

August 27, 2017 - Gen. 44:18 – 46:27 - Joseph Revealed to His Brothers

Torah Reading: Gen. 44:18 – 46:27 - Joseph Revealed to His Brothers

Psalm 37

Haftorah - (1) Joshua 14:6-15

(2) Jeremiah 30:21 – 31:5 + 19

(3) 1 Kings 18:36-46

Evidence of the changed hearts of Joseph's brothers

- They did not resent it when Benjamin was given the favored portion (Genesis 43:34)
- They trusted each other, not accusing each other of wrong when accused of stealing the cup (Genesis 44:9)
- They stuck together when the silver cup was found. They did not abandon the favored son and allow him to be carried back to Egypt alone (Genesis 44:13)
- They completely humbled themselves for the sake of the favored son (Genesis 44:14)
- They knew their predicament was the result of their sin against Joseph (Genesis 44:16)
- They offered themselves as slaves to Egypt, not abandoning Benjamin, the favored son, their brother (Genesis 44:16)
- They showed due concern for how this might affect their father (Genesis 44:29-31)
- Judah was willing to be a substitutionary sacrifice for his brother out of love for his father and his brethren (Genesis 44:33)

Compare Judah's offer with others:

Moses was willing to offer himself for the salvation of Israel (**Exodus 32:31-32**), and so was Paul (**Romans 9:1-4**).

Sacrificial love is evidence of our transformation (**John 13:34**).

See David Guzik, *Enduring Word Bible Commentary* - <https://buff.ly/2wusytt>

Confession and the meaning of the name 'Judah'

Remember in **Genesis 38**, Judah admits he was wrong. "She is more righteous than I," he says of Tamar. This is the first time in Torah in which someone acknowledges their own guilt.

We now understand the significance of Judah's name.

The verb *lehodot* means two things. It means to “thank,” which is what Leah has in mind when she gives Judah, her fourth son, his name: “This time, I will thank the Lord.” However, it also means to admit, to acknowledge. The biblical term vidui, “confession” then and now, is part of the process of Teshuvah (turning, repentance) and according to Maimonides, its key element comes from the same root.

Judah, therefore, means “he who acknowledged his sin.”

Rabbi Abahu, 3rd Century rabbinic scholar said, “In the place where the penitent stand, even the perfectly righteous cannot stand (Berechot 34b).” In a sense, then, where the penitent Judah stands, even the perfectly righteous Joseph cannot stand. That is the power of repentance.

For this reason Judah’s name includes the Tetragrammaton, the four letters of God’s unpronounceable name.

"Joseph, who sanctified the heavenly Name in private [in resisting Potipher’s wife], merited that one letter should be added to him from the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is written: He appointed it in Yhoseph (the Yh referring to the extra letter heh) for a testimony (Tehillim 81:6). Yehuda, who sanctified the Name of heaven in public [regarding Tamar] merited that the whole of his name shall be called after the name of the Holy One blessed be He" (Sotah 10b). The name Yehuda consists of the letter dalet and the four letters of the Tetragrammaton.

(See <http://www.btzbuffalo.org/services/darshan/Judah2016.pdf>)

Judah’s plea to Joseph

Genesis 44:18 - “Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh.”

This begins the longest oration recorded in Genesis.

[Some rabbinical sources picture this becoming a fierce, even overblown, confrontation between Judah and Joseph, with angry accusations, threats and self-justifications.

For instance, Judah says that because of Joseph’s injustice to them, “I shall go forth and dye all the markets of Egypt with blood!” Joseph replies, “Ye were dyers aforesimes when you dyed your brother’s coat in blood and told you father: He is torn to pieces.” etc., back and forth.

The midrash really means this to reflect the inner turmoil within Judah leading up to his talk with Joseph, showing him arguing with the voice of his own conscience - similar to the inner suggestions of Satan to Abraham on his way up to sacrifice Isaac.

Another way of interpreting this angry midrash: Joseph wanted the brothers to rise, angry, with zeal to protect their youngest one from injustice. Once Joseph saw that they were willing to get angry to save Benjamin, as opposed to the dismissive and nearly emotionless way they sold Joseph into slavery, he knew the brothers had indeed repented.]

The actual biblical text suggests Judah's appeal was subtle but filled with passion.

Judah re-explains what all has happened, in order to garner sympathy for their position and even to delicately include a grievance.

The Tanhuna paraphrases it: "From the beginning you came upon us with a pretext. From many countries did they come down to buy corn, and thou didst not question anyone of *THEM*. Peradventure we came to take the hand of thy daughter? Or art thou of a mind to wed our sister? Even so, we hid nothing from you."

