

NCYI Youth Groups Parashas Vayigash

Parsha Outline

VaYigash

- Yosef reveals himself to his brothers
- Yaakov brings his family to Egypt
- Yisrael settles in Goshen
- Effects of the famine on Egypt

(http://www.headcoverings-by-devorah.com/HebEngTaNaKh_TorahSummary.htm)

Sefer Bereishit is divided into twelve parashiyot (weekly readings). The first two parashiyot cover 1,948 years of history and twenty generations. The third and fourth parashiyot focus only on one hundred years of Avraham's life. The message is - what Avraham stood for is what Creation is all about - what Avraham represented is what concerns the Torah. The Torah therefore dwells on the lives of the forefathers.

The balance of Sefer Bereishit (eight week parashiyot) is devoted to following the course of Avraham's descendants - Yitzchak, Yaakov, and the Twelve Tribes - as they further develop the philosophy and approach to live of their ancestor, Avraham. The ideology developed by Avraham becomes the basis for a unique nation, the further evolution and progress of the nation is presented in the following sefer - Shemot.

Sefer Bereishit not only describes the origin of the Jewish people, but traces the origins of all peoples of mankind.

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Parsha Summaries

Family Parshah

Vayigash Roundup

Vayigash-And He Approaches

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/341220/jewish/Vayigash-Roundup.htm

By Chani Benjaminson

Judah approaches Joseph and begs him to free Benjamin. He even offers himself as a slave--yes he offers to stay in Egypt as Joseph's slave instead of Benjamin!--as long as Benjamin is set free and allowed to return to his father's home in Canaan. At this point, when Joseph sees how much his brothers care about one another, he can no longer hold back his feelings. He sends all his servants and guards out of the room, and when he and his brothers are left alone he cries and says "I am Joseph, is my father still alive?"

The brothers are silent. They are shocked and terrified. Is this man, the second to most powerful man in all of Egypt, really their brother? And so Joseph begs them to come closer and repeats himself. "I am Joseph!" The brothers finally realize that it is true, this is their brother, but they are so ashamed at what they have done to him, that they sold him into slavery. But Joseph comforts them and makes them feel comfortable, telling them that it was G-d's will that he end up in Egypt so that he would become powerful and have a chance to save the entire family from the terrible famine which was still going on at that time. Joseph then sends his brothers home to tell Jacob that he is alive as well as to invite him to come to Egypt where he will be able to live in peace. Pharaoh sends along carriages to help Jacob move.

When Jacob sees the wagons and hears the good news, he is overjoyed and stops the long 22 years of mourning for his beloved son Joseph. Jacob travels to Egypt together with his entire family, exactly 70 people (the 70th is born as they enter the city gates, the newborn is Jocheved, mother of Moses). On his way to Egypt G-d promises Jacob that He will make Jacob's children into a great nation, and that He will take them out of Egypt.

Joseph goes out to meet his father as he gets closer to Egypt and when they meet, Joseph hugs and kisses Jacob. They then go to meet Pharaoh who gives the land of Goshen to Jacob, which is where Jacob and his family will live throughout the next generations. Jacob blesses Pharaoh.

Vayigash Aliya Summary

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/604643/jewish/Aliya-Summary.htm

General Overview: In this week's Torah treading, *Vayigash*, Judah responds to Joseph's demand that Benjamin remain enslaved in Egypt, pleading to be taken as a substitute. Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers. At Joseph's request, Jacob and his family come down to Egypt.

First Aliyah: In the end of last week's Torah reading, Joseph demanded that Benjamin remain behind in Egypt as his slave. This week's reading opens with Judah approaching Joseph and appealed to him to allow Benjamin to return to his father Jacob in Canaan. He spoke of Jacob's reluctance to allow Benjamin – Rachel's only remaining child – to make the trip to Egypt, and the great love Jacob harbored for his youngest son.

