

From: The Rabbis at Chicago Torah Network

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THE CHICAGO TORAH NETWORK SHABBAT FAX[©]

A WEEKLY PRESENTATION OF JEWISH THOUGHT PUBLISHED IN MEMORY OF RAE DANIEL

VOLUME 18, ISSUE 10 FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2010 / 3 TEVES 5771 CANDLE LIGHTING: 3:59 P.M. SHABBAT ENDS: 5:09 (CHICAGO)

Hang in there - Shabbos is coming!

TORAH PORTION: VAYIGASH (GENESIS 44:18 - 47:27)

This week's CTN Shabbat Fax is dedicated by Maureen Stolman, "in honor of David's recent election to Chairman of the Lake County Board of Commissioners" and by Maureen and David "in honor of our Children (Karen, Adam, Kenny and Shelley) and our Grandchildren so far (Emma and Eli), and thanking Hashem for all our blessings and for allowing Rabbi Katz to enrich our lives."

1. Judah approached him (Joseph) and said, "Please ... let me say something in your ear". (44:18)

It's the climax of the story of 'Joseph and his Brothers'.

Judah steps up to the plate. And speaks forcefully to the Egyptian leader – who happens to be Joseph – about what would happen to Jacob if he lost Benjamin.

It's a major Biblical story that touches on some major Torah issues.

For now? Let's take a look at one thing that may seem like a 'small' issue. But is really very big.

It has to do with a very interesting wording of the text.

... Judah doesn't just say: 'let me tell you something'.

But: '*let me say something in your ear*'.

Think about it. Emotions are running high. There's tension in the air. Accusations are being made and can be made all around. And Judah makes a point of speaking very softly.

Of almost whispering into Joseph's ear.

What a practical – and important – lesson about effective communication.

... If we really want people to listen to what we say?

Speak softly. Especially when it's hard to do!

Because when we make a valid point in a loud voice?

It's so likely that the other person is tuned out.

And already working on their rebuttal.

So ... next time you have a difference of opinion with someone? There's a tension in the air.

And you're convinced you're right?

... Think of Judah.

Speak firmly.

Convincingly.

And softly.

- *The pastor left a copy of his sermon on the podium.*

And there were notes in the margins.

... 'Speak slowly and emphasize.'

And, 'Point towards heaven.'

And then there was one last note.

... 'Weak point. Yell like crazy!'

(Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski)

2. Joseph took his brothers to meet Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to them: What is your occupation? (47:2)

It's an interesting first question.

'What do you do for a living?'

In fact, we do it all the time: *'Nice to meet you. What do you do?'*

But sometimes it seems like we focus too much on how people make a living.

That sometimes we judge people – and their value – by what they do.

Like saying 'what are you?'

When we really mean 'what do you do professionally?'

Of course career is important. And we should choose it carefully. And give it our best.

But Judaism teaches us not to define people – *including ourselves* – by their profession.

Because my career is not me.

What defines us, are our values. And our goals.

Our commitment to others.

To family. To the community.

And our commitment to G-d.

- *Remember the story of Jonah? We read it in shul on Yom Kippur.*

In it, he is asked "What is your occupation and from where do you come?"

His response: "I am a Hebrew. And I fear G-d."

It's a powerful message.

'I am a Jew.

Who tries to live his life according to G-d's will.'

That's my identity.

... Everything else is secondary.



Shabbat Shalom and best wishes for a wonderful week.

Rabbi Moshe Katz

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