

QUESTIONS ON PARASHAT VAYIGASH

Q-1. (a) (1) Why did *Yehuda* fight the brothers' slavery for the goblet's theft after accepting that punishment in 44:16 (3 reasons)? (2) What did *Yehuda* mean with his request to "speak a word in my lord's [*Yosef's*] ear" – it cannot mean that he wanted to whisper a secret to *Yosef*, which would have been disrespectful to the viceroy, and until now, *Yehuda* did not even know if *Yosef* understood Hebrew? (3) What did he mean, "you [*Yosef*] are like *Pharaoh*" (4 views)? (4) How could *Yehuda* claim that *Yosef* had died without proof of this (2 views)? **(b)** (1) Why was it fitting for *Yehuda* to offer himself as *Yosef's* slave? (2) How did *Binyamin* later repay *Yehuda's* offer to be a slave instead of *Binyamin*? **(c)** When *Yosef* asked, "have you a father or brother?" why did he not ask about their mothers? **(d)** What did *Yehuda* mean that losing *Binyamin* would bring *Ya'akov* "in evil to the grave"? **(e)** (1) How was *Yosef* punished for not objecting to *Yehuda's* calling *Ya'akov*, "your [*Yosef's*] servant"? (2) Why was this penalty fitting? (*Bereishit* 44:18-33)

A-1. (a) (1) (i) *Yehuda* accepted *Hashem's* punishment of slavery for selling *Yosef* to be appropriate, but when *Yosef* decreed that *Binyamin*, who did not partake in the sale, be enslaved, he realized that this was no punishment for *Yosef's* sale, and he fought to return *Binyamin* (*Alshich*). (ii) *Yehuda* admitted that punishing *Binyamin* for theft was logical, but now he appealed for *Yosef's* compassion (*Ramban*). (iii) Seeing that *Yosef* interrogated them more intensely than anyone else buying food, *Yehuda* now argued that the punishment was unfair (*Rashi*). (2) *Yehuda* meant, "Let my words penetrate my lord's understanding" (*Rashi*). (3) *Yosef* (i) was as esteemed as the king; (ii) will be stricken with *tzara'at* over *Binyamin* as *Pharaoh* was when he detained *Sarah*; (iii) like *Pharaoh*, does not keep his word, by asking to see *Binyamin*, then enslaving him; (iv) like *Pharaoh*, will be killed (*Rashi*). (4) (i) If he did not claim *Yosef* was dead, *Yosef* could have asked to see him (*Rashi*). (ii) After his not seeing *Yosef* for 20 years, it was as if he was dead (*Tzeida laDerech*). **(b)** (1) It was retribution for *Yehuda's* proposal to sell *Yosef* as a slave (*Abarbanel*). (2) *Binyamin* was loyal to *Yehuda* when the 10 tribes repudiated *Yehuda* and split away, allowing *Yehuda's* survival as a nation (*Yalkut Yehuda*). **(c)** *Yosef* knew that *Rachel* had died at *Binyamin's* birth, and *Leah*, according to *Seder Olam*, had died before he was sold – he did not need to ask about them (*Ba'al haTurim*). **(d)** *Rachel* was *Ya'akov's* beloved wife – when she died, *Yosef* consoled him – with *Yosef's* loss, *Binyamin* consoled him – losing *Binyamin* was be like his losing all 3 (*Rashi*). **(e)** (1) *Yosef* was supposed to live to 120 but died at 110 – his life was shortened 10 years after hearing *Ya'akov* called his "servant", 5 times by his brothers and 5 times by the translator, and did not object; (2) the *Torah* says, "honor your father and mother so that your days may be prolonged" – by failing to honor his father, *Yosef's* days were shortened (*Sotah* 13b).

