



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

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Meeting of Two Kings

At the beginning of *Parashat Vayigash*, we encounter a dramatic and fateful meeting between Yehuda and Yosef. The Midrash describes this confrontation as **a meeting between two kings**. On the surface, this may seem puzzling. Yosef's royal status is clear — he is the viceroy of Egypt, ruler over the land and savior of nations. But Yehuda? At this point, he stands before Yosef humbled and desperate, pleading for the release of Binyamin. What, then, is “royal” about Yehuda in this moment? How does this episode sow the first seeds of *malchut Beit David*, the eternal kingship that will descend from him?

Rav Blumensweig (*V'hithalachti B'tochechem*) offers a profound explanation. Yehuda's speech to Yosef, one of the longest in Sefer Bereishit (44:18-34) seems, at first glance, to be merely a repetition of facts Yosef already knows. Yet

beneath the surface, something transformative is taking place. Yehuda is not pleading for forgiveness, nor defending himself or his brothers. Instead, he does something entirely different: **he offers himself** — his very life and freedom — in place of Binyamin.

This moment reveals two key shifts within Yehuda.

First, Yehuda says to Yosef:

וְעַתָּה יְשִׁבֵּנָא עֲבָדְךָ תַּחַת הַנָּעַר עֹבֵד לַאֲדֹנָי וְהַנָּעַר
יַעַל עִם־אֶחָיו:

So now, please let me, your servant, remain as a slave in place of the lad, and let the lad go back up with his brothers. (Bereshit 44:33)

Yehuda offers himself in place of Binyamin. This seems like a simple substitution, but for Yehuda it represents a deep act of *teshuva*. The Rambam defines complete repentance as being in the same situation yet acting differently. Once, Yehuda had initiated the sale of a brother into slavery; now, faced with the same test, he refuses to repeat his mistake. Rather than selling a brother, he is prepared to sell himself. This act of self-sacrifice marks Yehuda's spiritual transformation.

Second, Yehuda articulates a new understanding of his father's pain:

וַיֹּאמֶר עֲבָדְךָ אֲבִי אֵלֵינוּ אַתֶּם יְדַעְתֶּם כִּי שְׁנִים
יִלְדָה־לִּי אִשְׁתִּי:

Your servant, my father, then said to us, You well know that my wife Rachel bore me two sons. (Bereshit 4:27).

In referencing Rachel as *my wife*, Yehuda acknowledges something the brothers had long resisted — that Rachel was Yaakov's chosen

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partner, and her sons, Yosef and Binyamin, were especially beloved. This truth, once the source of the brothers' jealousy and strife, is now accepted with humility and clarity. Yehuda has moved beyond rivalry and resentment; he now empathizes with his father's love and his brother's status. In this moment, Yosef recognizes that the circle is complete. That the hatred that once divided them has healed and he can finally reveal himself.

Yehuda's greatness, then, lies not in his authority but in his **empathy**. He has learned to listen, to see the pain of others, and to take responsibility even at personal cost. That is true *malchut*. Leadership that serves, leadership born of humility and compassion.

Yosef's leadership sustained the world materially — he provided food for nations. But Yehuda's leadership nourished the soul. Yehuda restored broken hearts and repaired relationships. Yosef built the outer structure of survival; Yehuda built the inner world of connection and meaning.

THE HEART OF KINGSHIP

We are not kings in the formal sense, yet each of us is granted moments of leadership — within our families, communities, and workplaces. At times, we hold influence; at times, others look to us for guidance. In those moments, the Torah teaches us that true greatness does not lie in power, prestige, or control. It lies in Yehuda's courage to step forward, his humility to admit wrong, and his compassion to feel another's pain.

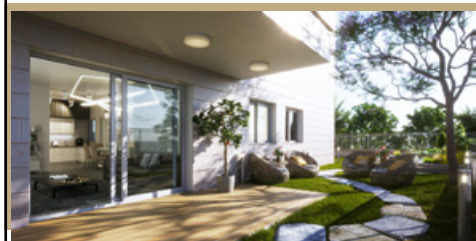
To lead, in the Torah's sense, is to serve — to sense what others need and to give of ourselves for their sake. That is the *malchut* we can all strive for: not the crown upon our heads, but the kindness in our hearts. May we merit to internalize both aspects of leadership — the strength of Yosef and the empathy of Yehuda. ■



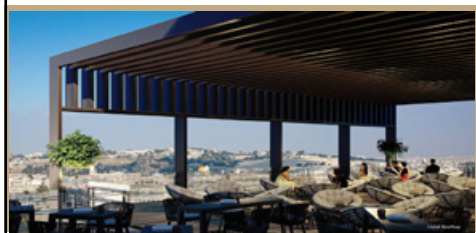
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