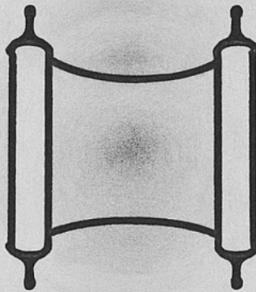


בס"ד

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodak Parshas Vayigash (ב)



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Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Vayigash (ב)

Introduction

Menachem Mendel Horodaker (circa late eighteenth to early nineteenth century), a Chassidic thinker and disciple within the broader tradition of early Chabad-influenced Chassidic masters, expounds in this maamar on the inner meaning of Judah's approach to Joseph, unveiling a comprehensive spiritual framework that explains human descent, struggle, and engagement with the physical world as a divinely orchestrated process of elevation and rectification.

And Judah approached him and said, "Please, my lord"

(Genesis 44:18). Behold, in the book Or HaChaim it is brought to explain the word "and he approached," what is the meaning of approaching.

And its explanation is that it is fitting for him, that the approaching was in the heart, to be known, as water reflects the face, so the heart of a man to a man (Proverbs 27:19).

And through these words was Judah's desire to arouse the compassion of Joseph; therefore he drew near in his heart to come close to Joseph and to love him with the truth of the heart.

In order to arouse Joseph's love toward him and to arouse his compassion. And behold, there emerged here holy speech, words of a wise mouth, grace, truth, and faith.

But if indeed, according to Judah's understanding, that he thought of Joseph that he was an Egyptian, concerning whom Israel was warned "you shall not show them favor" (Deuteronomy 7:2), not to give them favor.

Judah did not refrain from drawing his heart close to love him, according to what is known regarding prayer and offerings and eating.

Behold, our sages of blessed memory said in the Midrash and the Talmud: Jacob our father was fit to descend to Egypt in chains of iron, but so forth.

And the parable is of an animal that they lead to the slaughterhouse, and it does not want to go; they pull it with a rope. See there.

וינש אליו יהודה ויאמר בְּאָדָם (בראשית מ"ד:י"ח). הנה בספר אור הרים מובא לפירוש מלות נינש מה היה גנש

ופירושו הוא בראוי לו שהגנש הינהقلب להיות נודעת כפניהם הפנימים פון לב הקדם אל אדם (משל כ"ז:י"ט).

ובכךרים אלו הינה רצון יהודה לעורר רוחמי יוסף לבו הגיש בלבו להתקרב ליוסף ולאקהו אותו באמת הלב

בכדי לעורר אהבת יוסף אליו לעורר רוחמי. הנה יצא מפה קדוש דברי פי חכם חן אמרת ואמונה

אבל אם אמם לפיה דעת יהודה ששה סבור על יוסף שהוא מצרי שהקשו ישראאל לא תחנעם (דברים ז:ב) שלא לחתם חן

לא נמנע יהודה מלקרוב לבו לאקהו אותו על קרבן. הידוע בתפלה וקרונות ואכילה

הנה אמרו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה בᛰרץ ובש"ס ראייה הינה יעקב אבינו לירד בשלשלאות של ברזל למצריים אלא וככל

ומשל בהמה שמוליכין אומה למקளון ואינה רוזה לילך מושכין אותה בଘל עין שם

Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Vayigash (ב)

Behold, the parable is an instruction of the matter of the descent of Jacob and his sons to Egypt, in order to elevate the holy sparks of Egypt, as is known.

Regarding “and they emptied Egypt” (Exodus 12:36), as its Aramaic translation explains it as “and they emptied,” and our sages of blessed memory said, like a net that has no fish.

And behold, the matter of a person’s eating is also for this purpose, in order to elevate the sparks from level to level.

From the inanimate to the vegetative that is fit for human consumption, and what is not fit ascends from vegetative to animal until it reaches human consumption.

And sensory perception testifies that seemingly it is a wondrous matter, that physical food is a cause for the bonding of the soul with the body, which cannot live without eating.

And it is therefore necessary that within food there be an extract of holy vitality, from which the soul is nourished, while the body is nourished from the physicality.

