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## MORALITY LESSON PLAN

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TOPIC: THE MORALITY IN THE YEHUDA AND TAMAR SAGA

**Instruction:** Please skim all of Chapter 38. While reading consider the following questions:

- א) How committed are each of the characters to acting morally?
- ב) What actions stood out to you as noticeably moral or immoral?
- ג) What moral struggles do the characters experience?

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### DETAILED PESSUKIM QUESTIONS

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#### פסוק א

- 1) What do you think the Chumash mean when it says וירד יהודה מאת אחיו? Is it literal? If it's not literal, what is it telling us?
- 2) See Rashi's comments on פסוק א. How would Rashi answer Question #1?
- 3) See this quote from Rabbi Sacks. How does the parsha's previous episode influence this episode, in light of Rabbi Sacks' insight?

*"There is a deep connection between ethics and the human spirit, between morality and morale. If we lose the former, the latter begins to fail." (Faith in the Future, p.12)*

#### פסוק כו

In your own words: what does Yehuda's admittance ממני צדקה mean?

See Rashi, Ramban, Seforno

רש"י - **צדקה** - בדבריה, **ממני** - היא מעוברת.

ורבותינו דרשו: שיצתה בת קול ואמרה: **ממני** ומאתי יצאו הדברים. לפי שהיתה צנועה בבית חמיה גזרתי שיצאו ממנה מלכים, ומשבט יהודה גזרתי להעמיד מלכים בישראל.

רמב"ן

והנכון: שהוא כמו צדיקים וטובים ממנו (מלכים א' ב': ל"ב), ויאמר אל דוד צדיק אתה ממני כי אתה גמלתני הטובה ואני גמלתיך הרעה (שמואל א' כ"ד: י"ז), **צדקה** במעשיה יותר **ממני** כי היא הצדקת ואני החוטא אליה **שלא נתתיה לשלה בני**. והטעם כי שלה הוא היבם, ואם לא יחפוץ לקחת יבמתו, אביו הוא הגואל אחריו כאשר פרשתי למעלה (רמב"ן בראשית ל"ח: ח') בדין היבום.

ספרנו

צדקה ממני - אף על פי שהיא באה אלי במרמה, ואני לא ראיתיה כלל, כי שלחתי הגדי, מכל מקום היא צדקה במרמתה, שהיתה לתכלית טוב ורצוי לאל יתברך, שהוא קיום הזרע לא להנאת עצמה, שהרי חזרה לאלמנותה תיכף, יותר ממה שצדקתי אני בקיום אמונתי, שהיתה הכוונה בו לכבודי ולהשיג ערבוני, שהוא תכלית נפסד וגרוע. כאמרם זכרונם לברכה: גדולה עבירה לשמה ממצוה שלא לשמה (נזיר כ"ג:).

According to each of the Mefarshim: In what way does morality play a part in the story?

**Rashi** -

**Ramban** -

**Seforno** -

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#### A HEBREW LETTER LESSON – THINK, PAIR, SHARE

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Consider the letters in the words for truth (אמת) and falsehood (שקר). Notice that the letters for truth stand on their own, while the letters for falsehood have only one "leg" each and will always fall down.

- ➔ When in your life have you gained by telling the truth/action morally despite the inclination to do the wrong thing?

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 BIG QUESTIONS
 

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4) Why do you think Yehuda saved Tamar, thereby embarrassing himself?

5) See this quote from Rabbi Sacks. According to Rabbi Sacks, why do you think Yehuda chose to embarrass himself to save Tamar?

*"Morality makes a difference to the way we think about problems and their solution. It shifts us from self-interest to concern for the common good, and from a narrow focus on immediate gain to more distant horizons. We need to be able to think in this collective, long-term way if we are to avoid the short-sightedness that led people to think that you could abandon morality without paying a momentous price." (Morality, p.159)*

6) How does this episode end? What is the resolution to the Yehuda and Tamar relationship?

7) Who will ultimately descend from פֶּרֶץ? (see Rut 4:18-22 and recall Rashi on 26)?

8) Why do you think the Chumash feel it necessary to include the names of the children born to Tamar at this moment?

- a. See this quote from Rabbi Sacks. Consider again, how does this episode set the stage for the leadership of the Jewish people? What *character traits* are on display that have societal implications?

*"One of the great historical lessons is that societies become strong when they care for the weak. They become rich when they care for the poor. They become invulnerable when they care for the vulnerable." (Morality, p.336)*

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THINKING FURTHER

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Where else have we see the term **הכר נא**? What about that episode connects to this episode?

Compare Yehuda's actions in the Yosef story to his actions in the Tamar story. What motivated him to sell Yosef? What motivated him to save Tamar? Is it possible that they are 2 sides of the same motivation?