

GREAT FOR SHARING  
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

PARSHAS  
VAYIGASH

# בשבת

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## ALWAYS ROOM FOR MORE

The house of Yaakov was bustling and lively. The news had just broken — Yosef was still alive, and moreover, he was a ruler in Egypt! At Yosef's request, Yaakov and his family were preparing to join Yosef. But before they could go, some groundwork had to be arranged.

Yaakov sent Yehuda ahead of the family to make some sort of preparation.<sup>1</sup> What, specifically, was the nature of this mission? The *Medrash*<sup>2</sup> explains that Yehuda was charged with opening a *Beis Medrash*, a place where the *Bnei Yisrael* would be able to learn and teach Torah.

Why Yehuda? Why not any of the other *Shevatim*? Better yet, this very *Medrash* points to Yosef's Torah erudition — why not simply use the *Beis Medrash* of Yosef, and not bother Yehuda? The *Maharzu*<sup>3</sup> (Reb Zev Wolf Einhorn, 17??–1862) explains that it can be assumed that Yehuda, as the natural leader, was greater in his Torah wisdom than his brothers, therefore he was chosen as the *Rosh HaYeshiva*.

Upon reflection, this *Medrash* is astounding. Yes, Yehuda may have been greater than all of his brothers, but by how much? No doubt, every one of the *Shevatim* were learned and intelligent to the greatest degree. Yosef, for example, amazed Pharaoh with his acumen, to the point where Pharaoh testified there was no one as wise as Yosef in the entire Egypt. Yehuda's prowess may have been noticeable, but the other *Shevatim* were certainly not fools.

Additionally, what would have been lost had Yehuda travelled with the rest of the family? How long would it have taken him to set up a yeshiva? A week? A month? And during that time, the rest of the *Bnei Yisrael* would certainly have been studying, just not under his tutelage. All in all, it would appear that the advantage of Yehuda's early travel was slight, almost negligible. Nevertheless, Yaakov felt it important that Yehuda go, for every nuance and additional depth of Torah study is gold.

But there is another, perhaps deeper, lesson here. All of these nuances, subtleties, and profundities can fit into a human being. One would think that the *Shevatim* were 'saturated,' that it would not have made any impact had they learned with Yehuda, or anyone else. Yet we see the greatness of the human being — there's always more room for spiritual growth.

1 *Bereishis* 46:28

2 *Bereishis Rabbah* 95:3

3 *ibid.* s.v. בית וועד

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### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

There are so many *Chazal* that discuss the importance and value of each individual.<sup>1</sup>

However, unfortunately, there are times where a person may feel incompetent or ineffective. Inspiring words are nice, but is there a way to truly feel capable, let alone superpowered?

Our brains play funny tricks on us, and convince us of things based on a few experiences.

The key is to remind ourselves of those times we had difficulties and persevered despite the challenge.

A commonly overlooked scenario — as a child, it was so difficult to read and write. First, one had to learn the letters and their sounds. Then one had to learn how to hold a pencil, create the shape, then string the letters together, study the spelling, and so on. Yet, once older, most people are capable of reading and writing without a thought.<sup>2</sup>

When we remind ourselves of our capabilities, we will end up doing wonders.

1 *Sanhedrin* 37a, *Shabbos* 105b,

*Sanhedrin* 90a, etc.

2 *Ohr Yisrael*, Letter 6

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**If possible, it is very beneficial if a Rebbi learns a bit of Mussar on his own before beginning to teach. In this way...he himself will be able to serve as an example!** - Rav A. Y. L. Shteinman zt"l, *Leading with Love* pg. 231

# THE REMARKABLE POWER OF THE SOUL

Rabbi Turner\* signaled the end of his *halachah shiur* by closing the *sefer* in front of him. “Well, that’s it for this evening. I hope to see you all back next week. One last point — I recognize that the topic we are learning is very complicated. I, myself, find this to be very difficult, and I am afraid that it might come across unclear. I hope, as the weeks progress, to have more clarity, and to share that with you. Have a good night.”

The *shiur* was indeed complex, and it bothered Rabbi Binyomin Turner that he didn’t have a solid grasp of the material. He knew that if he had the material down, it would be that much easier to properly explain it to others.

As he was writing up his notes later that evening, Rabbi Turner received a call from Josh Cohen. Josh did not grow up observant, but that was ancient history now. Josh was one of the most vocal participants in the *shiur*, with intelligent questions and on point insights. Rabbi Turner answered the call and they were soon discussing and reviewing the various topics covered in the *shiur*.

“I hope that answered your questions, Josh. Were there any more?”

“No, rabbi. But I did want to address something else you said. I just wanted to mention that the *shiur* tonight was really excellent, came through quite clearly.”

“Thank you, Josh! I appreciate you saying that, I was nervous that the material came out garbled.”

“Not at all, and I wanted to really thank you. Not just for tonight, but for all of these *shiurim*. I never thought I would understand this world. It’s amazing to feel a level of comfort and unlock the mystery of it. I was in *yeshiva* for about four years, and I just couldn’t follow it! It’s been a long time dream of mine, twenty years, to crack the code. And now, thanks to you, I finally have some sort of grasp.”

Rabbi Turner couldn’t help but smile. “Josh, it really is very nice of you. I know you well enough to say that there is no doubt in my mind that it was not me. Every *shiur* you listened to that went over your head, every conversation that you couldn’t follow, and every sentence that you couldn’t read had an impact.

“And when you felt you couldn’t take it anymore, that you would never be ‘in the club,’ but you went back for more, that had an impact. Perhaps I helped in some way, but please give credit where credit is due. You, your indomitable soul, and your connection to Hashem is what helped you.

“Never underestimate the power of the human spirit.”

*\*Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- The power of the human is so remarkable that if not for a *passuk* informing us of Hashem’s great holiness, one would think a person can be just as sublime as Hashem!<sup>1</sup>
- The very first step in *avodas Hashem* is to recognize one’s self-worth.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Vayikrah Rabbah* 24:9

<sup>2</sup> *Shaarei Avodah of Rabbeinu Yonah*, Introduction

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