



10

VAYIGASH

DON'T TELL ME  
ANYTHING UNTIL I  
KNOW YOU CARE

*Joseph's Master Class in Effective  
Communication*

*Parsha*  
**Overview**  
*Vayigash*

Judah approaches Joseph to plead for the release of Benjamin, offering himself as a slave to the Egyptian ruler in Benjamin's stead. Upon witnessing his brothers' loyalty to one another, Joseph reveals his identity to them. "I am Joseph," he declares. "Is my father still alive?"

The brothers are overcome by shame and remorse, but Joseph comforts them. "It was not you who sent me here," he says to them, "but G-d. It has all been ordained from Above to save us, and the entire region, from famine."

The brothers rush back to Canaan

with the news. Jacob comes to Egypt with his sons and their families—seventy souls in all—and is reunited with his beloved son after twenty-two years. On his way to Egypt he receives the divine promise: "Fear not to go down to Egypt; for I will there make of you a great nation. I will go down with you into Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again." Joseph gathers the wealth of Egypt by selling food and seed during the famine. Pharaoh gives Jacob's family the fertile county of Goshen to settle, and the Children of Israel prosper in their Egyptian exile.



Yosef does not reveal himself to his brothers immediately.

*He first puts them through a series of trials.*

# TEXT 1A

BEREISHIT  
(GENESIS) 44:18

Then Judah approached him and said,  
“Please, my lord, let now your servant  
speak something into my lord’s ears, and  
let not your wrath be kindled against  
your servant, for you are like Pharaoh.”

וַיִּגַּשׁ אֵלָיו יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר  
בִּי אֲדֹנָי, יִדְבָר נָא  
עֲבֹדְךָ דְבַר בְּאָזְנֵי אֲדֹנָי,  
וְאַל יַחַר אַפְּךָ בְּעֲבָדְךָ,  
כִּי כַּמֹּזֶק כִּפְרָעָה:

# TEXT 1B

RASHI, BEREISHIT  
(GENESIS) 44:18

“And let not your wrath be kindled.” From here you learn that he spoke to him harshly.

"ואל יחר אפרך": מכאן  
אתה למד שדיבר אליו  
קשות.

# TEXT 2

BEREISHIT  
(GENESIS) 44:19–  
22; 33–34

19. My lord asked his servants, saying, “Have you a father or a brother?”

20. And we said to my lord, “We have an old father and a young child of his old age, and his brother is dead, and he is left alone of his mother, and his father loves him.

21. “And you said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me, and I will set my eye[s] upon him.’

22. “And we said to my lord, ‘The boy cannot leave his father, for if he leaves his father, he will die.’ . . .

23. “So now, please let your servant stay instead of the boy as a slave to my lord, and may the boy go up with his brothers.

24. “For how will I go up to my father if the boy is not with me? Let me not see the misery that will befall my father!”

יט. אָדְנִי שָׁאַל אֶת עַבְדֵּי לֵאמֹר,  
הֲיֵשׁ לָכֶם אָב אוֹ אָח:  
כ. וְנֹאמֶר אֶל אָדְנִי, יֵשׁ לָנוּ אָב זָקֵן  
וְיֶלֶד זָקֵנִים קָטָן, וְאָחִיו מֵת, וַיֹּתֵר  
הוּא לְבַדּוֹ לְאִמּוֹ, וְאָבִיו אֶהְבּוֹ:  
כא. וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל עַבְדֵּיהָ, הוֹרְדֵהוּ  
אֵלַי וְאֲשִׁימָה עֵינַי עָלָיו:  
כב. וְנֹאמֶר אֶל אָדְנִי, לֹא יוּכַל  
הַנֶּעֱר לְעִזְבֵּי אֶת אָבִיו, וְעִזְבֵּי אֶת  
אָבִיו וּמֵת: . . .  
לג. וְעַתָּה יֵשֶׁב נָא עַבְדְּךָ תַּחַת  
הַנֶּעֱר עֹבֵד לְאִדְנִי, וְהַנֶּעֱר יַעַל עִם  
אָחִיו:  
לד. כִּי אִיךָ אֶעֱלֶה אֶל אָבִי וְהַנֶּעֱר  
אֵינְנוּ אִתִּי, פֶּן אֶרְאֶה בְרַע אֲשֶׁר  
יִמָּצֵא אֶת אָבִי:

