

Parshat Vayigash – Reconciliation is Always Possible – Dec. 21, 2012

Parshat Vayigash is the third Parsha about Joseph and with it the story of the brothers will have a happy ending. Joseph, as the second governor of Egypt, saw when his brothers came to Egypt in order to buy grains, and though he recognized them, the brothers did not notice that they were in front of the brother they sold in the past as a slave.

Joseph decided not to tell his brother who really he was and to “play” a little bit with them. We don’t know exactly why: Maybe he wanted to take revenge or maybe he thought it could be a good idea to test them and to check if they repented after so many years.

After many vicissitudes, Joseph manages to put their brothers in a situation which is very similar to when they sold him. He puts his cup between Benjamin’s belongings, accused them of robbery and, convinced that his youngest brother was innocent, they said to Joseph that the one who will be found with the cup could be taken by him as a slave.

Benjamin was finally found guilty and was ready to be taken by Joseph. In that moment his older brothers could have chosen to return to Egypt and left behind them their young brother; after all, as Joseph, he was also the son of Rebecca, Jacob’s real love. However Judah come closer to Joseph (without knowing he was Joseph) and begged on behalf of Benjamin, offering to take the place of his brother and being taken as a slave: *“For how can I go up to my father if the boy isn’t with me? I couldn’t bear to see my father so overwhelmed by anguish”* (Genesis 44:34)

We can see now how much the brothers have changed. After so many years of thinking about what happened (and probably also a lot of guilt) they have successfully accomplished what is the most difficult in a *Teshuva* (repentance) process: To acknowledge you own mistakes and in a similar situation not acting in the same way anymore. With this, the relationship that seemed to be absolutely damaged and without any hope to be solved, now is ready to allow for reconciliation.

When there is a sincere repentance every relationship can be repaired. We could apply this lesson to human beings, any community and society. Joseph, finally, seeing how his brothers changed and made *Teshuva*, can take rid of his anger and there is no hatred anymore. Reconciliation is possible and a better future for the family is envisioned; also for the Jewish people.

May God bless us so we can also learn how repentance can help us to live a better life and to assure the continuity of the Jewish people.

Shabbat Shalom!