


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש


Friday 21 December 2012 - 8 Tevet 5773
Sedra Vayigash

TWO KINDS OF POWER

POWER AND POWERLESSNESS ARE IMPORTANT THEMES IN SOCIETY TODAY. They are issues in family dynamics as in international politics. They are issues in the stance of any man or woman facing the world. The Sedra¹ helps us understand something of the nature of power.

The Sedra opens with a dramatic confrontation. The twelve sons of Jacob are all on stage, together with a few extras - interpreters and other officials. The brothers face the Egyptian Viceroy, whom we know is actually their long-lost half-brother Joseph. Joseph is claiming his younger full brother Benjamin, and seems determined to keep him under his own care in Egypt, while the other ten brothers go back to their elderly father Jacob in the Land of Canaan. Jacob, without a doubt, will be utterly heart-broken. Benjamin is his youngest son and, seemingly, is the only surviving offspring of his beloved departed wife, Rachel. Actually her other son Joseph, is still alive, but no-one knows this. The brothers are filled with consternation but they are powerless.

Joseph has been put in command of the Egyptian economy by Pharaoh. You could hardly imagine a more powerful position for a

	In Loving Memory of Mrs Jeanne Gewolb-Sostrin (Yenta bas Devora) ע"ה - 15 Tevet 5772 Dedicated by her Son Dr Roger Gewolb שי'
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member of Jacob's family. After all, the future Jewish people were at this stage just an extended family group: the children and grandchildren of Jacob. For a member of this lonely family to rise to be Viceroy in Egypt was absolutely remarkable.

Joseph represents one kind of power.

At this point Judah steps forward. Judah had told his father that he takes responsibility for his youngest brother Benjamin, and only on that basis had been permitted by his father Jacob to take the boy to the Egyptian Viceroy who insisted on seeing him.

Judah pleads that Benjamin should be freed. Judah will stay as a slave of Joseph. At first sight this might seem a pathetic, powerless pleading. The cringing Jew, Judah, facing the Egyptian Viceroy. Yet Judah is insistent. The Sages tell us Judah was ready to face any odds. He would not accept the idea that Benjamin would remain in Egypt and would light to the death in order to bring him home.

This is another, higher kind of power. It is actually greater than that of Joseph. Joseph had a limited political power, having been put in his position by Pharaoh. By contrast Judah came with the force of right, based on the Torah, beyond any other form of authority.

Hence Judah was able to confront Joseph, and was ready to face Pharaoh himself if need be. In a sense, his stance was beyond Nature, like his later descendant David facing Goliath. Yet he knew, with certainty, that G-d was on his side. This gave him a strength which won through in the end, with a dramatic capitulation, when Joseph revealed his identity, and the anxious tension turns to tears of joy. We see that the highest power was not Joseph, but Judah, who therefore was the ancestor of King David and, ultimately, of the Messiah.

This story of more than three millennia ago tells us something about ourselves. About what constitutes real power, for a Jew facing a shifting reality. About how we should focus ourselves in the ups and downs of our personal lives, and in the conflicts facing the Jewish people in the world. In all situations, the path of our sacred Torah comes first, and at every step, will be seen to be successful.

1. Genesis 44:18 - 47:27. 2. Based freely on the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *Sefer HaSichot* 5752, p. 214 ff.

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SEDRA VAYIGASH

REPLACING HATE WITH LOVE

The heavenly smells of the hot baked goods filled Maya's nose as she entered the bakery. Her mother had sent her on some errands and one of them was buying Challas and cake from the bakery. After she carefully chose her goods, she went to the queue and waited for her turn to pay.

While she was standing in the line, she noticed her classmate Ariella walk into the shop. Ariella was the most popular girl in the class and many of the girls were intimidated by her. But, worst of all, she always had something nasty to say to Maya. *Uh oh*, Maya thought, *I don't want her to see me*. But, it was too late.

"Hi Maya," Ariella smirked, "What have you got there, huh? Some more cake to add to your weight? Yeah, I don't think you have quite enough there." Maya felt as though she had been slapped in the face. Ariella always made fun of her weight. She wasn't exactly the slimmest girl in town. Maya felt her anger boil up. She wished her turn to pay would come quickly so she could escape from Ariella's scrutiny and run home.

At last, it was her turn. She hurriedly gave the cashier the money. Then she rushed out of the shop. When she had finished the rest of the errands for her mother, she started making her way back home.

While she was walking, she suddenly saw someone slip and all the items in their shopping bags fell out and scattered. Maya hurried over to help the person. As she neared, she was able to see who it was, and she suddenly froze. It was Ariella.

Many thoughts raced through Maya's head. Ariella had been so mean to her before and this was such a great way to get back at her. But, the poor girl had slipped and might be in pain, as well as embarrassed. Should I help her?

Maya suddenly remembered something she had learnt in Sedra class that day. When Joseph was a Viceroy in Egypt, his brothers came to him for help during the famine. Even though, years earlier, they had thrown him in a pit and sold him as a slave, he didn't bear a grudge towards them. Instead, he treated them with kindness. He gave them food for themselves and their families to eat during the famine. Joseph was rewarded for this and G-d gave extra blessings to Joseph's share of land in Israel because he was merciful even to those who had wronged him.

Maya decided she was going to be like Joseph. She hurried over to Ariella and helped her up. Then she began picking up the items that were strewn about on the street and put them back in the shopping bags.

"Wow, thanks Maya," Ariella said, a surprised look on her face.

"Yeah, it's okay," Maya smiled. "Are you alright?"

"Yes, I think I'm okay... and Maya, I'm sorry for what I said before," Ariella said, looking regretful, "I didn't know what I was saying and I feel horrible that I treated you like that. ...Forgive me?"

Maya sighed. Yes, she was going to forgive her. She wasn't going to stay upset with Ariella. She'd give her a chance. So she smiled and said "Yes, don't worry. And let me help you with those bags. They look heavy. We're going the same way."

"Wow, that's so kind of you. Thanks Maya!" said Ariella, relieved. Together they began walking home.

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