# TEXT

## 3

BEREISHIT  
(GENESIS) 45:1–4

1. Now Joseph could not bear all those standing beside him, and he called out, “Take everyone away from me!” So no one stood with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers.
2. And he wept out loud, so the Egyptians heard, and the house of Pharaoh heard.
3. And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him because they were startled by his presence.
4. Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Please come closer to me,” and they drew closer. And he said, “I am your brother Joseph whom you sold into Egypt.”

א. וְלֹא יָכַל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק לְכָל  
הַנִּצְבִּים עָלָיו, וַיִּקְרָא הוֹצִיאוּ כָּל  
אִישׁ מֵעָלָי, וְלֹא עָמַד אִישׁ אֶתוֹ  
בְּהִתְוֹדַע יוֹסֵף אֶל אָחָיו:  
ב. וַיִּתֵּן אֶת קִלּוֹ בְּבִכּוֹ, וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ  
מִצְרַיִם וַיִּשְׁמַע בֵּית פַּרְעֹה:  
ג. וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל אָחָיו, אֲנִי  
יוֹסֵף הָעוֹד אֲבִי חַי, וְלֹא יָכְלוּ  
אָחָיו לְעֲנוֹת אֹתוֹ כִּי נִבְהָלוּ  
מִפְנֵיו:  
ד. וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל אָחָיו גִּשׁוּ נָא  
אֵלַי, וַיִּגָּשׁוּ. וַיֹּאמֶר, אֲנִי יוֹסֵף  
אֲחֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר מְכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי  
מִצְרַיִמָּה:

# TEXT 4

RABBI YITZCHAK  
BEN YEHUDAH  
HALEVI, KITZUR  
PAANEI'ACH  
RAZA, BEREISHIT  
(GENESIS) 45:1–4

One can ask: [Why does Joseph ask, “Is my father still alive?”] if already prior to revealing himself to his brothers, he had inquired after their father’s welfare [so he obviously knew Jacob was still alive]?

קשה, הרי כבר  
בטרם התוודע  
להם שאל “השלום  
לאביכם” וגו’?



## Question #1

What did Yosef mean by asking, “Is my father still alive?”

*The conversations beforehand included talk about their living father.*



# TEXT 5

RABBI DON  
YITZCHAK  
ABARBANEL,  
BEREISHIT 45:1

This, then, is the reason Joseph asked, “Is my father still alive?” He wasn’t actually determining whether or not their father was still alive, for they already said so, to which he had already responded, “How is your elderly father faring?” Rather, Joseph was trying to enter into conversation, as he knew his brothers would be ashamed and would not wish to discuss the sale. So he opted to discuss other matters, choosing to start with their father’s welfare.

Joseph intended to thereafter inquire after their families and household matters, but refrained from doing so when he saw how shocked they were.

ולזה אמר להם “אני יוסף, העוד אבי חי” — לא שהיה שואל אם הוא עדין בחיים, כי כבר אמרו לו שהיה חי, והוא אמרו “השלום אביכם הזקן”. אבל אמר להם זה כדי להיכנס עמם בדברים, כי חשב ראשונה בלבו כדי שלא יתביישו ממה שעשו — שלא לזכור להם ענין המכירה, אבל שידבר אליהם בענינים אחרים. ולזה התחיל מאביו, העודנו חי . . . והיה דעתו לשאול להם אחר כך כל נשיהם וילדיהם ומקניהם וכל עניני הבית, אבל לפי שהם נבהלו ולא ענו אותו.

# TEXT 6A

BEREISHIT  
(GENESIS) 3:9

And the L-rd G-d called to man, and  
He said to him, “Where are you?”

