

פרשת

ויגש

Parashat Vayigash

Genesis 44:18-47:27, Ezekiel 37:15-28

John 5:1-47

## What it means to be a Good Leader

In this week's reading, what is the purpose and/or thematic significance of the stories about Joseph and his brothers? Why do you think they were codified for generations to read about in the Torah? Do you think that Joseph was chosen by God from the time of his birth to become a great leader and Savior for all peoples? Based on his character (and life history) was he qualified for this job? In your own life, do you feel that you have been born for a certain mission or role or do you see it as something that is evolving? These are all very important questions as they are related to this week's Torah portion, Parashat Vayigash in regards to leadership and what it means to be a good leader. In the *Talmud Bavli Berakhot 55a*, we read the following, "*R. Judah said: Three things shorten a man's days and years: being given a Sefer Torah to read and refusing to read it; being given a cup for benediction and refusing to say it; and taking on airs of authority. To be given a Sefer Torah to read from and refuse, as it is written: For this is your life and the length of your days (Devarim / Deuteronomy 30:20). To be given a cup for benediction and refuse, as it is written (Bereshit / Genesis 12:3): I will bless them that bless you. To assume airs of authority: as R. Hama bar Hanina said: why did Joseph die before his brothers? Because he took on an air of authority.*" What do you think the rabbis

meant by the phrase, “*putting on the airs of authority?*” Why is this equated with refusing to read from the Torah scroll or to bless a cup of wine? The phrase “*to put on airs*” or “*to give oneself airs*” is a figurative way to say one acts better than he really is, or to pretend to be good or to be superior. The idea here is that the one who takes upon himself authority as a leader, one may be tempted as the Talmud says, to put on airs, or to feel superior to others. This may lead to pride in life and a lack of studying the Scriptures, and to not bless others as a result of the authority one has been given. The concept of “*superiority*” has no place in the hearts of leaders. The Talmud Bavli Berekhot 55a appears to place leaders and those in authority in a negative light as a result of pride. The Talmud Bavli Yoma 22b states, “*Rav Nehilai bar Idi said in the name of Samuel: As soon as a man is appointed administrator of a community he becomes rich – First it is written: And he [Saul] counted them by means of pebbles. Then in the end: And he [Saul] counted by means of sheep. (1 Samuel 15:5).*” Comparing Yoma 22a to Berekhot 55a, these comments appear to present “*authority*” in a positive light. It is interesting how the rabbis use king Saul as the example in Yoma 22a, where a reference to Saul may be related to men being failed leaders. In light of the rabbis comments on leadership and authority, how should one behave as a leader? This is related to the Torah portion in the sense of Joseph testing the faith of his brothers and observing their abilities as leaders. The conclusion is, true humility involves studying God’s Word and laying down of our lives for others as being the true meaning of leadership. Let’s discuss this further in this week’s Torah study.

This week we are looking at the Scriptures from *Bereshit / Genesis 44:18-45:5*.

***Bereshit / Genesis 44:18-45:5***

*44:18 Then Judah approached him, and said, ‘Oh my lord, may your servant please speak a word in my lord’s ears, and do not be angry with your servant; for you are equal to Pharaoh. 44:19 ‘My lord asked his servants, saying, ‘Have you a father or a brother?’ 44:20 ‘We said to my lord, ‘We have an old father and a little child of his old age. Now his brother is dead, so he alone*

is left of his mother, and his father loves him.' 44:21  
'Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me that I may set my eyes on him.' 44:22 'But we said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.' 44:23 'You said to your servants, however, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.' 44:24 'Thus it came about when we went up to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. 44:25 'Our father said, 'Go back, buy us a little food.' 44:26 'But we said, 'We cannot go down. If our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.' 44:27 'Your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons; 44:28 and the one went out from me, and I said, 'Surely he is torn in pieces,' and I have not seen him since. 44:29 'If you take this one also from me, and harm befalls him, you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.' 44:30 'Now, therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad's life, 44:31 when he sees that the lad is not with us, he will die. Thus your servants will bring the gray hair of your servant our father down to Sheol in sorrow. 44:32 'For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then let me bear the blame before my father forever.' 44:33 'Now, therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. 44:34 'For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me for fear that I see the evil that would overtake my father?' 45:1 Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, 'Have everyone go out from me.' So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. 45:2 He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it. 45:3

*Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?' But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence. 45:4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Please come closer to me.' And they came closer. And he said, 'I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. 45:5 'Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.*

יח וַיִּגַּשׁ אֵלָיו יְהוֹדָה וַיֹּאמֶר בֵּי אֲדֹנָי יִדְבָר-נָא עֲבָדָה, (NASB, דָּבַר בְּאָזְנֵי אֲדֹנָי וְאֵל-יִסָּר אַפָּי בְּעֲבָדָי כִּי כְמוֹת כְּפָרְעָה: יט אֲדֹנָי שְׁאַל אֶת-עֲבָדָיו לֵאמֹר הֲיֵשׁ-לְכֶם אָב אוּ-אָח: כ וַנֹּאמֶר אֶל-אֲדֹנָי יֵשׁ-לָנוּ אָב זָקֵן וַיֵּלֶד זָקְנִים קָטָן וְאָחִיו מֵת וַיִּוָּתֵר הוּא לְבָדוֹ לֵאמֹר וְאָבִיו אָהָבוּ: כא וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל-עֲבָדָי הוֹרֵר-זֶהוּ אֵלָי וְאֲשִׁימָה עֵינַי עָלָיו: כב וַנֹּאמֶר אֶל-אֲדֹנָי לֹא-יֻכַל הַנְּעַר לַעֲזֹב אֶת-אָבִיו וְעֹזֵב אֶת-אָבִיו נָמַת: כג וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל-עֲבָדָי אִם-לֹא יֵרֵד אַחֲיָכֶם הַקָּטָן אִתְּכֶם לֹא תִסְפְּוּ לַרְאוֹת פָּנָי: כד וַיְהִי כִּי עָלִינוּ אֶל-עֲבָדָי אָבִי וַנִּגַּד-לוֹ אֵת דְּבָרַי אֲדֹנָי: כה וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִינוּ שָׁבוּ שָׁבְרוּ-לָנוּ מַעַט-אֲכָל: כו וַנֹּא-מָר לֹא נוּכַל לַרְדֹּת אִם-יֵשׁ אַחֲיָנוּ הַקָּטָן אִתָּנוּ וַיִּרְדְּנוּ כִּי-לֹא נוּכַל לַרְאוֹת פָּנָי הָאֵישׁ וְאַחֲיָנוּ הַקָּטָן אֵינָנו אִתָּנוּ: כז וַיֹּאמֶר עֲבָדָי אָבִי אֵלֵינוּ אַתֶּם יְדַעְתֶּם כִּי שְׁנַיִם יִלְדָה-לִּי אֲשֶׁתַּי: כח וַיֵּצֵא הָאֶחָד מֵאֵתִי וַאֲמַר אֵיךְ טָרַף טָרַף וְלֹא רָאִיתִיו עַד-הַנְּהַי: כט וַיִּלְקַחְתֶּם גַּם-אֶת-זֶה מֵעַם פָּנָי וְקָרְהוּ אֶסוֹן וְהוֹרְדְתֶם אֶת-שִׁיבְתִי בְרָעָה שְׂאֵלָה: ל וְעַתָּה כָּבֹאִי אֶל-עֲבָדָי אָבִי וְהַנְּעַר אֵינָנו אִתָּנוּ וְנִפְשׁוּ קִשְׁוֹרָה בְּנִפְשׁוֹ: [שְׁנַיִ] לֹא וְהָיָה כְּרִאוֹתוֹ כִּי-אֵין הַנְּעַר נָמַת וְהוֹרִידוּ עֲבָדָי אֶת-שִׁיבְת עֲבָדָי אָבִינוּ בְּיָגוֹן שְׂאֵלָה: לב כִּי עֲבָדָי עָרַב אֶת-הַנְּעַר מֵעַם אָבִי לֵאמֹר אִם-לֹא אָבִיאָנוּ אֵלָיךְ וְחִטָּאתִי לְאָבִי כָּל-הַיָּמִים: לג וְעַתָּה יִשָּׁב-נָא עֲבָדָי תַּחַת הַנְּעַר עֹבֵד לְאֲדֹנָי וְהַנְּעַר יַעַל עִם-אָחִיו: לד כִּי-אֵיךְ אֶעְלֶה אֶל-אָבִי וְהַנְּעַר אֵינָנו אִתִּי פֶן אֶרְאֶה בְרָע אֲשֶׁר יִמָּצֵא אֶת-אָבִי: א וְלֹא-יָכֹל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק לְכָל הַנְּצָבִים עָלָיו וַיִּקְרָא הוֹצִיאֻ אוּ כָּל-אֵישׁ מֵעָלָי וְלֹא-עָמַד אִישׁ אִתּוֹ בְּהִתְנַדַּע יוֹסֵף אֶל-אָחִיו: ב וַיִּתֵּן אֶת-קָלוֹ בְּבִכִּי וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ

מִצָּרִים וַיִּשְׁמַע בֵּית פְּרָעָה: ג וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶחָיו אֲנִי יוֹסֵף  
הַעוֹד אֲבִי חַי וְלֹא-יָכֹלוּ אֶחָיו לַעֲנוֹת אֹתוֹ כִּי נִבְהָלוּ מִפָּנָיו:  
ד וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶחָיו גִּשְׁו-נָא אֵלַי וַיִּגָּשׁוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי יוֹסֵף  
אֲחֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר-מְכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי מִצְרַיִמָּה: ה וְעַתָּה | אֶל-תִּעַצְבוּ  
וְאֶל-יִחַר בְּעֵינֵיכֶם כִּי-מְכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי הַנְּהָה כִּי לְמַחֲיָה שָׁלַחֲנִי  
(אֱלֹהִים לִפְנֵיכֶם)

The most significant part of the reading for this week are Judah's words to Joseph from *Bereshit / Genesis 44:31-34*, which states the following, לא וְהָיָה כִּרְאוֹתוֹ כִּי-אֵין הַנְּעַר וְהוֹרִידוּ עֶבְדְּךָ אֶת-שִׁיבַת עֶבְדְּךָ, אֲבִינוּ בְּיָגוֹן שְׂאֵלָה: לֵב כִּי עֶבְדְּךָ עָרַב אֶת-הַנְּעַר מֵעַם אָבִי לֵאמֹר אִם-לֹא אֲבִיאֲנֹו אֵלַיְךָ וְחָטַאתִי לְאָבִי כָּל-הַיָּמִים: לֵג וְעַתָּה יֵשֶׁב-נָא עֶבְדְּךָ תַּחַת הַנְּעַר עֶבֶד לְאֹדְנִי וְהַנְּעַר יַעַל עִם-אֶחָיו: לִד כִּי-אֵיךָ אֶעְלָה אֶל-אָבִי וְהַנְּעַר אֵינְנוּ: *44:31 when he sees that the lad is not with us, he will die. Thus your servants will bring the gray hair of your servant our father down to Sheol in sorrow. 44:32 'For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then let me bear the blame before my father forever.' 44:33 'Now, therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. 44:34 'For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me for fear that I see the evil that would overtake my father?'* (NASB) Judah approached Joseph and spoke to him about his youngest brother. He laid his life down as a servant to Joseph in order to secure the life of his brother because he was concerned for the life of his father Jacob. Judah humbled himself and sought the welfare of others. This aspect of Judah's behavior was absent from what we read in the previous Torah portion. Thirty years of thinking about what they did to their brother Joseph has had an impact on the way they thought and behaved towards one another. The rabbis, according to the *Tosefta on the Talmud Bavli Berekhot 4:16*, have much to say concerning leadership and Judah who took it upon himself to protect his youngest brother and his father Jacob.

