

**"Actions speak louder than words" or**  
**"NO, no, no, no, NO!"**

(Old Testament, Chapter: Vah-Yee-Gah-sh)

**Summary:** Hearing Judah and his brothers beg for Benjamin, Joseph knows that his brothers now think more about others than themselves. An ancient and valuable lesson for our both our personal and business lives.

**Allegorical references:** Doing something of value to show you are sorry is much more credible than just saying you are sorry.

**Lesson:** Actions speak louder than words.

**Statistics:** 1,239 words (approximately 10 minutes speaking time); includes definition of terms used; quotes and sources.

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Vah-Yee-Gah-sh

And he went up.

In today's Torah reading Judah begs Joseph to let Benjamin go but Judah does not know yet that it is Joseph.

Hearing Judah and his brothers beg for Benjamin, Joseph knows that his brothers now think more about others than themselves. Joseph cannot pretend any more and tells his brothers who he is.

Joseph also tells his brothers not to blame themselves. That God made things happen so that Joseph could save them and everyone from starving and that they should get their father Jacob, all their families and things, and come to Egypt to live.

On the way, Jacob gives thanks to God and God tells Jacob not to be afraid of going to Egypt. God will go with Jacob to Egypt, make Jacob a great nation and bring him out of Egypt when the time is right.

What's missing from this story? (Pause)

Let's look at Page 276 45: 3-8.

Nivhalu- frightened, alarmed were they

Yachol- overcome, power, ability

Panav- paniim- face, countenance; panah-to turn from;

What's missing? The apology.

It is the word 'remorse' on the [chabad.org/parshah/vayigash/parshah](http://chabad.org/parshah/vayigash/parshah) in a nutshell that got me thinking.

I'm a parent, a husband, a son and a brother. How many of us in this room are parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brother or sister.

I don't know about you, but in my house we spend a good portion of the day having someone apologize to someone else... when we're not busy apologizing ourselves for our actions or inactions...

When I first had children I can hear myself saying:

What happened? Say you're sorry and you won't do it again!

What happened now? Say you're sorry and that you WON'T do it again!

Well, there came a point where I was asking one child to apologize to the other and this is what I was hearing in response:

"NO! No sorries. Sorries don't fix anything!"

Apparently my children are endowed with the knowledge of the sages...

So I modified my reaction to "Was that helpful? Did that get you what you wanted? How would you do that differently next time?" I'd wait for the response and then ask them to think about that the next time before they acted and to please apologize now.

It seems we're always saying we're sorry or instructing others to apologize.

In the greatest book ever written, in one of the most moving stories of reconciliation ever told... Joseph has already taught us this lesson-

It is our actions that say we repent. It is our actions that say we apologize. It is our actions that tell the world around us the measure of who we are today.

In the book 'The Bible for the Clueless and the Curious' by Nachum Braverman (a parting gift from my son's Moyel) it says the following:

'We all make mistakes. Our mistakes damage us and create distance between us and the people we love.

The bible's prescription for fixing our mistakes is called teshuva, which means "return"-- returning back to where we were and who we were, before our mistakes sent our lives askew.

Part of teshuva is saying "I'm sorry," but being sorry isn't enough. The real indication we've changed is when we're put in the same position we were before and we don't act the same way."

The passage concludes:

“Remember Joseph’s dreams of the stars and the sheaves of wheat bowing down to him? The dreams tell Joseph how to engineer the brothers’ return to the same choice they faced twenty-two years earlier when they sold him. To make the dreams come true he needs all the brothers in Egypt.”

So... Joseph facilitates a deception in order to place his brothers in as close a situation as possible from 22 years ago to give them the opportunity for teshuva. Not so that Joseph may be healed, but to enable his brothers to heal themselves.

This is important. This is a turning point for the Children of Israel and possibly the first instance of a lesson that would make it’s way down through the next 400 years to the time of the Exodus and our wandering in the desert where we are given opportunity after opportunity to make a different choice.

Admittedly the Torah takes the long way to go to get to the point...This is the first real story of reconciliation among brothers.

There was no opportunity for reconciliation with Caine and Abel.

Aside from both being present at Abraham’s burial, there is no record of reconciliation between Isaac and Ishmael- perhaps there was no need for reconciliation as their circumstance was generated entirely by Sarah.

Esau attempts reconciliation with Jacob- but their meeting is unplanned and Jacob is distrustful and moves on grateful no harm befalls him and his family.

This is a turning point in our collective psyche, our emotional growth. Seemingly, we have moved on from the insecurities of our tribal infancy to the idealism and confusion of our religious adolescence on the road to the ambition and bravado of our young national adulthood.

And let’s be realistic. How often do we find ourselves in the same situation with the same choices before us?

On the topic of choices, let me share with you the following modified excerpts from Jay Litvin’s essay ‘Vistas’

“We stand in this moment. Many such moments lay behind us. Many more, G-d willing, before us. In each of these moments there is, there was, there will always be a choice. A decision of importance or one concerning a simple day-to-day task. A choice between disciplining our child or accepting his or her behavior as a natural part of development. A choice on how to spend ten dollars or an evening, whether or not to respond to a comment, ask a question or think a thought.

At a certain point we have lived long enough to have made many choices and to be able to see the consequences they have wrought. From this vantage point, ...We

recognize that the full impact of each choice was not seen at the time, and had it been, then perhaps another choice would have been made, or the same choice, but with much more trepidation, less spontaneity, and a total absence of frivolity.

And after we are done blaming ourselves and each other, ultimately we conclude that we did the best that we could.

...We know that behind the imperative of doing the very best we can is the futility of doing anything more than we can.

Mr. Litvin concludes:

"And finally we realize that the failings and limitations, errors and miscalculations, even the consequences that cause the blood to rush to our face in shame are also a part of our limited perspective, our narrow vision, our lowly vista. For if we could climb high enough we would see that ultimately there is nothing to forgive."

Early in my working career a manager told me that managing is decision-making. You make choices. If you make a bad decision, you go ahead and make another decision that makes it better.

So, don't just say you're sorry. Do something about it. Make new choices. Take action. Figure out what you can do to make it right.

Showing you're sorry with action is much more powerful than saying just apologizing. And knowing this frees you to take make decisions, take action, and make the occasional mistake.

Shabbat Shalom.

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### **Definition of Terms Used:**

**God**- God with a capital 'G' denotes Israelite God

**Hashem**- Hebrew name for God, literally meaning "the name"

**Parsha**- Section of Torah

**Moyel**- An individual trained and certified to perform ritual Jewish circumcision

**Sedra**- Story within the section of Torah

**Shabbat**- Jewish Sabbath

**Shalom**- Hebrew greeting: hello; good-bye; peace

**Sefer**- Book

**Torah**- Old Testament, Pentateuch, Five Books of Moses