

# The Rebbe's Discourses

Summaries of points from the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל  
פרשת ויגש תשל"ד ד"ה ויגש עליו יהודה בלתי מוגה  
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## REDEMPTION AND PRAYER

**T**HE SEDRA OPENS WITH JUDAH DRAWING NEAR TO JOSEPH AND SAYING 'PLEASE MY LORD'. What does this mean for the service of the individual? The Zohar<sup>2</sup> explains that Judah drawing near to Joseph represents 'the joining of Geulah, Redemption, to Prayer'. This refers to a special moment in the daily morning prayer service. Just before the Amidah, the key Prayer, there is a blessing which ends on the theme of Redemption: 'those who were redeemed at the Splitting of the Sea sang a new song to Your great Name... [and in the future, You will be] our Redeemer, G-d, L-rd of Hosts, Holy One of Israel, blessed are You, Redeemer of Israel'. Immediately after these words, one begins saying the Amidah. There should not be any interruption between the passage about Redemption and the beginning of the Amidah. This is called 'joining Redemption to the (Amidah) Prayer'.

The rationale for explaining the words of the Sedra in this way is that the name Judah, Yehudah, relates to the word Hoda'ah, thanking and submitting, the theme of Prayer. Indeed, when Judah was born his mother called him by this name because she said 'now I will thank G-d'<sup>3</sup>. Thus Judah signifies Prayer.

Joseph signifies Redemption, for Joseph gave sustenance to everyone during the years of the famine, and he also represents the Attribute Yesod, Foundation, which pours beneficence to the feminine Attribute Kingship. From the attribute Kingship the flow continues to all the lower worlds.

<sup>1</sup> Maamar Vayigash Elav Yehuda 5734 (1973). It was not edited by the Rebbe. It was reprinted in Dvar Malchut Vayigash 5785.

<sup>2</sup> Zohar I, 205b.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 29:35, Sedra Vayetze.

Giving a flow of sustenance, blessing and goodness is the theme of Redemption, hence Joseph is associated with Redemption.

As mentioned, the Zohar interprets Judah coming close to Joseph as the way in the daily prayer-service, the Amidah, is joined directly to the blessing for Redemption which precedes it. It would seem from this, that Redemption, Joseph, is higher than Prayer, Judah: that's why Judah 'draws near' to Joseph. That's also expressed in the fact that the Attribute Yesod, Foundation, the Ninth Attribute, is higher than Kingship, the Tenth Attribute, expressing Judah.

But the general phrase as found in the Talmud<sup>4</sup> is 'joining Redemption to Prayer', implying that Prayer is higher. The text and blessing referring to Redemption is the preparation for the Amidah Prayer, which is therefore understood to be higher.

The question therefore is, should one think of the move from Redemption to Prayer in our daily prayer service as a step down (as in the Sedra, in which Judah is lower than Joseph) or as a step up?

The discourse mentions that this Sedra is always read near Chanuka, and therefore relevant to our discussion is the idea that the Chanuka lamp is placed on the left of the doorway, and the Mezuzah is placed on the right (going into the house or room)<sup>5</sup>. The Mezuzah on the right signifies Torah which flows downwards from Hashem to us, and the Chanuka lamp on the left signifies Prayer (and Mitzvot)<sup>6</sup> which move from below to above, towards Hashem.

Now, in Torah which moves from above to below, from Hashem's teachings on Sinai through the chain of teachers to each individual today, there is the concept of personal creativity, the 'Chiddush', (novella), in one's enthusiastic study discovering and expounding a new application of a teaching. By contrast Prayer, from below to above, is with *bitul*, selflessness.

But the Tzemach Tzedek<sup>7</sup> explains that there are two aspects of the Amidah. The first three blessings are addressed directly to Hashem, praising Hashem, from a standpoint of total selflessness. In this sense the Amidah is purely a movement from below to above.

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<sup>4</sup> Berachot 4b.

<sup>5</sup> Shabbat 22a.

<sup>6</sup> The discourse first presents the idea that the Mitzvot are from above to below (ie, they are defined by the Torah), but then presents another way of understanding them, as expressing our movement upwards towards Hashem.

<sup>7</sup> The third Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn (1789-1866), in his *Or HaTorah*, Vayigash 349a.

But then in the weekday Amidah prayer one continues with 12 (later extended to 13) blessings in which one asks G-d for daily things. These are drawing blessing from G-d from above to below.

This is expressed by the fact that when Judah drew near to Joseph – from below to above, which can be interpreted as not just to Joseph but to the Divine beyond – he said ‘please, my Master’. ‘Please’ in this passage is פֶּן which has the gematria 12, like the original 12 blessings in the middle of the Amidah which draw life-force from above to below.

Hence the Amidah combines qualities of movement from below to above, and from above to below. The inspiration and enthusiasm of the ‘Redemption’ section of the daily prayer gives one the thrust, so to speak, to soar upwards on the ‘ladder of prayer’, towards the Essence of the Divine, in selflessness. But then one comes to the 12 (later 13) middle blessings of the Amidah, which pour blessings from G-d into the world. (The final three blessings thank G-d, before one retreats from His Presence).

The ultimate is the spiritual power of the Amidah itself, the greatness of Judah, ancestor of King David, who is therefore seen to be higher than Joseph. This is expressed in the Haftorah for Vayigash, which includes the verse ‘and David My servant will be Nasi over them, for ever’<sup>8</sup>. That exalted quality of Prayer, bonding in a permanent way with the Divine, will be revealed in the future through the final, permanent Redemption.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care

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<sup>8</sup> Ezek.37:25