And nevertheless, no holy spark wishes to move from the place in which it is concealed in its level and to ascend, as our sages said that every blade of grass has an angel appointed over it who strikes it and says to it, “Grow” (Bereishit Rabbah 10:6).

For the holy spark fears an impure occurrence that may happen, perhaps it will come before a base person, and by his eating it will fall lower than it is now.

Although this is the entirety of man standing upon free choice, and who knows if he will choose the good to elevate it.

For no elevation is relevant unless a person intends to be nourished from sustenance that is given from the house of the King.

The Holy One, blessed be He, is within the food, and one eats and drinks and beholds God, drawing close to Him through the food.

As in the deed of Rav Hamnuna the Elder, who would immediately ascend, like the act of a sacrifice.

הנה הפשט הוא הוראת ענן ירידת יצחק ובניו למארים בקדיל להעלות נצונות הקדושות מארים בידוע.

על פסוק ויגלו את מארים (שמות י"ב:ל"ז) בתרגומו וריבינו ואמרנו רבינו זכרון לברכה במצויה שאנו בה דגין.

והנה ענן האכילה של אדם גם כן לצדק זה בקדיל להעלות נצונות מדרגה לדרגה.

מדום לצומח קדאי לאכילתו אדם ושיינו ראוי עולמה מצומח לחי עד שמתגיע לאכילת אדם.

והחיש מעיד שלכאורה כבר פלאי להיות המאכל הגשמי סבה להתקשות הגופש בגוף שאינו יכול לחיות בלי אכילה.

ומכך להיות במאכל ממצוין היה קדיש אשר הגופש נזון מפה והגופר מן הגשמיות.

ונא על פי כן אין רואה שום ביצוע הקדש לו זום ממקום שהוא בסתר המדרגה וLEVEL שכל עשב יש לו מלאה המפה ומפה אותו ואומר לו (גדל (בראשית רבה י"ו):

כى הניצוץ הקדש מתירא מקרה בLATI טהור אויל זדמן לפני אדם בLEVEL שיפלו באכילתיו יותר מפה. שהוא עכשו.

אף כי זה כל האדים עומד על הבחירה ומיה יזע אם יברר בטוב להעלותו.

כיאין שיכוח לשום עליו אלא אם יחשב האדם לו זום ממזוני דמתהיב מבי מלכא.

קדיש בריך הוא בתוך המאכל ויאכל וישפה ויחזקה את האלים להתקרב אליו על ידי המאכל.

כמעשנה דרב המונא סבא שהוא מתעללה פכבר. כמעשנה פארכון.

Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Vayigash (ב)

And all the worlds become unified, from the lowest and most base until the supernal will, the Infinite One, blessed be He, through the unification of man and beast in his eating.

And below him is a person who is good before God but does not elevate immediately through his eating.

Nevertheless, the additional vitality that he received through his eating, and the vitality reached this as well, for this is the teaching of man.

And every deed that he performs afterward for the sake of Heaven, the vitality is elevated as well.

In contrast, Heaven forbid, when a person becomes coarse from eating, and he eats and is satiated and his desire comes upon him.

Behold, he causes the holy spark to fall further and further into the husks, for he gives vitality and creates husks, may the Merciful One save us.

This is the fear of the spark from ascending, until they strike it, as mentioned above.

In truth, a holy spark that sees a place prepared before it for elevation, without doubt greatly desires it, as is known from the matter of the lower waters that weep, saying: we too desire to be before the King.

This is the matter of prayer, for sometimes when a person approaches God with the point of his heart in truth, as stated regarding Judah, foreign thoughts or foreign traits awaken within him.

And this is because their desire is to be elevated, for behold, a place has been prepared for them to be elevated through repentance, since he is ready to serve in holiness.

So too Jacob our father feared to descend to Egypt to elevate the sparks, like the matter of the grass that is struck so that it may grow,

And like a cow that they lead to the slaughterhouse, to elevate it through its slaughter and its eating.

ומתניתדים כל הульמות מן השללים המתהונים עד רצון עליון אין סוף ברוך הוא על ידי יהוד אדם ובכמה באכילתו אotta.

