



As Tamar Weissman recalls, citing the Midrash, “The Holy One said to Yehuda: ‘Because you were MODEH [admitted guilt], [so] will your brothers be MODEH that you be king over them.’”

Yes, Yehuda is both the one who thanks and appreciates (HODAYA) and the one who is MODEH, who admits and acknowledges.

Yehuda displayed the qualities of the righteous king, putting personal interests aside for the sake of the bigger quest. Yehuda is ready to take personal responsibility for the second son of Rachel, even though Leah’s sons berated her. Yehuda is ready to put his life on the line to protect Binyamin and, when facing Yosef, lives up to his commitments.

Yehuda was once so low (“Yehuda is a lion’s whelp”). And now he has risen up (“He stooped down; he couched as a lion. And as a lioness, who shall rouse him up?”). Yehuda teaches us that each of us, too, can rise up from moments of despair and reach majestic heights. **MP**

The “Lion’s Whelp” Rises Up

Yehuda, who rises up to confront Yosef in our Parsha, is an enigmatic character. For previously he spoke to the Egyptian viceroy, subservient and forlorn, and conceded that he and his brothers were Yosef’s slaves. But now, rather than despair, Yehuda stands up to the Egyptian ruler.

This is the Yehuda who spared Yosef’s life and persuaded his brothers to sell him to the Yishmaelites. But this is also the Yehuda, who Rashi describes, fell out with his brothers: They castigated him for not exerting his leadership and urging that they bring Yosef back to their father.

Yehuda, we know, then isolated himself from family life, consorted with the Canaanites, and fell into a spiritual abyss that reached its nadir with his illicit intimacy with Tamar.

Nevertheless, at that point, in a brave move, Yehuda not only exonerated his daughter-in-law, he also admitted his guilt in public.

Now, paradoxically, Yehuda’s previous leadership qualities resurfaced.