

# PARSHAS VAYIGASH

*by Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari*

The following midrash illustrates how the religious tasks and spiritual qualities of Yehudah and Yosef are the key to understanding the clash between the brothers which is the crux of this sedrah and the one that preceded it. 'There was a deep well with clear and sweet water, yet because of its depth nobody could benefit from this water, till a person came along and tied a bucket to a rope, thereby drawing up its water'. The deep well is Yosef and the wise one who was able to draw the water from its depth is Yehudah. Yehudah, in his repetition of all that had been said and done by Yosef since the brothers had come to Egypt, finally broke down the secrecy and the veils behind which Yosef had hidden himself till we read, 'and Yosef could no longer restrain himself. and made himself known to his brothers' (Bereishit, 45:1).

After Yosef had secretly sanctified the Name Of Heaven, he was rewarded with the addition of one letter of the name of Hashem to his name [éÀÑó] Psalms, 81). Yehudah who sanctified the Name of Heaven in public, had all the letters of the Holy Name in his name (Sotah, 10b). Yosef had the name changed to include three of the letters of the Name after he had done certain acts. Yehudah's name, however, was unchanged and contained all the letters of G-d's Name from the day of his birth.

From this we may learn that the midrash refers the whole method and nature of their divine worship and holy service.

The whole avodah of Yosef was sanctification in secret. Rashi tells us that he busied himself with his curls and the Zohar adds that he bothered with his clothes that they should be elegant and orderly; all this in order to hide his righteousness and spirituality. This is the pattern of all the descendants of Rachel. When they went to find Saul he was hiding amongst the baggage, while the story of both Esther and Mordechai was hidden beneath clothes, banquets and coded messages as befits hidden miracles. This is why the midrash sees Yosef as the power that can oppose Eisav, since it is the way of all evildoers to hide their intentions and to cover up their real selves. Eisav, whose evil is disguised, is like the pig, that has only one sign of kosher food, the cloven hoof, but lacks the other one, chewing the cud. So it sleeps deceptively with its foot outstretched but with its mouth closed. Eisav kept his hatred for Yaakov and the intention to kill him in his heart, while Haman did the same with regard to Mordechai.

In contrast, the nature and merit of the work of Yehudah is that sanctification is public and visible and is therefore able to affect even external and practical actions. 'Your brothers will acknowledge you- therefore he merited sanctifying HaShem in public' (Rashi, Bereisheit, 49, 8). So he

acknowledged in public that Tamar was justified. His descendant Nachshon was the first to plunge into the waters of the Red Sea in full view of all of Israel. David is able to confess publicly his sin and dance before the Aron HaKodesh.

Each of these two ways of worship has a special greatness and merit of their own. That of Yosef, conducted in secret and hidden from the sight of others, has a special power and strength. We see that the Maharal (Or Chadash) teaches that which is hidden has extraordinary power in the Heavens above that are themselves hidden. With the power of his avodah that is secret and hidden, Yosef is able bring an abundance of spirituality and sanctity from Heaven done to earth. In contrast, Yehudah, whose avodah is in public and completely revealed through actions, brings the World, even in its lowest spiritual form and even when it is completely material, up to the Heavens. The merit of Yehudah brings the world to the Kingship of Heaven as he is the chariot of the King of Kings. This leads to a desire and a yearning down below on earth for the spirituality, truth and splendor expressed through songs of praise and prayer, as we see in David. Simcha Bunem explained the use of shirei zimrah in Yishtabach, that are 2 words that describe the same thing, as describing the extra yearning that comes after the first level of prayer is reached.

The midrash commenting on the verse, 'and the ploughman shall overtake the harvester' (Amos, 9: 13), relates the ploughman to Yehudah and the harvester to Yosef. In his dream Yosef describes he and his brothers binding sheaves, while the verse tells of Yehudah plowing the field of Efraim. The Avnei Nezer explains that the Talmudical comment (Moed Katan (2b) that the physical purpose of plowing is to heal the soil, corresponds in the spiritual world to cure and soften the heart. So this is the role of Yehudah to break open the hearts through practical actions and mitzvot so that the seeds of spiritual growth and religiosity can enter, even as material seeds fall in the furrows and take root there. Yehudah, the king, is the heart of Israel and through his service the verse, 'and I will remove the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh' (Ezekiel, 36: 26) may be accomplished.

In the same way we should understand that there is a spiritual parallel to the physical work of the reaper. The Eglei Tal regarding work on Shabbat explains, that anything that is attached to the ground is considered as ground, so that one who reaps destroys this attachment.

One who is devoted to the bodily and the material is considered to be like them, while one who is able to separate his intelligence and mind from material things and devote them to the spiritual and heavenly things does the work of the harvester. This is Yosef, who is the mind and wisdom of Israel.

The theme of the hidden tzaddik is a common one and is not limited to Chassidic thought. However, in view of the central role played there by the Tzaddik, it is obvious that the nature of his Avodah assumed special importance, indeed being central to the specific type of Chassidut that he developed. In the Pshyscha school there does not seem to be such a tradition of the hidden tzaddik. Perhaps this is because they saw the main purpose of the Tzaddik to provide spiritual guidance and Torah learning, widely defined, rather than the material, economic and social assistance that

characterizes almost all of popular and mass orientated chassidut. This orientation of the Tzaddick was something that they shared with the founder of Chabad Chassidism.

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