ולמיטה מאננו אדם שטוב לפני אלhim ואינו מעלה. תפך באכילתו.

על כל פנים התוטפת חייה שקבל באכילתו והחיות. הגיע גם כן לזו תורת האדם.

וכל מעשה שיעשה אחר כך לשם שמים מטעלה. החיות גם כן.

מה שאין כן חס ושלום בשאדם מתגשים מן האכילה. ניאכל וישבע ותאותו בא לו.

ברי הוא מפל לנצח קדש בתוך קדשה יותר ויתר שברי הוא נתן חיים ובורא קליפות רחמן. לאלו.

זהו יראת הניצוץ להתעלות עד שמאכיהם אותו בנצח. לעיל.

ובאמת ניצוץ קדש שרוואה מקום מוקן לפניו להתעלות כל ספק מבקש מאי פידוע מענן מים. מתהונים בוכים גם אן בעינו למן קדם מלכ'.

שהוא ענן התפללה שלפעמים בשאהדם נגש אל האלים בקורת לבו באמת אמר ביהודה. מטעוררים עליו מתחשבות זרות או מדות זרות.

והוא שרצונם להתעלות כי הנה מקום אמת מוקן להעלות לחש. בקדש.

וכו יעקב אבינו ה' מהירה מלהדרת למארים להעלות. הנצונות בענן עשב שמאכיהם אותו לנдел.

ופרה שמליכים אותה למקளו להעלמה בשחיתת ואכילתה.

Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Vayigash (ב)

He was fit to descend in chains of iron, but his merit caused that the Holy One, blessed be He, promised him: "I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up" (Genesis 46:4).

And behold, our Torah is a Torah of truth and faith, that certainly it is forbidden for a person to bring himself into a test,

To bring himself into a foreign thought in order to elevate it, Heaven forbid, for who knows if he will prevail like a lion and rise up.

Or perhaps he will descend lower and lower and not withstand the test, Heaven forbid.

Only when the test comes before him without intent, it is certainly from God to test him,

And he must prevail with all his strength and with self-sacrifice for repentance, and this itself is the ascent.

And this was indeed the matter of the king, peace be upon him, who said, "I will increase and not refrain," and from the outset he went out with intention in order to elevate holy sparks, yet he did not withstand the trial.

And this is what our sages of blessed memory said, that one blesses over beautiful creatures, "Blessed is He Who has such in His world," even over a beautiful gentile.

And this does not contradict the statement "you shall not show them favor," for there the discussion is about bringing oneself to look at him intentionally.

To say, "How beautiful is this gentile," one is not permitted; whereas when he has already come before him unbidden, He certainly must bless, in order to elevate the pleasantness of the sight, as in the deed of Rabbi Akiva with that noblewoman, of whom the sages said she was at the corner.

But at the outset, it is certainly forbidden, and this is self-sacrifice, like the matter of falling on one's face, as is known.

And behold, the general principle of the matter regarding elevation is that a person must contemplate everything that comes before him.

ראי ה' היה לירד בשלשלאות של ברזל אלא שזכהתו גראמה לו ששחתה לו הקדוש ברוך הוא אָנָכִי אֶרְד עַמָּךְ מָצָרִיםָה וְאָנָכִי אַעֲלֵךְ גַּם עַלְהָ (בראשית ט"ו:ד).

ונהגה תורתנו תורה אמת ואמונה שבונדי אסור לו לאדם להביא את עצמו לידי נסיוון.

להכנים את עצמו במחשבת רוחה בקדאי להעלotta חס ושלום כי מי יודע אם יתגבר פאר ויתנשא

או אולץ ירד מטה מטה ולא יעמוד בNEGATION חס ושלום

אם לא כשלגנטיו גזען לפניו בלא מתחפנו בודאי מז ה' נספחו.

צאריך להתגבר בכל فهو וمسירת נפשו על התשובה והוא העללה.

זה היה ענינו של המלך עליו השלום שאמר ארבה ולא אסור ומתקלה יצא מתחפנו בקדאי להעלotta נצחות קדשות ולא עמד בNEGATION חס ושלום

ונזה שאמרו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה לברך על בריות נאות ברוך שפכה לו בועלמו אפלוי על גוי נאה.

