

# ALSHICH

## INSIGHTS FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

ספר בראשית

פרשת ויגש

SERIES 1: ISSUE 11

### YEHUDA'S FIRST APPROACH TO THE VICEROY

#### Chapter 44

**16)** Yehuda said, "What can we say to [you] my lord? What can we tell [you]? How can we defend our righteousness [before you]? God has uncovered the sin of your servants. We are ready to be slaves to my lord – both we and the one in whose hand the goblet was found."

**17)** He said, "It would be profane for me to do this. The person in whose hand the cup has been found, he [alone] shall become my servant; but [the rest of] you shall go in peace to your father."

**18)** Then Yehuda approached him and said, "Please, my master, may your servant speak a word in my lord's ears and let your anger not flare up against your servant – for you are like Pharaoh."

(טז) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה מֶה־נֹּאמַר לְאֲדֹנָי מֶה־נִּדְבַר וּמֶה־נִּצְטַדֵּק הָאֱלֹהִים מִצָּא אֶת עֹן עֲבָדֶיךָ הִנְנוּ עֲבָדִים לְאֲדֹנָי גַּם־אֲנַחְנוּ גַּם אֲשֶׁר־נִמְצָא הַגְּבִיעַ בְּיָדוֹ.

(יז) וַיֹּאמֶר חֲלִילָה לִּי מַעֲשׂוֹת זֹאת הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר נִמְצָא הַגְּבִיעַ בְּיָדוֹ הוּא יִהְיֶה־לִּי עֶבֶד וְאַתֶּם עָלוּ לְשָׁלוֹם אֶל־אֲבִיכֶם.

(יח) וַיִּגַּשׁ אֵלָיו יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר בִּי אֲדֹנָי יְדַבֵּר נָא עִבְדְּךָ דָּבָר בְּאָזְנֵי אֲדֹנָי וְאַל יַחַר אַפְךָ בְּעִבְדְּךָ כִּי כִמוֹךָ כִּפְרָעָה.

#### Consider the following questions:

- When Binyamin is caught with Yosef's goblet, Yehuda tells Yosef that as their punishment, all the brothers would become Yosef's slaves (verse 16).
  - Why is it that Yehuda gets angry (as the term וַיִּגַּשׁ means that Yehuda *approached* Yosef "for battle") and comes to protest after Yosef reduces the punishment and says that only Binyamin would remain as his slave (verse 17)?
  - Why doesn't Yehuda present his many arguments for clemency (verses 18–34) **before** offering Yosef that all the brothers would become his slaves?
- Verse 16 states: *We are ready to be slaves to my lord – both we and the one in whose hand the goblet was found* (i.e., Binyamin).
  - Why does Yehuda mention the other brothers ("we") before Binyamin? It would have made more sense to mention Binyamin first, since he was really the "guilty" party.
  - The words *גַּם אֲנַחְנוּ גַּם אֲשֶׁר נִמְצָא הַגְּבִיעַ בְּיָדוֹ* literally mean: **also** we, **also** the one in whose hand the goblet was found. What do these repetitions of the word *גַּם* come to include?
- What is verse 18 pointing out when it says that Yehuda *approached* Yosef? And what does Yehuda mean by saying that he wishes to speak a word in my lord's ear?
- What is the meaning of the phrase *בִּי אֲדֹנָי* (lit., *in me, my master*)? If Yehuda was really saying, "Please, my master" (which is what this phrase **seems** to mean), he should have said "נָא אֲדֹנָי."

Yehuda thinks that the whole matter of the silver cup and the viceroy's subsequent actions is a punishment from Hashem for the brothers having sold Yosef so many years earlier – a punishment he feels is deserved and that he is prepared to accept. Thus, he tells Yosef (verse 44:16), "God has uncovered the sin of your servants. We are ready to be slaves to

my lord.” He offers that all the brothers be enslaved, and does not even try to argue.

**[This answers Question 1b.]**

Moreover, Yehuda wanted all the brothers to do *teshuvah*, i.e., even those who were not directly involved in Yosef’s sale. The phrase **גַּם אֶנְחֵנוּ** thus comes to include Reuven, for although he had not been there when Yosef was sold, he was the one who had said to throw him into a pit; even though his intention had been to save him, he arguably deserved some punishment for this. Meanwhile, the second **גַּם** (**גַּם אֲשֶׁר נִמְצָא הַגְּבִיעַ בְּיָדוֹ**) means, “and even Binyamin,” who did even less than Reuven with regard to harming Yosef. **[This answers Question 2b.]** Since the other brothers are the main ones who deserve punishment, however, Yehuda mentions them (**גַּם אֶנְחֵנוּ**) before mentioning Binyamin. **[This answers Question 2a.]**

However, when Yosef says he’s only going to keep Binyamin as a slave and not the other brothers (verse 44:16), Yehuda realizes that the viceroy’s decree is **not** a punishment from Hashem; rather, it is the viceroy’s own idea, stemming from his own free will. That is why it is at this point, in the beginning of our *parashah*, that Yehuda starts arguing with Yosef. **[This answers Question 1a.]** In addition, he wanted to speak to him directly (“*in my lord’s ears*”), without an interpreter. He therefore *approached* him, standing where the interpreter had been standing until that point. **[This answers Question 3.]**

Yehuda now tells the viceroy his thought process, to explain why he is suddenly protesting. “I offered earlier, without protest, that we would all be your slaves, because I believed this was our due punishment for having sold our brother. But now you are threatening to take Binyamin and **not** us?! **בִּי אֲדֹנָי** (literally, [*the sin is*] in me, my master); I am the main one responsible for selling our brother” and, as he says during his subsequent speech (in verse 33), “*Let me be your slave in place of Binyamin, and let him go back to Canaan with his brothers.*” **[This answers Question 4.]**

### THE ALSHICH AND HIS COMMENTARY

The Alshich (1508–1600), was one of only five famous rabbis in Jewish history universally known by the title “HaKadosh” (the holy one). He served on the same Beis Din as Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of the Shulchan Aruch. The Alshich is most noted for his monumental Tanach commentary.

The Alshich uses his creative insight and encyclopaedic knowledge of Tanach, Talmud, and Midrash to weave together his profound interpretations. He simultaneously focuses on the text as well as the context of a series of verses by listing a range of questions and then answering them all with one or two concepts.

These sheets, distributed in memory of Yental *bas* Yitzchok, have been drawn from either the Alshich on Avos or Alshich on the Torah, published by Feldheim. They seek to expand the spectrum of readers who can appreciate the Alshich’s true greatness.

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