

# Vayigash

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There is a certain football team that has won some very important championship games, one being the Super Bowl, in overtime because they won the coin toss. Until recently, the first team to score a touchdown in overtime won the game, so winning the toss was crucial.

It was the same person each time who picked the toss, being a captain, and he always chose "Heads," and each time in these crucial games that's what it ended up being. As a result, they got the ball first and went down the field to score and win the game. Most people did not think much of it, the coin toss that is, and just chalked it up to good luck.

I found out that some time ago, the captain was interviewed and asked why he always chose "Heads." He said that, "Heads" reminded him of God, to Whom he was grateful for all of his success, or something like that. Apparently, he is a believer and makes a point of keeping God front row and center in his success, and it seems to have served him well.

That's what I think and others who believe in God and *Hashgochab Pratis*. Others would argue that there is no proof that what he said or believes, has anything to do with his team's good fortune. Anything improbable that did happen, they would argue, was just coincidence. They too have no proof of that, just a default logic that comes from not believing in the supernatural.

So, if someone tells you that you cannot affect the outcome of a coin toss, the answer would be, it depends what you believe. If you don't believe in God, or at least that He is willing to "interfere" in the events of history based upon the decisions of man, then you have to say that life is random and so is a coin toss.

But if you *do* believe that God does direct history based upon the actions of man, right down to a coin toss, then there is certainly good reason, or rather *God* reason,

for why a God-fearing football player might enjoy a little more success because of it. We might not be able to *prove* it, but it definitely makes sense from that perspective.

The fact that someone can't see how that is, or how it can be true, does not negate the reality. Wisdom is not a function of the mind only. It is function of the heart as well. Once a person subtracts God from the equation, they are forced to come up with all kinds of "interesting" variables to fill the gaps.

### **Shabbos Day**

WHAT DOES ANY of this have to do with this week's *parsha*? Everything, of course. The brothers had been so sure of their view of reality, and had completely rejected Yosef's view as preposterous when they sold him into slavery. Since then however, as their world slowly crumbled over the decades since Yosef's "disappearance," they seemed to have reconsidered. By the time the "Viceroy of Egypt" accused them of being spies, and then later caught Binyomin with the "stolen" goblet, they seemed to "sing" about their terrible offense from the past.

Nevertheless, it wasn't until Yosef revealed himself to them that they finally felt the full impact of their error in judgment. That is when they realized they had not only been wrong to sell their brother, but about everything about him. "*The stone that the builders rejected became the cornerstone*" (*Tebillim* 118:22), as has so often been the case in history, especially Jewish history.

How could they have been so wrong? They were so many (10 of them), so intelligent, and knew so much. And that is why, had we been there too, we would have sided with them. Given the choice between the 10 older brothers and the one Yosef, who incidentally seemed to be into himself a bit too much, we would have chosen their side. It would have been the most obvious and logical choice, given what we saw and knew at the time. We too would have been one of the shocked ones when Yosef later revealed himself as Viceroy of Egypt.

Amazingly, it was not the last time that such a fiasco happened in Jewish history. Dovid *HaMelech*, who penned the words, "*The stone that the builders rejected became the cornerstone*" (*Tebillim* 118:22), wrote them about his own murky rise from obscurity and rejection to the role of king over the Jewish people. He too had been rejected by his brothers, even his father; all of whom had assumed he was a *mamzer*.

Even the great prophet Shmuel *HaNavi* was shocked to find out that seemingly unfitting Dovid, and not his seemingly worthy brothers, was God's chosen. It was only once everything was sorted out, including his authentic *yichus* as a proper son

of Yishai, that the true story of Dovid *HaMelech* was told. Finally all the many misconceptions were cleared up.

This is why we have a *mitzvah* to judge a person to the side of merit, no matter how guilty they look to us. Perceptions are tricky, constantly fooling people into believing the opposite of what is really true. Add a few personal biases into the mixture, and you can get delusional people, of which there are no shortage today. So often what we thought was the *only* way for reality to be, ends up being the only thing it wasn't.

The only thing that is *Halachah L'Moshe M'Sinai*—Law from Moshe from Sinai—is *Halachah L'Moshe M'Sinai*. Everything else is simply opinion, no matter how smart and savvy the person telling you about it is. We don't see what is actually there, but what God *wants* us to see, because seeing the truth is not patent free. You have to *earn* the right to see it by first becoming a truth seeker.

### **Seudas Shlishis**

THIS IS WHY so many people have been wrong about life. Einstein was one of the greatest minds to have existed over the last 100 years, and yet he could not come to terms with the existence of God and the truth of Torah. So many people telling us about reality today disregard the most important component of it, God, so how reliable can they really be?

The assumption is that reality is some objective state of existence that anyone can see if they look hard enough. But that's like to trying to perceive a tapestry by first taking away its background canvas that holds the threads in place to form the picture. All you're left with is strands of wool that might be somewhat interesting on their own, but far from a reflection of the true big picture.

That is perhaps why the brothers got it so wrong. They had left their father out of the equation, and for that matter, God too. They dealt with the "strands" of history, of which Yosef was one, but lacked the canvas of the tapestry into which to place them. When the big picture was finally shown to them, they could not recognize it all, and were shocked how wrong their previous thinking had been. This was not just the message to Yosef's brothers, but to all of us throughout the ages.

We have to remember to never be overly certain about our take on reality. Don't take anything for granted. So little is what it seems to be on the surface. Oh, and don't forget to ask God to show You the truth about life because, in the end, He is the only one Who can. *Ain od Milvado*. He is *all* there is, and if you don't have Him, you really have nothing at all.

## ***Ain Od Milvado, Part 78***

IF YOU ARE looking for a key to something important, and someone tells you that a particular person has it, do you approach that person, or do you ignore them? *Ain od Milvado* means that God is not the only key to reality, but reality *itself*. Removing Him from any equation leaves the answer incomplete, no matter how complete it may seem to us.

The verse says, “*Secrets of God to those who fear Him*” (*Tebillim* 25:14). This doesn’t mean that non-secrets can go to people who do not fear God. It means that even the most obvious things in life also have secrets to be resolved to fully understand what they mean. Those “secrets” however only go to the people for Whom God is literally reality.

This can happen in a number of ways. It could be that a person gets an insight that no one else has, or that they experience something at just the right moment in just the right way to reveal something. God has many messengers, and many ways to get His point across to the people He wants to know it.

Yosef knew this. This is why he kept giving his brothers clues to his identity, as if to test the waters of their worthiness. He may not have known what level of secrets they merited, but God did, and He would have to be the One to clue the brothers in to what he was hinting.

As we see, it had never been Yosef’s intention to publicly shame his brothers, and quite frankly, it was a *Chillul Hashem* their story unfolded. It may have been one big happy family reunion for Ya’akov’s family, but you can just imagine what everyone else was saying behind their backs.

But alas, it was not to be a private affair, though Yosef made sure to send all Egyptian personnel out of the room for the big reveal. The brothers seemingly had not merited to work out Yosef’s secret on their own, and had to be subjected to his shock revelation. According to the *Midrash*, many will have to undergo something similar on their final day of judgment if they don’t merit to know God’s secrets while in the world now.

Have a great *Shabbos*,  
Pinchas Winston