

Genesis 44:18 *Then Judah approached him and said, "If you please, my lord, may your servant speak a word in my lord's ears and let not your anger flare up at your servant — for you are like Pharaoh. ¹⁹ My lord has asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or brother?' ²⁰ And we said to my lord, 'We have an old father and a young child of (his) old age; his brother is dead...*

1. "Then Judah approached him and said."

¹The word which expresses the action of approaching someone, is used in three different senses. It can mean:

- to come forward for presenting a case for judgment (*Deuteronomy 25:1*);
- to appease an adversary (*Joshua 14:6*); or else
- to engage in battle (*II Samuel 10:13*).

Rashi

As he came forward, Judah resolved to achieve his goal using these three means:

- pleas and arguments for Benjamin, words of appeasement — *let not your anger flare up at your servant*
- *for you are like Pharaoh* and battle — *If you anger me, I will kill you and your master.*

R' Bachya stresses, however, that Judah first resorted to appeasement as his long speech bears out. He thus acted in conformity with the recommendation in Proverbs: *A reply full of gentleness turns away anger; a wounding word stirs up rage* (15:1).

This view is brought out also in the *Midrash Tanchuma*: to Judah's rhetorical prowess it applies the verse from Proverbs: *Like deep water is the counsel in the heart of man: but the wise man knows how to draw it out* (20:5). This, explains the Midrash, is to be compared to **a well so deep that no one can draw water from it**. Then along comes **a man who ties ropes together and joins pails together until the water at the bottom of the well can be drawn up**. So the secret thought which dwelt deep in Joseph's heart appeared impenetrable to the ten brothers. But thanks to his keen psychological insight, Judah knew **"how to go down into the depths of Joseph's thinking"**. He was able to touch Joseph's heartstrings when he described so poignantly the terrible suffering which his father would endure were Benjamin not to return. And so he succeeded in overcoming Joseph's cold reserve. As intelligent as Joseph was, concludes our Sages, Judah nevertheless gained the upper hand.

2. "May your servant speak a word."

Ramban notes that he does not know why Judah spoke at such length to recount what had previously taken place between them. Nor does *Rashi's* answer seem to satisfy him. It makes mention of Judah's criticism of Joseph:

"You act like Pharaoh, you promise something and do not keep your word. You had told us that you wanted 'to set an eye upon Benjamin.' Is this what you call 'setting eyes upon' someone?"

¹ Commentary by Rabbi Elie Munk, *The Call of the Torah: An Anthology of Interpretation and Commentary on the Five Books of Moses*, Bereishis. Vayigash. p582. © 1994 Mesorah Publications, Ltd.

Judah's lengthy speech was then just the development of this criticism. *Ramban* holds, on the other hand, that Judah was only endeavoring to stir up pity for Benjamin by playing on Joseph's "fear of God" as revealed by his words (42:18) and deeds (43:23).

Genesis 42:18 *On the third day Joseph said to them, "Do this and you shall live, for I am a God-fearing man..."*

Genesis 43:23 *"... All is well with you; do not be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, must have put treasure in your bags for you. I got your payment."*

Rashi

And so he (Judah) pointed out that Benjamin's coming to Egypt was only due to Joseph's exaggerated demand and it had taken place against the will of their broken-hearted father. Was it right to seize Benjamin and keep him as a slave just because of a trick? "You have tried to pick a quarrel with us. Why did you ask us all these questions (which you did not ask any of the other buyers)? Were we asking for your daughter, or did you want our sister?."

Midrash

"Then spare our aged father," says Judah, "and enslave me instead of Benjamin, and you will have acted fairly." Thus, pursuing his previously mentioned aim, Judah goes with consummate skill from sentimental arguments to scarcely concealed reproach, from appeals to Joseph's sense of justice and his piety right to veiled threats which thunder in the furious tone of his voice.

3. "And let not your anger flare up."