וַיִּקְרָא ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶל  
הָאָדָם, וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אַיֶּכָּה:

# TEXT 6B

RASHI, BEREISHIT  
(GENESIS) 3:9

“Where are you”: He knew where he was, but [He asked him this] to enter into conversation with him, lest he be frightened to answer if He should punish him suddenly. So with Cain, G-d said to him (Genesis 4:9), “Where is your brother Abel?” And so with Balaam (Numbers 22:9), “Who are these men with you?” for the purpose of entering a conversation with them.

“אייכה”: יודע היה היכן הוא, אלא ליכנס עמו בדברים, שלא יהא נבהל להשיב אם יענישהו פתאום. וכן בקין (בראשית ד, ט) אמר לו: “אי הבל אחיך”, וכן בבלעם (במדבר כב, ט) “מי האנשים האלה עמך”, ליכנס עמהם בדברים.



Was Yosef trying to put them  
at ease with a question?



Or rather was he expressing  
astonishment?

# TEXT 7A

BEREISHIT  
(GENESIS) 37:35

And all his sons and all his daughters arose to console him, but he refused to be consoled.

וַיִּקְמוּ כָּל בְּנָיו וְכָל בְּנוֹתָיו  
לְנַחֲמוֹ, וַיִּמְאֵן לְהִתְנַחֵם.  
וַיֹּאמֶר, כִּי אֵרֶד אֶל בְּנֵי אָבִי  
שְׂאֵלָה, וַיִּבֶךְ אֶתֹּ אָבִיו:

# TEXT 7B

RASHI, BEREISHIT  
(GENESIS) 37:35

“But he refused to be consoled.”  
No one accepts consolation for a person who is really alive but believed to be dead, for it is decreed that a dead person should be forgotten from the heart, but not a living person.

“וימאן להתנחם”:  
אין אדם יכול לקבל  
תנחומין על החי וסבור  
שמת, שעל המת  
נגזרה גזירה שישתכח  
מן הלב, ולא על החי.

Yaakov “*refused to be consoled.*”



Because he lacked closure, Yaakov endured extra suffering.



## Answer #1

What did Yosef mean by asking, **“Is my father still alive?”**

*Yosef’s question served as a preface to his instructions to quickly go home and tell Yaakov the good news. To relieve Yaakov’s pain.*



# TEXT

## 8

TALMUD  
TRACTATE  
CHAGIGAH, 4B

When Rabbi Elazar reached this verse, he cried, “And his brethren could not answer him, for they were affrighted at his presence” (Genesis 45:3). He said, “If the rebuke of a man of flesh and blood was such [that the brothers were unable to respond, when it comes to] the rebuke of the Holy One, blessed be He, all the more so!”

רבי אלעזר, כי מטי  
להאי קרא — בכי "ולא  
יכלו אחיו לענות אותו,  
כי נבהלו מפניו"  
(בראשית מה, ג). ומה  
תוכחה של בשר ודם  
כך, תוכחה של הקדוש  
ברוך הוא על אחת כמה  
וכמה!

# TEXT

## 9

RABBI MEIR  
LEIBUSH MICHEL  
WISSER,  
BEREISHIT 45:3

This “being startled” was a mixture of astonishment and fear, for when he said, “I am Joseph,” they feared revenge, as if he were saying, “How could my father be alive after all the pain [you caused him by selling me]?”

“כי נבהלו מפניו”: בהלה  
הזאת הייתה השתוממות  
וגם חרדה, שאמר “אני  
יוסף”, ויראו מן הנקמה,  
וכאילו אמר: “העוד אבי  
חי” מרוב הצרות?

## Question #2

Why did Rabbi Elazar cry when he came to the verse, “**Is my father still alive?**”

*It seemingly doesn't contain any rebuke at all.*



## Answer #2

Why did Rabbi Elazar cry when he came to the verse, **“Is my father still alive?”**

Yosef’s response evoked, **“How could you not have been concerned about our father?”**