***The Tosefta on the Talmud Bavli Berekhot 4:16***

*[Then] he (i.e. Rabbi Tarfon) said to them (i.e. his students), "I will ask [you another question]." They said to*

him, “Teach us our master.” He said to them, “Why did [the tribe of] Yehudah merit the kingship [of Israel]?” They said to him, “Because [Yehudah] admitted [that he impregnated] Tamar.” It happened [once] with four elders, that they were sitting in the gatehouse of Rabbi Yehoshua. [They were] Elazar Ben Matya, Chaninah Ben Chachinai, Shimon Ben Azzai, and Shimon Hatei-mani. And they were involved [in discussing] what Rabbi Tarfon taught to them, “Why did [the tribe of] Yehudah merit the kingship [of Israel]?” “Because [Yehudah] admitted [that he impregnated] Tamar.” They have added [another source to that explanation] on their own. “[It says in the book of Iyov], ‘... that which the wise related from their fathers and did not withhold. To them alone the earth was given...’ (Job 15:18-19)” He (i.e. Rabbi Tarfon) said to them (i.e. to the four elders), “Do they give reward for a transgression? But rather what is [the real] reason why [the tribe of] Yehudah merited the kingship of Israel?” [The four elders said back to Rabbi Tarfon,] “Because he (i.e. Yehudah) saved his brother (i.e. Yosef) from death, as it is said, ‘Yehudah said to his brothers, “What benefit [will we have] if we kill our brother?”’ (Genesis 37:26) and it is written, ‘Let us go and sell him to the Ishmaelites...’ (Genesis 37:27)” He (i.e. Rabbi Tarfon) said [back] to them (i.e. the four elders), “It is enough that [the act of] saving [him] should [serve] as forgiveness for the [act of] selling [him to the Ishmaelites]. But rather what is [the real] reason why [the tribe of] Yehudah merited the kingship of Israel?” [The four elders said back to Rabbi Tarfon,] “Because of [Yehudah’s] humility, as it is said, ‘And now your servant (i.e. Yehudah) will become a slave to my master (i.e. Yosef) instead of the boy (i.e. Binyamin).’ (Genesis 44:33) Also [the only reason that] Shaul merited the kingship [of Israel] was due to [his] humility, as it is said, ‘... may be my father will turn his attention away from the donkeys and will

*start to worry about us.’ (I Samuel 9:5) [Since Shaul said “us” and not “me”] he considered his servant as [important as] himself, but Shmuel did not do so, but rather [he said], ‘Your father stopped worrying about the donkeys and is worried about you, saying “What will happen to my son?”’ (I Samuel 10:2) And when he (i.e. Shaul) runs away from [accepting his newly appointed role of] leadership what does it say? ‘And they have asked God, “Is the man even here?” and God said, “Here he is hiding by the vessels.”’ (I Samuel 10:22) He (i.e. Rabbi Tarfon) said [back] to them (i.e. the four elders), “Is not he (i.e. Yehudah) a cosigner? And in the end [it is the responsibility] of a cosigner to fulfill his pledge. But rather what is [the real] reason why [the tribe of] Yehudah merited the kingship of Israel?’ They said to him, “Teach us our master.” He said to them, “[The reason the tribe of Yehudah merited the kingship of Israel is] because they sanctified God’s name on the sea. When [all of] the tribes came and stood by the sea, this one said, ‘I will go down [into the water first]’ and this one said, ‘I will go down [into the water first].’ The tribe of Yehudah jumped up and went in first and sanctified God’s name [by doing so]. And regarding that moment it says [in Tehillim], ‘Save me God, because the water is up to my soul.’ (Psalms 69:2) And it also says, ‘When Yisrael was going out of Egypt, the children of Yakov from the nation of a foreign tongue, Yehudah was His sanctifier...’ (Psalms 114:1-2) Since Yehudah sanctified God’s name on the sea, therefore ‘... Yisrael his subjects.’ (ibid.)” אמר להם אשאל אמרו לו] (למדגן) רבינו אמר להם מפני מה זכה יהודה למלכות אמרו לו מפני שהודה בתמר מעשה בארבעה זקנים שהיו יושבין בבית שער של ר’ יהושע אלעזר בן מתאי חנינא בן חכינאי ושמעון בן עזאי ושמעון התימני והיו עסוקין במה ששנה להן ר’ ט אמר להן ר’ ע מפני מה זכה יהודה למלכות מפני שהודה בתמר הוסיפו הן מעצמן (איוב טו) אשר חכמים יגי-*