Q-2. (a) Why did *Yosef* now identify himself to his brothers (3 views)? **(b)** Why did *Yosef* order everyone to leave when he revealed himself (6 reasons)? **(c)** Since *Yehuda* mentioned several times that *Ya'akov* was alive, why did *Yosef* again ask, "is my father still alive?" (4 views)? **(d)** Why were his brothers unable to answer him (3 views)? **(e)** Why did *Yosef* request, "come close to me" (2 views)? (*Bereishit* 45:1,3)

A-2. (a) (1) He had irrefutable proof of his brothers' devotion to *Ya'akov*, love for *Binyamin* and contrition for their crime against him (*Hirsch*). (2) Now that they had the expiatory humiliation they deserved, it was time to reconcile (*Abarbanel*). (3) He was concerned his brothers were capable of destroying *Mitzrayim*, as they did *Shechem* (*Bereishit Raba*). **(b)** (1) He wanted to be sure that his brothers would not be embarrassed in front of others (*Rashi*). (2) He could not tolerate all of the people standing over him (*Radak*). (3) He could not bear to wait until all the bystanders would leave on their own – he ordered that they leave immediately (*ibn Ezra*). (4) it would be unbecoming for the viceroy to cry in front of others (*Rashbam*). (5) when his and *Pharaoh's* servants heard *Yehuda's* plea on *Binyamin's* behalf, they joined in pleading for *Binyamin* – *Yosef* could not resist the collective pleas; (6) if the *Mitzrim* heard that *Yosef's* brothers had sold him and lied to their father, they would consider his brothers deceitful thieves who should not be allowed to settle in *Mitzrayim* (*Ramban*). **(c)** *Yosef* was asking (1) about *Ya'akov* to draw them into conversation, to show that he was friendly (*Abarbanel*). (2) whether *Ya'akov* was still strong and healthy (*Tur*). (3) how *Ya'akov* could have survived the sorrow and worry over *Yosef's* disappearance (*Sforno*). (4) whether *Yehuda* had lied about his old father being alive in order to gain *Yosef's* sympathy (*Kli Yakar*). **(d)** They (1) were overwhelmed with shame (*Rashi*). (2) were confused and frightened that he would seek revenge (*Malbim*). (3) could not believe that the youth they sold as a slave was *Mitzrayim's* supreme ruler (*Da'at Zekeinim*). **(e)** He (1) wanted to prove he was circumcised – he was their brother (*Rashi*). (2) did not want *Binyamin* to hear about the sale, which would be *lashon hara* (*Tzeror HaMor*).

Q-3. (a) (1) When *Yosef* told his brothers to go back to their father in *Eretz Yisrael*, why did he say, "*alu*" (*go up* [to my father]) (2 views)? (2) Why did *Yosef* say, "your eyes see, as do the eyes of my brother *Binyamin*" that *Yosef* was speaking to them? (3) Why did *Yosef* want to settle his family in *Goshen* (3 views)? **(b)** (1) Why did *Binyamin* and *Yosef* cry on each other's necks (2 views)? (2) How does the neck symbolize these events (4 views)? (3) Why did they cry now about these events? **(c)** In 45:10, *Yosef* told his brothers that they will live "in the land of *Goshen*", and in 45:18, *Pharaoh* said that he will give *Ya'akov's* family "the best of the land of *Mitzrayim*" – why does 47:11 say that *Yosef* settled his family "in *Eretz Ramseis*"? **(d)** What do the 300 silver pieces that *Yosef* gave to *Binyamin* signify (2 views)? **(e)** (1) When his sons told him that *Yosef* was alive, why did *Ya'akov* not believe them? (2) Why did he believe them when he saw the wagons that *Yosef* had sent? (*Bereishit* 45:10-14,18-22,26-27)

