

The Rebbe's Discourses

Summaries of points from the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל

פרשת ויגש תשכ"ה ד"ה ויגש עליו יהודה חנוכה מוגה

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JOINING WORLDS

THE SEDRA BEGINS WITH JUDAH DRAWING NEAR TO JOSEPH. SIMILARLY, IN THE HAFTORAH, the Prophet Ezekiel is told by G-d to write the names Judah and Joseph on two pieces of wood, and to hold the two pieces of wood together, to express the unity between Judah and Joseph.

The context of the Haftorah is that after the death of King Solomon, the Jewish people had divided in two: the Northern Kingdom, Israel, ruled by Jeroboam of the Tribe of Ephraim, son of Joseph, and the Southern Kingdom, Judah, ruled by Solomon's son Rehoboam, from the Tribe of Judah. After the destruction of the First Temple, Ezekiel prophesied that there would be unity between Judah and Joseph, under the rule of a descendant of King David, Moshiach.

We might interpret the connection of the Haftorah to the Sedra in the theme of the joining of Judah and Joseph. The Sedra depicts Judah, son of Jacob, coming close to Joseph, the Egyptian Viceroy, and the Haftorah depicts the unity of the people of Judah and the people of Joseph in the time of Moshiach, after their many years of separation².

That itself is very meaningful. But the Discourse focuses on an interesting detail. In the Sedra, Joseph is higher than Judah, he is the Viceroy, and Judah is

¹ Maamar Vayigash Elav Yehuda 5725 (1966). It was edited by the Rebbe and published as Kuntres Hey Tevet 5751. It was reprinted in Dvar Malchut Vayigash 5775.

² The 'Ten Tribes' of the Northern Kingdom – representing Joseph – went into exile before the destruction of the First Temple and the exile of the Southern Kingdom. They are generally considered 'lost'. When Moshiach comes, many scholars (such as the Maharal of Prague) say they will be rediscovered and united with the rest of the Jewish people.

pleading that he should be taken as a slave instead of his brother Benjamin. By contrast, in the Haftorah, the supremacy of Judah's descendant is emphasised: 'and My servant David – descended from Judah - will be King over them', indicating that Judah will be higher than Joseph.

In Torah Or³ we learn that Joseph represents the Sefirot of Zeir Anpin⁴ which now, in the time of Exile, is higher than Kingship, the Feminine, represented by Judah. Indeed, it pours beneficence into Kingship. But in the Future, Kingship, the Feminine, will be higher than Joseph, as it says 'a woman of valour is a crown to her husband'. For then the root of Kingship will be revealed, and that is actually higher than Zeir Anpin.

A discourse by the Tzemach Tzedek points out that the last letters of the opening three Hebrew words of the Sedra spell the word *shaveh*, meaning equal⁵. This emphasises the equality of Joseph and Judah. The discourse explains this 'equality' as several varieties of pairs of concepts, which in an unusual way are described as being equal or joined: One pair is Da'at Elyon and Da'at Tachton, which can be translated as Upper Consciousness and Lower Consciousness.

Upper Consciousness (Joseph) is the supernal consciousness that the Divine is the ultimate reality and existence is 'nothing' in comparison. Lower Consciousness (Judah) is the opposite: the normal human appreciation that existence is real, and that the Divine is beyond, in a supernal and ethereal realm. The joining of Joseph and Judah signifies the joining of these two states of consciousness so that they co-exist.

Another expression of this joining of two states of mind, is the joining of the Upper Unity with the Lower Unity. The second section of Tanya explains that the Upper Unity is the awareness that there is nothing apart from G-d, expressed in the first line of the Shema. There is, so to speak, no world: G-d is the only reality. The Lower Unity is expressed in the second line of the Shema (*baruch shem kevod malchuto l'olam va-ed*), and signifies that there is a world, but it expresses the Divine.

Again, Joseph represents the Upper Unity and Judah the Lower. Their meeting and joining together suggests the union of these two kinds of awareness.

Another pair is the idea of service from above to below (Joseph), in which G-d inspires the person, and from below to above (Judah), in which the person reaches towards G-d. These too are being joined so that they are one.

³ Containing Chassidic discourses by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi.

⁴ This means the six Sefirot from Kindness to Foundation, which is called the 'Small Visage' (Zeir Anpin) of the Divine, contrasting with the 'Great Visage' expressed in the more exalted Sefirah Keter.

⁵ שוה אליו יהודה, the last letters spell שוה.

We thus see that when Judah approached Joseph, on the one hand he was expressing the lower status of Kingship in relation to Zeir Anpin, as it is now, in Exile, and at the same time hinting at their equality as it will be in the future, and even at the idea mentioned earlier, that ultimately Kingship will be higher than Zeir Anpin: ‘the woman of valour is a crown to her husband’.

A further kind of joining is seen in the fact that the Sages speak of ‘joining Geulah (Redemption) to Prayer’, which means joining the blessing which ends ‘blessed are You, G-d, Who redeems Israel’ with the Amidah prayer in the daily prayer service. The Zohar links this with the joining of Judah (the Amidah) and Joseph (Redemption). The Rebbe Maharash⁶ explains that when Judah said to Joseph ‘please, my master’, it was like the opening phrase when we recite the Amidah, ‘L-rd, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise’ (Ps.51:17). The Aramaic Targum of this verse is ‘open my lips with Torah’, and Chassidic teachings explain that one is asking G-d to make one’s prayer have the quality of Torah. Just as Torah comes from G-d, and the person studying Torah is simply repeating G-d’s words, so too, we ask, may our prayer be from G-d, which we are simply repeating: may our prayer be the Divine prayer.

This leads to the idea of Prayer, in general (Joseph), and Torah (Judah). Prayer reaches up towards the Divine, higher and higher without limit. Torah, in its discussions of existence, reaches lower and lower, without end. These two dimensions are also unified in the joining of Judah and Joseph.

This leads to discussion of an anecdote in the Talmud, in which Elijah informed Rabbi Judah the Prince that Rabbi Hiyah and his sons were like the Patriarchs. Rabbi Judah set them to lead the prayers. When they said ‘He makes the wind blow’, the wind blew. When they said ‘He makes the rain fall’, it began raining. When they said ‘He brings the dead to life’, the world began trembling. Their prayer broke through the barriers dividing prayer from reality.

We see that the joining of Judah with Joseph joins kabbalistic dimensions, spiritual perspectives, Torah, Prayer, and, ultimately, reality, revealing the Divine in this world, as it will be in the future, when the woman of valour (practical reality, Judah) will indeed be the crown to her husband (the spiritual dimension, Joseph). This joining of worlds is the goal of Creation.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care

⁶ Rabbi Shmuel, 4th Lubavitcher Rebbe (1834-1882)