דו ולא כחזרו מאבותם להם לבדם נתנה הארץ אמר להם וכי  
 נותנין שכר על העבירה אמרו לו אלא מפני מה זכה יהודה  
 למלכות מפני שהציל את אחיו מן המיתה שנא' (בראשית  
 לז) ויאמר יהודה [אל אחיו] מה בצע [כי נהרוג] וכתוב  
 (שם) לכו ונמכרנו לישמעאלים אמר להן דיה להצלה שת-  
 כפר על המכירה אלא מפני מה זכה יהודה למלכות מפני  
 הענוה שנא' (בראשית מד) ועתה ישב נא עבדך [וגו' אף]  
 שאול לא זכה למלכות אלא מפני הענוה שנא' (שמואל א  
 ט) פן יחדל אבי מן האתונות ודאג לנו שקל עבדו בו אבל  
 שמואל אינו כן אלא (שמואל א י) נטש אביך את דברי  
 האתונות ודאג לכם לאמר מה אעשה לבני [וכשהוא] בורח  
 מן השררה [מה הוא אומר] (שמואל א יא) וישאלו [עוד]  
 בה' [הבא עוד הלום איש] ויאמרו הנה הוא נחבא אל הכלים  
 אמר להם ולא ערב הוא וסופו של ערב לצאת ידי ערבותו.  
 אלא מפני מה זכה יהודה למלכות [אמרו להם] למדנו רבינו  
 אמר להם מפני שקידש שמו של הקב"ה שכשעלו שבטים  
 ועמדו על הים זה אומר אני יורד וזה אומר אני יורד קפץ  
 שבטו של יהודה [ויורד בתחלה וקדש] שמו של הקב"ה ועל  
 אותה השעה הוא אומר (תהילים סט) הושיעני אלהים כי  
 באו מים עד נפש וגו' וכן הוא אומר (תהילים קיד) בצאת  
 ישראל ממצרים וגו' היתה יהודה לקדשו יהודה קדש שמו  
 (של הקב"ה על הים [ולפיכך] ישראל ממשלותיו.

The Tosefta (תוספתא) is Aramaic and is translated as *“supplement”* or *“addition”* as it is a compilation on the interpretation of the Jewish oral law (Mishnah) from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The Tosefta offers additional aggadic and midrashic material which contributes to the Mishnah in the interpretation of Jewish law, or in attributing in whose name a law was stated. According to the *Tosefta on the Talmud Bavli Berekhot 4:16*, the rabbis open with the question on what it was that caused Judah to be such a great leader and merited his kingship? They open with Judah having admitted that he had impregnated Tamar. This impregnation was a transgression, a sin. The belief is a true leader admits his faults and his sins; he does not attempt to hide what he has done wrong.



