

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators presents

An Interactive **PARSHA EXPERIENCE**



Parsha: Vayigash

Title: It's All a Matter of Approach

Contributor: Reuven Margrett, Director of Digital Content, PCJE

The Parsha at First Glance

Spotlight on the Parsha:

In a brave move at the beginning of Parshat Vayigash, Yaakov's son Yehuda approaches and requests the release of his imprisoned younger brother Binyamin from his still-in-disguise brother Yosef (who just happens to be the second most powerful person in Egypt). After an impassioned plea where Yehuda offers to trade places with the enslaved Binyamin, with great emotion Yosef reveals himself to his brothers. After 22 years since Yosef was thrown in the pit,



the 12 brothers are finally reunited and plans are quickly made for them, and their father Yaakov, to move to the land of Goshen in Egypt.

Zooming In:

By approaching the still-in-disguise Yosef, Yehuda is putting his life on the line to rescue his younger brother. Enslavement or even death might follow. What was Yehuda thinking and feeling when he approached Yosef? How do we approach our difficult situations?

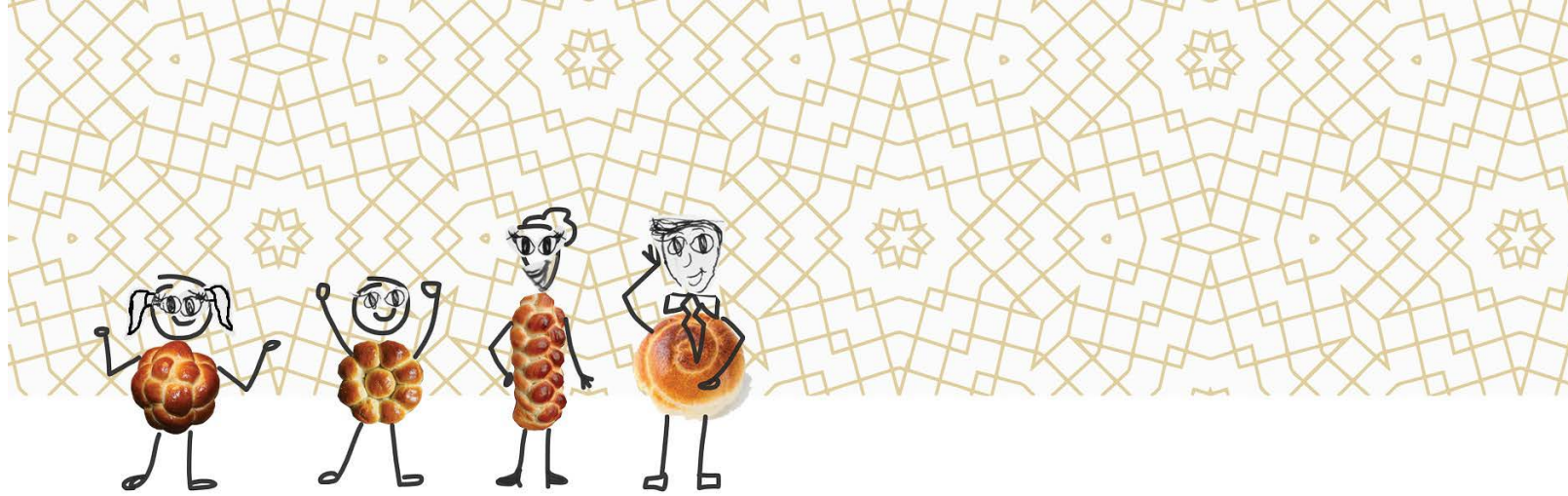
The Midrash ([Genesis Rabbah 93:6](#)) gives an insight into what the word *vayigash* ('and he approached') could mean. It brings four subtle interpretations of the word based on other uses of *vayigash*/approach in the Tanakh (Bible).

'And Yehudah approached (vayigash) him'

1. Rabbi Yehuda says: Approached to make war. As it says in II Samuel 10:13, *And Yoav, and the people with him, approached to make war.*
2. Rabbi Nechemya says: Approached in order to appease (make peace). As it says in Joshua 14:6, *And the children (tribe) of Yehuda approached Yehoshua to appease him.*
3. The Sages say: Approached him in prayer. As it says in I Kings 18:36, *And Eliyahu HaNavi approached and said 'God, my Lord...'*
4. Rabbi Elazar said: Combine them [all of the above interpretations]. If it be war, I come [for war]; if it appeasement, I come [for appeasement]; if it be for prayer, I come [for prayer].

Question for Consideration:

1. Given what you know about Yehuda coming to Yosef-in-disguise, which opinion appeals to you the most?
2. Can you think of another interpretation of 'and he approached'?
3. Why do the Rabbis come up with so many different interpretations of *vayigash* ('and he approached')?



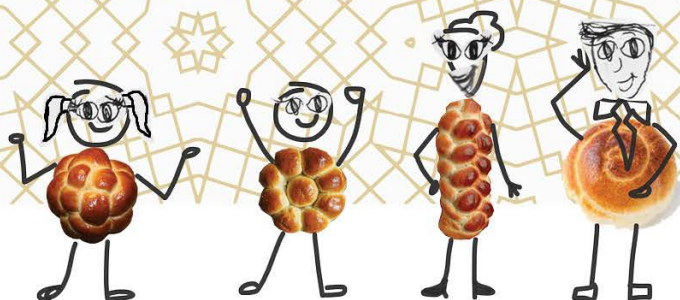
The Parsha Through Another Lens

Acting Out:

The aim of this activity, in a lighthearted way, is for people to think about how they approach difficult situations and/or people. Is it with anger, calm, faith or something else? The activity uses the Yehuda-Yosef dialogue to get us to reflect on how we deal with difficult situations and how we respond to them.

- One volunteer pretends to be Yosef.
- Four volunteers pretend to be Yehuda.
- Each one of the Yehudas, in the style of Yehuda character in the table below, makes a 30-second speech to Yosef as to why Binyamin should be let go. Yosef can respond to create a dialogue with each Yehuda.

Opinion from the Midrash	Yehuda	Key word from Midrash	Emotions and characteristics for the dialogue
Rabbi Yehuda	Yehuda 1	War	Confrontational, Angry, Injustice
Rabbi Nechemya	Yehuda 2	Peace	Calm, Understanding, Compromise
The Sages	Yehuda 3	Prayer	Faith, Divine Justice, God will help
Rabbi Elazar	Yehuda 4	War, Peace, Prayer	Flexible, Responsive, No set ideas



Extension Activity:

- Have all the Yehudas, in character, discuss why their approach is the most effective in this situation.
- Debrief what happened. You can use any, some, or none, of the questions below.
 - What did it feel like to role-play? Is this how you normally talk? Would you rather have played a different type of Yehuda, and if so, which one and why?
 - Which approach do you think would be the most effective in this situation?
 - Do you ever have difficult situations you need to deal with? What are they?
 - When you find yourself in a difficult situation do you 'approach' the situation like the examples above? (Do you go into the battle/war/argumentative approach, or the peace seeking/compromise approach, or leave it up to God/authority figure/whatever happens, happens approach?)
 - Are there certain types of situations where one approach would be better than another?
 - When you're in a fight with a sibling
 - When there is a problem with a classmate
 - When you don't see eye-to-eye with your friend
 - When you feel an injustice by your teacher
 - When you disagree with a parent

Shabbat Shalom!