kotler z'tl: The students of *Rebbe Akiva* were the sages who were responsible for the transmission of the *Torah* and its traditions to the future generations. Their obligation was to communicate the tradition accurately, as it was transmitted at Sinai, without even the slightest difference. Because they did not have the sensitivity to value the nuances of differences between one another, they were not qualified for this awesome

task. Had they not passed away, the *Torah* that they would have transmitted would have been deficient.

Identically, *Yaakov* understood that if *Yosef* was spiritually diminished, even to a small degree, it would put the future of the Jewish people in jeopardy. Therefore, he was not convinced that *Yosef* was not spiritually affected in Egypt until he saw the wagons that indicated that he had maintained his level of righteousness.

Prayer – When it is an Affront to G-d (From Mikeitz)

Midrash: "Antoninus the Roman Emperor had asked Judah the Prince (*Rebbe*), 'Is one permitted to pray at any time that he wishes?' *Rebbe* responded, 'It is not permitted. One is permitted to pray only three times a day.' Antoninus asked, 'Why?' *Rebbe* replied, 'Because praying multiple times will cause one to act with levity.' Antoninus disagreed with *Rebbe*.

"In order for Antoninus to appreciate *Rebbe's* position, he rose early in the morning to call upon the Emperor. He acknowledged him with an honorable appellation. After a short time, *Rebbe* again called upon the Emperor and referred to him with another honorable and appropriate title. Soon after that visit, *Rebbe*, again returned to the Emperor, and said, 'Greetings to the King.' Antoninus said to him, 'Do you realize that by approaching me so many times on the same day that it is a disrespect. One only approaches the Emperor when there is an important matter that needs my attention.'

"*Rebbe* responded, 'You must listen to what you are saying, you who are a mere mortal, feel that it is disrespectful for me to approach you as many times as I have – regardless of our special relationship, how much more disrespectful is it to approach G-d, the King of Kings, the Omnipotent One!'"

Midrash: "*Reb Yosi Ben Chalafta* says, 'There is a special time when one should pray. It is during the time of special appeasement (of G-d) – *eis ratzon*' When is it the time of special appeasement? It is when the quorum (*tzibor*)/community prays. This is the reason one should rise early in the morning in order to pray at the time of the *tzibor*. There is nothing greater/more effective than prayer. Where do we find this?

"G-d had decreed that *Moshe* should not be allowed to enter into the Land and not even to see it. However

because he supplicated G-d in abundance, G-d showed him the Land. *Moshe* was able to partially alter the decree through his supplications. When *Yaakov* had sent his sons to Egypt, they were in a state of danger. He thus prayed on their behalf...

Moshe prayed to G-d for two things: firstly to enter into the Land and secondly, even if he should not enter, he should merit to see it. What was the value of *Moshe* "seeing" the Land?

Chazal: For *Moshe* to see the Land, G-d performed a miracle that enabled him to see every aspect of the Land of Israel, which is humanly not possible within the context of limitation.

Sforno: Since *Moshe* possessed the ultimate "ayin tovah – good eye" he wanted to see every aspect of the Land so that the Jewish people should succeed in it with blessing and good fortune. Even *Moshe* entering into the Land was not for his own sake, but rather, for the good of the Jewish people- to ensure their spiritual success in the Land. *Moshe's* only interest, through his prayers were only, to facilitate the glorification of G-d. It was unrelated to his self gain. G-d, therefore, altered the decree and allowed *Moshe* to gaze upon the Land.

If one approaches G-d for his own needs more than three times a day, it is understandable that it is excessive. It is an indication that one does not revere G-d sufficiently. Just as one will not approach a mortal king for his mundane needs, unless it was of the utmost importance, identically one does not approach G-d. However, if one's emphasis of prayer is only to alleviate and dispel the desecration of G-d's Name in the world and to make His Presence known to all mankind, it would be permitted even if one were to pray numerous times.

Torah: *Avraham*, our Patriarch, was engaged in a communication with G-d when three wayfarers came upon him. "Avraham lifted his eyes and saw: Behold! Three men... and he said (to G-d), 'My Lord, if I find favor in Your eyes, please pass not away from Your

servant." *Avraham* interrupted his communication with G-d to offer hospitality to the three wayfarers.

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: "It is from here that we learn that providing hospitality has even greater value than receiving the Divine Presence." *Avraham's* objective in life was to establish G-d's dominion in existence and to dispel paganism from the world. His hospitality was only a means to enter into a convincing dialogue with the members of his generation that all is Willed by Him.

Therefore, *Avraham's* interrupting his communication with G-d for the sake of hospitality was not an affront to G-d, but rather, carrying out His Dictate. Every aspect of *Avraham's* life was selflessly focused on doing the Will of G-d, therefore his every interaction with the Omnipotent One was never considered a lack of reverence. When *Yaakov* prayed for the safety of his sons when they were sent to Egypt, it was not as a parent demonstrating concern for his loved ones, but rather it was so that they should accomplish his objective. By being protected and succeeding in their mission, it would establish the future of the Jewish people. *Yaakov's* prayers were only for G-d's Glory and not for his own.

The discussion between *Rebbe* and Antoninus is limited to the context of individuals who pray for their own needs. If one were to come before the King too often to beseech him for his personal needs it would be considered a disrespect and lack of reverence. However, regarding the prayers of *tzaddikim* (devoutly righteous), this is not the case.

Midrash: The reason the Patriarchs and Matriarchs were initially barren was because, "G-d desires the prayers of *tzaddikim*." The prayers of *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Yaakov* did not emanate from their own desire to have children, but rather to establish the Jewish people who would bring about G-d's Glory.