Second Aliyah: Judah continued: "When [Jacob] sees that the boy is gone, he will die." He explained to Joseph that he, Judah, had taken personal responsibility that Benjamin would return unharmed to Canaan. And as such, he asked to remain as a slave in stead of Benjamin. At that point, Joseph could not restrain himself any longer. He asked all the Egyptians present to leave the room, and he revealed his identity to his brothers: "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?!" He then reassured them, and asked them not to be upset about selling him into slavery: "For it was to preserve life that G-d sent me before you. For . . . another five years there will be neither plowing nor harvest, and G-d sent me before you to ensure your survival in the land..."

Third Aliyah: Joseph directed his brothers to quickly return to Canaan and bring Jacob and their families back to Egypt, where Joseph promised to provide them with food until the famine ends. Joseph embraced his brothers and cried. Pharaoh was informed that Joseph's family had arrived, and he, too, instructed them to come to Egypt where he would give them the "best of the land." The brothers went to Canaan – laden with gifts from Pharaoh and Joseph – and informed Jacob that Joseph was alive, indeed he ruled over all of Egypt. "And the spirit of their father Jacob was revived."

Fourth Aliyah: Jacob and his entire family left Canaan and headed to Egypt. En route

they stopped in Beersheba, where G-d told Jacob not to fear going to Egypt, for it is there that he will be made into a great nation. Furthermore G-d told him: "I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up."

Fifth Aliyah: This section names the seventy members of Jacob's family that went to Egypt.

Sixth Aliyah: Jacob arrived in Egypt, to the province of Goshen that Pharaoh had allotted his family. Joseph went there to greet his father. Joseph prepared his family for meeting Pharaoh, and instructed his brothers to tell Pharaoh that they are shepherds, who only wish to tend to their flocks in Goshen until the famine ends. Indeed the brothers followed this script, and Pharaoh acceded to their request. Jacob was then brought before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed him.

Seventh Aliyah: While Joseph supplied his family with food, the rest of Egypt was in a desperate plight. First they expended all their money in exchange for food that Joseph sold them. Then their money ran out, and they paid for provisions with their cattle. Finally, when they had no money or chattel left, they sold their land and themselves to Pharaoh into servitude in exchange for provisions. Meanwhile, in the land of Goshen, Jacob's family prospered and multiplied exceedingly.

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Overview

http://ohr.edu/this_week/torah_weekly/4124

By Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

With the discovery of the goblet in Binyamin's sack, the brothers are confused. Yehuda alone steps forward and eloquently but firmly petitions Yosef for Binyamin's release, offering himself instead. As a result of this act of total selflessness, Yosef finally has irrefutable proof that his brothers are different people from the ones who cast him into the pit, and so he now reveals to them that he is none other than their brother. The brothers shrink from him in shame, but Yosef consoles them, telling them that everything has been part of G-d's plan. He sends them back to their father Yaakov with a message to come and

reside in the land of Goshen. At first, Yaakov cannot accept the news, but when he recognizes hidden signs in the message which positively identify the sender as his son Yosef, his spirit is revived. Yaakov together with all his family and possessions sets out for Goshen. G-d communicates with Yaakov in a vision at night. He tells him not to fear going down to Egypt and its negative spiritual consequences, because it is there that G-d will establish the Children of Israel as a great nation even though they will be dwelling in a land steeped in immorality and corruption. The Torah lists Yaakov's offspring and hints to the birth of Yocheved, who will be the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu. Seventy souls in total descend into Egypt, where Yosef is reunited with his father after 22 years of separation. He embraces his father and weeps, overflowing with joy. Yosef secures the settlement of his family in Goshen. Yosef takes his father Yaakov and five of the least threatening of his brothers to be presented to Pharaoh, and Yaakov blesses Pharaoh. Yosef instructs that, in return for grain, all the people of Egypt must give everything to Pharaoh, including themselves as his slaves. Yosef then redistributes the population, except for the Egyptian priests who are directly supported by a stipend from Pharaoh. The Children of Israel become settled, and their numbers multiply greatly.

Parsha Songs

[The lyrics are supplied here. For the tunes, please click on the link]

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/573572/jewish/Parshah-Song.htm

Yehudah said to Yosef, "I'm stronger it is so
Please take me for a slave, and let Binyamin go."
The brothers knew what they had done to Yosef was wrong
Yosef sent his servants out, and in a voice so strong, said

Chorus: "I am Yosef, is my father still alive?
Ani Yosef, haod avi chai?"

