

B"H

Daily Teaching  
29 Kislev 5768  
Monday, December 9, 2007

## Vayigash #1

from Harav Yitzchak Ginsburgh

The first verse of our *parshah*, *parshat Vayigash*, reads:

Judah approached him and said: "Please, my lord..."

On this verse we find the following *midrash*:

"For the kings have come to know one another, they passed together. [Others saw, they were bewildered, they feared and they fled. Trembling seized them there.]"<sup>1</sup>

"For the kings"—these are Judah and Joseph;

"they passed together"—they were filled with anger at one another;

"Others saw, they were bewildered"—"the men looked at each other in bewilderment"<sup>2</sup>;

"Trembling seized them"—these are the tribes. They said: "Kings are negotiating with one another, what business is it of ours; it is proper for a king to negotiate with a king."

"Judah approached him"—"one to [lit., in] one they approach"<sup>3</sup>—these are Judah and Joseph.

"No air separates them"<sup>4</sup>—these are the tribes. They said: "Kings are negotiating with one another, what business is it of ours."

The two kings are thus Judah and Joseph. Judah was the king among his brothers, while Joseph was a king in Egypt. *Parshat Vayigash* thus begins with the meeting of the two kings. This meeting has tremendous significance, both in the development of the storyline in the Torah and in its meaning for all future generations, as it is known that everything that occurred in the patriarchs' lives is repeated in our own lives.

Judah corresponds to the *sefirah* of kingdom; Joseph corresponds to the *sefirah* of foundation. At the very edge of the *sefirah* of foundation, is its crown, which is the source of the *sefirah* of kingdom of *Ze'er Anpin* is revealed. As explained in the Arizal's writings, this aspect of the kingdom of foundation is embodied by Ephra'im the son of Joseph.

In our reality it is the foundation that provides for kingdom. But, in the future, during the reign of the Mashiach (the son of David—the embodiment of the *sefirah* of kingdom), the foundation will receive from kingdom through its own aspect of kingdom (the kingdom of *Ze'er Anpin* just mentioned). Thus, in our present reality it is Joseph



GALEINAI PUBLICATION SOCIETY

2 Hausner St. • Jerusalem 96431 • tel.: 972.547.533770 • info@gpsociety.org

who gives sustenance to Judah (which is how things turn out in our *parshah*), but in the future, the Mashiach (a descendant) of Judah, will give sustenance to Joseph.

This change in the relationship between the *sefirot* of foundation and kingdom is also reflected in the blessings said under the wedding canopy. In the sixth blessing (corresponding to foundation, Joseph) we say: "...who gladdens the groom and the bride," indicating that the bride (symbolizing kingdom) is dependent on the groom (symbolizing foundation) and that the joy flows from the groom to the bride. But in the seventh blessing (corresponding to kingdom, Judah) we say: "...who gladdens the groom with the bride," indicating that the groom receives joy from the bride, he is dependent on her.

The reading in the Prophets selected by the sages for *parshat Vayigash* is from Ezekiel, chapter 37 and continues the theme of the meeting between Joseph and Judah, the two kings. Upon careful reading we see that it too reflects the future elevation of Judah over Joseph, of kingdom over foundation.

It begins with the verse:

And you, son of man, take for yourself one branch and write on it, "For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions"; then take another branch and write on it, "For Joseph, the branch of Ephra'im and all the house of Israel, his companions." Then bring them near one another and make them into one branch, that they may become one in your hand.

These last words echo the meaning of the verse from Job brought in the *midrash* we quoted: "One to one they approach." A few verses later, we find:

Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I shall take the branch of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join them with and upon them the branch of Judah, and make them into one branch, and they will be one in My hand."

Here, the branch of Judah is placed above the branch of Joseph. And then:

"And my servant David will be king over them, and they all will have one shepherd, and they will follow my laws and they will keep my commandments and perform them."

We see that indeed in our reality Joseph transcends Judah, but in the time of the Mashiach, Judah (David) will rise above Joseph. All of this is explained at length in Chassidic teachings.

We would like to better understand the nature of the unification between Joseph and Judah. From the *midrash* and from the verses quoted from Ezekiel, it seems that the key word to meditate upon is באחד, meaning "in one." In the *midrash*, "in one" appears in the verse from Job "one to one they approach" where the Hebrew wording is אחד באחד יגשו, meaning "one in one they approach." If we search the Bible, we find that this same form of the word "one" appears in another verse from Job that reads: "And He is [in] One, and who can answer Him; He wanted and He acted."<sup>5</sup>

Let us give some background so that we can better understand the subject of this verse. After Job was tested with the tragic death of his children and with a terrible affliction of the flesh, his three close friends came to comfort him. The crux of their argument was that Job must have sinned in some way. Job consistently refuses to accept their theory and instead keeps arguing his innocence before God. In one of his refutes he utters the words just quoted. The *Malbim*, an important commentary from the 19<sup>th</sup> century writes that the meaning of this sentence is that Job is arguing that he could not have done anything differently than the way that he did, for everything is predetermined by God, and to change anything would mean a change in the Almighty, which contradicts His eternal and unchanging nature.

But, Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra, the great Medieval sage, writes as follows:

וְהוּא בְּאֶחָד—“And He is [in] One.” There are those [commentaries] who say that the letter *beit* in *בְּאֶחָד*, “in one” [the letter *beit* corresponds to the preposition “in”], is superfluous. But, the truth is that it is not, but I cannot explain this because it contains a great secret.” Though the *Ibn Ezra* was careful to conceal his Kabbalistic knowledge, Rashi in his commentary on the verse (based on the *Targum*<sup>6</sup>) reveals some of what the *Ibn Ezra* meant. He writes:

“And He.” Because He is Singular in the world, and knows the countenance and thoughts of men, what can they say before Him. Therefore all replies are already before Him.”

Adopted into Chassidic terminology, *Rashi*'s words may be understood to imply that the Singular aspect of the Almighty [“He is Singular”] enclothes itself within the aspect of His Oneness, and this is why the prepositional “in” *בְּאֶחָד* is necessary as it implies “in-ness” or enclothement. As we shall see, this is also the secret of the union of Joseph and Judah, the secret of the words “one in one they will approach, and no air separates them.”

---

<sup>1</sup>. Psalms 48:5-7.

<sup>2</sup>. Genesis 43:33.

<sup>3</sup>. Job 41:8.

<sup>4</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>. Ibid. 23:13.

<sup>6</sup>. Who translates the word “in one” as *yechidai*, “Singular One.” See also the commentary of Nachmanides, who writes: “‘And He is in One’—Singular (*yachid*) in His world.... Likewise in the verse: ‘God is in Sinai in holiness.’ The literal meaning of both verses is that the world does not give space to God, but the inner meaning suggests that Job was a sage and a Kabbalist who knows the secrets of the Divine and the Oneness of God.” Though Nachmanides, based on the *Targum* and *Rashi*, uses the phrase “Singular One,” (*yachid*) he does not reveal to us the inner meaning of the verse, just as the *Ibn Ezra* does not reveal to us (in this place) the “great secret.”