*Yosef’s teary rebuke hit the mark.*



# TEXT

## 10

TALMUD  
TRACTATE  
ARACHIN, 16B

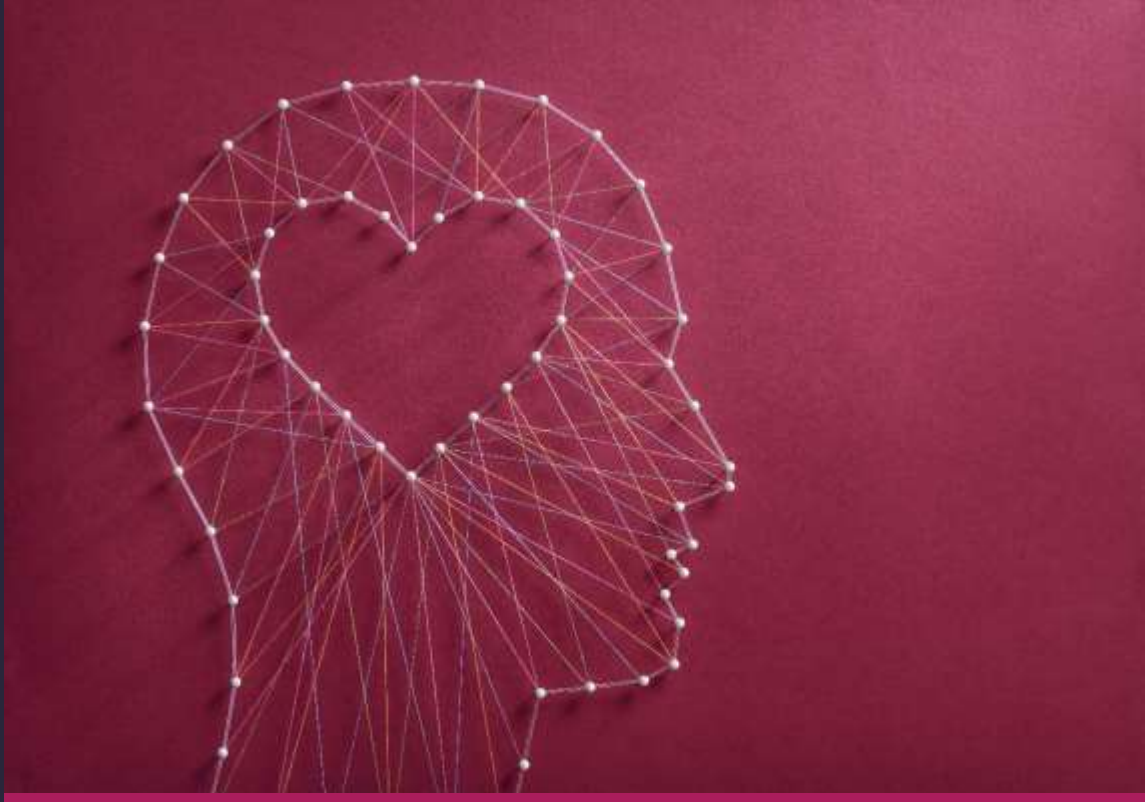
Rabbi Tarfon says, “I would be surprised if there is anyone in this generation who can receive rebuke. [Why? Because] if the one rebuking says to him, ‘Remove the splinter from between your eyes,’ [i.e., rid yourself of a minor infraction] the other says to him, ‘Remove the beam from between your eyes’” [i.e., you have committed far more severe sins].

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria says, “I would be surprised if there is anyone in this generation who knows how to rebuke correctly [without embarrassing the person he is rebuking].”

אמר רבי טרפון:  
(תמיהני) אני אם יש  
בדור הזה שמקבל  
תוכחה. אם אמר לו “טול  
קיסם מבין עיניך”, אמר  
לו “טול קורה מבין  
עיניך”!

אמר רבי אלעזר בן  
עזריה: תמיהני אם יש  
בדור הזה שידע להוכיח.

Yosef rebuking his siblings is a how-to lesson.



*Intent*



*Delivery*

# TEXT 11A

BEREISHIT  
(GENESIS) 45:4–5

4. Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Please come closer to me,” and they drew closer. And he said, “I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.

5. “But now do not be sad, and let it not trouble you that you sold me here, for it was to preserve life that G-d sent me before you.”

