



COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"L

Former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

May the learning of these Divrei Torah be לעילוי נשמת

HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Ariele zt"l

The following dvar Torah was submitted to Torah Tidbits from Rabbi Sacks before his passing.

לעילוי נשמות

פנחס בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד אייז ע"ה
עזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שרטור ע"ה



ROBERT SRETER
ד"ר רוברט שרטור MS, DDS
DOCTOR OF DENTAL SURGERY, SPECIALIST IN
PROSTHETIC DENTISTRY AND ORAL REHABILITATION
ב"ר אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שרטור ע"ה

Dedicated by Dr. Robert Sreter DDS., M.S.

The Unexpected Leader

I was once present when the great historian of Islam, Bernard Lewis, was asked to predict the course of events in the Middle East. He replied, "I'm a historian, so I only make predictions about the past. What is more, I am a *retired* historian, so even my past is passé." Predictions are impossible in the affairs of living, breathing human beings because we are free and there is no way of knowing in advance how an individual will react to the great challenges of their life.

If one thing has seemed clear throughout the last third of Genesis, it is that Joseph will emerge as the archetypal leader. He

is the central character of the story, and his dreams and the shifting circumstances of his fate all point in that direction. Least likely as a candidate for leadership is Judah, the man who proposed selling Joseph as a slave (Gen. 37:26-27), whom we next see separated from his brothers, living among the Canaanites, intermarried with them, losing two of his sons because of sin, and having sexual relations with a woman he takes to be a prostitute. The chapter in which this is described begins with the phrase, "At that time Judah *went down* from among his brothers" (Gen. 38:1). The commentators take this to mean moral decline.

Yet history turned out otherwise. Joseph's descendants, the tribes of Ephraim and Menashe, disappeared from the pages of history after the Assyrian conquest in 722 BCE, while Judah's descendants, starting with David, became kings. The tribe of Judah survived the Babylonian conquest, and it is Judah whose name we bear as a people. We are *Yehudim*, "Jews." This week's parsha of Vayigash explains why.

Already in last week's parsha we began to see Judah's leadership qualities. The family

had reached a deadlock. They desperately needed food, but they knew that the Egyptian viceroy had insisted that they bring their brother Benjamin with them, and Jacob refused to let this happen. His beloved wife Rachel's first son (Joseph) was already lost to him, and he was not about to let the other, Benjamin, be taken on a hazardous journey. Reuben, in keeping with his unstable character, made an absurd suggestion: "Kill my two sons if I do not bring Benjamin back safely." (Gen. 42:37) In the end it was Judah, with his quiet authority – "I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him" (Gen. 43:9) – who persuaded Jacob to let Benjamin go with them.

Now, as the brothers attempt to leave Egypt, and return home, the nightmare scenario has unfolded. Benjamin has been found with the viceroy's silver cup in his possession. The official delivers his verdict. Benjamin is to be held as a slave. The other brothers can go free. At this point Judah steps forward and makes a speech that changes history. He speaks eloquently about their father's grief at the loss of one of Rachel's sons. If he loses the other, he will die of grief. I, says Judah, personally guaranteed his safe return. He concludes:

"Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father." (Gen. 44:33-34)

Eiferman Properties Ltd.

JERUSALEM SALES

- **GERMAN COLONY** - Existing building with permit to build 250 sqm on a huge lot!
- **CITY CENTER** - 4 Bdrms, renovated, elevator, balconies.
- **HOLYLAND / RAMAT SHARET / BAYIT V'GAN**
Cottage 235 sqm, 9 rooms, large succah, view, parking!
- **HAR NOF** * Shlav A, 3 bdrms, Succah, storage, view!
* Renovated 4 bdrms, bright and airy, 3 exposures, MB en suite, large succah, no steps to the building!
* Unique Villas for sale, 250- 330 sqm + rental units, outdoor space, parking, view! Many options!

OUT OF JERUSALEM

- **MODIIN AREA - New Project**
180 sqm semi detached house, NIS 2,650,000 complete.
- **YAVNIEL** - Villa + Rental Units! NIS 2,490,000!

