



Parshas Vayigash 2021, your true nature

This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Gittel Bas Asher, Chana Bas HaRav Yeudah, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia.

Our Parsha continues Yehuda's negotiation with Yosef to let Benyamin return home. He pleads with Yosef to take him as a slave instead, citing that if he returned home without Benyamin, his father would die from the pain of losing a second son.

At that time, Yosef cannot restrain himself anymore; overcome with emotion, he asks all but his brothers to leave his presence, and he immediately reveals his true identity "**I am Yosef.**" He instructs them to return home quickly and bring Ya'akov and their families back to Egypt.

His brothers were speechless and in complete shock; they could not believe that Yosef had become the viceroy of Egypt. But then they began to tremble, fearing the punishment that Yosef would retaliate against them with. However, Yosef called them back and told them that they were forgiven. When he made history, he became the first person in the Torah to forgive.

When the brothers returned home, they told Ya'akov something he'd never thought he would hear in his lifetime, Yosef is still alive! Ya'akov was ecstatic and overjoyed, as the Pasuk says (45:27), "**And the spirit of their father, Ya'akov, was revived.**"

Before Ya'akov began his journey down to Egypt, Hashem appeared to him and said that He would go with him down to Egypt and make his family a great nation. Ya'akov gathered his family and quickly traveled to Egypt with his beloved son, Yosef.

However, a question comes to mind: The Parsha begins by saying, "**Vayigash Elav Yehuda - Yehuda stepped up to him,**" seemingly signifying the start of Yehuda's plea.

But at the end of last week's Parsha, we see that Yosef and Yehuda were already speaking. As the Pasuk writes (44:16), "*Yehuda said, "what can I say to you, my lord? How can*

we plead and prove our innocence?" So why does Pasuk use a word that indicates the beginning of a conversation?

Furthermore, why does the Pasuk use a very uncommon word, "**Vayigash - and he stepped up**" rather than "**Vayomer - and he said**" or "**Vayidaber - and he spoke**"?!

The Baal HaTurim (*Rav Yehuda be Asher, a famous Spanish commentary from the late 12th century*) gives an interesting answer. He writes that the Pasuk wrote "**Vayigash Elav Yehuda**" to say the Yehuda came physically close to Yosef's throne. He did so to plead and beg for Benjamin's life. Therefore, the Parsha begins by indicating a new discussion because Yehuda changed his strategy.

However, the Kotzker Rebbe (*Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, a famous student of the Baal Shem Tov*) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He explains that "**Vayigash Elav Yehuda**" means that Yehuda started connected to his truest self, **a king with a warrior mindset**. The last three letters of the words "**Vayigash Elav Yehuda**" spells **Shaveh**, which means equal.

The Midrash Rabbah explains that Yehuda told Yosef, "**I am a king as much as you are, and you have no actual superiority over me. This negotiation is not one-sided anymore; we have matching authority and power.**" He had enough of Yosef's games and was ready to jeopardize his life to save his younger brother, Benjamin."

Yehuda demonstrating his true nature is what made Yosef so emotional that he was compelled to reveal his true identity. Yehuda transformed himself from selling Yosef to slavery to protecting the weak and innocent.

In our daily life, it is important to realize that unless faced with difficult situations, most people don't access their inner strength and identity. Yet, if we define our individuality by asking ourselves, Why? We gain the power to use that energy daily to achieve our aspirations and goals. We must seek to recognize our unique souls to find purpose and true meaning in this world.

"People tend to look upwards, contemplating the mysteries of the heavens. They would do well to look inward and examine what's happening within themselves."

The Kotzker Rebbe, Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*