A-3. (a) (1) (i) *Kiddushin* 69a says, "*Eretz Yisrael* is the highest of all lands", i.e., *Eretz Yisrael's* hills and mountains are taller than those of surrounding countries (*Rashi*). (ii) In the realm of the spirit, *Eretz Yisrael* is the highest in the world – entering it brings one to a higher spiritual level (*Mahara*). (2) *Yosef* conveyed that just as *Binyamin*, who was not present at *Yosef's* sale, sees that *Yosef* has no hatred for him, so should his brothers see that he, *Yosef*, neither has hatred for them (*Rashi*). (3) (i) It was away from the idolatrous *Mitzrim* (*Malbim*). (ii) It was away from the social and political activity in the palace (*Ramban*). (iii) It was fertile for their shepherding; (iv) *Pharaoh* had given *Goshen* as a gift to *Sarah* (12:16) – it was appropriate for her offspring to settle there (*Pirkei deRebi Eliezer*). **(b)** (1) (i) It showed their strong love, as brothers from the same mother (*Radak*). (ii) They foresaw the destructions of *Mishkan Shilo* in *Yosef's* territory and both *Batei haMikdash* in *Binyamin's* territory (*Rashi*). (2) (i) The *Beit haMikdash* is compared to a neck in *Shir haShirim* 4:4 – while *Mishkan Shilo* or the *Beit haMikdash* stood, *Bnei Yisrael* prospered, walking with straight necks – after their destructions, they could no longer raise their heads among the nations; (ii) just as the neck is the top of the body, the *Beit haMikdash* is *Bnei Yisrael's* summit and splendor (*Maharsha*). (iii) Just as the neck is a person's lifeline – one cannot live with a punctured neck – the *Beit haMikdash* is *Bnei Yisrael's* lifeline; (iv) like most ornaments, which are hung around the neck, the *kohanim* and *levi'im*, *Bnei Yisrael's* "ornaments," are attached to the *Beit haMikdash* (*Shir haShirim Raba*). (3) They saw that just as they went to *Mitzrayim* for the *sin'at chinam* (baseless hatred) of *Yosef* and his brothers, the *Mikdashim* will be destroyed for this reason (*Bereishit Raba*). **(c)** *Goshen* was a province of *Mitzrayim*, and *Ramseis*, which had the most fertile land in *Mitzrayim*, was an area within *Goshen* (*Rashi*). **(d)** (1) *Shemot* 21:32 says that a Jewish slave's value is 30 silver pieces – *Gittin* 44a says that a Jew selling a Jewish slave to a gentile is fined 10 times the slave's value, the fine being 300 silver pieces – since *Yosef* threatened *Binyamin* with slavery to a

“gentile” ruler, Yosef paid *Binyamin* this “fine”; (2) *Devarim* 22:19 says that the penalty for slander is 100 silver pieces – Yosef slandered his brothers 3 times, falsely accusing them of (i) eating *eiver min hachai* (flesh of a live animal); (ii) flirting with *Cana’anit* women; and (iii) calling *Bilha’s* and *Zilpa’s* sons “slaves” – he gave this “penalty” to *Binyamin*, who did not participate in his sale (*R. Bechaya*). (e) (1) When one misleads someone, he is not believed even when he tells the truth – since *Ya’akov’s* sons fooled him into thinking the *Yosef* was killed, his heart would not allow him to believe them now, when telling the truth (*Pirkei deRebi Nosson*). (2) Before *Ya’akov* sent *Yosef* to check on his brothers (37:13), they were studying the law of *egla arufa* (calf whose neck is broken), with the plural of “*egla*” being “*agalot*” – when *Ya’akov* saw the *agalot* (which also means wagons), he was revived, and the spirit of prophesy, which had been taken from him when *Yosef* was sold, returned to him (*Rashi*).

