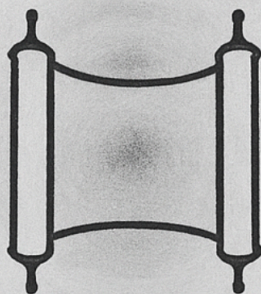


בס"ד

**Rebbe Elimelech
of Lizhensk
Parshas Vayigash**



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The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Vayigash

מאמר א

And Judah approached him and said, "Please, my lord." We will preface to explain the verse in Psalms, "And according to Your fear is Your wrath, etc." (Psalms 90:11).

For behold, with the Creator, blessed be He, no fear applies to Him at all. Rather, this fear that He has, the Exalted Name has, that He fears that a person should not sin.

Because of His love, that He loves the person, to benefit him in his end, for His way, blessed be He, is to benefit all His creations, and therefore He fears that he should not sin.

And it is found that the fear of the Creator, blessed be He, is fear from within love. And likewise, the punishment that He punishes a person is also because He wants to benefit him in his end.

He refines him with sufferings in this world so that he will be able to receive the good in the World to Come. And this is "And according to Your fear is Your wrath."

Its explanation: just as Your fear is from love of the person, so Your wrath, that You punish the person, is also because of love, to benefit him in his end.

"To number our days, thus inform." For a person needs to cleave to His attributes, as the Holy One's fear is from love.

So too a person needs to be fearful from love of the Creator, exalted be He, that fear should rise upon his head to sin from love.

That he loves the Creator, blessed be He, and how could he sin and separate his love from Him, Heaven forbid.

For the root of the matter is that fear applies only from that which the eyes see, but from that which is not seen, fear does not apply.

For from what would one fear. But love is in the heart, and in the heart one can imagine even something that is not seen at all.

ויגש אליו יהודה ויאמר בי אדני. נקדים לפרש הפסוק בתהלים "ויקראתה עבדך וכוילי" (תהלים צ:יא).

דהנה הבורא ברוך הוא אין שיך בו שום יראה, רק היראה הזאת יש לו לשם יתעלה שמתירא שלא יחטא האדם,

מחמת אהבתו שאוהב את האדם להיטיבו באחריתו, כי דרכו יתברך להיטיב לכל ברוואיו ולכן מתירא שלא יחטא,

ונמצא יראת הבורא ברוך הוא היא יראה מתוך אהבה, וכן העונש שמעניש לאדם הוא גם כן מחמת שרוצה להיטיבו באחריתו

הוא מצרפו בנסיון בעולם הזה כדי שיוכל לקבל הטוב לעולם הבא, וזהו "ויקראתה עבדך"

פרוש כמו שהיראה שלך היא מתוך אהבת האדם, כן עבדך שאתה מעניש לאדם הוא גם כן מחמת אהבה להיטיבו באחריתו

"למנות ימינו כן הודע", כי האדם צריך לדבק במדותיו יתברך, כמו שהשם יתעלה יראתו מתוך אהבה,

כן האדם צריך להיות ירא מחמת אהבת הבורא יתעלה, שיעלה מורא על ראשו לחטוא מחמת אהבה,

שאוהב לבורא ברוך הוא ואין יחטא ויפריד אהבתו ממנו חלילה,

כי שרש הדבר הוא שיראה אין שיך אלא ממה שעניו רואות, אבל ממה שאינו נראה אין שיך יראה,

כי ממה יתירא, אבל אהבה היא בלב ובלב יכול לצייר לעצמו אפילו דבר שאינו נראה כלל

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Vayigash

And therefore the Creator, blessed be He, is surely the One who sees and is not seen, and a person needs to imagine in his heart the greatness of His rule and His awesomeness and His wonders.

ולכן הבורא ברוך הוא בודאי הרוצה ואינו נראה
וצריך האדם לציר בלבו את גדל ממלכתו
ונוראותיו ונפלאותיו ותפארתו

And through this there will come to him great love in his heart to the Creator, blessed be He, and moreover, in thought a person can attain attainments without end.

ועל ידי זה יבוא לו אהבה רבה בלבו לבורא
יתברך, ומה גם שבמחשבה יכול האדם להשיג
השגות גדולות לאין קץ

For thought too is without end, and if so a person needs to bind himself with cords of love, and from within love he will have the fear to sin, Heaven forbid, lest he separate love, Heaven forbid.

