

א ביסל תורה!

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ו' טבת תשפ"ו · ירגש

Favoring בנימין: a Repeat of Prior Favoritism?

By Eitan Orkaby '27

One of the leading factors of the brothers' hatred of יוסף is יוסף's favoritism towards יוסף. From this hatred יוסף is separated from his family for 22 years. One would expect יוסף to learn from this that one should try to avoid favoritism, yet we see that he himself does it! This first mention of this is when יוסף gives the brothers food the second time, giving בנימין five times the amount of the others. יוסף then puts his goblet in בנימין's sack, trying to force בנימין to stay with him, separate from the rest of his family. After revealing himself, יוסף proceeds to hug and kiss his brothers, starting with בנימין. And to make the favoritism even more clear, upon giving his brothers gifts of clothing, יוסף gives "וְלִבְנִימִן נָתַן שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת כֶּסֶף" "and to בנימין he gave 300 silver pieces and 5 changes of clothing" (בראשית מה:כב). How did יוסף not learn his lesson?

In trying to explain the five times amount of food that בנימין received over his brothers, רש"י tries to avoid saying there was any favoritism and counts five people the portion of food is for: בנימין, himself, יוסף, אסנת יוסף's wife, and מנשה, אפרים. While this answers the number of items בנימין receives, there still seems to be a disparity between the brothers and בנימין.

There is another larger question on this whole story of the treatment that the brothers receive from יוסף, which the brothers themselves explain comes from

there mistreatment of יוסף due to their jealousy of him (בראשית מב:כא). The ספורנו understands this to be the same reason why בנימין was treated much nicer than his fellow brothers: to see if they would be jealous of בנימין as well.

While it is quite clear that many מפרשים are hesitant to say that יוסף was favored by בנימין it is possible that he actually did favor בנימין. The mother of יוסף, רחל, was the last of יוסף's wives to have kids. She also was the only of his wives to die in childbirth. Already from birth בנימין is unlike the rest of his siblings, aside from יוסף, because he is motherless. Thus, יוסף formed a close bond with בנימין. It is the case that יוסף became close with the sons of בלהה after רחל's death (רש"י), however, after being thrown in a pit, a decision made by his brothers collectively, יוסף lost any connection that he had with בלהה's children. The only one who was not involved in this was his brother בנימין. Therefore, יוסף had an affection for בנימין unlike anyone else and gave him extra anytime there were gifts to be given out.

The actions of יוסף towards בנימין give a window into the family dynamics of יוסף's children. While there were many fights within, in the end they are all referred to as בני ישראל, together and not individually. Furthermore, יוסף's own children highlight how brothers are supposed to act towards one another. Upon blessing יוסף's children, יעקב seems to mix up the ages of the children, putting his left hand on the eldest and right hand on the younger one. Nevertheless, יוסף's children do not fight. They learned

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from their father and uncles that whoever seems to be the favorite should not affect their relationship, rather they should stay close.

Learning From יהודה's Selfless Actions

By Sara Canner '28

Last week's פרשה ends with יוסף, the ruler of Egypt, planting his silver goblet in his youngest brother בנימין's bag. יוסף declares that whoever's bag the goblet is found in must stay as a slave. When the brothers had earlier plotted to harm יוסף, יהודה had stepped in and suggested selling him instead. In this week's פרשה, פרשת ויגש, פרשה יהודה continues to protect his brothers by taking responsibility and offering himself as a slave in place of בנימין. The פרשה opens with the words: "וַיֵּצֵא אֵלָיו יְהוֹדָה" "And יהודה approached him" (בראשית מ:יח).

This approach is not just physical, it is moral. יהודה steps forward to take responsibility for his family. By offering himself as a slave instead of בנימין, he ensures that their father, יעקב, will not suffer. This is especially meaningful and selfless because יהודה was the one who had originally suggested selling יוסף. Now, we see how he has grown. יהודה demonstrates what true leadership looks like: acting selflessly, and taking responsibility to be willing to help others, even in difficult situations. As a result of יהודה's actions, יוסף is able to reveal his identity. Instead of seeking revenge, יוסף forgives his brothers and recognizes that Hashem had a larger plan. All the events Hashem made

happen ultimately helped save many lives during the famine. Proving that everything Hashem does is for a reason even if at the time it may feel entirely wrong. יוסף has so much strength to take a step back and accept that the terrible thing his brothers did to him ultimately had good results. פרשת ויגש teaches us many ways in which people can grow. יהודה managed to protect his father, יעקב, and his brother בנימין. May we learn from יהודה to act in a selfless way in order to protect others. From יוסף, may we learn the importance of forgiveness and trusting in Hashem's bigger plan.



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