ד. וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל אָחָיו  
גָּשׁוּ נָא אֵלַי, וַיִּגָּשׁוּ.  
וַיֹּאמֶר, אָנֹכִי יוֹסֵף אֲחֵיכֶם  
אֲשֶׁר מְכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי  
מִצְרָיִמָּה:

ה. וְעַתָּה אֵל תִּעַצְבוּ, וְאֵל  
יַחַר בְּעֵינֵיכֶם כִּי מְכַרְתֶּם  
אֹתִי הֵנָּה, כִּי לְמַחְיָה  
שְׁלַחַנִי אֶלְקִים לְפָנֵיכֶם:



# TEXT 11B

RABBI YAAKOV  
BEN ASHER, TUR  
HAARUCH,  
BEREISHIT  
(GENESIS) 45:4-5

He now [changed his demeanor]  
and spoke to them in a friendly  
manner to draw them close.

"גשו נא אלי": דיבר  
עמהם בלשון רכה,  
למשכם אליו בדבריו.

"גשו נא אלי":

"Please come closer  
to me . . ."

—Bereishit  
(Genesis) 45:4–5



# TEXT 11C

RABBI CHAIM  
IBN ATAR,  
BEREISHIT  
(GENESIS) 45:4–5

I am your brother Joseph.” The reason he repeated the fact that he was Joseph a second time was because he felt that there were two possible reasons why the brothers could not respond to him. 1) They were afraid of him and could not answer him, just as a thief cannot answer when caught red-handed. 2) They simply did not believe him when he claimed to be Joseph.

To dispel their fear of him, he stressed the words your brother in the statement. In the next sentence, after he had formed the impression that they did not believe him, he stressed the words your brother whom you sold, indicating that even at the time they had sold him, he had not ceased feeling like a brother toward them.

He added the words whom you sold to Egypt as proof that it was really him, Joseph, for not even a prophet could have known that fact.

”אני יוסף אחיכם וגו’”: טעם שחזר פעם ב’  
”אני יוסף”, לצד שראה שלא ענוהו —  
חשש לב’ דברים: האחד, שפחדו ממנו ולא  
יכלו להשיב כבושת גנב כי ימצא, והב’,  
שלא האמינוהו שהוא יוסף.

לזה אמר, כנגד צד היראה, שאתם יראים  
ונבהלתם — לא תחושו לדבר, כי אני יוסף  
אחיכם, פירוש: מתנהג עמכם במדת  
האחווה, וכאילו לא היה הדבר ההוא. גם  
סמך לומר ”אחיכם אשר מכרתם”, לומר,  
שאפילו בזמן המכר לא כהתה עין האחוה  
ממני.

וכנגד צד הצדקת הדבר שהוא יוסף — אמר  
להם דבר שבו יצדיקו בסימן מובהק כי הוא  
זה, באומרו: ”אשר מכרתם אותי מצרימה”,  
ודבר זה לא ידעו אדם ואפילו נביא, אם לא  
שתאמר ודאי גמור כי הוא זה יוסף.



Yosef shifted from his role as a stern ruler and adopted a softer approach to put them at ease.

# TEXT 12

TALMUD  
TRACTATE SOTAH,  
47A

The sages taught: It should always be the left [weaker hand] that pushes another away and the right [stronger hand] that draws one near.

תנו רבנן:  
לעולם תהא  
שמאל דוחה  
וימין מקרבת.

# TEXT 13

THE REBBE,  
RABBI  
MENACHEM  
MENDEL  
SCHNEERSON,  
HAYOM YOM,  
ELUL 22

The teachings of Chasidut demand that before rebuking someone else, one should “cut their nails” so that people will not scratch each other, for [the forces of kelipah (negative energy)] cling to the nails. Every prick [unleashes] kelipah and other such negative energy.

תורת החסידות דורשת,  
כי תחילה להוכחה  
צריכים להסיר את  
הצפורניים, ניט שטעכען  
זיך, כי בטופרהא אחידן,  
יעדער שטאך איז  
קליפה וסטרא אחרא.



When reproach is appropriate,  
*it must only come across with warmth and sensitivity.*

Next Week

# Vayechi



**A LIFE OF WORTH IS A LIFE  
WORTH LIVING**

*Life's Hard? Welcome To  
The Chance of Your Lifetime*