The rabbis respond saying, “*He (i.e. Rabbi Tarfon) said to them (i.e. to the four elders), “Do they give reward for a transgression? But rather what is [the real] reason why [the tribe of] Yehudah merited the kingship of Israel?” [The four elders said back to Rabbi Tarfon,] “Because he (i.e. Yehudah) saved his brother (i.e. Yosef) from death, as it is said, ‘Yehudah said to his brothers, “What benefit [will we have] if we kill our brother?’” (Genesis 37:26) and it is written, ‘Let us go and sell him to the Ishmaelites...’ (Genesis 37:27)”* The idea here is that it was for his having saved Joseph from his brothers and from death that he merited kingship. The rabbis question whether this was sufficient for the forgiveness of selling Joseph into slavery, because it was Judah who suggested earning money from the sale of their brother into slavery. The rabbis continue saying what was the real reason for his earning kingship? They say, “*[The four elders said back to Rabbi Tarfon,] “Because of [Yehudah’s] humility, as it is said, ‘And now your servant (i.e. Yehudah) will become a slave to my master (i.e. Yosef) instead of the boy (i.e. Binyamin).’ (Genesis 44:33)”* The primary reason for Judah being given the kingship was due to his humility and selflessness towards his brothers. The Tosefta interprets the reason Judah merited the kingship to have gone even further back in history, making reference to *Tehillim / Psalms 114:1-2* which states the following, *114:1 When Israel went forth from Egypt, The house of Jacob from a people of strange language, 114:2 Judah became His sanctuary, Israel, His dominion. 114:3 The sea looked and fled; The Jordan turned back.* (NASB, אֲבָצְאֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמְצָרִים בַּיַּת יַעֲקֹב מֵעַם לֵעָז: ב הַיְיִתָּה יְהוּדָה, (לקדשו ישראל ממשלותיו: ג תים ראה ויגס הירדן יסב לאחור: The interpretation on these Scriptures is in support of Judah having laid his life down on behalf of the people. Judah had faith and humility was great enough to even merit the dividing of the red sea in the minds of the rabbis.

The significant points that we can take from the rabbis and this week’s Torah portion are in relation to the qualities of being a leader, especially a spiritual leader, is to live selflessly. Selflessness is in the sense of being humble, honest, and consistently thinking upon and have concern for the welfare of others as opposed to ones’s self. One major concern is the importance of correctly teaching the word of God (*as opposed to teaching believing in only a theology*) and to live the example

(*Ephesians 4:11, 1 Timothy 3:2, 5:17, Titus 1:9, and Hebrews 3:17*). According to *Acts 6:1-6*, the apostles were devoted to prayer and the ministry of the word of God. The qualifications of a good leader are found in *1 Timothy 3:8-13*, one must not be an addict (*3:3*), not greedy or seeking dishonest gain (*3:3*), blameless (*3:2, Titus 1:6*), the husband of one wife (*6:2*), and able to manage his children and household (*6:4-5*). These qualifications are focusing upon moral character of the person who is to be a leader, he is to be mature and above reproach. Were these the things Joseph was looking for in his brothers?

In addition, a leader is to be dignified and not double tongued (*i.e. saying one thing and then doing another*). He is not to be a drunkard (*addicted to much wine*) and to be sound in faith and life (*6:9*). Paul's language of being "*blameless*" would disqualify all of Joseph's brothers, since they were all complicit in Joseph being sold into slavery (*all except Benjamin*). Moreover, what we can conclude is that leaders should have the ability of discernment, having a maturity in faith and not a maturity in the sense of only being able to repeat a church doctrine. The point is to be seasoned in the Scriptures, being able to understand Scripture, and apply the Scriptures to any situation in life. This is important because all of these things call for our obedience to God's Word as we live our lives for God's glory.

Note that with God's mercy comes His blessings in our lives for those who would obey His Word. The ungodly, those who disobey his commands, the wicked, we are told their ways turn "*A fruitful land into a salt waste*" (*Tehillim / Psalms 107:34*) and the reason is because of wickedness pollutes a holy land and those who dwell in it. The righteous on the other hand the descriptions given in the Psalms are those of newness of life and even of resurrection in the sense that life comes from a deserted and dry (dead) land. The Lord says that He will cause springs of water to flow and the hungry will dwell in the land, plant fields and vineyards and the Lord will cause the land to produce much fruit and great prosperity will come to the people who walk in God's ways! The Aramaic Targum on *Tehillim / Psalms 107:32-38* states, לב ומרוממין יתיה בכנשת עמא בית ישראל ובסנהדרין דחכימא ישבחון יתיה: לג על דרא דיואל בר פתואל אתנבי ואמר כד מרדו בית ישראל ביומי דיואל נביא אייתי בצורתא בעלמא שווי נהרוותא היך מדברא ומפקנות מיא היך צהותא: לד ארעא דישראל דעבדא פירי צדא היך סדום דאתהפיכת

