

(24) “It was when we went up to your servant, my father, and we told him the words of my lord;

(25) “[that] our father said, ‘Return [to Egypt], [and] buy us some food.’

(26) “Then we said, ‘We will be unable to go down, [but] if our youngest brother is with us, we will go down; for we will not [even] be permitted to see the face of the man [in charge of the food distribution] if our youngest brother is not with us.’

(27) “Then your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two [sons].

(28) “‘The one¹⁵ went forth from [being] with me and I said, “He has surely been torn to pieces,” and I have not seen him since then.

(29) “‘If you would take away also this one from near my presence¹⁶ and he would meet with disaster, you will bring down my old age to the grave in an evil way.’”

Answer to
Question 4

intentions are to take the boy [for your own immoral purposes].”
[This answers Question 4.]¹⁴

YEHUDAH DESCRIBES YAAKOV'S REACTION TO YOSEF'S ACCUSATIONS

Let us consider the following questions:

1. In verse 24, why does Yehudah choose the word *וַנִּגְדֶּה*, *we told*, instead of the more common *וַנֹּאמֶר*, *we said*?

14. Although the Alshich does not say so, we may suggest that Yehudah's suspicions about Yosef's immoral motives regarding Binyamin would also serve to explain why Yehudah got angry and approached Yosef to protest only after Yosef reduced the family's punishment and said that Binyamin alone would remain as his slave (see Alshich above, 44:18–23, Question 1a).

15. Referring to Yosef. The Alshich explains that the reason Yaakov referred to Yosef as *הָאֶחָד*, *the one*, rather than as *הָרֵאשִׁוֹן*, *the first [son to be lost to him]*, was that at the time he lost Yosef, he still had Binyamin (Rachel's second son). It would not make sense to speak of a “first” being lost if it had not yet happened to a “second.”

16. Translation follows Alshich.

- (כד) וַיְהִי כִּי עָלִינוּ אֶל-עַבְדֶּךָ אָבִי וַנְּגַד-לוֹ אֵת דְּבַרֵי אֲדֹנָי.
- (כה) וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִינוּ שָׁבוּ שִׁבְרוּ-לָנוּ מִעֵט-אֶכָּל.
- (כו) וַנֹּאמֶר לֹא נוֹכַל לָרֶדֶת אִם-יֵשׁ אַחִינוּ הַקֶּטָן אֲתָנוּ וַיְרַדְנוּ כִּי-לֹא נוֹכַל לָרְאוֹת פְּנֵי הָאִישׁ וְאַחִינוּ הַקֶּטָן אֵינָנו אֲתָנוּ.
- (כז) וַיֹּאמֶר עַבְדֶּךָ אָבִי אֵלֵינוּ אַתֶּם יִדְעֶתֶם כִּי שְׁנַיִם יְלָדָה-לִּי אִשְׁתִּי.
- (כח) וַיֵּצֵא הָאֶחָד מֵאֲתֵי וַאֲמַר אֶף טָרֶף טָרֶף וְלֹא רָאִיתִי עַד-הַנֶּה.
- (כט) וּלְקַחְתֶּם גַּם-אֶת-זֶה מִעִם פְּנֵי וְקָרְהוּ אֶסוֹן וְהוֹרְדֶתֶם אֶת-שִׁיבְתֵי בְרַעְיָה שְׂאֵלָה.

2. The Hebrew word אַת usually implies an inclusion of something that is not explicitly stated.¹⁷ What is the implication of the word אַת in this verse?
3. Yaakov seems to have ignored Yehudah's recounting of the viceroy's accusations against them.¹⁸ Why did Yaakov say nothing about these accusations?
4. Why did Yehudah repeat (in verse 26) that he told his father that the viceroy had forbidden them to return without their younger brother, when he had already stated (in verse 24) that he had told Yaakov all that Yosef had said?
5. Why does Yehudah mention that Yaakov had brought up Yosef's disappearance, and Yaakov's reaction to it?
6. Why did Yaakov tell the brothers that if something happens to Binyamin they would bring him down to the grave? Would it not be the viceroy's fault rather than theirs? And what point is Yehudah making by telling this to the viceroy?

17. This is understandable in light of the fact that אַת also means "with."

18. The only part Yaakov **did** respond to was the fact that the money the brothers had paid for their food had been returned to them; Yaakov told them to bring double payment to Egypt the next time they went.

7. In describing the last time he saw Yosef, Yaakov said, *“The one went forth from me...”* But with regard to Binyamin’s leaving he said, *“If you would take away this one from near my presence...”* What is the significance of the change in verbs (from *“one went forth”* to *“you would take away”*)?
8. Why did Yaakov say that Yosef had been taken *מֵאִתִּי*, *from [being] with me*, instead of using the more common expression, *מִמֶּנִּי*, *from me*? And why does he then describe Binyamin’s potential disappearance as being *פְּנֵי מֵעַם פְּנֵי*, *from near my presence*?
9. In verse 29 Yaakov is quoted as having said: *וְלִקְחֶתֶם גַּם זֶה*, *If you would take away also this one* (Binyamin). Why was this not said more concisely, *וְלִקְחֶתֶם זֶה*, *If you would take away this one*?

Yehudah felt that the viceroy might think the brothers had not given their father a complete report of what had transpired between himself and the brothers. Perhaps they had not mentioned the accusation that they were spies, or that their money had been placed in their sacks and that they could thus be accused of having stolen it — either accusation of which could carry a death sentence — but had told their father only that the viceroy had asked whether they had a father or brother. Therefore, Yehudah told Yosef that they had not merely “said” to their father (i.e., briefly) what had occurred, they had “told” him every word that had passed between them.¹⁹ Yehudah reiterated this point by adding the word *אָת* to his words. [This answers Questions 1 and 2.]

