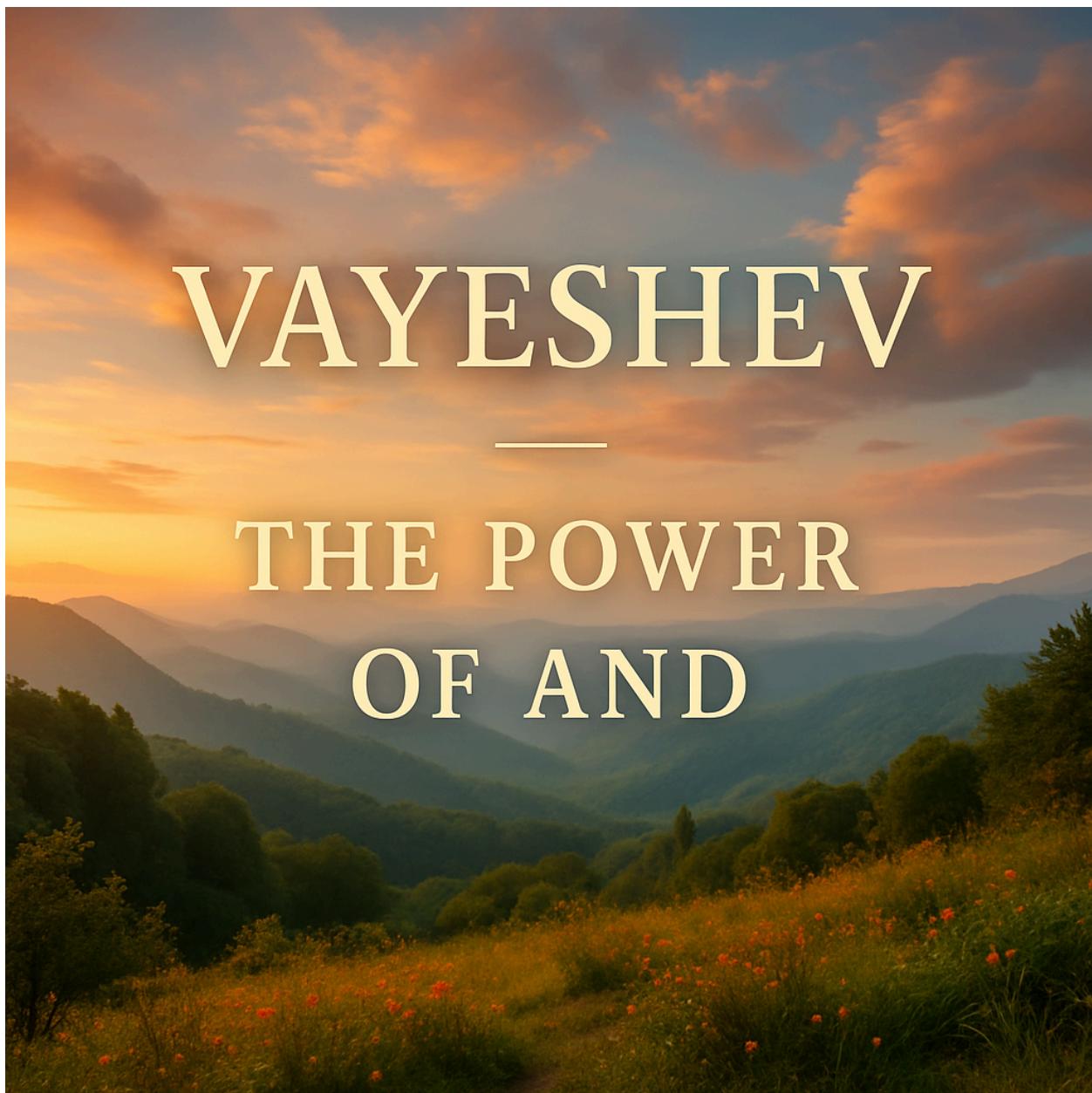


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# VAYESHEV

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## THE POWER OF AND

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## Vayeshev — The Power of “And” and the Courage of Truth

There are parashiyot that whisper, and there are parashiyot that charge into your life without permission.