מן בישות יתבין בה: לה כד תבו לאוריתא שוי מדברא היך אריתא דמיא  
 וארע ציהייא צדיא למפקנות מיא: לו ואשרי תמן כפינים ואתקינו קרתא  
 מייטבא: לז וזרעו חקלין ונציבו ונסיבו כרמיא ועבדו פרי אבא: לה וב-  
*107:32 And they exalt him in the assembly of the people, the house of Israel; and in the Sanhedrin of the wise they will praise him. 107:33 Concerning the generation of Joel son of Pethuel he prophesied and said: "When the house of Israel rebelled in the days of Joel the prophet, he brought a drought into the world; he made the rivers like the desert, and the sources of water like thirst." 107:34. The land of Israel that produces fruit became a waste like Sodom, which was overthrown because of the evil of its inhabitants. 107:35 When they returned to the Torah, he made the desert like a channel of water; and the parched land [became] sources of water. 107:36 And he made the hungry dwell there, and they set up an inhabited city. 107:37 And they sowed fields and planted vineyards, and they yielded fruit of produce. 107:38 And he blessed them and they multiplied greatly, and their livestock will not diminish. (EMC)* The rabbis parallel these things to Joel the son of Pethuel, speaking of a prophetic message against the people of the land due to the faithlessness of the people and their sins. The people were unrepentant, they did not seek to walk in God's ways, they desired to walk in their own ways, and as a result the land became a desert waste, like Sodom. Note that in both the MT and the Targum translations, the Scriptures say *"And he made the hungry dwell there,"* suggesting the Lord placed a hungry people in the land. Note this sounds similar to what is written in Parashat Pinchas, *Devarim / Deuteronomy 28:48 therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you. (NASB)* From this Torah context, it sounds as if the Lord is describing the hunger, thirst, and nakedness as in personal possessions and sustenance. The Description in the Psalm states however that these people the Lord planted will plant fields and the land will produce fruit and sources of water will appear to water the land. This sounds like a description of a righteous people. These people who are hungry sound to be in need for and desire the presence of the Lord and His Holy Words. The people are starving for the Lord's word and His presence, similar to what Amos says in *Amos 8:11 "Be-*

*hold, days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water; But rather for hearing the words of the LORD. (NASB)* Do you thirst and hunger for the presence of God in your life? Do you hunger and thirst for His words?

These qualities of leadership involve studying God’s Word for the purpose of applying His truth to our lives, and to have concern for the welfare of others as opposed to one’s self. Good leadership appears to be the significance of the stories about Joseph and his brothers. The reason these stories were written in the Torah was to show us how no matter what the circumstances, the Lord is working in the background for good, to save lives, and to bring His truth into the hearts of all men. In conclusion, let’s read from the Mishnah Pirkei Avot 5:17-18.

