



TEXTing

a Hartman podcast hosted by Elana Stein Hain

Episode 7

Pride and Shame

Study Guide

Elana Stein Hain and Christine Hayes

How to use this guide

This resource is meant as a tool to facilitate learning grounded in the sources discussed in each episode of TEXTing. The study guide includes an opening question and “The TEXT Message,” which breaks down the texts mentioned in each episode with quotes from the episode and questions for conversation. Learners can listen to the episode before or after engaging with this guide or use the guide as a stand-alone tool for learning.

If you have questions or comments about this guide, or want to share how you have used it, please email Jessica Fisher at jessica.fisher@shalomhartman.org.

Episode Description

In excess, both pride and shame can be destructive forces, yet to cultivate a healthy ego, one needs a moderate dosing of each. In this episode of Texting, **Elana Stein Hain** and **Christine Hayes** unpack tractate Yoma page 22b, which highlights the tension between the need to stand up for oneself and the imperative to be magnanimous and forgiving. What emerges is the importance of interpersonal relationships, as we strive to treat others as we want to be treated.

Opening Questions

Elana Stein Hain opens the podcast episode with an anecdote from her own life where her sense of pride and shame fed into one another. She relates that on her first date with her husband, he asked her if she remembered something she had taught months before. She immediately felt indignant that he did not think she was a serious teacher. She responded defensively, afraid he was shaming her, when he was just making conversation and curious about what she taught. As Elana explains in her opening, “Both pride and shame can be counterproductive, and even destructive.”

Both Elana and Christine Hayes describe pride and shame as a spectrum. If you have too much pride, you can become self-centered and stubborn, while too much shame can lead to self-doubt and self-censorship. But pride and shame also have important virtues, including understanding one’s value and humility.

- **Can you think of a story from your own life where pride or shame led you to misunderstand someone’s intentions or led you down the wrong path?**
- **When have you found pride or shame playing productive roles in your life?**
- **How do you manage feelings of pride and shame? How do you identify the right response to a given situation and how much are you able to control your instinctive response?**

The TEXT Message

Part I: Healthy Ego-- Humility

1. Talmud Bavli Yoma 22b

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר שְׁמוּאֵל: מִפְּנֵי מָה לֹא נִמְשְׁכָה מַלְכוּת בֵּית שְׁאוּל — מִפְּנֵי שְׁלֹא הָיָה בּוֹ שׁוּם דּוֹפֵי, דְּאָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן מְשׁוּם רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן הַצְּדָק: אֵין מַעֲמִידִין פְּרָנָס עַל הַצִּיבוֹר אֲלָא אִם כֵּן קוּפָה שְׁל שְׂרָצִים תְּלוּיָהּ לוֹ מֵאַחוֹרָיו. שְׁאִם תְּזוּחַ דְּעֵתוֹ עָלְיוֹ אוֹמְרִין לוֹ: חֲזוֹר לְאַחוֹרָיִךְ.

Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: Why did the kingship of the house of Saul not continue on to succeeding generations? It is because there was no flaw in his ancestry; he was of impeccable lineage. As Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yehotzadak: One appoints a leader over the community only if he has a box full of creeping animals hanging behind him, i.e., he has something inappropriate in his ancestry that preceded him. Why is that? It is so that if he exhibits a haughty attitude toward the community, one can say to him: Turn and look behind you and be reminded of your humble roots. This is why David's kingdom lasted while Saul's did not, as David descended from a family with problematic ancestry, namely Tamar (see Genesis, chapter 38) and Ruth the Moabite (see Ruth 4:18–22).

In this *sugya* (section of Talmud), the rabbis try to explain why Saul, the first king of Israel, did not become the head of a dynastic line to the throne. This passage explains that a leader needs to have some kind of flaw in their background so they can't look down at others' mistakes without the awareness that someone could turn around and do the same back. As Elana notes, the expectation of a flawed background "forces a humble posture." Rav Yehuda and Rabbi Yochanan argue that, because of his lack of ancestral baggage, Saul may not have enough humility. The implication is that his successor, David, was able to start a dynasty, because he *does* have problematic ancestry (see Genesis 38 and Ruth 4:18-22 for more on David's ancestors).

