

Rav Pinches Friedman

He Sent Yehudah Before Him to Joseph

Yehudah and Yosef Pave the Way for All of Klal Ysroel: Yehudah the Path of Teshuvah and Yosef the Path of the Tzaddik

In this week's parsha, Vayigash, we read of two crucial confrontations between two royal figures - Yehudah and Yosef. The first encounter described at the beginning of the parsha occurs before Yosef reveals his identity to his brothers (Bereishis 44,18): **“וַיִּגַשׁ אֵלָיו**” **“Yehudah approached him and said, 'If you please, my lord, may your servant speak a word in my lord's ears'...** The second encounter, after Yosef has revealed his identity to his brothers and has made peace with them, occurs when Yaakov sends Yehudah to Yosef (ibid. 46,28): **“וַיֵּאָדָר יְהוּדָה**” **“He sent Yehudah before him to Yosef, to instruct ahead of him in Goshen".** Here Rashi comments: "To clear a place for him, and to instruct how to settle in it. Ahead of him: before he would arrive there". Rashi adds from an aggadic Midrash: "To establish for him a house of study from which instruction shall go forth."

When we examine the difference between these two encounters, we find that the first was dramatic and intense; Yehudah approached Yosef with grave concerns, prepared for battle, if necessary. Rashi (44,18) comments that he was prepared to kill Yosef and Paroh, quoting the Midrash: **“כִּי כַמוֹךְ כַּפְרָעָה, אִם תִּקְנִיטֵנִי אֶהְרֹג אוֹתְךָ וְאֵת אֲדוֹנֶיךָ”**. In contrast, their second meeting was calm, peaceful, friendly and brotherly. This encounter is discussed by our blessed sages in the Midrash Tanchuma (6):

“וַיֵּאָדָר יְהוּדָה שֶׁלַח לִפְנֵי, זֶה שֶׁאָמַר הַכְּתוּב (אִיּוֹב כֵּה) הַמֶּשֶׁל וּפְחַד עָמוּ עוֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו, הַמֶּשֶׁל זֶה מִיכָאֵל וּפְחַד זֶה גְּבִרְיָאֵל, מִיכָאֵל מִן הַמַּיִם וּגְבִרְיָאֵל מִן הָאֵשׁ, וְהֵן עוֹמְדִין לִפְנֵי הַשְּׂכִינָה וְאֵינָן מְזִיקִין זֶה אֶת זֶה, הוּא אֹמֵר עוֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו. אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן, כָּל הַרְקִיעַ שֶׁל מַיִם וְהַמַּלְאכִים שֶׁל אֵשׁ וּמִשְׁרָתוֹ אֵשׁ לֹוֹהֵט, וְאֵינָן הַמַּיִם מְכַבִּין אֶת הָאֵשׁ וְלֹא הָאֵשׁ שׁוֹרֵף אֶת הַמַּיִם, יְהוּדָה וְיוֹסֵף, זֶה אָרִי וְזֶה שׁוֹר, אֶתְמוּל מִתְּנַגְחִין זֶה עִם זֶה, וְעַכְשָׁיו הוּא מְשַׁלְּחוֹ אֶצְלוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְאֵת יְהוּדָה שֶׁלַח לִפְנֵי, הוּא עוֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו”.

The Kings Confronted One Another With Antagonism

In this article, we wish to examine an astonishing elucidation by our sages concerning the first encounter between Yehudah and Yosef based on the verses (Tehillim 48,5-7):

“כִּי הִנֵּה הַמְּלָכִים נֹעְדוּ, זֶה יְהוּדָה וְיוֹסֵף, עָבְרוּ יַחְדָּיו, זֶה נִתְמַלֵּא עֲבָרָה עַל זֶה וְזֶה נִתְמַלֵּא עֲבָרָה עַל זֶה, הַמָּה רָאוּ כֵן תְּמָהוּ, וְיִתְמָהוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים אִישׁ אֶל רֵעֵהוּ, נִבְהָלוּ נַחְפְּזוּ, וְלֹא יָכְלוּ אַחֲיוּ לַעֲנוֹת

אותו כי נבהלו מפניו, רעדה אחזתם שם, אלו השבטים, אמרו מלכים מדויינים אלו עם אלו אנו
מה איכפת לנו, יאי למלך מדיין עם מלך”.

The kings assembled refers to Yehuda and Yosef; “עברו יחדיו”, they each filled with rage against the other; “המה ראו כן תמהו”, the spectators were bewildered; “נבהלו נחפזו”, his brothers were unable to respond to him because they were in shock; “רעדה אחזתם שם”, this refers to the Shevotim who said: “kings are debating one another, what concern is it of ours, it is fitting for a king to confront a king.”

We must endeavor to decipher our sage's enigmatic words: (a) Surely, Yehudah was enraged and furious towards Yosef who held Binyomin captive; however, why should Yosef have borne any antagonism toward Yehudah, who was merely fulfilling his promise to Yaakov? (b) What did the Shevotim mean when they said: “kings are debating kings, what concern is it of ours”? There is undoubtedly a hidden lesson here regarding this royal confrontation; it is incumbent upon us to unravel our sages riddle. Lastly, Rashi adds in his commentary (46,28) in the name of a midrash aggadah that Yaakov sent them to establish a beis midrash, a house of study; why, davka, did Yaakov choose Yehudah and Yosef out of all of the twelve shevatim for this task?

