

Stollen Moments – Vayigash – December 11, 2021

PARASHA SUMMARY FROM WWW. REFORMJUDAISM.ORG

- Judah pleads with Joseph to free Benjamin and offers himself as a replacement. (44:18-34)
- Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and forgives them for selling him into slavery. (45:1-15)
- Although the famine still rages, Pharaoh invites Joseph's family to "live off the fat of the land." (45:16-24)
- Jacob learns that Joseph is still alive and, with God's blessing, goes to Egypt. (45:25-46:33)
- Pharaoh permits Joseph's family to settle in Goshen. Pharaoh then meets with Jacob. (47:1-12)
- With the famine increasing, Joseph designs a plan for the Egyptians to trade their livestock and land for food. The Israelites thrive in Egypt. (47:13-27)

Genesis Chapter 44

18 Then Judah went up to him and said, "Please, my lord, let Your servant appeal to my lord, and do not be impatient with your servant, You who are the equal of Pharaoh. 19 My lord asked his servants, 'Have you a father or another brother?' 20 We told my lord, 'We have an old father, and there is a child of his old age, the youngest; his full brother is dead, so that he alone is left of his mother, and his father dotes on him.'

21 Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set eyes on him.' 22 We said to my lord, 'The boy cannot leave his father; if he were to leave him, his father would die.' 23 But you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, do not let me see your faces.' 24 When we came back to Your servant my father, we reported my lord's words to him.

25 "Later our father said, 'Go back and procure some food for us.' 26 We answered, 'We cannot go down; only if our youngest brother is with us can we go down, for we may not show our faces to the man unless our youngest brother is with us.' 27 Your servant my father said to us, 'As you know, my wife bore me two sons. 28 But one is gone from me, and I said: Alas, he was torn by a beast! And I have not seen him since. 29 If you take this one from me, too, and he meets with disaster, you will send my white head down to Sheol in sorrow.'

30 "Now, if I come to your servant my father and the boy is not with us — since his own life is so bound up with his — 31 when he sees that the boy is not with us, he will die, and your servants will send the white head of your servant our father down to Sheol in grief. 32 Now your servant

has pledged himself for the boy to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, I shall stand guilty before my father forever.’ 33 Therefore, please let your servant remain as a slave to my lord instead of the boy, and let the boy go back with his brothers. 34 For how can I go back to my father unless the boy is with me? Let me not be witness to the woe that would overtake my father!”

Genesis Chapter 45

1 Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, “Have everyone withdraw from me!” So there was no one else about when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. 2 His sobs were so loud that the Egyptians could hear, and so the news reached Pharaoh’s palace. 3 Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph. Is my father still well?” But his brothers could not answer him, so dumfounded were they on account of him.

4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come forward to me.” And when they came forward, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, he whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not be distressed or reproach Yourself because you sold me hither; it was to save life that God sent me ahead of you. 6 It is now two years that there has been famine in the land, and there are still five years to come in which there shall be no yield from tilling. 7 God has sent me ahead of you to ensure Your survival on earth, and to save your lives in an extraordinary deliverance. 8 So, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, lord of all his household, and ruler over the whole land of Egypt.

9 “Now, hurry back to my father and say to him: Thus says your son Joseph, ‘God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me without delay. 10 You will dwell in the region of Goshen, where You will be near me — you and your children and your grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all that is yours. 11 There I will provide for you — for there are yet five years of famine to come — that you and your household and all that is yours may not suffer want.’

12 You can see for yourselves, and my brother Benjamin for himself, that it is indeed I who am speaking to You. 13 And you must tell my father everything about my high station in Egypt and all that you have seen; and bring my father here with all speed.” 14 With that he embraced his brother Benjamin around the neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. 15 He kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; only then were his brothers able to talk to him.

Rashbam on Genesis 45:1:2

(2) לכל הנצבים עליו, in the presence of all those surrounding him; he now could no longer restrain his emotions. He called to all his personal servants even to leave the building. This is the plain meaning of the text.

Rashi on Genesis 45:1:1

(1) (אשר) AND JOSEPH COULD NOT REFRAIN HIMSELF BEFORE ALL THEM... — He could not bear that the Egyptians should stand by him witnessing how his brothers would be put to shame when he made himself known to them.

Sforno on Genesis 45:4:2

(2) (אשר) אשר מכרתם, the one whom you have sold! By mentioning this episode you will realise that I can be none other than your brother Joseph, for who else knows about this? The people who bought me as a slave had no idea that I was the sellers' brother.

Leviticus 19:18

"Do not take vengeance or bear a grudge against anyone among your people but love your neighbor as yourself. I am Adonai."

1) Chizkuni: Chezekiah ben Manoach, 13th Century, France

It doesn't mean to love your neighbor as yourself, because it is impossible to do that, rather the meaning of love is: to be good to them just as you would like that they would do to you.

2) Rambam: Moshe ben Maimon, Spain 1134-Egypt 1204

It is a commandment to all people to love each and every Jewish person as themselves, as it is written: "Love your neighbor as yourself" therefore people should say good things about others, and to be careful about others' money just as they would be careful about their own money, and desire honor for themselves.

3) Talmud: Tractate Shabbat 31a

It happened that a non-Jewish person came to [the head Rabbi] Shammai and said to him: "Take me as a convert, on condition that you teach me the entire Torah, all of it, while I stand on one foot." Shammai instantly drove him away with a builder's measuring rod...When the non-Jewish person came to [the other head Rabbi] Hillel, Hillel agreed to make him a convert, saying: "What you don't like, don't do to your neighbor--this is the entire Torah, all of it, the rest it commentary. Go and study.

4) Kli Yakkar: Shlomo Efraim Luntschitz, Poland (1550-1619)

Certainly, in the case of the convert he asked [not to say all the mitzvot while standing on one foot, rather to] stand all the mitzvot in the Torah on one founding principle...so that they [the mitzvot] wouldn't be forgotten. In response, Hillel taught him "Love your neighbor as yourself."