### **Mishnah Pirkei Avot 5:17-18**

כָּל הַמְזַכֵּה אֶת הַרְבִּים, אֵין חָטָא בָּא עַל יָדוֹ. וְכָל הַמְחַטֵּיא אֶת הַרְבִּים, אֵין מִסְפִּיקוֹן בְּיָדוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה. מִשָּׁה זָכָה זָכָה אֶת הַרְבִּים, זְכוּת הַרְבִּים תְּלוּי בּוֹ, שְׁנֵאמַר (דְּבָרִים לֵג) צְדָקָתָהּ עָשָׂה וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל. יִרְבְּעֵם חָטָא וְהִחַטֵּיא אֶת הַרְבִּים, חָטָא הַרְבִּים תְּלוּי בּוֹ, שְׁנֵאמַר (מַלְכִים א טו) עַל חַטָּאוֹת יִרְבְּעֵם (בֵּן נֶבֶט) אֲשֶׁר חָטָא וְאֲשֶׁר שְׁנֵאמַר (מַלְכִים א טו) עַל חַטָּאוֹת יִרְבְּעֵם (בֵּן נֶבֶט) אֲשֶׁר חָטָא וְאֲשֶׁר *Anyone who brings merit to the many, sin does not result from him. And anyone who brings the many to sin is not given enough [time] to repent. Moshe -- who was meritorious and brought merit to the many; the merit of the many is appended to him, as it is stated (Deuteronomy 33:21), “He fulfilled the righteousness of God and His statutes with Israel.” Jeroboam -- who sinned and caused the many to sin; the sin of the many is appended to him, as it is stated (I Kings 15:30), “for the sins of Jeroboam that he sinned and that he caused Israel to sin.”* כָּל מִי שֶׁיֵּשׁ בְּיָדוֹ שְׁלֵשָׁה דְּבָרִים הִלְלוּ, מִתְלַמְּדֵי שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אַבְיָנוּ. וְשְׁלֵשָׁה דְּבָרִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם, מִתְלַמְּדֵי שֶׁל בְּלָעֵם הָרָשָׁע. עֵין טוֹבָה, וְרוּחַ גְּמוּלָה, וְנֶפֶשׁ שְׁפֵלָה, מִתְלַמְּדֵי שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אַבְיָנוּ. עֵין רָעָה, וְרוּחַ גְּבוּהָה, וְנֶפֶשׁ רְחֵבָה, מִתְלַמְּדֵי שֶׁל בְּלָעֵם הָרָשָׁע. מֵה בֵּין תְּלַמְּדֵי שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אַבְיָנוּ לְתַלְמִידֵי שֶׁל בְּלָעֵם הָרָשָׁע. תְּלַמְּדֵי שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אַבְיָנוּ, אוֹכְלֵי בְּעוֹלָם הֵזָה וְנוֹחְלֵי בְּעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שְׁנֵאמַר (מִשְׁלֵי ח) לִהְנַחֵל אֶהְבִּי יֵשׁ, וְאַצְרִיתֵיהֶם אִמְלֵא. אַבְל תְּלַמְּדֵי שֶׁל

בלעם הרשע יורשין גיהנם ויורדין לבאר שחת, שנאמר (תהלים נה) ואתה אלהים תורידם לבאר שחת, אנשי דמים ומרמה לא יחצו מיהם, *Anyone who has these three things is from the students of Abraham, our father, and [anyone who has] three other things is from the students of Bilaam the evildoer: [one who has] a good eye, a humble spirit and a small appetite -- is from the students of Abraham, our father. [One who has] an evil eye, a haughty spirit and a broad appetite - is from the students of Bilaam the evildoer. What [difference] is there between the students of Abraham, our father, and the students of Bilaam the evildoer? The students of Abraham, our father, eat in this world and possess the next world, as it is stated (Proverbs 8:21), "There is what for those that love Me to inherit, and their treasures will I fill." But the students of Bilaam the evildoer inherit Gehinnom (Purgatory) and go down to the pit of destruction, as it is stated (Psalms 55:24), "And You, God, will bring them down to the pit of destruction; the people of blood and deceit, they will not live out half their days; and I will trust in You."*

The Mishnah Pirkei Avot 5:17-18 speaks of one who brings righteousness to many as opposed to one who brings many to sin. The biblical comparison is to Moshe and Jeroboam, Moshe brought many to righteousness, Jeroboam brought many to sin. The rabbis say that those who teach righteousness to others, are the students of Abraham, and those who teach others to sin, are the students of Bilaam. The teacher of righteousness inherits the kingdom of Heaven, and the teacher of sin inherits Gehinnom (Hell). These descriptions of two types of people are related to leadership and the importance of studying God's Word for the purpose of applying His truth to our lives, and to have concern for the welfare of others as opposed to ones's self. Leadership is what these stories about Joseph and his brothers are all about. The reason these stories were written in the Torah was to show us how no matter what the circumstances, the Lord is working in the background for good, to save lives, and to bring His truth into the hearts of all men.

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