RENTALS

- **OLD KATAMON** Lovely 2 bdrms, furnished, 2 balconies!
- **BUSTAN BAKA** Brand new building, 3 bdrms, 2.5 bthrms, ground floor, large garden, parking, immediate!
- **HAR NOF** * Villa, beautiful 6 bedrooms, view!
* Shlav A, 3 bdrms, renovated, garden, view, machsan!

02-651-4030 www.eifermanrealty.com

בס"ד

NEED STORAGE ?

MAXIBOX

The place for extra space

Jerusalem

Beit-Shemesh

Modiin

053-7272-815

www.premiummoving.co.il

Like us on facebook
 "חובלות אייל- premium moving"

No sooner has he said these words than Joseph, overcome with emotion, reveals his identity and the whole elaborate drama reaches closure. What is happening here and how does it have a bearing on leadership?

The Sages articulated a principle: “Where penitents stand even the perfectly righteous cannot stand.” (Brachot 34b) The Talmud brings a proof-text from Isaiah: “Peace, peace, to those far and near” (Is. 57:19) placing the far (the penitent sinner) before the near (the perfectly righteous). However, almost certainly the real source is here in the story of Joseph and Judah. Joseph is known to tradition as *ha-tzaddik*, the righteous one.¹ Judah, as we will see, is a penitent. Joseph became “second to the king.” Judah, however, became the ancestor of kings. Hence, where penitents stand even the perfectly righteous cannot stand.

Judah is the first person in the Torah to achieve perfect repentance (*teshuvah*)

1 See *Tanchuma (Buber)*, *Noach*, 4, s.v. *eleh*, on the basis of Amos 2:6, “They sold the righteous for silver.”

gemurah), defined by the Sages as when you find yourself in a situation where it is likely you will be tempted to repeat an earlier sin, but you are able to resist because you are now a changed person.²

Many years before Judah was responsible for Joseph being sold as a slave:

Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.” His brothers agreed. (Gen. 37:26-27)

Now, faced with the similar prospect of leaving Benjamin as a slave, he has a very different response. He says, “Let me stay as a slave and let my brother go free.” (44:33) That is perfect repentance, and it is what prompts Joseph to reveal his identity and forgive his brothers.

The Torah had already hinted at the change in Judah’s character in an earlier chapter. Having accused his daughter-in-law Tamar of becoming pregnant by a forbidden sexual relationship, he is

2 *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot Teshuvah* 2:1.

CASH 4 GOLD
We buy your Gold & Silver
Personal home service - 30 years experience
We also buy silverware, gold & silver coins!
Please send me a picture to WhatsApp for free appraisals
972-54-219-2428
mail: absaffran@gmail.com
Follow Us On Facebook
I pay cash! I will meet you where you want! Customer service!

Shoshana Dekel, M.S.W. -
Individual & Couple/Family therapy
Clinical Social Worker
& Certified Couple/Family Therapist
20 years experience
Languages: English & Hebrew
as mother tongue
Private clinic in Rechovot
Online therapy optional upon request
Tel: 0549263636
E-mail: shoshpashosh@gmail.com

confronted by her with evidence that he himself is the father of the child, and his response is to immediately declare: “She is more righteous than I” (Gen. 38:26). This is the first time in the Torah we see a character admit that he is wrong. If Judah was the first penitent, it was Tamar – mother of Perez from whom King David was descended – who was ultimately responsible.

Perhaps Judah’s future was already implicit in his name, for though the verb *le-hodot* from which it is derived means “to thank” (Leah called her fourth son Judah saying, “This time I will thank the Lord,” Gen. 29: 35), it is also related to the verb *le-hitvadot*, which means “to admit or “to confess” - and confession is, according to the Rambam, the core of the command to repent.

Leaders make mistakes. That is an occupational hazard of the role. Managers follow the rules, but leaders find themselves in situations for which there are no rules. Do you declare a war in which people will die, or do you refrain from doing so at the risk of letting your enemy grow stronger with the result that more will die later? That was the dilemma faced by Chamberlain in 1939, and it was only some time later that it became clear that he was wrong and Churchill right.