**Vayeshev** belongs to the second category.

It begins with a family portrait that is anything but peaceful. Jealousy, rivalry, dreams, vulnerability, betrayal—all swirling in the same emotional pot. And right in the center stands Yosef, the beloved son, the dreamer, the lightning rod for everything his brothers wished was not true.

The pasuk says:

**“Vayir’u echav ki oto ahav avihem mikol echav. —  
And his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all the other  
brothers.”**

They saw it.

They felt it.

And it burned.

The Torah continues:

**“Vayisne’u oto, velo yachlu dabero l’shalom.”  
“And they hated him, and they could not speak to him in peace.”**

And here, Rashi drops a bomb—but a gentle one, layered in brilliance:

**From their *ginut* (their shame), we learn their *shevach* (their praise).  
They did not speak one way outwardly, while feeling differently inside.**

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They hated him—so they spoke accordingly.  
They did not act nice on the outside while harboring resentment on the inside.  
Their inner world and their outer world matched.

It's uncomfortable.  
It's messy.  
It's human.

But Rashi is teaching us something enormous:

**\*\*There is praise hidden inside shame.**

There is goodness folded even into dysfunction.  
If you learn to look for it, you will find diamonds in the dirt.\*\*

And most of us don't look.

Because it's easier to flatten people into one-dimensional categories:  
“She's bossy.”  
“He's irresponsible.”  
“She's controlling.”  
“He's aloof.”

But life—real life—is made of “**and**,” not “either/or.”

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## THE “AND” MUSCLE

Rashi is begging you to practice something spiritual, emotional, and deeply adult:

**Learn to say AND.**

“She's bossy...  
**and she also gives thousands of hours to the school PTA without pay.**”

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“He’s impossible to deal with...  
**and he’s the only one stepping up to make sure the charity event actually happens.”**

“My sibling never comes to family gatherings...  
**and he’s carrying the financial weight of our parents more than anyone else.”**

“Dad was never home when we were kids...  
**and we liked the home, vacations, and opportunities his absence paid for.”**

One does not erase the other.  
Both are true.  
Maturity is being able to hold contradictions without breaking.

**\*\*The brothers failed at the AND.**

And their failure fractured a family.\*\*

If they could say:

“Yosef reports negatively about us...  
**and he is the purest-hearted among us.”**

Or:

“He’s young and immature...  
**and he genuinely wants closeness with us.”**

Everything might have changed.

The entire exile of Egypt might never have been born.

All because someone couldn’t say **and**.

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But Rashi doesn’t stop there.  
There is a second lesson—equally piercing.

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## THE COURAGE OF TRUTH

Rashi praises the brothers because:

**They could not be two-faced.**

If they hated Yosef, they didn't fake it.  
Their internal world didn't contradict their external behavior.

Dangerous? Yes.

Immature? Maybe.

Pure? Absolutely.

Because the Torah forbids something far worse:

**“Lo tisna et achicha bilvavecha.”**  
**Do not hate your brother in your heart.**

Say it.

Speak it.

Release it.

We are living in a generation plagued by **passive-aggression**, silent treatment, smiling masks covering seething resentment.

People don't speak their pain.

So the pain becomes radioactive, poisoning the relationship from beneath the floorboards.

A marriage collapses not from one big argument—  
but from **100 unspoken sentences**.

A business partnership dies not from fraud—  
but from **years of suppressed frustration**.

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A parent-child relationship withers not from distance—  
but from **conversations that never happened.**

Therapists don't just give insight.  
The superpower of a therapist is that they **get you to speak.**

To finally put words to feelings.  
To align mouth and heart.

This is why Rashi praises the brothers.

Not because they hated.  
But because they **didn't fake peace while feeling war.**

Imagine a world where:

Husbands tell wives the truth—  
**without cruelty.**

Wives tell husbands the truth—  
**without collapse.**

Segue say what hurt—  
**without destroying the relationship.**

Friends say:  
“I love you AND you hurt me.”  
“I appreciate you AND I need more from you.”  
“I’m grateful AND I’m struggling.”

