

Reflections of Redemption

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,
Based on the talks of the
Lubavitcher Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Vayigash, 5782
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov

Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה
Ekman

Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** עי"ה
Marenburg

Passed away on the second day
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766

Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** עי"ה
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)

Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769

ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF

Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתי'
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY

Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shagalov

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by
Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann

Vayigash

JOSEPH AND JUDAH – STUDY AND ACTION

When Moshiach comes, the two approaches to serving G-d (study, represented by Joseph, and action, represented by Judah) will be united. How is this possible? Currently, Joseph (study) is superior. In the times of Moshiach, Judah (action) will be superior, but study will be of an entirely different nature, infused with bitul.

The basic content of this week's Torah reading is the approach of Judah to Joseph. Indeed, the name of the portion – *Vayigash* – means “he approached.” The Torah is talking about more than one individual approaching another. The confrontation between Judah and Joseph – and their ultimate reconciliation – reflects the process by which the ultimate revelation of G-dliness will occur. For, as the *Zohar* explains, the Torah reading is about the coming together of two worlds, so to speak, in order to unify them. Joseph and Judah each represent a different ‘world,’ a different approach to the Divinely ordained task of making the physical world a dwelling place for G-dliness.

The same concept is expressed in the haftorah. The section of Ezekiel chosen for the haftorah talks of the time of Moshiach, when the kingdoms of Judah and Joseph will be reunited. The prophet is told by G-d to “take a branch and write on it ‘for Judah’ . . . take a branch and write on it ‘for Joseph’ and bring them together so they will be united in your hand. . . . Thus says the Lord . . . I will make them one nation and there will be one king over them. They will no longer be two nations nor will they be divided into two kingdoms.”

This means that the two approaches to serving G-d will be united. Neither will outweigh the other; rather both will be revealed as manifestations of the essential nature of the Jewish soul.

In terms of Divine service, Joseph represents Torah study and Judah represents action (the actual performance of mitzvos). Currently, the level of Joseph – that is, Torah study – is considered higher, for it leads to action. “Torah is greater” because through study one ends up with both study and action. Therefore, Judah – the model for action – approaches Joseph – the model for study, since “action follows study.” Since Joseph is – at this time – higher than Judah, he – Judah – must make the first move, so to speak. Judah must approach Joseph. However, in the era of Moshiach, Judah will be higher – as the prophecy in the haftorah indicates, “My servant David will rule over them” – because then the advantage of action will be revealed.

However, there seems to be a problem, since the ‘one king’ that will rule over both segments of the Jewish people – the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Joseph – will come from Judah, as Ezekiel himself prophesies: “My servant David will rule over them forever.” This does not seem to be a complete or true unification, since the kingdom of Joseph will disappear and there will remain only the branch of Judah. Surely this doesn’t mean that there will be only mitzvos and Acts of Lovingkindness after Moshiach, but no study of Torah. True unity means both exist.

How can there be unification between the two kingdoms – that is, the two approaches of study and action – when only the king from Judah – Moshiach – will rule? What is the difference between the days before Moshiach – when this unification has not yet taken place – and the era of Redemption – when there will be one king over all Israel?

As mentioned already, the reason Torah study is greater – during

these times – is because it leads to action. So, through Torah study one ends up with the advantages of both. Therefore, in the times of Moshiach, action, which will be greater, must also possess the advantages of both. The difference is that now Torah leads to action, while after Moshiach comes, action leads to Torah.

Parenthetically, we should explain how one can know what to do – how to perform the mitzvah – before learning about it – studying the laws. When Moshiach comes, G-d will remove the “spirit of impurity from the earth.” As a consequence, impulses, temptations and cravings will no longer compel a person “against their will.” G-dliness will be fully revealed, in the most physical and mundane manner. At that level, there will be no need to study the laws of the Torah, because they will be known automatically, much as a young child knows not to stick his or her hand into a fire.

Returning to the question why action will be greater than study in the times of Moshiach, we can say that study is limited to the intellectual capacity of the student or scholar. The mind can go very far, understand very much, but it is still limited. Performing a mitzvah, on the other hand, requires bitul – a nullification of the ego. To do something simply because G-d commanded it requires acceptance of the yoke of heaven – submitting one’s own will to G-d’s. The attachment thus formed – and the manifestations of that attachment – are limitless.

Nevertheless, there are two types of bitul, two ways of subjugating one’s will. The first is an ‘external’ bitul, one that does not penetrate to the essence of the soul. In this case, one performs the mitzvah – carries out G-d’s Will – because of awe, through an acceptance of the yoke of heaven. This is the type of bitul that exists today. Getting there, achieving this degree of submission to G-d’s Will, requires intellect. One must study, learn Torah so deeply and so well, that a willingness to observe its commandments has

penetrated to the level of action, to a commitment to perform the mitzvah. In the times of Moshiach, however, the mitzvos will be performed because of a higher, 'internal' level of bitul. The hierarchical order – from intellect to action, from study to mitzvah – will no longer be necessary.

Then – in the times of Moshiach – performance of a mitzvah will reveal the essence of the soul – its innate connection to G-dliness – or, as the prophet phrases it, “all flesh will see” G-dliness. As a result, the impetus for doing a mitzvah will come not from understanding its significance, but automatically, from the nature of one's soul.

Still, this seems to nullify the very existence of Joseph – to eliminate the need for study. How can the two kingdoms, Joseph and Judah – study and action – become one unified nation and still retain their identities? How is it possible that “My servant David shall rule over them” if they are truly united, meaning both Joseph and Judah – study and action – retain their existence – and significance?

At the time when “study leads to action” – when Joseph is higher and Judah must approach him – study and action remain two separate concepts. Even though the individual possesses both, since “study leads to action,” a hierarchy exists: study is higher.

The essence of the soul is nullified to G-d's Will, being only a vehicle for its manifestation. The essence, and its nullification to G-d's Will, is revealed through action. When the essence is revealed, its nullification to G-d's Will is revealed in every manifestation and attribute. Thus, when action is higher, the intellect becomes egoless.

David, the king from Judah, is described as “My servant,” indicating that he ruled not with arrogance or self-exaltation, but humility and complete self-nullification. Just as performance

of a mitzvah requires effort and putting aside one's desires and conveniences to fulfill G-d's Will, so too Torah study requires effort and putting aside one's ego and rationalizations. In this way – in his submission to G-d's Will – Moshiach will unite Joseph and Judah, study and action.

We can thus understand a key phrase in Rambam's list of qualifications for Moshiach. Moshiach, Rambam explains, must be "a king from the house of David, expert in Torah and involved with mitzvos – as David his father." The phrase "as David his father" means that not only will Moshiach be punctilious in the observance of mitzvos and unequalled in Torah knowledge, but he will do both – Torah and mitzvos – with the same effort, humility and self-nullification "as David his father."

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 25, pp. 258-266)

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