

YEHUDAH'S FIRST APPROACH TO THE VICEROY

Chapter 44

16) *Yehudah 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 Yehudah 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) ויאמר יהודה מה נאמר לאדני מה נדבר ומה נצטדק האלהים מצא את עון עבדיך הננו עבדים לאדני גם אנחנו גם אשר נמצא הגביע בידו.

יז) ויאמר חלילה לי מעשות זאת האיש אשר נמצא הגביע בידו הוא יהיה לי עבד ואתם עלו לשלום אל אביכם.

יח) ויגש אליו יהודה ויאמר בי אדני ידבר נא עבדך דבר באזני אדני ואל יחר אפך בעבדך כי כמוך כפרעה.

Consider the following questions:

- At the end of Parashas Mikeitz, when Binyamin is caught with Yosef's goblet, Yehudah tells Yosef that as their punishment, all the brothers would become Yosef's slaves (verse 16).
 - Why is it that Yehudah gets angry and approaches Yosef to protest after Yosef reduces the punishment and says that only Binyamin would remain as his slave (verse 17)?
 - Why doesn't Yehudah present his many arguments for clemency (in verses 18–34 of Parashas Vayigash) **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 Yehudah 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 גם אנחנו גם אשר נמצא הגביע בידו literally mean: **also** we, **also** the one in whose hand the goblet was found. What do these repetitions of the word גם come to include?
- What is verse 18 pointing out when it says that Yehudah approached Yosef? And what does Yehudah mean by saying that he wishes to *speak* a word in my lord's ear?
- What is the meaning of the phrase בי אדני (lit., *in me, my master*)? If Yehudah was really saying, "Please, my master" (which is what this phrase seems to mean), he should have said נא אדני.

Yehudah 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, Yehudah wanted all the brothers to do teshuvah, i.e., even those who were not directly involved in Yosef’s sale. The phrase **גַּם אֶנְחֵנוּ** 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. However, even though his intention had been to save Yosef, he arguably deserved some punishment for his actions. Meanwhile, the second **גַּם (אֲשֶׁר נִמְצָא הַגִּבִּיעַ 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, Yehudah mentions them (**גַּם אֶנְחֵנוּ**) before mentioning Binyamin. **[This answers Question 2a.]**

However, when Yosef says he is only going to keep Binyamin as a slave and not the other brothers, Yehudah 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 Yehudah 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 (see 42:23 above). He therefore *approached him*, standing where the interpreter had been standing until that point. **[This answers Question 3.]**

Yehudah 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 (as stated in *Bereishis* 37:26–27). **וְעַתָּה יֹשֵׁב נָא עַבְדְּךָ תַּחַת הַנֶּעֱר עַבֵּד לְאֲדֹנָי וְהַנֶּעֱר יָחִי עִם אָחָיו** – 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 “HaKodosh” (the Holy one). He served on the same Beis Din as Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of the Shulchan Aruch. He simultaneously focuses on both the text as well as the context of a series of verses by listing a range of questions and then answering them all using one or two concepts.

These sheets are drawn from the Alshich on the Torah published by Feldheim and are in memory of Yental Bas Yitzchok, Mrs Jean Silkin. They seek to expand the spectrum of readers who can appreciate the Alshich’s true greatness.