Q-4. (a) Before going to *Mitzrayim*, why did *Ya’akov* go to *Be’er Sheva* (4 views)? (b) Why does the *Torah* say that *Ya’akov* and his family “took all the wealth they had amassed in *Eretz Canaan*” – what about the wealth they amassed at *Lavan’s* residence in *Padan Aram*? (c) Who are the 2 granddaughters that *Ya’akov* took to *Mitzrayim*? (d) From where do we learn that (1) when a woman emits seed first, she bears a male? (2) when a man emits seed first, she bears a female? (e) Since he had 4 wives, why is *Rachel* the only one called “*eishet Ya’akov*” (*Ya’akov’s* wife) (2 reasons)? (f) When the *Torah* says, (1) that 70 souls went to *Mitzrayim*, why does it state “*kol ha-nefesh*” (all the soul – singular), not “*kol ha-nefashot*” – plural? (2) “*Yosef’s* sons who were born in *Mitzrayim*,” why does it say, “*asher yulad*” (who was born – singular), not “*asher yuledu*” – plural? (g) The *Torah* lists 69 people who went to *Mitzrayim* – who was the 70th (4 views)? (h) Since *Bnei Ya’akov* were banned from marrying *Canaanit* women, how was *Shimon’s* son, *Shaul*, “son of the *Canaanit* woman”? (i) Who was born when *Ya’akov* went to *Mitzrayim* and died when *Bnei Yisrael* left 210 years later? (*Bereishit* 46:1,6-10,15,19,26-27)

A-4. (a) *Be’er Sheva* was (1) the southernmost city on *Canaan’s* border en route to *Mitzrayim* – *Ya’akov* prayed there just before leaving the *Eretz Canaan* (*Radak*). (2) where *Yitzchak* had prayed to *Hashem* – now, *Ya’akov* prayed there for His protection (*Rashbam*). (3) where *Ya’akov* had sought *Hashem’s* protection before leaving *Eretz Canaan* to *Charan* – *Ya’akov* now asked His permission there to leave *Canaan* and go to *Mitzrayim* (*Ramban*). (4) *Ya’akov* foresaw that *Bnei Yisrael* would need special wood – “*shittim*” logs - to build the *Mishkan* in the desert after *Matan Torah* – he cut down and brought to *Mitzrayim* the trees which *Avraham* had planted in *Be’er Sheva* (*Bereishit Raba*). (b) *Ya’akov* gave his *Padan Aram* wealth to *Eisav* to pay for the burial place in *Me’orat haMachpeila* (*Rashi*). (c) *Serach*, *Asher’s* daughter, and *Yocheved*, *Levi’s* daughter (*Rashi*). (d) (1) *Leah’s* sons are called “*Leah’s* sons”, but *Dinah* is called “his [*Ya’akov’s*] daughter (*Rashi* – *Nida* 31a). (e) (1) *Rachel* was the “*akeret ha-bayit*” (mainstay of *Ya’akov’s* household) – his principal wife for whom he worked for *Lavan* (*Rashi*). (2) The quality of *Rachel’s* children, *Yosef* and *Binyamin*, was greater than *Leah’s* or the other wives’ (*Sotah* 36b). (f) The singular indicates that (1) all 70 worshiped *Hashem echad* (*Rashi*). (2) *Menashe* and *Ephraim* were twins, born from one birth (*Radak*). (g) (1) *Yocheved*, who was born as *Bnei Yisrael* were entering *Mitzrayim* (*Rashi*). (2) *Ya’akov* himself (*Rashbam*). (3) The *Shechina*, Who descended with *Bnei Yisrael* to *Mitzrayim* (*Medrash haGadol*). (4) Only 69 actually went, but the *Torah* rounds it off to 70 (*Rosh*). (h) When *Shimon* rescued *Dina*, he prophesied that he should marry *Dina*, and *Shaul* was his and *Dina’s* son – since *Dina* had relations with *Shechem*, she was called “*Canaanit*” (*Rashi*). (i) *Lyov* (*Bava Batra* 15a).

