

In this week's parashah, Vayigash, our ancestor Judah, does something very difficult. He is in Egypt, far away from home, begging for food. His youngest brother, Benjamin, has been accused of being a thief, and Judah is facing a powerful Egyptian official, who is really his brother, Joseph. But he doesn't recognize Joseph. It's been years since he saw Joseph. The last time he saw Joseph, Joseph was his pesky younger brother, and Judah was picking on him. Judah and all the other brothers ganged up on Joseph and sent him away

Now Joseph has grown so powerful and scary, that Judah doesn't recognize him, and Joseph himself isn't sure whether he even wants his brothers to know who he really is. But the name of the parashah is "Vayigash, because the first words are "vayigash elav yehudah:" Judah approached him. Judah approached Joseph, the brother he didn't even recognize.

Instead of running away, Judah got closer. Instead of hiding, Judah told Joseph the whole truth about who he was and what he had done.

And Judah's courage and honesty made Joseph decide to show who he was, and to greet his brothers.

The word "Jew" comes from the name "Judah." And this parashah reminds us that to be a Jew, it is important to face what and who we fear. It is important to be honest and courageous. And when we speak our truths, we can encourage others to do the same, and to meet each other more fully.