

Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch

Ohr Torah

Parashat Vayigash

Siman #56

"And Judah approached him and said, 'Please, my lord... [for you are as Pharaoh].'"Genesis 44:18.

Our sages of blessed memory said: The term "approach" (*higash*) always denotes prayer. It seems to me that this verse alludes to the behavior of a Jewish individual, referred to as "a Jew" (*Yehudi*), when standing in prayer before the Blessed One. This is how one should conduct themselves: namely, that the entire intention of their prayer should be to bring influence upon the Divine Presence (*Shechinah*).

This is what our sages meant when they said: "One should not stand to pray except with a heavy head" (*koved rosh*), referring to the gravity of the "Head of all heads" (the Divine). Even when requesting personal needs, one's intention should be that nothing will be lacking Above, Heaven forbid. For the soul is a portion of the Divine from above, and it is a limb of the Shechinah. This is the primary purpose of the request—that it should be fulfilled and bring influence Above.

Certainly, with such intention, the prayer will be desirable, and no adversary or accuser will criticize it. This is unlike those who act for their own benefit and cry out, "Give! Give!" as the holy Zohar and Tikkunim describe.

It is also known that speech is called *Yehudah* (Judah), because thought, referred to as *Yud-Heh* from the name *Yehudah*, extends into the voice, referred to as the Vav. The Vav then brings influence to the *Daleth*, forming the name 'ה.

This is the meaning of "*And he approached*"—to pray. "*And he said*"—[this refers to the request:] "Act for the sake of Yourself," for I am a part of the Divine from above. This is the meaning of "*Please, my lord*": the essence of my being is connected to You. Therefore, surely "*Do not let Your anger burn against Your servant*" and no accusations will arise against me, because my entire intention is to bring influence above to the Divine portion that resides within me. This is the meaning of "*Please, my lord.*"

"*For you are as Pharaoh*"—the word *Pharaoh* (*Par'oh*) comes from the root meaning "revelation," indicating that You are the inner essence being revealed. All the more so since the world of speech operates within me.

This is the meaning of "*Let your servant speak a word*"—it refers to this attribute called *Davar* (word), which is the realm of speech.

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"And Joseph prepared his chariot [etc.]." Genesis 46:29.

It is written: "She built her nest far away" (Psalms 104:17). For behold, there are two types of love. The first is love due to the greatness of affection one has for the child, prompting the parent to provide all good things. The second is love that, due to affection, causes one to rebuke and even strike the child for their benefit.

Now, everything that exists in the world must certainly have been included in the primordial thought [of creation]. And the two types of love mentioned above were already present [alternatively: also present] in that primordial thought in this manner: First, Israel arose in thought. This means that although Israel is the last of all beings to be actualized in the physical world, in thought, they are primary to all. For everything else was created only for the sake of Israel, who are called "the first" (ראשית). That is, so that the Holy One, blessed be He, would derive delight from them.

And this is the essence of the thought, "I shall reign" (Anah Emloch). This is the meaning of "In the beginning" (בראשית)—for the sake of Israel, who are called "the first." That is to say, the love of the Creator for Israel caused the creation of the worlds. This is the first type of love: out of His love, He bestowed goodness upon them and provides abundance to all the worlds.

And behold, when it arose in thought that there would be Israel, this could not happen as it was, for they would not have been able to receive (later) the Infinite Light, blessed be He—a pure and refined light. Therefore, there had to be *tzimtzum* (contraction), which is an aspect of *din* (judgment), meaning a restriction of the flow. Through this, they could later receive the flow.

Thus, it is always necessary that the worlds receive the love of the Creator, blessed be He—that is, the divine flow—in a manner of *mati v'lo mati* ("reaching and withdrawing"), as in "like an eagle arousing its nest" (Deuteronomy 32:11), touching and not touching. All of this is for the aforementioned reason: they would not have been able to endure the first love directly. Through this process, Israel came into being.

This is essentially the attribute of Jacob, for the first two attributes correspond to Abraham and Isaac. Afterward, Jacob was born, representing the attribute of mercy (*rachamim*). This is [the meaning of] "Abraham begot Isaac"—that is, both together begot Jacob, who is the attribute of mercy that follows the aspect of *din* (judgment). Through this, the first love was revealed.

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This is [the meaning of the verse] *"Thus says the Lord, to Jacob, who redeemed Abraham"* (Isaiah 29:22). That is, the first love mentioned above. For that love was originally concealed. Now, through the revelation of the attribute of love, Israel can exist as *"Israel, in whom I glory"* (Isaiah 49:3), for in the inner essence [of creation], God can take pride in that love, which was initially hidden. [Alternatively: And through Israel, the inner attribute of love is revealed. This is the meaning of *"Israel, in whom I glory"*: I take pride in that inner love mentioned above.]

Let us return to the matter of the two aforementioned thoughts, namely *Israel* (the first love) and *tzimtzum* (contraction), both of which caused the first love, as mentioned. This is the meaning of *"And of Levi he said: 'Your Tumim and Urim'"* (Deuteronomy 33:8). *Levi* refers to connection and attachment and applies to the righteous one with whom the Holy One, blessed be He, connects. [Thus,] *Tumim and Urim* refer to [the attribute of Jacob] and *tzimtzum*—everything is directed toward *"the man of Your kindness"* (ibid.), for everything is caused by the first love, as mentioned.

This is why, in 24 places, priests are referred to as Levites, even though Levites represent the aspect of awe (*yirah*). All of this relates to the concept mentioned above. Similarly, in the analogy mentioned earlier, when a father loves his child with an immense love, but the child is too young to bear and receive that love, the father, desiring to reveal his love, strikes the child. Through this, the attribute of compassion is later revealed, which is itself a manifestation of the father's love, as mentioned above.

This is [the meaning of] *"She built her nest far away"* (Psalms 104:17)—the language of affection and love. *"She built"* refers to understanding (*binah*) and the revelation of love. *"Far away"* indicates that through distancing—[the child being distanced] initially—this caused the revelation of love.

Now, for the Blessed One, past and future are all the same, for He is beyond time. Before Israel even existed, every righteous individual with their deeds and Torah was already revealed to Him. From the very beginning, when Israel arose in thought, there were already delights for the Holy One, blessed be He, from every righteous person and their deeds. This is why we find that the Holy One, blessed be He, takes delight and says, *"Elazar, my son, says: 'A cow that is two years old...'"* (as in the Talmud), even before Rabbi Elazar came into the world, the Holy One, blessed be He, already derived pleasure from him.

Indeed, the deeds of the righteous, which they perform now in actuality, align perfectly with the primordial thought of the Blessed Creator. Through their good deeds, they create a chariot for the Creator's thought, drawing it down and causing it to rest upon

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them. The thought of the Blessed Creator mentioned above is called the "father" of the deeds of the righteous, which they perform now in actuality. Through this, the righteous become a chariot for the Divine [alternatively: and He assists the righteous], granting them the power to act.

This is [the meaning of] "*Joseph harnessed his chariot*" (Genesis 46:29). That is, Joseph the righteous became a chariot through his good deeds. "*And he went up to meet Israel his father*"—this refers to the primordial thought mentioned above.