- Does the Talmud's explanation make sense to you? Why or why not?
- Do you think it is important for a leader to be flawed or to have experienced hardship to be effective?
- If the goal is humility, are there other ways to attain it?
- What qualities or experiences do you find essential for leadership?

During their conversation, Christine notes that this *sugya* seems to notice a biblical pattern of God choosing to be in relationship with flawed people. As she explains, the idea that there is a virtue behind being chosen is "not the biblical message. The biblical message is that there is no place for arrogance here... It reminds people to remain humble... and sends a message that God does not expect an impossible virtue."

- Why do you think the Bible features so many flawed characters and leaders? How does it impact your experience as a reader of biblical narratives?
- How does the theme of God choosing underdog and imperfect figures as partners impact your own relationship to God and theology?

Part II: Healthy Ego--Pride

2. Talmud Bavli Yoma 22b, cont.

אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב: מִפְּנֵי מָה נֶעְנַשׁ שָׁאוּל — מִפְּנֵי שְׂמִיחַת עַל כְּבוֹדוֹ, שְׂנֵאָמַר: "וַיְבִי בְּלִיעַל אָמְרוּ מָה יוֹשִׁיעֵנו זֶה וַיִּבְזוּהוּ וְלֹא הִבִּיאוּ לוֹ מִנְחָה וַיְהִי כְּמַחְרִישׁ", וּכְתִיב: "וַיֵּלֶךְ נָחַשׁ הָעֵמוּזִי וַיַּחֵן עַל יָבֵשׁ גִּלְעָד וְגו'".

Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: Why was Saul punished in that he was ultimately led to commit the sins described above? Because at the very outset of his reign he inappropriately forwent his royal honor, as it is stated with regard to Saul's inauguration: "And some base fellows said: How can this man save us? So they disparaged him and brought him no present. But he made himself as if he did not hear" (I Samuel 10:27). And it is stated immediately afterward: "And Nahash the Ammonite marched up and encamped against Jabesh-gilead" (I Samuel 11:1). The implication is that if Saul had forcefully assumed his throne, Nahash would not have dared to attack the people of Jabesh-gilead. In this way, his humility led to the crisis.

Here the rabbis unpack another piece of Saul's story: in a moment of celebrating this milestone, why, they wonder, was he punished. Rav Yehuda says Saul was punished for being overly humble. This seems to contradict the previous section, which worried that Saul would not be sufficiently humble because of his background. Elana notes that in the first section, the problem Saul faces is one he can't control, which is his family of origin. In the second section, Saul's punishment is the result of his own inaction.

- Describe a moment when you experienced a consequence—personal or professional—for being too humble. Could you imagine behaving differently if presented with the opportunity to revisit the experience?
- Can you describe a time when you initially thought your skills or background did not make you the right person for a role, but then came to realize these qualities were, in fact, helpful assets?

Christine sees the extremes reflected in these two explanations—not humble and too humble—as representative of the ways we tend to tie our own success or failure to some virtue we do or do not possess. It is tempting to see success as a sign of our virtue and see ourselves as flawless because of our success.

- Christine points out that this belief will lead to disaster. Why do you think that is the case? Can you think of examples from literature or films where this plays out?
- One potential outcome of this belief is not seeking counsel from others. Is there someone you turn to in order to keep yourself in check or to build you up? How do you best receive this type of feedback?

Christine and Elana grapple with the questions behind the problem Rav Yehuda identifies: is the issue that Saul is not defending his God-approved kingship or that, as a leader, he needs to demonstrate his authority?

- Which of these questions do you think Rav Yehuda is asking and why? Are the stakes different depending on the question?
- Elana differentiates between a private individual who forgoes their own honor as opposed to a public leader. How does an excess of humility impact a leader differently than an individual?

