



**RABBI SHALOM**

**ROSNER**

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# From Regret to Rebuild

In Parashat Vayeishev, we read of one of the most painful moments in the Torah — the sale of Yosef. Immediately following this story, the Torah tells us that Yehuda left his brothers and found a wife.

The **Midrash** (Bereshit Rabbah 85) offers a fascinating perspective on this moment: “ויהי בעת ההוא” רבי שמואל בר נחמן פתח (ירמיה כט, יא): “כי אנכי ידעתי את המחשבת” – שבטים היו עסוקין במכירתו של יוסף, ויוסף היה עסוק בשקו ובתעניתו, ראובן היה עסוק בשקו ותעניתו, ויעקב היה עסוק בשקו ובתעניתו, ויהודה היה עסוק לקח לו אשה, והקדוש ברוך הוא היה עוסק בורא אורו של מלך המשיח.

“*And it came to pass at that time,*” *Rabbi*

*Shmuel bar Nachman began (Jeremiah 29:11): “For I know the thoughts.” The tribes were busy selling Yosef, Yosef was busy with his sackcloth and fasting, Reuven was busy with his sackcloth and fasting, Yaakov was busy with his sackcloth and fasting, Yehuda was busy taking a wife for himself — and the Holy One, blessed be He, was busy creating the light of the King Messiah.*

The Midrash paints a scene in which every character is absorbed in response to the tragedy. The brothers are stricken with guilt for selling Yosef. Reuven, who tried to save him, regrets not insisting that they let him go free. Yaakov blames himself for sending Yosef to Shechem. Yosef himself mourns, feeling perhaps that his own behavior provoked his brothers’ jealousy.

Yet, in the midst of this national and familial grief, **Yehuda leaves** and gets married. On the surface, this seems disturbing. Did Yehuda not feel remorse? Why does the Midrash contrast his marriage with everyone else’s repentance?

The Hemdat Yamim, quoting Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshischa, offers a profound answer. Repentance (*teshuvah*) is not meant to paralyze us in sadness or guilt; it is meant to **inspire renewal and action**. Feelings of regret are only the beginning of *teshuvah*. They must lead to constructive change.

Yehuda, a natural leader, recognized that he had failed to live up to his role. He should have stood up more firmly to save Yosef. Now, instead of remaining trapped in despair,

“אור זרוע לצדיק ולישרי לב שמחה”

May the Torah learned from this issue of Torah Tidbits be in loving memory of and לעילוי נשמת our beloved husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather

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Yehuda sought a way forward. His response was not only to repent, but to **rebuild** — to take initiative, to create life, and to ensure that from him would emerge a new generation of leaders who could do better.

The Midrash concludes that God, too, was “busy” — creating the light of Mashiach, who would ultimately come from Yehuda’s lineage. From Yehuda’s willingness to rebuild in the wake of failure came the seed of redemption: “*From Tamar came Oved, the father of Yishai, the father of David.*”

The **Rebbe of Kutzk** adds another dimension: Yehuda’s marriage symbolized a desire to start life anew, to begin again from the very first mitzvah — *pru u’rvu*, “be fruitful and multiply.” After the darkness of the Yosef episode, Yehuda longed to reenter the world of mitzvot, to restart his spiritual life from

the beginning.

The story of Yehuda teaches a powerful truth about the nature of *teshuva*. True repentance is not defined by how long we sit in sorrow, but by how courageously we rise to rebuild.

Yehuda’s greatness lay not in avoiding mistakes — he, like his brothers, failed. His greatness lay in his response: he transformed regret into renewal and guilt into growth. While others mourned what had been lost, Yehuda took the first step toward what could yet be created. From that step — an act of rebuilding when everything seemed broken — came the spark of Mashiach, the eternal light of hope.

When we stumble, may we remember Yehuda’s example: *Do not remain frozen in regret. Begin again. Create. Build. Act.* ■

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