ואינו סותר למאמר לא תחגט כי שם מירוי להכנים עצמו לראותם מתחפנו.

בקדאי לומר במא נאה גוי זה מה שאין כן כשבבר גזען לפניו.

בונדי ארייך לברך להעלotta נאות קראיה במעשה דרבינו עקיבא בקהיא מטרונית שאמרי רבותינו זכרונם לברכה גורו זוית קוי.

ובתקלה ודי אסור והוא מסירת נפש בענין נפילת אפים פידוע.

ונהגה כלל לא דמלתא מענין העהלאה הוא שארייך האדם להתבונן על כל המזען לפניו.

Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Vayigash (ב)

That within it as well is found a flow and portion from that very matter, whether good or bad.

And after kind emerges from kind and is awakened, therefore one must immediately bind himself to Him, blessed be He.

From the nature of the event that came before him, by placing it upon his heart that “the Lord is this, and there is nothing besides Him,”

As the saying states, “His kingship rules over all,” for kingship rules over all and gives life to all.

And through attachment to Him, blessed be He, one ascends with the kingship to the foundation, which is attachment.

And this is the ladder set upon the earth whose head reaches the heavens, to ascend, as is known, from “the righteous one, foundation of the world.”

Therefore, Judah, when he saw all these causes that came before them, as they said, “What is this that God has done to us,”

Judah understood that the matter was demanded of them for elevation.

Therefore, “Judah approached him” with his heart, even if he were a gentile or an Egyptian.

For behold, the Lord had already arranged before them and caused it to occur that they were compelled to seek his compassion for their lives.

And this is what he said, “Please, my lord,” for Judah was the kingship of the house of David.

And “His kingship rules over all,” and everything is included within it.

And he approached in order to attach with him, to Him, blessed be He.

And according to the inner truth, since he was Joseph, who is the foundation, and is bound with kingship.

And this is “Please, my lord,” both according to the plain meaning and according to the inner truth.

שגם בו נמצא שטר מנהו מאותו ה' כבר אם טוב ואם רע.

ואחר שיצא מין את מינו ונעור לו כן אריך תפך.
להתקשר בו יתפרק.

משמעותו שגבורו לפניו בשומו אל לבו שלא ה' זוא אין כבר בלתו.

כמאמר ומלכותו בכל משללה כי המלכות היא המושלת בכל ומתחיה הכל.

ונעל ידי ההתקשרות בו יתפרק מתחלה עם המלכות אל היסוד שהוא ההתקשרות.

והוא השלם משב ארץ וראשו מאיין הנטינה לעלות בידוע מזיך יסוד עולם.

לכן הנה יהוקה כשראה כל אלה הפסות שגבורו לאניהם לאחיו מה זאת עשה לאלהם לנו.

הבין יהוקה להיות הדבר מתקבש מאמת להתעלות לנו ויגש אליו יהוקה בלב אפילו אם היה גוי או מצרי.

שערי כבר צפן כי לפניו והקירה להיותם מקרים לרוחם לבקש מאתו על נפשם.

וזהו שאמר כי אדרני להיות יהוקה מלכות בית קוד.

ומלכותו בכל משללה והכל כלול בו.

ויגש להתקשרות עמו אליו יתפרק.

ונעל פי האמת להיותו יוסף הוא היסוד ומתקשרות עם המלכות.

וזהו כי אדרני על פי פשוטו ועל פי אמת

Menachem Mendel of Horodak
Pri Ha'Eretz
Parshas Vayigash (ב)

[NOTE Summary:

The maamar opens with the verse “And Judah approached him and said, Please, my lord” and explains, based on the Or HaChaim, that the essence of approach is not physical movement but inner movement of the heart. True approach means emotional and spiritual alignment, where one heart opens to another. Judah’s intent was to awaken compassion within Joseph by genuinely drawing close in love, since love awakens love, as water reflects a face to a face.

