

# RABBI GOLDBERG'S *Parsha Perspectives* FOR TODAY

Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Vayigash for your Shabbos Table  
Delivered on Monday, 2 Teives, 5783/December 26, 2022

Sponsored by Eli & Sara Malka Neger as a zechus for a refuah shleima for Chaya Esther Tehila bas Arielle Tsiporah and lilui nishmas Yitzchok Moshe ben Aaron Yaakov Yehoshua.

## DVAR TORAH FOR THE FRIDAY NIGHT MEAL

### God is Approachable!

The first words in Parshas Vayigash are ויגש אליו יהודה – telling us that Yehuda approached Yosef to beg that he allow Binyamin to return home to their father. Yehuda had personally guaranteed Yaakov that Binyamin would return home safely, and so now that Yosef wanted to keep Binyamin as his slave after discovering his goblet in Binyamin's bag, Yehuda set out to plead that Binyamin be permitted to go home, offering to remain as a slave in Binyamin's stead.

The Midrash offers an additional layer of interpretation to the words ויגש אליו יהודה, explaining that ויגש refers to *tefila*. As Yehuda approached Yosef to plead on Binyamin's behalf, he also silently offered a prayer to Hashem. Outwardly, he was speaking to Yosef, but in his mind, he placed his faith in Hashem, begging Him to come and help the family in this moment of grave crisis.

The Midrash here teaches us a vitally important lesson about *emuna* – that even as we perform our necessary *hishtadlus*, putting in the effort that we need to put in, we must recognize that the outcome always depends on Hashem, to whom we must always turn for help. Before any meeting, whether it's a job interview, a business deal, parent-teacher conferences, or any other important appointment, we must reflect on the fact that ultimately, the outcome depends solely on Hashem, and we are to pray that He orchestrates everything for the best.

Rav Nachman of Breslav added that this *pasuk*, as understood by the Midrash, teaches us about a crucial prerequisite for *tefila*.

The expression ויגש אליו יהודה, which the Midrash understands as referring to Yehuda's approaching Hashem, alludes that we must always feel comfortable and confident enough to approach Hashem. One of the impediments to meaningful, heartfelt prayer is the sense of unworthiness that many people feel. They think about the inappropriate things they've done and said, all the mistakes they have made, and conclude that God is not

interested in them, that He does not want to hear from them, that He wants to have nothing to do with them. Rav Nachman's most famous teaching is מצווה גדלה להיות בשמחה תמיד – that a person must always be happy (*Likutei Moharan*, 1:282). He emphasized that even if a person has failed and sinned, he should remain joyful and in good spirits, remembering that he also has many virtues, and much goodness within him. It is the *yetzer ha'ra*, Rav Nachman explained, that tries to convince us to feel despondent and worthless after acting wrongly. Alongside our sincere regret for our wrongdoing, we must recognize our redeeming qualities, and all the good that we do. And we must confidently believe that despite our mistakes, Hashem is always approachable. His door is always open. He wants us to come to Him often to ask for what we need.

The first step toward meaningful *tefila* is ויגש אליו יהודה, to recognize that regardless of what we've done, Hashem invites us to approach Him, at all times.

## DVAR TORAH FOR THE SHABBOS DAY MEAL

### Growing Through Adversity

When Yosef finally revealed his identity to his brothers, he announced to them, אני יוסף אחיכם אשר מכרתם אותי מצרימה, – "I am your brother, Yosef, whom you sold to Egypt" (45:4).

The *Sefas Emes* raises the question of why Yosef emphasized at this moment that they had sold him as a slave. In the very next *pasuk*, he urged them not to feel ashamed or overcome by guilt over what they did to him, because Hashem arranged that this should happen in order to rescue Egypt and the world from hunger. It was because they sold him as a slave to Egypt that he ended up interpreting Pharaoh's dreams and foreseeing the seven famine years, which in turn led to his storing grain to save the region from starvation. Yosef therefore assured his brothers that this was Hashem's plan, such that they should not wallow in guilt over what they did to him. If Yosef's purpose at this point was to ease his brothers' concerns, and to assure them that they had no reason to feel ashamed, then why did he make a point of

emphasizing, *אני יוסף אחיכם אשר מכרתם אותי מצרימה* – that they had sold him as a slave?

