



PARASHAT VAYIGASH

MONEY

Our teacher the Ba'al Shem Tov taught that the way to rectify our learning of Torah and our service of prayer is to perform them out of selflessness and humility (lowliness) in order that they not become selfish acts whose energy continues to sustain the evil in the world. The Baal Shem Tov himself added that though he had provided a path for rectifying our learning and our prayer, he was not able to provide a complete path for rectifying our business and monetary dealings. Thus, the evil in the world is sustained through our unrectified business and monetary conduct. Indeed, it is well known, that from the time of the Baal Shem Tov to the present, many Jews have been distanced from Torah and religious observance because of the reputation for financial dishonesty that has clung to observant Jews.

Repairing and sanctifying our financial conduct remains a challenge for the generation of the Mashiach—our generation. Bringing the Mashiach requires a great deal of money, demanding that we be willing to squander whatever we have amassed over the years. But, at the same time, the money spent on bringing the Mashiach must be pure and coming from a rectified source. This week's *parashah*, Vayigash, tells us that "Joseph gathered all of the money that was in the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan."¹ The sages explain that the majority of the money Joseph collected was meant for the future, "Joseph stored three caches of money in Egypt; one was found by Korach, another by Antoninus the son of Asyrius, and one is stored for the *tzadikim* of the future." This is the cache of stored money that will be revealed for the purpose of bringing the Mashiach. So, in order to understand how to rectify our monetary conduct and how to become pure conduits of the wealth needed to bring the redemption, we turn to Joseph who related to money in the proper manner.

The cornerstone of Joseph's approach, which allowed him to indeed amass all the money in Egypt and Canaan, was that he did not allow his personal needs to influence him. How did Joseph attain a

state of composure in which the money he was collecting was not tainted by his personal needs?

The answer is that it all has to do with faith. When a person passes on, the first question he is asked by the heavenly tribunal is "did you engage in business with faith?" Doing business with faith means having faith that all the wealth we will ever possess comes from the Creator. Though faith is a super-conscious faculty, it certainly induces proper conscious behavior. Faith that all that one will earn comes from God alone induces a very conscious attitude that all the money we earn be with fairness and honesty. The corollary: that through dishonesty not only will our profit not increase, it will decrease because it will clog the conduit of sustenance running from heaven to us. As explained in length elsewhere, faith creates trust and confidence² in our hearts, confidence allowing us to treat money with composure and full-knowledge that we can minimize the amount of time spent thinking about it and trying to attain it. For, all is from the Almighty, who feeds and sustains all creatures.

Let us look at the connection between money and faith in more depth. Faith is the highest of the soul's super-conscious faculties—faith, pleasure, and will—contained within the *sefirah* of crown. One way of understanding these three super-conscious faculties is that they represent three types of attractions that motivate our actions: yearning, rapture, and longing.³ The difference between these attractions is that yearning, which corresponds to faith and money⁴, motivates us to seek an intangible good that lies concealed in our faith (the Jewish faith, which we believe is the proper path for rectifying reality). Our desire motivates us to seek palpable pleasure. Finally, will motivates us to seek the instruments of pleasure, not just to pleasure itself.

Thus, the ability to amass and utilize money in a proper way depends on our yearning to realize our strong faith in the rectification of reality by the Mashiach, faith that is beyond any desire or longing we have for palpable pleasure. When yearning and

faith are strong, we can make do with only a minimal amount of pleasure. Unlike desire and longing which are limited, yearning fueled by our faith is limitless, allowing us to amass wealth without end, all without the need to satisfy our personal desires and will. For this reason, the Lubavitcher Rebbe proclaimed that in our generation, in preparation for the coming of Mashiach, it is proper that we all yearn to be wealthy (of course, as above, through business conducted in faith) in order to help bring Mashiach all the money needed to rectify the world.

The Mashiach will be a king. Seemingly, the king is not allowed to have great wealth, as the Torah states, "...He shall not augment for himself his gold and silver."⁵ However, the Torah only refers to wealth that the king amasses to aggrandize himself. But, money amassed with the purpose of bringing the redemption, by spreading the wellsprings of

Torah, that is not only permitted, it is necessary. Indeed, Maimonides writes⁶ that,

The king may not amass silver and gold for the purpose of either augmenting his treasury or boasting of; rather, he must give to his soldiers, servants, and ministers. Furthermore, all the gold and silver that he amasses for the treasury of the house of God, which lies there ready for to fill the needs of the public and their battles, this type of wealth it is a mitzvah to amass (!). The only prohibition is for him to amass the wealth for his own personal treasury, as the verse says, "He shall not augment for himself."

(based on *Ma'ayan Ganim Bereishit*, pp. 93-101)

Notes: 1. Genesis 47:14. 2. The inner aspect of the *sefirah* of victory. 3. The initials of their Hebrew equivalents, **ביסופין**, **תשוקה**, and **רצון**, spell the word "crown" (**כתר**). 4. The Hebrew word for money (**כסף**) is the root of yearning (**ביסופין**). 5. Deuteronomy 17:17. 6. *Hilchot Melachim* 3:4.

"THE ALMIGHTY LOVES TZADIKIM..."

Sunday is the fast of the 10th of Tevet commemorating the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem in the First Temple period. It is also the *yahrzeit* of Rebbe Natan of Nemirov, Rebbe Nachman's most important disciple. There is a parable told by Rebbe Natan that helps us focus our efforts in bringing the true and complete redemption and is connected with the image of a siege.

Once, Rebbe Natan was asked how it is possible that our generations, which are spiritually lower, will succeed in bringing the redemption, while the great generations with towering figures like Rebbe Nachman failed to do so. He answered with a parable:

There was a great fortified city that many kings wanted to conquer. They sent all their armies, but their soldiers were defeated by the arrows shot down at them. Then there came a king who sent his entire army to attack the walls surrounding the city. They too were defeated and the king alone remained. But, this king, in his wisdom, surveyed the entire wall to see the damage the attack had had on it. He found that though outwardly strong, the wall had been severely damaged, and with old men, women, and children he could break through it. He called his subjects, and with an army of misfits broke through the wall. Now, who broke through the wall? Without the tremendous efforts

of the earlier, professional soldiers, the misfits would not have been able to conquer the city in a thousand years. The redemption is similar. Because of the great battles that the giants like Moshe Rabbeinu, Rashbi, the Arizal, the Ba'al Shem Tov, and Rebbe Nachman, and all the other great *tzadikim* fought with evil, causing it to become an empty shell, it matters not who it is in the final generations that comes to finish the job and complete the rectification leading to the redemption.

From this parable we learn two points: 1) Even if you are only a child (spiritually), or an old man, or just a plain misfit, you still have the duty to join the efforts to bring the redemption, because most of the work has already been done and does not depend on your skill. If you make an effort, you will succeed. 2) The best place to focus our current efforts is on the spot in the wall that the great *tzadikim* mentioned all focused their efforts—the spot that is affected by the inner teachings of the Torah. Where they attacked evil with their concentration on the Torah's inner dimension is where evil is weakest and will most easily be brought down. We too must focus all our efforts in this area, to spread the wellsprings of the inner teachings of the Torah.

(based on *Ma'ayan Ganim Bereishit*, pp. 210-11)