This raises a difficulty. Judah believed Joseph to be an Egyptian, and the Torah forbids granting favor or affection to such people. Yet Judah nevertheless drew close in his heart. The resolution lies in understanding that there are moments when closeness is not an act of forbidden favor but a divinely mandated descent for the sake of elevation. Just as Jacob was destined to descend to Egypt to extract and elevate holy sparks embedded within it, Judah sensed that this encounter was not incidental but purposeful.

The maamar explains at length the doctrine of holy sparks. Every element of the physical world contains concealed divine vitality. Human beings descend into physical engagement in order to elevate that vitality. Food sustains the body materially, but the soul is nourished by the divine life-force hidden within it. The reason eating binds soul and body is precisely because the soul is reclaiming its own source from within the physical.

Yet the sparks themselves resist ascent. Each spark fears being further degraded if consumed or engaged by an unworthy person. This explains why the Midrash describes each blade of grass as being struck and commanded to grow. The spark is compelled upward despite its fear. If a person eats for selfish pleasure, the spark falls deeper into concealment and gives life to destructive forces. If one eats with awareness of God, the spark ascends.

The highest level is exemplified by Rav Hamnuna the Elder, whose eating immediately effected unification of all spiritual worlds, like a sacrifice upon the altar. A lower level person may not elevate immediately, but if the added vitality is later used for mitzvot or divine service, the spark is ultimately raised. Only when eating leads to indulgence and material coarseness does the spark suffer further descent.

This principle extends to prayer and inner struggle. When a person approaches God sincerely, foreign thoughts or emotions may suddenly arise. These are not random distractions but sparks seeking elevation, sensing that the person is in a state capable of uplifting them. One must not deliberately invite such challenges, as doing so constitutes a forbidden self-imposed trial. King Solomon erred when he intentionally entered danger claiming he would not stumble. Elevation can only occur when the challenge arises uninvited.

The same rule applies to beauty in the world. One may not seek out forbidden sights under the guise of spiritual elevation. However, when beauty presents itself unbidden, one must elevate it by recognizing it as an

Menachem Mendel of Horodak
Pri Ha'Eretz
Parshas Vayigash (ב)

expression of divine creativity and blessing God for it. This distinction resolves the apparent contradiction between the prohibition of showing favor and the blessing over beautiful creations, even non-Jews.

The unifying principle is awareness. Every event, whether uplifting or disturbing, contains a divine message and vitality meant for that moment. A person must immediately bind the experience back to God, recognizing that there is nothing besides Him and that divine kingship animates all existence. Through this conscious attachment, the experience ascends through the spiritual structure, from kingship to foundation, symbolized by the ladder set on earth whose head reaches heaven.

Judah embodied this awareness. Seeing the cascade of events surrounding Benjamin, he recognized divine orchestration. He understood that elevation was being demanded of them. Therefore he approached Joseph with his heart, even believing him to be Egyptian, because God had placed Joseph before them as the channel for mercy. On the inner level, Judah represents kingship and Joseph represents foundation. Their meeting was not merely negotiation but cosmic unification. Thus Judah's words "Please, my lord" are true both on the surface and in their deepest mystical meaning.

Practical Takeaway:

A person should not seek spiritual challenges, temptations, or moral danger in the hope of transforming them. Growth does not come from manufactured trials but from responding correctly to what God places before us. When difficulty, distraction, or desire appears uninvited, the task is not panic or indulgence, but awareness, restraint, and conscious redirection toward God. Eating, praying, seeing, and engaging the world all become acts of elevation when done with intention and humility. The measure of spiritual maturity is not how much one can handle, but how faithfully one responds to what one is given.

Chassidic Story:

A well-known Chassid once asked his Rebbe why he felt sudden waves of improper thoughts precisely during moments of heartfelt prayer, whereas at other times his mind was calm. The Rebbe answered that when a fire is lit in a dark room, moths immediately rush toward it. The fire had not created the moths; it merely revealed them and gave them direction. The Rebbe explained that sincere prayer ignites a spiritual fire, and sparks wandering in darkness sense the opportunity to rise. The task of the worshipper is not to chase them away in anger nor to engage them, but to continue steadily toward God. In doing so, the sparks ascend on their own.

END NOTE]