Yehudah represents the “בעל תשובה”, Yosef the “צדיק גמור”. Let us introduce an important principle that should clarify and shed light on this entire parsha. We shall expand on an illuminating concept of the holy, gaon Rav Tzaddok hakohen, zy”a, presented in his Pri Tzaddik (Vayigash,3): the two kings, Yehudah and Yosef are in essence the source of two distinct approaches to the service of Hashem - that of the tzaddik and that of the baal teshuvah.

Yosef hatzaddik merited the title “צדיק יסוד עולם” due to his withstanding the difficult test in matters of kedushoh in Mitzroyim. He is emblematic of the perfect tzaddik who has defeated his yetzer horah. In contrast, Yehudah- who admitted publicly to Tamar (Bereishis 38,26): “ויכר יהודה ויאמר צדקה ממני” - “Yehudah recognized, and he said, 'she is right, it is from me', . . .” - is emblematic of the baal teshuvah. It is true, however, that Rashi comments (ibid.) based on Sotah 10: that a heavenly voice went forth and proclaimed that it was I, Hashem, who brought about these events (involving Yehudah and Tamar). The point being that it was heavenly ordained that -the element of choice was withdrawn from Yehudah, so that he would repent as serve as a beacon for teshuvah for all of Klal Yisroel.

It is stated in Sefer Yetzirah (chapt. 6): “לב בנפש כמלך במלחמה” – the king represents the heart of the people. The Rambam (Hilchot melochim, chapt.3, halachah 6) comments, in a similar fashion, that the king is the heart of the congregation of Yisroel ; just as the heart is the central, gathering place of the blood, so, too, the king is the focus and heartbeat of the nation.

Anatomically, the heart is comprised of right and left chambers. Spiritually, the right heart houses the yetzer hotov, while the left heart houses the yetzer horah. This is taught in the Midrash (Bamidbar R.,22,8) on the verse (Koheles 10,2):

“לב חכם לימינו ולב כסיל לשמאלו - לב חכם לימינו, זה יצר טוב שהוא נתון בימינו, ולב כסיל לשמאלו, זה יצר הרע שנתון בשמאלו.”

In this vein, Rav Tzaddok explains that the two kings, Yehudah and Yosef, correspond to the two chambers of the heart. Yosef, the complete, ultimate tzaddik represents the right chamber, the abode of the yetzer hotov and, thus, was able to overcome his yetzer horah - an illustration of (Avos 4,1): “who is mighty, he who conquers his personal inclination.” Yehudah, however, represents the left cavity of the heart, the abode of the yetzer horah; this is why it was arranged from shomayim that he fall prey to this yetzer, so that he would pave the road for the baal teshuvah.

Thus, our two kings, Yehudah and Yosef, blazed the paths for all of Yisroel . Yosef, the complete tzaddik, is credited by the Midrash (Vayikrah R. 32,5) as being the reason the children of Yisroel were able to sanctify themselves and refrain from immorality during their exile in Mitzroyim; he is also credited with their redemption. Yaakov ovinu, in his wisdom, realized that it would be impossible for everyone to be like Yosef hatzaddik - as stated by the wisest of all men (Koheles 7,20): “כי אדם אין צדיק בארץ אשר יעשה טוב ולא יחטא”, i.e. there doesn't exist such a righteous man that never commits a sin. Therefore, he devised to send Yehudah, representative of the baal teshuvah, to Yosef hotzaddik, to integrate these two forces. Thus, an appropriate path was provided for all members of klal Yisroel. This is the meaning of the possuk: “ואת יהודה שלח לפניו אל לתקן לו בית תלמוד שמשם תצא יוסף להורות לפניו גשנה” and Rashi's commentary “הוראה”. In other words, a place was designated to provide instruction in both methods of service to Hashem - that of Yehudah and that of Yosef.

The Two Moshiachs

In this manner, Rav Tzakkok continues to weave the golden threads of this fascinating tapestry. It is for this same reason that Dovid homelech, also from shevet Yehudah, was also designated from above to set an example and lead the way for baalei teshuvah. The gemorah (Avodah Zarah 4:) states:

“לא דוד ראוי לאותו מעשה דכתיב ולבי חלל בקרבי... אלא לומר לך שאם חטא יחיד אומרים לו כלך אצל יחיד... והיינו דרבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר רבי יונתן, מאי דכתיב (שמואל ב כג א) נאום דוד בן ישי ונאום הגבר הוקם על, נאם דוד בן ישי שהקים עולה של תשובה.”

We see that it was arranged from above that Dovid homelech would fail and sin in the matter of Bat Sheva. Being that he was the king of Yisroel , and, in the words of the Rambam, the heart of the people, he was obliged to follow in the footsteps of Yehudah,

the father of his tribe. He committed what appeared to be a sin on his part, in order to carve out a path of teshuvah for all of Yisroel .