Rashi

From this you can conclude that he spoke to him harshly. To the **verbal duel being fought here between the lion (referring to Judah, cf. 49:9) and the ox (Joseph, Deuteronomy 33:17)...**

Genesis 49:9 *Judah is a lion's whelp; On prey, my son, have you grown. He crouches, lies down like a lion, Like the king of beasts—who dare rouse him?*

Deuteronomy 33:17 *Like a firstling bull in his majesty, he has thorns like the horns of the wild-ox; with them he gores the peoples, The ends of the earth one and all. These are the myriads of Ephraim, those are the thousands of Manasseh.*

The Zohar applies the verse of Psalms (48:5): *For behold the kings assembled, they came together.* It interprets it thus:

Here are the kings meeting face to face (Judah and Joseph were the two principal leaders among the brothers): they are both enraged; they (the others) see them and are struck with perplexity, dread seizes them... anguish takes hold of them. They tremble with fear, continues the Zohar, that they will have to kill or be killed.

But the confrontation of the two giants turned out for the best. For **the establishment of harmony within the family and in society is conditioned by the union of temporal power (represented by Judah, the father of the royal tribe) and spiritual power (represented by the righteous Joseph).** Indeed, no source of blessing is more beneficial to man than that which emanates from the alliance of royalty and the fear of God. Accordingly, the introductory

verse of this section, announcing that Judah comes forward to confront Joseph, **marks an auspicious turning point in the evolution of history.**

R Yonasan adds: The angels themselves descended from heaven to be present at the furious combat between **"the lion and the ox."** In most battles, they said, the ox stands in fear of the lion, but **this battle will not cease until the Messiah comes**, as the prophet Isaiah declares concerning the coming of the Redeemer: ***Then will end the rivalry of Ephraim (representative of the descendants of Joseph), and the hatred of Judah will disappear; Ephraim will no longer be jealous of Judah, and Judah will no longer be hostile to Ephraim*** (11:13 – *Tanchuma*).

Seen in historical perspective, the reconciliation of the two brothers taking place here did not survive the test of time. When the Jewish kingdom was divided into two opposing groups after King Solomon's death, one was called Judah, the other Ephraim. As for Benjamin, he remained ever loyal to Judah, his great protector, and never rallied to the side of Joseph's children, Ephraim and Manasseh, just as Joseph had painfully foreseen (cf. our commentary on 43:29).

Genesis 43:16 *Joseph saw Benjamin with them...* ²⁹ *He lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin...*

Zohar

Why were his emotions so affected now that he felt the need to cry? It is because he now had a vision of the future which he had not had at first. The text marks this difference by adding the words *"he lifted up his eyes"* whereas in verse 16 it had said only "Joseph saw Benjamin was with them." Joseph saw in his vision that Benjamin would always remain at the side of his brother Judah, his great protector. This union was sealed for all time the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin formed an indissoluble partnership, but the two tribes issuing from Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, were to have no share in this sacred union. When he saw Benjamin was with his brothers instead of with him and his children, **Jospeh was powerless to hold back his tears.**

*Book of Legends Sefer Ha-Aggadah (Talmud and Midrash)*²

... In saying, "My lord asked his servants," etc. (Gen. 44:19), Judah argued with Joseph: "From the very beginning, you intended to frame us. From how many countries have people come to Egypt to buy food? Did you ask any of them the kinds of questions you asked us, as though we had come to wed your daughter or you to wed our sister? Nevertheless, we concealed nothing from you."

Joseph retorted, "Judah, why do you act as spokesman for your brothers, when I see in the goblet that you have brothers older than you?"

Judah replied, "My brothers bear no responsibility for Benjamin, whereas I — my innards — are twisted like a rope with anguish."

Joseph: "Why?"

Judah: "Because I stood surety for him."

Joseph: "Why did you not feel it necessary to stand surety for your other brother at the time you sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver and inflicted pain upon your aged

² The Book of Legends Sefer Ha-Aggadah. Legends from the Talmud and Midrash. Edited by Hayim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky. Translated by William G. Braude. © 1992. 55:107.

father by telling him that 'without doubt Joseph has been torn in pieces by a beast of prey' (Gen. 37:33)? That brother did no harm to you, while this one sinned, for he stole the goblet. So tell your father, '**The rope has followed the bucket into the well.**'

"When Judah heard this, he broke out into sobs and cried in a loud voice, "How shall I go up to my father, if the lad be not with me?" (Gen.44:34).