Yehudah then reported to the viceroy that their father’s sole response to everything they had told him was, *“Return [to Egypt],*

Answer to
Questions
1 and 2

19. The Alshich writes that the root *הגד* implies speaking at length.

[and] buy us some food” (verse 43:2). Yaakov’s lack of reaction to the viceroy’s accusations implied that he thought of them as empty foolishness, unworthy of any response. [This answers Question 3.]

Answer to
Question 3

Yehudah then told the viceroy that the fact that his father reacted with such indifference — despite the fact that a father deeply feels his children’s troubles and tends to exaggerate their severity, not minimize them — made him and his brothers realize that they were not in danger. Nevertheless, the brothers repeated to their father that they could not go down to Egypt to buy grain; not because they feared the consequences of Yosef’s deciding they were spies, but because Yosef had instructed his guards not to admit them into his presence (to buy food) unless they brought their youngest brother with them (see verse 23). [This answers Question 4.]

Answer to
Question 4

Yehudah then recounted how Yaakov had opposed bringing Binyamin to Egypt, telling his sons that if something were to happen to Binyamin, “*you will bring down my old age to the grave in an evil way*” — in other words, Yaakov said that he would blame his sons for putting Binyamin in danger, for they were doing so for no reason. He would not blame the viceroy, for it was obvious to him that Yosef was not serious when he said they must bring Binyamin to Egypt to prove they were not spies! Yehudah’s point in saying this was to show the great onus that rested on the brothers to ensure that Binyamin returned home safely. [This answers Question 6.]

Answer to
Question 6

Yehudah quoted his father’s words, “*You know that my wife bore me two sons*” (verse 27), as intimating that since they (Yaakov’s sons) knew that his favorite wife (Rachel)²⁰ bore him two sons (Yosef and Binyamin), and the loss of one of them had caused him

20. The fact that Yaakov referred to Rachel as “my wife” without specifying further (for, after all, he had four wives) indicates that he regarded her as his main wife.

Chapter
44

(29) “If you would take away also this one from near my presence²³ and he would meet with disaster, you will bring down my old age to the grave in an evil way.”

Answer to
Question 5

incalculable grief, they should have realized how much greater would be his grief if any calamity would befall her second and only remaining son (see further). [This answers Question 5.]

Yaakov’s next words provided three reasons why Binyamin was particularly susceptible to harm — even more than Yosef had been when he had disappeared — by contrasting his situation with Yosef’s:

Answer to
Question 7

(1) Yosef had not been wrested from his father’s hands by force. Rather, *the one* (Yosef) *went forth* of his own volition.²¹ Binyamin would be taken by his brothers against his will (as Yehudah said, “If you would **take away** also this one”). [This answers Question 7.]

(2) Yosef’s disappearance had been the one and only visitation of God’s *Middas HaDin* (Attribute of Strict Justice) upon any of Rachel’s children. Binyamin’s disappearance would be the second time (as Yehudah said, “If you would take away **also** this one”).

Answer to
Question 8

(3) Yosef had intended merely to go away for a short distance (מֵאִתִּי, *from [being] with me*). Binyamin was going to be taken far away (מֵעִם פָּנָי, *from [anything that is] near my presence*). [This answers Question 8.]

As Yehudah told the viceroy, Yaakov then concluded: Should Binyamin meet with disaster, he would not merely “go down to the grave in **mourning**” (as he said he would when Yosef disappeared),²² he would suffer far more: he would “go down to the grave in **an evil way**.”

As to why Yaakov said הֲוֹ אֶת גַּם אֲנִי instead of just saying הֲוֹ (*this*

21. With the intention of seeing how his brothers were faring.

22. See Bereishis 37:35.

(כט) וּלְקַחְתֶּם גַּם־אֶת־זֶה מֵעַם פְּנֵי יַקְרָהוּ אֶסּוֹן וְהוֹרְדִתֶם אֹת־
שִׁיבְתֵי בְרָעָה שְׂאֵלָה.

one) (Question 9), the words גַּם and אֶת are both words of inclusion: גַּם means *also*, and as mentioned above, אֶת is always understood by the Sages as coming to include something not mentioned explicitly in the text. While הָּ refers to Binyamin, the addition of the words גַּם and אֶת indicates that Yaakov was speaking also of two people besides Binyamin: namely, Shimon and Yosef. To explain:

Recall that when the brothers returned from their first trip to Egypt, they told Yaakov that the viceroy had kept Shimon as a hostage to ensure that they would return with Binyamin. Then they emptied their sacks and saw that each man's money bag had been returned to him. At that point Yaakov began to suspect that none of what his sons told him was true. He said, "You have bereaved me: Yosef is not [with me]; Shimon is not [with me]; and [now] you want to take away Binyamin!" (42:36). He told them that it was impossible to believe, especially during a great famine, that they could purchase ten donkey-loads of grain and the Egyptians would not take their money. As such, they must have bartered Shimon in exchange for the grain! Since they were capable of selling their brother for food, he now suspected that Yosef had not really been attacked by a wild animal, as they had said; rather, they had sold Yosef, just as they sold Shimon. Yaakov was therefore accusing them as follows: "You have bereaved me: Yosef is not with me, because you have sold him; Shimon is not with me, because you have sold him; and now you want to take Binyamin and sell him, too!" [This answers Question 9.]

Answer to
Question 9

23. Translation follows Alshich. Note that this *pasuk* is Yehudah's quote of what Yaakov had said, while what follows are Yehudah's own words.