Part III: Revenge or Rolling Over?

3. Talmud Bavli Yoma 22b-23a

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן מִשׁוּם רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יְהוֹצְדָק: כָּל תַּלְמִיד חָכָם

And Rabbi Yoḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yehotzadak: Any Torah scholar...

שְׂאִינוּ נוֹקָם וְנוֹטֵר כְּנָחָשׁ — אֵינוּ תַלְמִיד חָכָם. וְהִכְתִּיב: "לֹא תִקּוֹם וְלֹא תִטּוֹר?" הֲהוּא, בְּמִמּוֹן הוּא דְכִתְיב, דְּתִנָּיָא: אֵיזוֹ הִיא נְקִימָה וְאֵיזוֹ הִיא נְטִיחָה? נְקִימָה — אָמַר לוֹ: הֲשְׂאִילְנִי מִגְלָד, אָמַר לוֹ: לָאוּ. לְמַחֵר אָמַר לוֹ הוּא: הֲשְׂאִילְנִי קַרְדּוּמָד, אָמַר לוֹ: אֵינִי מִשְׂאִילָד, כְּדָרְדָד שְׂלֵא הֲשְׂאִלְתַּנִּי — זֶה הִיא נְקִימָה.

...who does not avenge himself and bear a grudge like a snake when insulted is not considered a Torah scholar at all, as it is important to uphold the honor of Torah and its students by reacting harshly to insults. The Gemara asks: But isn't it written explicitly in the Torah: "You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against the children of your people" (Leviticus 19:18)? The Gemara responds: That prohibition is written with regard to monetary matters and not personal insults, as it was taught in a baraita: What is revenge and what is bearing a grudge? Revenge is illustrated by the following example: One said to his fellow: Lend me your sickle, and he said: No. The next day he, the one who had refused to lend the sickle, said to the other person: Lend me your ax. If he said to him: I will not lend to you, just as you did not lend to me, that is revenge.

וְאֵיזוֹ הִיא נְטִיחָה? אָמַר לוֹ: הֲשְׂאִילְנִי קַרְדּוּמָד, אָמַר לוֹ: לֹא. לְמַחֵר אָמַר לוֹ: הֲשְׂאִילְנִי חִלּוּקָד; אָמַר לוֹ: הִילָד, אֵינִי כְמוֹתָד שְׂלֵא הֲשְׂאִלְתַּנִּי. זֶה הִיא נְטִיחָה.

And what is bearing a grudge? If one said to his fellow: Lend me your ax, and he said: No, and the next day he, the one who had refused to lend the ax, said to the other man: Lend me your robe; if the first one said to him: Here it is, as I am not like you, who would not lend to me, that is bearing a grudge. Although he does not respond to his friend's inconsiderate behavior in kind, he still makes it known to his friend that he resents his inconsiderate behavior. This baraita shows that the prohibition relates only to monetary matters, such as borrowing and lending.

In this section, the conversation shifts from Saul and kingship to Torah scholars, who saw themselves as the leaders of their time. Rabbi Yochanan segues from Saul by connecting the idea that a king should not tolerate disrespect to the same being true for a Torah scholar. In fact, the Torah scholar here is told to take vengeance “like a snake” if they are insulted.

- Elana asks if this mandate for vengeance is because a Torah scholar, like a king, represents something bigger than themselves or is it because any person should stand up for themselves. What do you think?

Even though Leviticus 19:18 says *not* to seek revenge or bear a grudge, here the rabbis posit that there are times when it is appropriate. While the case focuses on scholars, it highlights a universal human experience.

- Can you think of cases where vengeance or grudge-holding seems like the right response between individuals?

Christine and Elana unpack additional texts on pride and shame (see “Texts for Further Study Below”) and note that the relationship between the one who insults and the one who is insulted impacts the response. Elana explains, “Part of the discussion of pride, shame, humility right now is that when people accuse you of things, not because they’re your friends or they’re trying to help you, but actually it’s because they fundamentally don’t care about you.”