"Don't be afraid," the brothers were told
"It was Hashem's will that I was sold
Go and tell our father, to Hashem I am true
Take food and wagons, but bring Yaakov back with you."

Chorus:

Serach played on her kinor, Yosef is alive
Yaakov was so happy when the wagons did arrive
When Yaakov saw Yosef after so many years
They hugged one another and cried happy tears

Chorus: "I am Yosef, my father is alive."
"I am Yosef, my father is alive."

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Parsha Questions & Answers

Selected from the following website:

<http://chinuch.org>

Questions By Rabbi Normie Lowenthal

_____ דש

The Pitgam Hashavua is..

לא תקים וְלֹא תִטֹּר ויקרא יט: יח

"Do not take revenge or bear a grudge."

Who did the brothers think they were standing before? Why were they there (not going home)?

פְּעִנָּח - (Tzofnas Panayach), they had no idea that he was Yosef. They were taken back to his house because of the "stolen" goblet.

What did Tzofnas want to do with Binyomin, and why?

He wanted to make him an עֶבֶד (slave) since he was caught with the "stolen" goblet.

Who came to plead for Binyomin's freedom? Why and How?

Yehudah, since he was responsible for Binyomin's safety (he promised Yaakov). He compared Tzofnas to Paroh, meaning: he's just as powerful and as evil, but he would still kill him to save Binyomin, if necessary. He tried to convince Tzofnas, saying that he should take Yehudah as a slave instead of Binyomin, or his father would die.

How did Yehudah refer to his father before Tzofnas, and what happened to Yosef as a result?

אָבִי עַבְדְּךָ " (Your servant, my father), and Yosef was punished for not stopping it when he heard his father being called a servant by losing one year of his life for each time he heard it, totaling 10 years.

What did Yosef do before revealing his identity?

First he sent everyone out of the room (except for the brothers), and then, in לשון הקודש לָשׁוֹן הַקּוֹדֶשׁ (Loshon Hakodesh- Hebrew), " I am Yosef is my father still alive?".

What was the brothers' reaction to the news?

They didn't say anything, they were shocked. So Yosef told them not to worry about having sold him, since it was all Hashem's doing. He needed to be there to provide them with food during the hunger.

How were the brothers sure that it was really Yosef?

Firstly, he spoke in Loshon Hakodesh, second, he showed that he had a Bris, and third, he told them he was sold.

What did Yosef send with the brothers, and what did he send with Binyomin?

He sent them all with presents in עֲגָלוֹת (wagons), and sent Binyomin with five sets of clothes and money.

Who told Yaakov the news that Yosef was alive, and what made Yaakov believe it?

Serach bas Asher told him, but he didn't believe it until he saw the Agolos, and remembered that the last thing he had learned with Yosef was אֶרֶוּפָה עֲגָלָה (about the Halacha of a dead calf found between two cities...)

Why did Hashem want Yaakov to go to Mitzrayim?

Because Hashem had promised Avrohom that his children would go down to Mitzrayim...(see Lech L'cha).

How many people went down to Mitzrayim?

A total of seventy, including Yocheved bas Levi (later to be Moshe Rabbeinu's mother), who was born on the way.

What did Yaakov tell Yosef as they met?

1) Now that I see you're alive, I can die , and 2) He said the "Shema".

What did Yosef tell his brothers to say their job is, and why?

Shepherds, since they'd be asked to live far from the Mitzrim who hated shepherds (they worshipped animals), and this way, living in Goshen, they could to Mitzvahs in peace.

What בְּרָכָה did Yaakov give Paroh?

That the Nile river should overflow and irrigate the land (this ended the years of hunger).

דְּבַר תּוֹרָה

When Yaakov was told that Yosef was alive, and was the ruler of Mitzrayim, he said, "רב!" - "It's too much!", and then said, "My son Yosef is alive, I must go see him!" What did he mean by that, and what was "too much"?