כי המחשבה היא גם כן אין סוף, ואם כן צריך
האדם לקשר עצמו בעבודות אהבה ומתוך אהבה
יהיה לו היראה לחטוא חלילה פן יפריד אהבה
חלילה.

And this is the explanation of “My Sabbaths you shall keep.” And seemingly it should have said “My Sabbath you shall keep,” and what is this doubling of the letter tav?

וזהו פרוש “את שבתותי תשמרו”, ולכאורה הנה לו
?לומר את שבתתי תשמרו [ו]מה זה כפל התיווין

And it appears that the Sabbath is only love, and a person needs to bind the weekdays with the Sabbath, for the weekdays are fear, and we wrote that fear needs to be from within love.

ונראה כי השבת הוא רק אהבה, והאדם צריך לקשר
ימי החול בשבת, כי ימי החול הם יראה ופחד
שהיראה צריכה להיות מתוך אהבה

And therefore for this reason we count the weekdays by means of the Sabbath, “Today is the first day of the Sabbath,” and likewise each and every day.

ולכן מטעם זה אנו מונים ימי החול על ידי השבת –
“היום יום ראשון בשבת”, וכן כל יום ויום

In order to bind the Sabbath into the weekdays, that also in the weekdays there should be love, and there should be fear from within love.

כדי לקשר השבת בימי החול, שגם בימי החול יהיה
אהבה ויראה יראה מתוך אהבה

And when fear is from within love, then also the weekdays are called Sabbath, for they too are levels of love.

וכשהיראה היא מתוך אהבה אזי גם ימי החול
נקראים שבת כי הם גם כן מדרגות אהבה

But they are not like the Sabbath itself, for the Sabbath is only love alone, but the weekdays are fear because of love, and this is called a partial Sabbath.

אבל אינם כמו השבת עצמו, כי השבת הוא רק
אהבה לבד, אבל ימי החול הם יראה מחמת אהבה,
וזה נקרא מקצת שבת

And this is the hint in the verse “My Sabbaths etc.”, meaning two Sabbaths, that is, the weekdays and the Sabbath day.

וזה רמז בפסוק “את שבתותי כו”, ר"ל שני שבתות,
הינני ימי החול ויום השבת

For the weekdays are also called Sabbath as explained above, and it hints to the weekdays with the doubling of the tavs, to show that they are not like the Sabbath itself, which is entirely love.

כי ימי החול נקראין גם כן שבת כנ"ל, ומרמז ימי
החול בכפל התיווין להראות שאינם כמו שבת עצמו
שהוא כולו אהבה

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Vayigash

“You shall keep” hints to thought, like “and his father kept the matter,” meaning that the essence of love is in thought in the heart, as explained above.

“תשמרו” רמז על המחשבה כמו וְאָבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת הַדָּבָר, דְּהִינּוּ דְעִיקָר אַהֲבָה הִיא בְּמַחְשָׁבָה בְּלֵב כַּנִּל

And what emerges for us from this is that we need to bind the weekdays with the Sabbath, in order to draw love from the Sabbath onto the weekdays, and there should be fear from within love.

וְהַיּוֹצֵא לָנוּ מִזֶּה שְׁאֵנָחֵנוּ צָרִיכִין לְקַשֵּׁר יְמֵי הַחֹל בְּשִׁבְתָּ כְּדֵי לְהַמְשִׁיךְ אַהֲבָה מִשִּׁבְתָּ עַל יְמֵי הַחֹל וְיִהְיֶה יִרְאָה מִתּוֹךְ אַהֲבָה

And this is “To number our days, thus inform,” meaning that the Holy One, blessed be He, informed us in His mercy that we should count the weekdays together with the Sabbath.

וְזֶהוּ “לְמַנּוֹת יְמֵינוּ בֵּן הַיּוֹדֵעַ,” ר”ל שֶׁהַשִּׁי”ת הוֹדִיעַ לָנוּ בְּרַחֲמָיו שְׁמַנְהָ יְמֵי הַחֹל עִם הַשִּׁבְתָּ

“Today is the first day of the Sabbath,” etc., in order that there be fear from within love, like the attribute of the Holy One, blessed be He, whose fear is from love of the person.

הַיּוֹם יוֹם רִאשׁוֹן בְּשִׁבְתָּ כו' כְּדֵי שִׁיְהֶיּה יִרְאָה מִתּוֹךְ אַהֲבָה, כְּמוֹ מִדַּת הַקְּדוּשָׁה בְּרוּךְ הוּא שִׁיִּרְאָתוֹ הִיא מִתּוֹךְ אַהֲבַת הָאָדָם

And this is the explanation of “Please, my lord,” meaning that also judgment – for the name “Adonai” hints to judgment – is also for my good.