Q-5. (a) (1) Why did *Ya’akov* send *Yehuda* to *Mitzrayim* ahead of the family (2 reasons)? (2) Why did *Yosef* not open the *yeshiva*? (b) (1) When *Yosef* met *Ya’akov* and cried on his shoulder, why did *Ya’akov* not cry on *Yosef’s* shoulder (2 explanations)? (2) Why did *Yosef* not also recite the *Shema*? (c) Why did *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, *Ya’akov* and his sons become shepherds (5 explanations)? (*Bereishit* 46:28-32)

A-5. (a) (1) To (i) establish a *Torah* study house (*Rashi*). (ii) determine the best route to *Goshen*, by avoiding contact with the immoral *Mitzrim* (*Radak*). (2) Since *Yehuda* had learned with his *rebbe*, *Ya’akov*, for 22 years, while *Yosef* did not, *Yehuda* was more qualified (*Bereishit Raba*). (b) (1) (i) *Ya’akov* was reciting the *Shema* (*Rashi*) to thank *Hashem* for this joy (*Mahara*). (ii) In fact, it was *Ya’akov*, the aged parent, who fell on his son’s shoulder (*Ramban*). (2) *Yosef* was doing in the *mitzvah* of honoring his father and was absolved from the *mitzvah* to recite the *Shema* (*Siftei Chachamim*). (c) Shepherding (1) separated them from idolaters who worshiped sheep and despised shepherds (*R. Bechaya*). (2) caused them to be alone and avoid big-city sins such as gossip, slander, immorality, thievery and falsehood (*R. Munk*). (3) requires less physical exertion than agriculture, leaving more time to think about *Hashem* and do *chesed*; (4) instills traits of kindness and generosity by caring for needy animals (*R. Hirsch*). (5) was a profession not looked upon as a threat to the governments in *Canaan* and *Mitzrayim* (*Ha’amek Davar*).

Q-6. (a) (1) Why did *Hashem* punish *Ya’akov* for telling *Pharaoh*, “few and bad have been the years of my life”? (2) How was he punished? (b) Why do we eat romaine lettuce at the *sefer*? (c) (1) After acquiring all of the *Mitzri* land for *Pharaoh* in return for food, why did *Yosef* resettle all of the *Mitzrim* in different districts of *Mitzrayim*? (2) Why did *Yosef* not take the priests’ land in return for food (3 reasons)? (*Bereishit* 47:8-9,21-22)

A-6. (a) (1) *Ya’akov* should have expressed appreciation for all that *Hashem* had done for him – His saving him from *Eisav*, *Lavan* and *Shechem* and the return of *Dinah* and *Yosef*; (2) *Ya’akov* lived until 147 – 33 years less than his father *Yitzchak*, which corresponds to the 33 words in these 2 verses (*Chizkuni*). (b) It reminds us of *Bnei Yisrael’s* time in *Mitzrayim* – romaine lettuce first tastes fine but leaves a bitter taste – *Ya’akov’s* going to *Mitzrayim* at first was trouble-free, but later, *Bnei Yisrael* were embittered (*Yerushalmi Pesachim* 2:5). (c) (1) *Yosef* did not want the *Mitzrim* to scorn his family as foreigners – by relocating all of the *Mitzrim*, they all became foreigners from the places they had lived, too (*Rashi*). (2) (i) Due to *Pharaoh’s* ongoing subsidy of the priests, they did not need to sell their land; (ii) to teach *Bnei Yisrael* not to hesitate to give *kohanim* and *levi’im* the tithes (*Moshav Zekeinim*). (iii) *Yosef* rewarded them for their defending him when *Potifar* was going to kill him, by proving that *Yosef* had run away from *Potifar’s* wife (*Targum Yonatan*).

Q-7. In the *haftara*, the *Navi* says that *Bnei Yisrael* “will dwell on the land I gave to My servant *Ya’akov*” – since He had promised *Eretz Yisrael* to *Avraham* and *Yitzchak* too, why does the *Navi* specify the land that He gave to *Ya’akov*? (*Yechezkeil* 37:25)

A-7. *Avraham* and *Yitzchak* each had a son, *Yishmael* and *Eisav*, respectively, whose offspring had no share in the land – only *Bnei Yisrael*, the offspring of all of *Ya’akov’s* sons, will inherit all of *Eretz Yisrael* in *yemot haMashiach* (*Radak*).