The Ozneyim Latorah explains: Yaakov was not excited by Yosef's greatness, but by the fact that he was alive. Not just in the sense that he was physically alive, but that he was truly living -- doing Torah and Mitzvahs. That is why he felt overwhelmed, and then said, "Let me see *him*," not his greatness!

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Parsha Stories

Family Parshah

Vayigash Parshah Lesson

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/335928/jewish/Vayigash-Parshah-Lesson.htm

By Rebbetzin [Malka Touger](#)

Adam pointed out to his friend, "Do you see that man, I remember him without his long beard."

"Yeah," said Rafi, "he used to help us in Hebrew School."

Wow, he looks so wise, Adam added.

Rafi said "Hey, that reminds me of what he once taught us in Hebrew School. When Joseph's brothers stood before him in Pharaoh's palace, he recognized them but they did not recognize him. He explained that when they sold him as a slave he was a teenager. Now he had a full beard which made him look much different."

"A beard does make a person look different," agreed Adam. He thought for a moment. "But still, I'm surprised that he changed so much that Joseph's brothers could not recognize him, even after meeting and talking to him again and again. Even when Judah

argued to save Benjamin, he did not think that he was talking to Joseph."

"I remember that he told us," explained Rafi, "that it was hard for you to recognize that man because of his beard, but we still figured it out. But when the brothers came to Egypt and met a governor who was supplying food to all the hungry people and who was running the economic affairs of the country, it never occurred to them that he could possibly be Joseph. They thought Joseph would be concerned only with spiritual things. they could never imagine him being so involved with business. That's why they didn't recognize him.

"But Joseph was on a much more learned than his brothers. Jacob had taught Joseph all of the Torah he knew. This helped Joseph live like a good Jew even though he lived among people who were far from G-d and did evil acts. Even when he was involved in buying and selling, he knew that the being just and following G-d's ways is what is most valuable."

This is a lesson for us, said Adama, "G-d wants a Jew to be involved in this world, and to make it a place where G-d's presence is felt. We should follow Joseph's example. Even when Joseph was involved in business matters, his life was not separate from G-d and the Torah."

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LESSONS FROM THE PARSHA

http://ohr.edu/this_week/kinder_torah/4123

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Parashas Vayigash

Tsur Mishelo

“**A**bbba, the past few Shabbosim have been so special. You have explained the words of the zemiros to us, we have sung them, and felt the connection of shomayim va'aretz (heaven and earth).”

“Shall we continue tonight, kinderlach with ‘Tsur Mishelo’?”

“Please, Abba!”

“Okay, kinderlach. The beginning of this zemer resembles the Bircas Ha’mazone, as we thank Hashem for the food that we have eaten and the land (Eretz Yisrael) that we have inherited. We then ask Him to mercifully rebuild Yerushalayim, the Beis HaMikdash, and send moshiach. Let us begin with the first word – ‘tsur’. What does it mean?”

“Rock.”

“Correct, Esti. Why do we refer to Hashem as the Rock?”

“Because He is the foundation that holds up everything. Just like a properly constructed building rests on bedrock, so too the entire world rests on Hashem’s strong shoulders (so to speak). We are fortunate enough to have eaten from His bounty, therefore we faithfully bless Him. We have eaten our fill, and left over (some food) as He wishes.”

“Why does Hashem want us to leave food over, Abba?”

“The gemora (Sanhedrin 92a), the Shulchan Auruch (Orach Chaim 180, and Mishna Breurah) relate that a person will not see blessing in what he does unless he leaves over some food from his meal. One reason is that food is ready if poor people come. Another reason given is that the blessings of Bircas Ha’mazone can rest on the food left on the table. Finally, we demonstrate Hashem’s generosity by showing that we cannot finish all that He has given us. We then bless Him as He has commanded us, ‘And you shall eat and be satisfied and bless Hashem, your G-d’ (Devarim 8:10).”

“**H**ashem is so good and generous.”