Then Joseph said, "Come, let us discuss the matter calmly. State what you have in mind and set forth your plea in an orderly fashion."

At that, Judah said to Naphtali [in an aside], "Go and see how many districts there are in Egypt."

Naphtali leaped out, " bounded back, and reported, *Twelve."

Judah then said to his brothers, "I will smash three of them, each of you will take one, and we shall not leave a man alive among them."

His brothers replied, "Judah, Egypt is not Shechem. If you destroy Egypt, you destroy the whole world."

At this, "**Joseph could not refrain himself . . and he cried...**

John 4:7 **A woman from Samaria came to draw water.** Yeshua said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸ (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ¹⁰ Yeshua answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." ¹¹ The woman said to him, "**Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?**" ¹² **Are you greater than our father Jacob?** He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." ¹³ Yeshua said to her, "**Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.** The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

Isaiah 11:13 *Then Ephraim's envy shall cease and Judah's harassment shall end; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.*

Ezekiel 37:15 *The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁶And you, O mortal, take a stick and write on it, "Of Judah and the Israelites associated with him"; and take another stick and write on it, "Of Joseph—the stick of Ephraim—and all the House of Israel associated with him." ¹⁷**Bring them close to each other, so that they become one stick,** joined together in your hand. ¹⁸And when any of your people ask you, "Won't you tell us what these actions of yours mean?" ¹⁹answer them, "Thus said the LORD God: **I am going to take the stick of Joseph**—which is in the hand of Ephraim—and of the tribes of Israel associated with him, and I will place **the stick of Judah** upon it and make them into one stick; they shall be joined in My hand." ²⁰You shall hold up before their eyes the sticks which you have inscribed, ²¹and you shall declare to them: Thus said the LORD God: I am going to take the Israelite people from among the nations they have gone to, and gather them from every quarter, and bring them to their own land. ²²**I will make them a single nation in the land, on the hills of Israel,***

and one king shall be king of them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms. ²³Nor shall they ever again defile themselves by their fetishes and their abhorrent things, and by their other transgressions. I will save them in all their settlements where they sinned, and I will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

²⁴**My servant David shall be king over them; there shall be one shepherd for all of them.** They shall follow My rules and faithfully obey My laws. ²⁵Thus they shall remain in the land which I gave to My servant Jacob and in which your fathers dwelt; they and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, with **My servant David as their prince for all time.** ²⁶I will make a covenant of friendship with them—it shall be an everlasting covenant with them—I will establish them and multiply them, and **I will place My Sanctuary among them forever.** ²⁷**My Presence shall rest over them;** I will be their God and they shall be My people. ²⁸And when My Sanctuary abides among them forever, the nations shall know that **I the LORD do sanctify Israel.**

Luke 1:67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, ⁶⁸ “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people ⁶⁹ and has raised up a horn of salvation for us **in the house of his servant David,** ⁷⁰ as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old...

Matthew 2:6 And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least **among the rulers of Judah;** for from you shall come **a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.**

Matthew 23:37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! **How often would I have gathered your children together** as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁸ See, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.**’”

Luke 2:25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the LORD's Messiah. ²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Yeshua, to do for him according to the custom of the Torah, ²⁸ he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

²⁹ “LORD, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰ for my eyes have **seen your salvation** ³¹ that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² **a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.**”

Luke 19:41 And when he drew near and saw the city, **he wept over it,** ⁴² saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that **make for peace!**

John 10:14 **I am the good shepherd...** ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. **So there will be one flock, one shepherd.**

Acts 2:29 “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would **set one of his descendants on his throne**, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Yeshua God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. ³⁴ For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, ³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.” ³⁶ Let **all the house of Israel** therefore know for certain that God has made him **both Lord and Messiah, this Yeshua** whom you crucified.”

Revelation 7:17 *For the Lamb in the midst of the throne **will be their shepherd**, and he will **guide them to springs of living water**, and God will **wipe away every tear from their eyes**.*”