Based on the above, we find many references from Rav Tzaddok to the concept found in the gemorah (Succah 52:) that the Almighty will redeem Yisroel by means of two moshiachs - משיח בן יוסף from the line of Yosef and משיח בן דוד from shevet Yehudah. Moshiach ben Yosef will guide the people of Yisroel to be kodosh and follow the ways of the tzaddik. Moshiach ben Dovid will guide the people of Yisroel to correct all of their transgressions through teshuvah.

The Philosophical Debate Between Yehudah and Yosef

With this background and understanding, we can begin to fathom why it was so crucial in the heavenly scheme that this royal confrontation takes place in Mitzroyim. Yehudah and Yosef represented very different philosophies; Yehudah was ready to wage war against Yosef in order to retrieve Binyomin and return him to his father Yaakov. Yet, in the end, they made peace, and Yaakov, with his entire household, were brought to Mitzroyim.

There is a well-known dispute in the gemorah (Berochos 34:) as to who is greater, the בעל תשובה or the צדיק גמור:

”אמר רבי יוחנן, כל הנביאים כולן לא נתנבאו אלא לבעלי תשובה, אבל צדיקים גמורים (ישעיה טד ג) עין לא ראתה אלהים זולתך, ופליגא דרבי אבהו, דאמר רבי אבהו מקום שבעלי תשובה עומדין צדיקים גמורים אינם עומדין.”

In matters of dispute among the righteous, there is an important principle (Eruvin 13:): “אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים” i.e. both sides represent divine Truth. So too, in our discussion, both doctrines hold true. In certain aspects, the baal teshuvah is greater; in other aspects, the tzaddik gomur stands out. Furthermore, it all depends on each's spiritual level and madreigah. Not every tzaddik is greater than his baal teshuvah counterpart, and not every baal teshuvah is greater than his tzaddik counterpart. This explains why the initial confrontation in our parsha was so fiery and antagonistic. Both Yosef and Yehudah wished to defend their holy doctrines and guide the people of Yisroel appropriately. They ultimately saw eye to eye and were able to establish a paradigm for future generations to follow. Their message is that both ways are valid and necessary; both are invaluable; therefore, both Yosef and Yehudah, together, were required to pave the way.

We can now suggest an interesting interpretation of the possuk: “ויגש אליו יהודה ויאמר ” בי אדוני ידבר נא עבדך דבר באזני אדוני”

In the sefer Lev Aryeh (Vayigash 5), he writes in the name of Rabbi Leib Darshen from Ostrah, based on what we've learned (Sotah 10:): Yosef who performed an act of kiddush

Hashem in private merited the addition of one letter from Hahem's name to his own name - as it is written "עדות ביהוסף שמו"; Yehudah, who performed an act of kiddush Hashem in public merited to be named entirely after Hashem's name. Rashi explains that this is telling us that all four letters of Hashem's name are contained in the name יהודה.

So, when Yehudah says "בי ארוני", he is making the point that his name contains all the letters of the shem havaya, as opposed to יהוסף which only contains the single addition of the letter "ה" from Hashem's name. Yehudah's intention was not to prove to Yosef that he was the greater of the two of them, but rather to prove that the halachah accords with Rabbi Abahu that "מקום שבעלי תשובה עומדין צדיקים גמורים אינם עומדין".

“What Concern Is It of Ours Both of them are Right”

In the final analysis, we see that these two kings made a peaceful alliance, they were joined by all twelve shevatim and the result was that Yaakov and his entire household went down to Mitzroyim. Hashem is teaching us the lesson that: "אלו ואלו דברי אלקים"; we required the approaches of both Yehudah and Yosef - the baal teshuvah and the tzaddik - in order to survive the exile in Mitzroyim. Similarly, in the merit of these two approaches, we will realize the future redemption facilitated by "משיח בן יוסף" - emblematic of the tzaddik gomur and "משיח בן דוד" - emblematic of the baal teshuvah.

The meaning of the Midrash now becomes clear: "כי הנה המלכים נוערו, זה יהודה ויוסף, עברו יחדיו, זה נתמלא עברה על זה וזה נתמלא עברה על זה", Each wished to fortify his own doctrine, being of the opinion that his way was the correct and direct path to pave on behalf of all of Yisroel .

"המה ראו בן תמהו, ויתמהו האנשים איש אל רעהו, נבהלו נחפזו, ולא יכלו אחיו לענות אותו" The brothers were shocked by Yosef's kedushoh and their realization that he epitomized the "צדיק יסוד עולם".

"רעדה אחזתם שם, אלו השבטים, אמרו מלכים מדיינים אלו עם אלו אנו מה איכפת לנו, יאי למלך מדיין עם מלך".

The brothers perceived through divine inspiration that Hashem devised this scenario, pitting the kings, Yehudah and Yosef, head to head, in one locale, to teach that both paths are correct and essential in order to serve Hashem. At that point, they proclaimed: "מלכים" - what difference does it make to us that these two kings are debating one another; we require a combination of the two approaches. A deal was finally struck when Yaakov sent Yehudah to Yosef to establish a house of learning where both doctrines of service of Hashem would be taught.