The AND muscle transforms truth from a weapon into a bridge.

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**NEGOTIATION OF REAL LIFE**

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Years ago, a top attorney from Mishcon de Reya gave rabbis a masterclass on negotiation.

He explained:

**Every human interaction is a negotiation.**

You're negotiating with your spouse, your kids, your boss, your own expectations.

But most people destroy negotiations because they don't know what they're actually negotiating for.

He told the story of an advertising agency serving Barclays Bank.  
They were being paid £1,000,000 a year.  
The contract renewal was approaching.

The lawyer asked the agency director:

**"At what point do you walk away?"**

The man guessed: 750k.  
Then 500k.  
Then 250k.

Eventually the truth came out:

**\*\*There was no walk-away point.**

The client was too valuable for the brand's reputation.  
Even at £0, they needed Barclays.\*\*

It was a **loss leader**—  
a temporary loss that creates a much larger gain.

And suddenly:  
Loss AND gain.  
Bad AND good.  
Sacrifice AND success.

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Life is not binary; it is layered.

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And then the attorney looked at the rabbis and said:

**“Most of your frustration in life comes from not knowing what you’re actually negotiating for.”**

Your marriage.  
Your parenting.  
Your friendships.  
Your service to G-d.  
Your community.

If you don’t know what matters most, you will fight over the wrong things.

**Vayeshev — The Power of “And” and the Courage of Truth**

**But the parashah is not finished teaching us.**

**If Part 1 was about the AND muscle, Part 2 is about the integrity muscle — the alignment between what you feel and what you say... and the deep spiritual danger of living with a split between the two.**

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TRUTHINESS: WHEN HEART AND MOUTH MATCH

Rashi’s praise of the brothers is blunt:

“They could not speak to him peacefully.”

Not *would not*.

Could not.

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They were incapable of duplicity.

Their mouths did not know how to form words that contradicted their hearts.

Contrast that with the modern world:

People smile and seethe.

They say, "No problem," while dying inside.

They say, "I'm fine," while drowning.

We have become connoisseurs of polite fakery.

And our relationships are paying the price.

The Torah's command is the opposite:

"Do not hate your brother in your heart — rebuke him."

Tell him. Say it. Bring it to the surface.

Not to hurt him —

but to stop hurting *yourself*.

Resentment is emotional mold.

Leave it in the dark long enough, and it will ruin the structure of the relationship.

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## THE THERAPIST'S SECRET SUPERPOWER

People think therapy is about brilliance, technique, analysis.

But the greatest therapists have one true gift:

They get you to talk.

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To stop swallowing.  
To stop suppressing.  
To stop decorating your pain with silence.

When someone finally says:

- “That bothered me.”
- “I felt overlooked.”
- “I felt unappreciated.”
- “I felt alone.”
- “I needed you.”

That moment is more healing than the most genius psychological insight.

Words release the pressure valve.  
Truth brings oxygen into a suffocating relationship.

It is no coincidence that in Hebrew:

\*\*“Dibur” (speech)

shares a root with  
“Davar” (thing).\*\*

When you speak something, you create a *thing* —  
a structure that can be understood, held, and healed.

The brothers' greatness is that they spoke their truth, not in a refined, eloquent way — but in a raw, honest way.

And because they did not bury their hatred, it eventually became addressable.

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Buried emotions rot.  
Expressed emotions breathe.

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## THE PRICE OF PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE LIVING

Modern relationships often fall into two dangerous patterns:

### Pattern 1: The Silent Volcano

Everything looks fine...  
until one day the marriage explodes.

Years of swallowed truth erupt in a single moment:

“I’ve been unhappy for years.”  
“I never felt supported.”  
“You never understood me.”  
“You weren’t there for me.”

This is not truth — this is accumulated resentment.

### Pattern 2: The Smile-Mask Hypocrisy

People who never say what they feel...  
but always feel what they never say.

They talk “normally,” but everything they do drips with quiet hostility:

- Cold tone
- Subtle digs
- Delayed responses

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- Withholding affection
- Avoidance

This is the emotional version of carbon monoxide.  
Colorless. Odorless. Lethal.

