

JUDAH, JUDAH, JUDAH

VAYIGASH

Genesis 44:18-47:27

Cast of Characters

Judah
Joseph
Benjamin
Naphtali
Levi
Simeon
Gad
Zebulon
Issachar
Reuben
Asher
Dan
Jacob

(*Judah enters.*)

JUDAH: Hello. I'm Judah. I'm a pretty important figure in the Torah. Where do you think the word "Judaism" comes from? But still, my brother Joseph is the one you always hear about. Joseph and his coat. Joseph and his dreams. Joseph, Joseph, Joseph.

(*Joseph enters.*)

JOSEPH: Did someone call my name?

JUDAH: No, Joseph. Now please . . . let *me* tell this story.

JOSEPH: Which story?

JUDAH: The one from Parashat Vayigash, in which I convince you to spare Benjamin's life.

JOSEPH: Oh, yes. But don't you think I should be telling that story? After all, it is about me.

JUDAH: Every story is about you. Let someone else have a turn.

(*Naphtali, Reuben, Gad, Benjamin, Issachar, Simeon, Dan, Asher, Levi, and Zebulon, all enter.*)

NAPHTALI: Yeah, Joseph. Give someone else a chance for once!

REUBEN: That's right. I'm the oldest, and you never hear about me.

GAD: That's not true, Reuben. They named a sandwich after you!

REUBEN: But it's not even kosher!

JOSEPH: Okay, okay. Let Judah tell the story.

JUDAH: Thank you. When Parashat Mitzrayim ended, Joseph had just found the silver goblet in Benjamin's sack. He then told his brothers that they may all go back to Canaan, but young Benjamin must stay and be Joseph's servant. Benjamin was plenty scared.

BENJAMIN: I am plenty scared.

JUDAH: And the brothers were troubled.

BROTHERS: (*In unison.*) We're troubled.

JUDAH: And then, one brother came forward — one who was brave enough to stand up to this powerful Egyptian leader; one who was strong enough to defend his brother, Benjamin; one who was a great leader — and a really nice guy. Me. (*To Joseph.*) Sir, may I have a word with you? And please, don't get angry, even though you're a very powerful man, as powerful as Pharaoh.

JOSEPH: Stop telling me things I already know. What is it you want to say?

JUDAH: My father is a very old man.

(Jacob enters, looking very old.)

JACOB: I'm one hundred and thirty, but who's counting?

JUDAH: And when you sent us to get Benjamin and bring him back here to Egypt, our father said . . .

JACOB: What are you, mishuga? I had two children in my old age. One was killed by wild beasts.

JOSEPH: *(Behind his hand.)* Oh, so that's what they told Dad.

ISSACHAR: What did you say?

JOSEPH: *(Covering up.)* I said that's very sad. Now go on, old man.

JACOB: And now you want to take my beloved Benjamin from me? If any harm should come to Benjamin, I could not live.

JUDAH: But Dad. If we don't bring Benjamin to Egypt, that powerful Egyptian leader we met there will not give us food.

JACOB: I guess I have no choice. *(Hugs Benjamin tightly.)* My son, it is so difficult for me to say good-bye to you.

BENJAMIN: *(During the hug.)* Not as hard as it is for me to breathe.

JACOB: Sorry, son. Hurry home.

(Jacob exits.)

JUDAH: And so you see, I can't go back without Benjamin. It would hurt my father too much. So . . . go ahead. Take me instead!

BROTHERS: No, punish me, punish me . . .

JOSEPH: I don't believe it. Once you would let your brother die. But now, you would give your own lives to save your brother!

SIMEON: How do you know so much about us?

JOSEPH: How do I know? This is so hard for me to say . . .

DAN: Oh no, he's gonna kill us. I just know he's gonna kill us . . .

JOSEPH: No, I won't, because . . . because . . .

ZEBULON: Because what?

JOSEPH: Because . . .

LEVI: Spit it out already!

JOSEPH: Because . . . all my servants, leave the room . . . now!

JUDAH: They are gone. Tell us, please.

JOSEPH: I am your brother — Joseph!

BROTHERS: *(All are stunned.)* Oh my!

NAPHTALI: But we threw you in a . . .

ASHER: And sold you to some . . .

LEVI: Well, you know . . .

JOSEPH: By a miracle, I was saved. And by another miracle, we are together again.

ISSACHAR: Does that mean you're not angry at us?

JOSEPH: I was angry for many years. But people change. And people forgive. I forgive you.

ZEBULON: Joseph — how can we repay you?

JOSEPH: Do any of you have my favorite coat?

(The brothers all shake their heads signifying no.)

GAD: No, but I have a nice beige raincoat that might fit you . . .

DAN: That's not going to help!

LEVI: We'll paint it!

JOSEPH: Brothers, do not worry about the coat or the terrible thing you did to me. What happened to me was what God wanted all along. Because now I have the power to give you food . . . and save you all from the famine.

ASHER: That's our Joe . . . always looking at the bright side!

JOSEPH: Now come here, you crazy kids, you. I want to hug each and every one of you. *(Joseph starts to hug each of them.)*

REUBEN: How did we get so lucky?

SIMEON: Just enjoy it while it lasts. The way our family's luck goes, it won't last long.

JOSEPH: *(Now hugging Benjamin tightly.)* Little Ben . . . the innocent one . . . I'm sorry I had to put you through this. What can I do to make it up to you?

BENJAMIN: You could let me breathe . . .

JUDAH: *(To the audience.)* And so Joseph sent us to get Jacob, our father. We told him Joseph was alive.

(Jacob enters.)

NAPHTALI: Pop, you're not going to believe this. Joseph is alive.

JACOB: I don't believe it!

(Jacob staggers and faints to the floor.)

JUDAH: He was very happy to hear the news . . .

JOSEPH: And so the brothers brought Jacob down to Egypt where the Israelites lived happily for many years . . . thanks to me . . . who forgave my brothers.

JUDAH: You mean thanks to me, whose unselfish words convinced you to forgive your brothers.

JOSEPH: Judah, there's no reason to argue. We all deserve the credit. Now go, celebrate your new wealth and happiness. I'll be right with you.

BROTHERS: Yeah, come on, let's celebrate . . .

(The brothers exit. Joseph is alone on stage. He turns to the audience.)

JOSEPH: And so, my family all came to live in Goshen, which also comes from the same word as the name of this parashah, Vayigash. So that just about wraps things up for Vayigash. Thank you all for coming. And speaking of wraps, if any of you should happen to come across my favorite coat, please let me know.