- Have you been accosted for something by someone who does not care about you? Do you think you would have received their accusation differently if it was from someone you loved?

וְצַעֲרָא דְגוּפָא לָא? וְהָא תַנְיָא: הִנְעֵלְבִין וְאִינְן עוֹלְבִין, שׁוֹמְעִין חֲרָפְתּוֹ וְאִינְן מְשִׁיבִין, עוֹשִׂין מַאֲהָבָה וְשִׂמְחִין בְּיַסּוּרֵין, עֲלֵיהֶן הִכְתוּב אוֹמֵר: “וְאֹהֲבָיו כְּצֵאת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בְּגִבּוֹרֶתוֹ!”

The Gemara asks: But does the prohibition against vengeance really not relate also to matters of personal anguish suffered by someone? Wasn’t it taught in a baraita: Those who are insulted but do not insult others, who hear themselves being shamed but do not respond, who act out of love for God, and who remain happy in their suffering, about them the verse states: “They that love God be as the sun when it goes forth in its might” (Judges 5:31). This baraita shows that one should forgive personal insults as well as wrongs in monetary matters.

וְהָאָמַר רַבָּא: כָּל הַמַּעֲבִיר עַל מַדּוּתֵיו — מַעֲבִירִין לוֹ עַל כָּל פְּשָׁעָיו! דְּמַפְיִסוּ לֵיהּ וּמְפִיִּיס .

The Gemara asks: But didn’t Rava say: With regard to whoever forgoes his reckonings with others for injustices done to him, the heavenly court in turn forgoes punishment for all his sins? The Gemara answers: Indeed, even a scholar who is insulted must forgive insults, but that is only in cases where his antagonist has sought to appease him, in which case he should allow himself to be appeased toward him. However, if no apology has been offered, the scholar should not forgive him, in order to uphold the honor of the Torah.

In the initial unpacking of vengeance, the rabbis determine that the Torah prohibition on holding a grudge is about exacting vengeance on financial matters. Here, the Talmud returns to the question of personal insult as a justification for seeking vengeance, using an earlier rabbinic text that those who are insulted but do not respond are seen as doing the right thing, because a person should forgive personal insults, too. The *sugya* continues by recognizing that even if we shouldn't act on our grudges, it is understandable that we may have an emotional response to an insult.

But the *sugya* concludes by saying that if the antagonist asked for forgiveness, the scholar or person should forgive them and, in fact, that all of the sins of the forgiver will be forgiven! If, however, there is no move for forgiveness, then the scholar should not forgive the person, in order to preserve the Torah's honor.

Elana points out that at the beginning of the *sugya*, Saul was punished for staying silent in the face of being mocked, but at the end we are told that it is the responsibility of the people who did harm to make the first move to repair the harm. She points out that in the latter case, it is about relationship building.

- Share a moment, personal or societal, where a person who has done harm stepped forward first to take responsibility and apologize. What made the apology feel sincere and relationship-repairing? What makes similar apologies ineffective?
- The verse in Leviticus that teaches us that we should not bear grudges is the same verse where we learn, "Love your neighbor as yourself." How is this model of reparation after insult an example of fulfilling the commandment to love your neighbor?
- Elana shares that there are times when a person apologizes, but is not capable of changing their behavior. In this case, it seems like a case of someone who should *not* ignore what happened and forgive. Ultimately, Chris concludes, we have to calibrate to each situation. How do you do that math for yourself?

Synthesis

Elana divides the *sugya* into the following sections:

1. How did Saul not succeed? Either because he was too entitled or because he didn't take himself seriously enough.
2. How should someone of good values behave? There is a spectrum: you can't ignore when someone has treated you poorly, so in financial matters, you should listen to what the person has to say; in the case of a personal insult, don't act on it, but there is no expectation that you will completely forget the incident and move on, especially if the antagonist does not ask for forgiveness.
3. How does the relationship (or lack of relationship) impact this equation?