Judah does not mention the accusation of spying, however, hoping it will be forgotten.

The word "father" occurs 14 times, calculated to arouse compassion by appealing to the most elemental of affections, parental love.

Genesis 44:25-29 - This conversation is not reported elsewhere in Genesis

Jacob probably did not say "Ye know that my wife bare me two sons" (wife = Rachel), in front of the sons of his other wives. Judah though, knew his father's heart, and added this detail to arouse compassion in Joseph.

Genesis 44:32 - "For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever."

Rashi - "I have bound myself with a strong bond to be an outcast in both worlds." [From Gen. Rabbah 93:8]

Judah had become "surety," a guarantor of Benjamin's safety, with Jacob. Previously he had given Tamar his staff and ring as a guarantor. He knew what that meant. As the guarantor, he spoke as the leader, instead of Reuben the first born. He was viscerally invested in the outcome.

Despite Judah's fulfillment of his guarantee, a rabbinical story shows the severity of such a vow:

When Moses blesses each tribe, he says of Judah:

Deuteronomy 33:7 - "May this [also be] for Judah." And he [Moses] said, "O Lord, hearken to Judah's voice and bring him to his people; may his hands do battle for him,

and may You be a help against his adversaries.”

Rashi says - Our Rabbis ...explained that during the entire forty years that Israel was in the desert, Judah's bones were rolling in his coffin, because of the excommunication which he had accepted upon himself [when he took responsibility for Benjamin] Moses' words "May the Lord listen to Judah's voice," is a prayer that Judah's bones would finally come to rest.

Judah's Proposal

Genesis 44:33 - "Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren."

Rashi - Because I am superior to him in all respects: in strength, in battle, and in service. [From Gen. Rabbah 93:8]

The word *eved* or slave, occurs 13 times in the oration, underlying their humble position before the mighty Egyptian ruler.

Judah ends with a an impassioned rhetorical question:

Genesis 44:34 - "For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father."

Seeing Judah's genuine anguish over his father assures Jospheh there had been a change, a turning. Judah (and the other brothers) have grown, have been able to empathize and really "see" others.

Joseph Reveals Himself

Genesis 45:3 (NET) - "Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" His brothers could not answer him because they were dumbfounded before him."

They were dumbfounded by shame.

Genesis 45:4-5 - "And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life."

And again:

Genesis 45:7 - “And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.”

God’s Providence - “Sold” become “Sent”

It was not the brothers ultimately who did this, but God who had providentially sent him on this mission to fulfill God’s prophecy to Abraham.

When Jacob “sent him from the vale of Hebron” to find his brothers (**Genesis 37:14**) Rashi says this really meant “from the vale (deep place, or deep counsel) of the righteous man buried in Hebron (i.e. Abraham) to whom it was said:

Genesis 15:13-14 - “Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.”

Proverbs 16:9 - “A man may plot out his course, but it is the Lord who directs his steps.”

Proverbs 19:21 - “Many designs are in a man's mind, but it is the Lord's plan that is accomplished.”

Joseph forgives his brothers for their guilt, once he’s convinced of their repentance. But the realization of God’s providence is the only antidote to their shame, (and to ours). They have to be reminded again of this in Genesis 50.

Proof

Genesis 45:12 - “And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you.”

Rashi - For I am circumcised like you, and moreover, that it is my mouth that is speaking to you in the holy tongue (Hebrew) (from Gen. Rabbah 93:10).

Provision

Genesis 45:20 - “Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.”

We can’t help but pair this with Jesus’ description of life in the Kingdom:

Matthew 6:31 - “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?”

When God promises to provide sustenance, it comes without fail. We don’t have to

“regard our stuff.”

God speaks to Jacob

Usually it is forbidden to go to Egypt, i.e. to trust in the world system or the flesh. But here God suspends the prohibition by direct command, and promises to be present with him.

Genesis 46:4 - “And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.”

Rashi - Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes - i.e. Jacob is promised that he will die and be laid to rest in the Holy Land.

Alternately, going to Egypt, into “exile,” makes no sense to Jacob. So Joseph’s hand represents the mysterious way God has worked in Joseph’s life, and that should close Jacob’s inquisitive and searching eyes (mind) from trying to understand God’s ways, which are inscrutable to man.

Isaiah 55:8-9 - “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Another interpretation sees Jacob’s going down to Egypt as fulfilling his own cry at his first anguish at the loss of Joseph: “I will go down mourning to my son in Sheol (the grave).” (**Genesis 37:35**)

Genesis 46:6-27 - The passage ends with a list of all who came with Jacob into Egypt.