

THAT'S WORTH FIGHTING FOR

by Rabbi Label Lam

And Yehudah said, "What shall we say to my master? What shall we speak, and how shall we exonerate ourselves? G-d has found your servants' iniquity both we and the one in whose possession the goblet has been found." (Breishis 44:16)

But he (Yosef) said, "Far be it from me to do this! The man in whose possession the goblet was found he shall be my slave, but as for you go up in peace to your father." (Breishis 44:17)

Then Yeudah approached him and said, "Please, my lord, let now your servant speak something into my lord's ears, **and let not your wrath be kindled** against your servant, for you are like Pharaoh." (Breishis 44:18)

and let your wrath not be kindled: From here you learn that he spoke to him harshly. (Rashi)and let your wrath not be kindled: From here you learn that he spoke to him harshly.

It's hard to figure out sometimes the patterns of certain behaviors. How do great people pick their battles? Why does Avraham Avinu put up such a furious fight for saving Sodom and he goes quietly into the night when asked to sacrifice his own son?

I once saw such a beautiful shorter than short essay by Rabbi E. E. Dessler where he quotes one of the great Chassidic masters who stated that every character trait good and bad has a positive reason for being and helpful function. The Rebbe asked, "Then what's the utility of the Mida- the character trait of apikorsus- heresy?" Of what use is that?" The answer he gives is extremely powerful and it may help explain the distinction between Avraham's struggling for Sodom and conceding to the Akeida. He said, "Apikorsus is to be employed when it comes to helping others!" One should not say, "G-d will help!" He must move heaven and earth as if, G-d forbend, there is no G-d to forbend!" When it comes to himself, however, acceptance is often a large part of what's required.

Now when it comes to Yehuda's approach to Yosef, there's a dramatic change of gears that's puzzling in its extremeness. The last two versus in last week's portion betray a surrendering Yehuda who is willing to march with all his brothers into slavery. Yosef then pronounces his intentions in what must rank as one of the most sardonic lines of all time. "The man in whose possession the goblet was found he shall be my slave, but as for you go up in peace to your father." How can they possibly go up in peace to their father without Benjamin!?

But wait a second! Yehuda just surrendered all the brothers including Benjamin. That certainly

would have been a more fatal blow to father Yaakov. What's the logic that compels Yehuda to now suddenly pivot 180 degrees and become a warrior for Benjamin's freedom? What happened between the end of last week's portion to the beginning of this week's portion? For us it was a long week but for him it was a split second.

The answer is that when they understood that everyone was to be held in captivity they surrendered and accepted their collective fate. However, when it became apparent that only Benjamin was to be imprisoned Yehuda roared like a lion. Why?

Collectively they realized their guilt for having sold Yosef years earlier. Benjamin was caught up with the wrong company of people as King Solomon said, "Woe to the wicked and woe to his neighbor."

However, Benjamin himself was not only guiltless in the sale of Yosef, but he is counted as one of only four people in human history that died only because of the sin of the Adam and Chava that introduced death to the world. He was innocent as a child. So holding him only must then be a gross injustice and **that's worth fighting for**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.