The *Sefas Emes* answers this question by offering a fascinating, novel interpretation to this *pasuk*. He notes that the word *אשר* can sometimes mean “because of.” Accordingly, the *Sefas Emes* suggests reading Yosef’s remark to mean, “I am your brother Yosef **because you sold me to Egypt.**” Yosef was telling his brothers that he became the person he became, the outstanding, righteous figure that Yosef was, specifically because of the ordeals that he endured. It was a result of his struggles and hardship that he grew and developed into Yosef Ha’tzadik. Of course, he did not want all this to happen, and it was not pleasant going through everything he went through. But over the course of this difficult, painful process, Yosef became Yosef, the extraordinary figure that he was.

Many of us have many regrets, and we wish that many things which happened in our past would not have happened. We sometimes think, “If only my parents had raised me differently,” “If only I had better teachers,” “If only I had a better group of friends,” and so on. But the truth is that everything in our lives, even that which we would have preferred to have unfolded differently, contributed to building us into the people that we are, and contributed to our growth.

Rav Yehoshua Neubert *zt”l*, perhaps the most famous disciple of Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, was the author of *Shemiras Shabbos Ke’hilchasah*, which until today serves as the most important compilation of *halachos* relevant to Shabbos. In the introduction to this work, Rav Neubert gives the fascinating background to this monumental project. His family survived the Holocaust by hiding in an apartment for three years. Throughout this period, they stayed in place, without even approaching a window, to avoid being seen, and somebody brought them food so they wouldn’t starve. All Rav Neubert had with him was a *Maseches Kesubos* and the third volume of *Mishna Berura*, which discusses *hilchos Shabbos*. He spent these three years learning this volume numerous times, until he knew *hilchos Shabbos* backwards and forwards. The knowledge he amassed during these three years of isolation is what put him in the position to write a work on *hilchos Shabbos*. But the decision to undertake this project was made later, when the family was given the opportunity to emigrate to Israel by ship. The ship left on Shabbos, and the family felt that this was a matter of *פיקוח נפש* (a potentially life-threatening situation), as their lives would be in danger if they remained. They therefore traveled to Israel on Shabbos. Rav Neubert pledged that although he was permitted to travel on that Shabbos, nevertheless, in order to “compensate” for his inability to observe Shabbos that week, he would author a *sefer* about *hilchos Shabbos*.

This story is an inspiring example of *אני יוסף אחיכם אשר מכרתם אותי מצרימה* – of how adversity and hardship can spur a person to growth and achievement. While we certainly do not hope for difficult challenges and crises, when we face hardship we must embrace it as an opportunity for growth,

an occasion to build ourselves into the great people that we are capable of becoming.

## DVAR TORAH FOR SHALOSH SEUDOS

### Crying Over שנתת חנים

The Torah (45:14) relates that after Yosef revealed to his brothers who he was, he and Binyamin embraced, and cried on each other’s neck: *ויפול על צווארי בנימין אחיו ויבך, ובנימין בכה: על צוואריו*.

Rashi, based on the Gemara, explains that Yosef and Binyamin were crying because they foresaw the tragedies that would befall their descendants many centuries later. Yosef foresaw the destruction of the two *Batei Mikdash* which were built in Binyamin’s territory, and Binyamin foresaw the destruction of the *Mishkan* in Shilo, a city in the region allotted to the tribe of Efrayim, Yosef’s descendants.

Why would Yosef and Binyamin have cried over these calamities specifically now, at this festive moment, when they finally reunited after twenty years of separation?

The *Divrei Yisrael* of Modzitz explained that Yosef and Binyamin cried not over these tragedies themselves, but rather over the fact that these calamities would be caused by *שנתת חנים*, the baseless hatred that would plague *Am Yisrael* throughout the millennia. The fraternal strife that caused so much pain and grief to Yaakov’s family would, sadly, continue, leading to tragedy and devastation. This is why Yosef and Binyamin cried. They realized that although the family had now come back together, and the fight that tore apart the family now ended, this was only temporary. The brothers succeeded in bandaging the wounds, but not in curing the ill of *שנתת חנים* entirely. The process of reconciliation was left incomplete, and the tensions and hard feelings did not fully heal. These lingering tensions and feelings would continue for centuries, to this very day, causing so much grief and anguish, and so Yosef and Binyamin cried.

Their tears challenge us to redouble our efforts to eliminate *שנתת חנים* from our midst, to do more to ease tensions, to forgive, to respect others, and to treat our fellow Jews the way they should be treated, so that we can once and for all cure the terrible scourge of *שנתת חנים* and be worthy of the rebuilding of the *Beis Ha’mikdash*.