“That is how the zemer continues, kinderlach. ‘He feeds His world, our Shepherd, our Father.’ He guides us like a faithful shepherd, and has mercy on us like a father. ‘We have eaten His bread and drunk His wine. Therefore (we are obligated to) praise His Name (for His kindness), pay tribute to Him saying, “There is none as holy as Hashem!”’ The Medrash Tehillim (89:3) tells a parable about a king who had a tremendous treasury filled with all good things. He asked himself, ‘Who will enjoy them? I will acquire servants, feed them, and then ask them to praise me.’ So too, Hashem filled His world with a bounty of good, created man, gave him reign over everything, and then commanded him to bless the Holy One Who provided everything.”

“We want to bless and praise Hashem, Abba. How do we do it?”

That is the subject of the next stanza, kinderlach. ‘With song and the voice of thanks we bless our G-d.’ For what? ‘For the land so desirable and good (Eretz Yisrael) that He gave our forefathers as an inheritance.’ Who desired our land? Many people: ancient kings, our forefathers, Moshe Rabbeinu, and Hashem Himself (when He chose Yerushalayim as the place to build His Temple and bestow His Shechina [Divine Presence]). We acknowledge that He has satisfied us with food and sustenance. His kindness is mighty and Hashem is truth!”

“Why do we end with that statement that Hashem is truth, Abba?”

“Because He kept His promise to the Avos to give us Eretz Yisrael, kinderlach. And so, we now request that He keep His ultimate promise, and bring the moshiach. ‘Be merciful in Your kindness upon Your nation, our Rock, upon Tzion, the resting place of your Shechina, the shrine and home of our splendor.’ We ask Him to have mercy on us and on Yerushalayim. May the son of Dovid, Your servant, come and redeem us. The breath of our life is dependent upon the moshiach of Hashem. (Please send him).”

“We want him to come Abba!”

“Of course, kinderlach. This is what we pray for every day. When he does arrive, wonderful things will happen. The Mikdash (Temple) will be rebuilt and the city of Tzion will become filled with our brothers whom Hashem will gather from the four corners of the earth. There we will sing a new Shir (song) which has never been sung before. It will be a song rejoicing the happiness of the gathering of the exiles from all over the world. ‘May the Merciful One, the Sanctified One be blessed and exalted over a full cup of wine, as is worthy to bless Him!’”
“Amen, Abba! What a beautiful way to bless Hashem!”

Kinderlach . . .

Hashem kept His promise to our forefathers and gave them the Holy Land. He treats us royally by giving us delicious food and drink today and every day. He will exalt us among all the nations in the future, by sending moshiach, returning us to Eretz Yisrael, and building the Beis HaMikdash, as He promised. For all this, we thank and praise Him by singing this beautiful zemer, Tsur Mishelo. May His ultimate promise be fulfilled right away!

Gratitude

The air was charged with anticipation. The emotional reunion between Yaakov and his long-lost son Yosef was about to take place (Bereshis 46:29). One can imagine the feelings of Yaakov Avinu for his favorite son. He loved him so much that he refused to be consoled for the entire time that Yosef was gone. Yaakov Avinu was a *novi* (prophet). One can only experience *nevuah* (prophecy) from Hashem when he is happy. Yaakov Avinu did not receive one *nevuah* (prophecy) during the entire time of Yosef’s absence due to his extreme sadness. We can only begin to picture how happy he must have been to see Yosef.

That actually happened? Yosef fell onto Yaakov's neck and wept. Rashi explains that Yaakov, however, did not weep. Instead, he recited *Kriyas Shema*, the prayer by which we accept *Oi Malchus Shomayim* (the Yoke of Heaven) upon ourselves. At the height of his ecstasy, his first thought was about Hashem.

The Maharal in his *sefer Gur Aryeh* relates that when Yaakov saw his son Yosef, love and fear of Hashem came into his heart. How wonderful and complete are Hashem's *middos*; see how He rewards His faithful ones! This is the trait of the pious ones, when something good happens to them, they cleave to Hashem for the kindness and the truth He has done for them.

Kinderlach . . .