In her conclusion, Elana focuses on the question of pride and shame within a relationship or outside of a relationship, noting that there are many ways these questions apply to our own lives. She cites Israel advocacy, antisemitism, and personal relationship as examples.

- What contexts come to mind for you on the questions raised by this *sugya*?
- How can you push past your pride or shame in order to deepen relationships, while still preserving your own honor?

Texts for Further Study

1. 1 Samuel 10:26-27

וְגַם־שְׂאוֹל הִלָּךְ לְבֵיתוֹ גִּבְעָתָהּ וַיֵּלְכוּ עִמּוֹ הַחֵייל אֲשֶׁר־נָגַע אֱלֹהִים בְּלִבָּם: וַיִּבְנִי בְלִיעֵל אָמְרוּ מִה־יִשְׁעֵנוּ לָהּ וַיִּבְזְאוּ וְלֹא־הִבִּיאוּ לָהּ מִנְחָה וַיְהִי כַּמְחַרֵּשׁ:

Saul also went home to Gibeah, accompanied by upstanding men whose hearts God had touched. But some scoundrels said, “How can this fellow save us?” So they scorned him and brought him no gift. But he pretended not to mind.

2. Berachot 7b

וְאָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן מִשּׁוֹם רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחִי: מִנֵּינן שְׂאִין מְרָצִין לוֹ לְאָדָם בְּשַׁעַת כַּעֲסוֹ — שְׁנֵאמַר: “פָּנֵי יֵלְכוּ וְהִנְחוּתִי לָךְ.”

And Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai: From where is it derived that one must not placate a person while the person is in the throes of his anger? As it is stated: “My face will go, and I will give you rest” (Exodus 33:14).

3. Eicha (Lamentations) Rabba 1

אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בֶּר נַחְמוֹ, בְּשַׁעַת שְׁחָרַב בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בָּא אַבְרָהָם לְפָנֵי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בּוֹכָה וּמְמַרְט זְקֵנוֹ וְתוֹלֵשׁ שַׁעְרוֹת רֹאשׁוֹ וּמַכָּה אֶת פָּנָיו וְקוֹרֵעַ אֶת בְּגָדָיו וְאֹפֵר עַל רֹאשׁוֹ, וְהָיָה מִהִלָּךְ בְּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וְסוֹפֵד וְצוֹעֵק, אָמַר לְפָנֵי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מִפְּנֵי מָה נִשְׁתַּנֵּיתִי מִכָּל אִמָּה וְלִשׁוֹן שְׂבָאֲתִי לִיָּדִי בּוֹשֶׁה וּכְלָמָה זֹאת, כִּינֵן שְׂרָאוּהוּ מִלְּאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת אִף הֵם קִשְׁרוּ הַסֶּפֶד שׁוֹרוֹת שׁוֹרוֹת וְאוֹמְרִין (ישעיה לג, ח): נִשְׁמוּ מִסְּלוֹת שְׁבַת עֵבֶר אֲרַח וְגוֹ', מֵאִי נִשְׁמוּ מִסְּלוֹת, אָמְרוּ מִלְּאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת לְפָנֵי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מִסְּלוֹת שְׁהִתְקַנְתָּ לִירוּשָׁלַיִם שֶׁלֹּא יְהוּ עוֹבְרֵי דְרָכִים פּוֹסְקִים מֵהֵם הֵיאָךְ הָיוּ לְשִׁמְמָה. שְׁבַת עֵבֶר אֲרַח, אָמְרוּ מִלְּאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת לְפָנֵי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא דְרָכִים שְׁהָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹבְרִים וְשָׁבִים בָּהֶם בְּחִגִּים הֵיאָךְ שְׁבַתוֹ. הִפְרָ בְרִית, אָמְרוּ מִלְּאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת לְפָנֵי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא רְבוּנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, הוֹפֵר בְרִית שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם אֲבִיהֶם, שֶׁעַל יְדוֹ מִתְּיָשֵׁב הָעוֹלָם, וְעַל יְדוֹ הַכִּירוּךְ בְּעוֹלָם שְׂאֲתָה אֵל עֲלִיוֹן קוֹנֵה שָׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ. מֵאֵס עָרִים. אָמְרוּ מִלְּאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת לְפָנֵי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מֵאֵסָתְ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם וְצִיּוֹן לְאַחַר שְׁבַחְתָּ בָהֶם, הִדָּא הוּא דְכָתִיב (ירמיה יד, יט): הִמָּאֵס מֵאֵסָתְ אֶת יְהוּדָה [ו]אֵם בְּצִיּוֹן גְּעָלָה נִפְשָׁךְ וְגוֹ'. (ישעיה לג, ח): לֹא חֲשַׁב אָנוּשׁ. אָמְרוּ מִלְּאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת לְפָנֵי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אָפְלוֹ כְּדוֹר אָנוּשׁ שְׁהָיוּ רֹאשׁ לְעוֹבְדֵי עֲבוֹדַת כּוֹכָבִים לֹא חֲשַׁבְתָּ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל. בְּאוֹתָהּ שַׁעַת נִזְקַק

הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְמַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרַת, אָמַר לָהֶם, מַה לָּכֶם קוֹשְׁרִין מִסִּפֵּד בְּעֵינָיו הִזָּה שׁוֹרֹת שׁוֹרֹת. אָמְרוּ לְפָנָיו רַבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, מִפְּנֵי אַבְרָהָם אוֹהֵבֶד שֶׁבָּא לְבֵיתֶד וְסִפֵּד וּבְכָה מִפְּנֵי מָה לֹא הִשְׁגַּחְתָּ עָלָיו, אָמַר לָהֶם מִיּוֹם שֶׁנִּפְטַר אוֹהֵבֵי מְלַפְנֵי לְבַיַּת עוֹלָמוֹ לֹא בָּא לְבֵיתִי, וְעַכְשָׁו (יִרְמִיָּה יא, ט):

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahman said: When the Temple was destroyed, Abraham came before the Holy One blessed be He weeping, pulling out his beard, tearing out the hair of his head, striking his face, rending his garments, ashes on his head, and he was walking in the Temple and lamenting and screaming. He said before the Holy One blessed be He: 'Why am I different from all nations and tongues that I have come to this state of shame and humiliation?' When the ministering angels saw him, they too composed lamentations standing in rows and saying: "[Behold, their angels cry out outside....] The highways are desolate, wayfarers have ceased; [he breached the covenant, rejected cities, regarded no man]" (Isaiah 33:7–8). What is "the highways are desolate"? The ministering angels said before the Holy One blessed be He: 'The highways to Jerusalem that You prepared so that travelers would never cease from them, how have they become desolation?' "Wayfarers have ceased" – the ministering angels said before the Holy One blessed be He: 'The ways upon which Israel would travel on the festivals, how have they become idle?' "Breached the covenant" – the ministering angels said before the Holy One blessed be He: 'Master of the universe, the covenant of their patriarch Abraham has been breached, by means of whom the world was settled, and by means of whom You were recognized in the world as God on High, Maker of the heavens and the earth.' "Rejected cities" – the ministering angels said before the Holy One blessed be He: 'Have You rejected Jerusalem and Zion after You chose them?' That is what is written: "Did You reject Judah, did Your soul loathe Zion...?" (Jeremiah 14:19). "Regarded no man [*enosh*]" – the ministering angels said before the Holy One blessed be He: 'You did not consider Israel even like the generation of Enosh, who were the originators of idol worshippers.' At that moment, the Holy One blessed be He attended to the ministering angels. He said to them: 'Why are you composing lamentations like this, standing in rows?' They said to Him: 'Master of the universe, why did You not pay attention to Abraham, Your beloved, who came to Your House and lamented and wept?' He said to them: 'From the day that My beloved passed away from before Me to his eternal home, he did not come to My House, and now: "What has My beloved to do in My House?"' (Jeremiah 11:15).