But leaders are also human, and their mistakes often have nothing to do with leadership and everything to do with human weakness and temptation. The sexual misconduct of John F. Kennedy,



Eta Morris
JERUSALEM REALTY

For information on magnificent stand alone homes in German Colony, Baka and Old Katamon.
Call today: **Eta: 054-723-3863**

Baka

100 sqm apartment in new project, 3 bedrooms, 2 full bathrooms, high ceilings, terrace (partial sukka) shabbat elevator and parking. **4,250,000 NIS.**

Duplex penthouse with elevator, two sukka terraces. 160 sqm brand new. Fantastic deal. **4,550,000 NIS!!!**

Old Katamon

Fantastic garden apt in Old Katamon. High ceilings, authentic Jerusalem stone building, registered garden, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms **4,600,000 NIS.**

New project 4, 5, 6 rooms available. Underground parking, shabbat elevator and storage. Starting prices at **3,800,000 NIS**- larger apts **-6,000,000 NIS.**

115 sqm, new apartment, with 50 sqm registered garden. Ready to move in. **4,300,000 NIS.**

Downtown

Saidoff Tower: 200 sqm on one floor, terrace, underground parking 24/7 doorman, pool and gym. 5 bedrooms. **Call for more info.**

Talbiya

King David Crown apartment for sale. 24/7 doorman. 145 sqm on one floor , facing garden, 3 bedrooms, 2.5 bathrooms, terrace, parking, Shabbat elevator and storage. **USD 1,800,000.**

Beautiful apt in Talbiya, 107 sqm. Fully renovated with high end finishings- underfloor heating/central air, elevator, terrace, shared pkg. Old City, Mamilla, First Station. Was 4,400,000 NIS now **4,000,000 NIS.**

German Colony

100 sqm apt in a new project ready in 2 years. 50 sqm registered garden, parking. **4,500,000 NIS.**

160 sqm on one floor, 2nd floor in small luxury building. Large sukka terrace. Parking, shabbat elevator, views, lots of light. **8,500,000 NIS.**

New luxury project. 3 and 4 room apartments underground parking and storage, starting at **3,000,000 NIS.**

Eta Morris Realty, Ltd.
etamorrisrealestate@gmail.com
Tel: 054-723-3863 · etamorrisrealty.co.il

Bill Clinton and many other leaders has undoubtedly been less than perfect. Does this affect our judgment of them as leaders or not? Judaism suggests it should. The prophet Nathan was unsparing of King David for consorting with another man's wife. But Judaism also takes note of what happens next.

What matters, suggests the Torah, is that you repent – you recognise and admit your wrongdoings, and you change as a result. As Rav Soloveitchik pointed out, both Saul and David, Israel's first two kings, sinned. Both were reprimanded by a Prophet. Both said *chattati*, "I have sinned".³ But their fates were radically different. Saul lost the throne, David did not. The reason, said the Rav, was that David confessed immediately. Saul prevaricated and made excuses before admitting his sin.⁴

The stories of Judah, and of his descendant David, tell us that what marks a leader is not necessarily perfect righteousness. It is the ability to admit mistakes, to learn from

them and grow from them. The Judah we see at the beginning of the story is not the man we see at the end, just as the Moses we see at the burning bush – stammering, hesitant – is not the mighty hero we see at the end, "his sight undimmed, his natural energy unabated." A leader is one who, though he may stumble and fall, arises more honest, humble and courageous than he was before. ■

Questions (Around The Shabbat Table)

- How does Judaism's view of a leader differ from the secular understanding of leadership in your country?
- Do you gauge people by their mistakes or by their responses to these mistakes?
- How can we apply these ideas about *teshuvah* to our lives today?

Covenant and Conversation 5781 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l.

These weekly teachings from Rabbi Sacks are part of the 'Covenant & Conversation' series on the weekly Torah reading. Read more on www.rabbisacks.org.

3 I Sam. 15:24 and II Sam. 12:13.

4 Joseph Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek: Listen – My Beloved Knocks* (Jersey City, N.J.: Ktav, 2006), 26.

PesachHOTELS
* Lev Yerushalayim (Mehadrin Jerusalem)
* Nes Amim Hotel (near Naharyia) (Mehadrin Rabbanut Mateh Asher)
* Prima Kings, Jerusalem (Mehadrin Rabbanut Jerusalem)
Other hotels, Vacation Villages and Tzimmers throughout the Country
EVERYTHING ACCORDING TO THE DIRECTIVES OF MINISTRY OF HEALTH
GROSSMAN TOURS: 02-941-0110 • 052-624-4733