*What was Yaakov Avinu's first thought when something good happened to him? To thank and praise Hashem. This *hacoras hatov* (gratitude) is a wonderful *middah**

(character trait) that we can learn from. What do we do when good things happen to us? Do we say, "Boruch Hashem?" "Hodu Lashem Ki Tov"? We should. We know that all good things come from Hashem. So, why not thank Him directly? The next time we get a good grade on a test, let's say, "Boruch Hashem!" When our Sabba and Safta come to visit us from far away, let's say "Hodu Lashem Ki Tov!" We're so happy that Hashem has been good to us!

Parasha Questions:

- Who is a person more obligated to honor, his father or his grandfather? (46:1 and Rashi)
- Is there a difference between the possessions one acquires in Eretz Yisrael and those acquired outside of the Holy Land? (46:6 and Rashi)
- Why does the verse use the singular form, "nefesh" when referring to the 70 souls who went down to Mitzrayim? (Rashi 46:26)

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Family Parsha Vayigash

by [Nesanel Yoel Safran](#)

This article can also be read at: <http://www.aish.com/tp/pak/fp/48897907.html>

Vayigash(Genesis 44:18-47:27)

The Secret of Forgiveness

From this week's Torah Portion

Forgiving people and not holding grudges against them is not only good for them -it's also good for us. Sometimes the anger we hold inside against someone who has treated us unkindly hurts us even more than what they did to us in the first place. But forgiving can be hard; how can we do it?

This week's portion reveals the secret. Joseph's brothers had treated him very unkindly and sold him into slavery. Yet when he met them again many years later, he didn't hold any grudge whatsoever against them. How was that possible? Because Joseph realized the amazing truth that everyone in our lives are, in a deeper sense, God's 'messengers.' Whatever they say or do is only because God is sending us some sort of a message, and what's the point of getting angry at the messenger? Not only that, since the message is coming from God, ultimately it's for our best. Once we learn to live with this outlook, we will lead much happier lives filled with forgiveness and free from the pain of grudges.

Story

In our story, a kid learns the secret of forgiveness in most unlikely place.

"ESCAPE FROM THE DUNGEON"

The kids in Mrs. Kaplan's history classes felt like they had stepped back into the Middle Ages. As a special class trip she had taken them to Manor Castle, a history museum inside a real 800-year-old castle that had been brought, brick by brick, from overseas and reconstructed just as it had been.

"This place is absolutely amazing, isn't it Ellen?" said Naomi, with wide open eyes, as they made their way through the stately, candle-lit halls and chambers.

"Yeah, I guess so," muttered the girl under her breath. Even though the unheated castle was pretty cold, Ellen was boiling.

"Hey, what's the matter with you?" asked Naomi, surprised at her usually bubbly friend's curt answer.

"I'm sorry Naomi," she said, "I'm just really upset."

"Why?"

"You mean to tell me you're *not* upset about how all those kids from the older class just pushed ahead of us like we didn't exist and took all the good seats on the bus? I'm lucky I didn't have to sit in the baggage compartment!"

Naomi shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, that? Yeah I guess it wasn't so nice, but forget it, and let's enjoy the trip. What's the point of letting a couple of minutes of unpleasantness ruin our whole day? Anyway, they were only 'messengers.' Hey, did you hear that? The guide just said we're going down to the dungeon next!"

The dungeon was just where those pushy kids belonged as far as Ellen was concerned. How could her friend just forgive and forget like that? And what in the world had she meant by 'messengers'? But before she had a chance to ask, the guide began leading everyone down a thin, curving stairway. Ellen tried to calm down as she held tight to the metal railing. But she was also holding tight to her grudge. How could she just forgive those thoughtless kids?

"Now nobody get scared..." bellowed Tom, the big, redheaded guide who looked like he fit right into the medieval setting, "...but this is the chamber where the master of the castle would take his prisoners. You know, back then the kings were very cruel. They would even punish, or kill, a messenger that brought them bad news!"

The kids gasped. "Wow, wasn't that dumb?" commented Ellen to Naomi. "What was the point of getting mad at the *messenger*?"

"So why do you do the same thing?"

Ellen was taken aback by her friend's strange comment. "Do the same thing? What are you talking about?"