Rashi is screaming:  
Don't live that way.  
Don't love that way.  
Don't parent that way.  
Don't be that way.

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## RELATIONSHIPS ARE BUILT ON PREDICTABLE TRUTH

People don't need you to be perfect.  
They need to know where you stand.

You become trustworthy not by being agreeable —  
but by being *consistent*.

When someone knows that what you say is what you feel...  
and what you feel is what you say...

They learn to trust your silence, your words, your apologies, your praise.

The brothers, for all their flaws, were emotionally *integrated*.  
Their insides matched their outsides.

Imagine a world where:

- You never had to guess what someone meant.

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- You never had to decode subtext.
- You never had to fear unspoken anger.
- You never had to read between the lines.

This is the world Rashi is hinting at.

A world where people are not perfect —  
but they are *honest*.

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## THE “AND” THAT SAVES RELATIONSHIPS

Let's tie the two lessons together:

### 1. The AND Muscle:

Hold contradictions.  
See praise within shame.  
Find nuance instead of absolutes.

### 2. The Integrity Muscle:

Align heart and mouth.  
Speak truth without cruelty.  
Let honesty be a bridge, not a bomb.

These two tools — AND + TRUTH — can save marriages, friendships, communities, and lives.

People break when they feel unseen.  
People heal when they feel understood.

People lash out when their truth has no home.  
People grow when their truth is welcomed.

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People close off when they're shamed.

People soften when they're heard.

This is the Torah's roadmap for emotional literacy and spiritual adulthood.

My friends, when you learn to use these two inner muscles — AND and TRUTH — you begin to see the world as Rashi does: with depth, with nuance, with compassion, and with honesty.

You stop demanding perfection from imperfect people.

You stop interpreting flaws as negations of worth.

You stop assuming malice where there is only misunderstanding.

You stop letting silence do the talking that your heart desperately needs your mouth to do.

You start to see the *shvach* — the praise — hidden even inside someone's *ginut* — their shame or flaw.

And when you do that, something magnificent happens:

You become capable of relationships that can never be broken.

Because you are no longer operating in the brittle world of "either/or."

You are operating in the divine world of "this *and* this."

You are no longer living in the defensive world of polite lies.

You are living in the liberating world of gentle truth.

This is what Parashat Vayeshev calls us to do.

This is what the story of Yosef and his brothers begs us to learn before the pain of their rupture repeats itself in ours.

And perhaps that is why the Midrash says that the entire saga of Yosef and his brothers was a training ground for Am Yisrael — a workshop in emotional maturity, truth-speaking, nuance, and reconciliation.

Because a nation cannot survive if its members live with either/or thinking.

A family cannot survive if its members hide their truths behind smiles.

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A marriage cannot survive if honesty is felt as danger rather than connection.  
A community cannot survive if it cannot see the good within the messy.

One word could have saved the brothers: AND.  
One sentence could have saved the relationship: "We're hurt — let's talk."

And so the Torah invites us, every year:

\*\*Learn what they didn't.

So you don't repeat what they did.\*\*

Amen.

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## Shabbat Table Discussion Questions

Use these at your Shabbat table, with your family, children, guests, or community to turn the derasha into a living conversation:

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### 1 Where is the “AND” in someone you’ve judged?

Think of a person who frustrates you.

What *shvach*, what praise or hidden good, exists inside the behavior that bothers you?

What happens to your emotions when you acknowledge both sides?

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### 2 Are you a “silent volcano” or a “smile-mask” person?

Which avoidance pattern do you tend to fall into?

Where did you learn it?

And what would honesty — delivered gently — actually change?

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### 3 What truth are you currently swallowing that needs to be spoken?

Not to fight.

Not to hurt.

But to heal.

What truth have you been afraid to express, and what would be the smallest “safe version” of expressing it?

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## **4 How do you react when someone tells *you* the truth?**

**Do you create safety for honesty, or do you punish people for being real with you?**

**How can you become someone whose loved ones feel safe speaking to?**

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## **5 Which relationship in your life would transform most from adding these two muscles: “AND” + HONESTY?**

**What is one action you can take this week to move it forward?**

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