Naomi smiled. "Like I said, those kids on the bus were also just messengers - from God."

"Messengers from God? What are you *talking* about?"

"Nothing happens for nothing. Whatever happens is really just God's way of talking to us and giving us a message that somehow we need to hear."

"Like what kind of messages?"

"There are lots of different messages. Maybe we had once done something similar to someone else, and God sends us a messenger to teach us how it feels so we won't do it again..."

Ellen blushed, remembering how she had jumped in front of a little kid to grab a seat on the way to school just that morning.

Naomi went on. "Or maybe the messenger is coming to stop us from doing something we think will be good for us but really isn't, or to get us to do something we didn't know that we should. Sometimes the message is pretty clear, and other times we may not understand the message, or why it's good right away, but the message is always there."

Ellen nodded. "Okay, let's say that those kids on the bus really were 'messengers,' but wasn't it still wrong of them to act that way?"

"Maybe it was, but that's their business to work out. What matters for us is that we had to hear a message, and one way or the other God was going to tell it to us. If those kids hadn't been the ones to deliver the message, someone or something else would have. So why not just forgive and forget instead of feeling angry and miserable by holding a grudge?"

"It's like we learned in Torah class about how Joseph met up with his brothers who sold him as a slave. That's how he was able to forgive them, by realizing they were God's messengers. And that's why staying mad at people doesn't make any more sense than one of those medieval kings who used to kill their messengers."

In his booming voice, Tom announced, "Now follow me upstairs to the royal banquet hall!"

Ellen thought about what Naomi said. It would certainly make it easier to drop a grudge and go on with life. She breathed easier as she climbed the stairs and felt ironically like she had begun to climb out of the 'dungeon' of grudge-bearing, and entered the 'banquet hall' of forgiveness.

Discussion Questions

Ages 3-5

Q. How did Ellen feel at first about the idea of not holding a grudge against the kids who pushed her on the bus?

A. She felt that since they did something wrong, she should stay angry at them.

Q. How did she feel in the end?

A. She realized that she could think of those kids as being God's 'messengers' and forgive them instead of staying mad.

Ages 6-9

Q. Why did Ellen feel better after talking with Naomi?

A. Naomi helped her realize that whatever people do or say to us isn't just by chance. God is watching over us and wouldn't let anything happen to us unless it was to give us a message and teach us something we needed to know. Once she heard this, she was able to drop her grudge against the big kids, and that felt good because the only ones that holding grudges hurt - are us.

Q. Why does God send us messages?

A. One of our main purposes in life is grow into better and kinder people. Therefore, God sends us hidden messages along the way to help us reach our goal. Those messages come to us from the people we meet, and what they say and do. It's a pretty amazing system, but then again God is pretty amazing.

Ages 10 and Up

Q. How can we learn to become more aware of the messages God is sending us?

A. Once we realize that God is truly sending us messages, we are well on the way to becoming more aware of them. It is helpful to remind ourselves of this concept from time to time because it is easy to forget when we're in the middle of a busy day. Of course, we can't know for certain what God is telling us, but often we can get a pretty good idea of which direction He's guiding us to go.

Q. Why does God hide His messages in the words and actions of other people instead of just talking to us directly?

A. There are a number of reasons, but a big one is that God wants us to have free choice whether or not to listen to Him. This is because we grow much more if we freely choose to come close to Him rather than feel compelled. If we were to hear 'directly' from God we would be so blown away by the experience, that we would have virtually no choice but to listen.

Published: Sunday, December 12, 2004

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Parsha Games

Vayigash

Forgiving

Discussion: Have a conversation about siblings: How many siblings do you each have? Do you ever fight with your siblings? If your siblings threw you into a pit and sold you to passing Yishmaelim, would you forgive them? Well Yosef's brothers did just that to him and he forgave them.

Activity: Explain that in order to win this game, you need to be able to forgive each other and just keep playing. Someone shouts out "one," then someone else says "two," and you have to get to ten. The catch is if two people say the same number, you have to start again. Any time two kids say the same number, make sure instead of giving each other mean faces, there's no hard feelings.

Courtesy of parshaactivities.com