וְזֶהוּ פִּירוּשׁ “בִּי אֲדֹנָי,” ר”ל גַּם הַדִּין – דָּשֵׁם ‘אֲדֹנָי’ רָמַז עַל הַדִּין – הוּא גַּם כֵּן לְטוֹבָתִי כַּנִּל

“And according to Your fear is Your wrath,” and everything is for good, in order to bequeath good reward in the World to Come.

וְכִיִּירְאָתְךָ עֲבָרְתְּךָ, וְהַפֵּל הוּא לְטוֹבָה כְּדֵי לְהַנְחִיל שִׁכָּר טוֹב לַעוֹה”ב

Blessed is the Lord forever, amen and amen.

בְּרוּךְ ה' לְעוֹלָם אָמֵן וְאָמֵן

[NOTE Summary:

In this maamar, Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk explains that all Divine conduct, even judgment and suffering, flows from love. Hashem’s “fear,” so to speak, is not fear of loss or threat, but concern that a person might sin and thereby forfeit the ultimate good prepared for him. Because the Creator’s very nature is to bestow goodness upon all His creations, even punishment is an expression of compassion, a refining process in this world so that a person can fully receive good in the World to Come. This is the deeper meaning of the verse “According to Your fear is Your wrath,” that just as Divine fear is rooted in love, so too Divine wrath is an act of love.

Rabbi Elimelech then turns to the avodah of the human being. A person is commanded to cleave to Hashem’s attributes. Just as Divine fear emerges from love, so too human fear of sin must arise from love of Hashem. Fear that is detached from love is incomplete. True yirah is the trembling of someone who loves deeply and cannot bear separation. Since fear is usually triggered by what the eyes see, and Hashem is unseen, love becomes the primary gateway. Love resides in the heart and imagination, and through thought a person can picture the greatness, sovereignty, and wonders of Hashem. Thought itself has no limit, and through it one can reach endless spiritual attainments.

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Vayigash

This framework explains why the Torah says “My Sabbaths” in the plural. Shabbat represents pure love, while the weekdays represent fear. Yet the weekdays are meant to be connected to Shabbat, so that weekday fear is infused with Shabbat love. For this reason, the days of the week are counted in relation to Shabbat, such as “today is the first day of the Sabbath,” so that love from Shabbat extends into the weekdays. When fear is born from love, even the weekdays are called a form of Shabbat, a partial Shabbat, though not identical to Shabbat itself. Shabbat is love alone, while the weekdays are fear because of love.

Rabbi Elimelech further explains that “you shall keep” alludes to thought, as in “his father kept the matter,” emphasizing that the root of love is in the inner world of thought and heart. The essential work, then, is to bind the weekdays to Shabbat in one’s inner life, drawing love into everyday existence so that all fear of sin is transformed into fear of separation from the Beloved. Even the Divine name associated with judgment, Adonai, is revealed as goodness, for judgment itself serves the ultimate benefit of the soul. Everything, without exception, is directed toward bestowing a good and eternal reward in the World to Come.

Practical Takeaway:

A person should consciously connect weekday life to the inner atmosphere of Shabbat. This means pausing during ordinary days to recall love of Hashem, His goodness, and His ultimate intention to bestow good. When fear of failure or wrongdoing arises, it should be reframed as fear of losing connection, not fear of punishment. By cultivating loving awareness through thought and reflection, even discipline, boundaries, and self restraint become expressions of closeness rather than distance.

Chassidic Story:

Rabbi Elimelech once noticed a student who was visibly anxious and weighed down by fear of spiritual failure. The student confessed that his avodat Hashem felt heavy, driven mostly by fear of punishment. Rabbi Elimelech responded by inviting him to observe a father watching his child take first steps. “Do you see fear in the father’s eyes?” he asked. “There is concern, yes, but it comes from love. He fears only that the child might fall and miss the joy of walking.” He explained that Hashem looks at a Jew in the same way. The student later testified that this teaching transformed his entire inner world, replacing paralyzing fear with a desire to stay close out of love.

END NOTE]

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Vayigash

מאמר ב

Or it may be said, “And he approached, etc., for you are like Pharaoh.” One can say that since Scripture is unspecified and it does not state to whom he approached, but only says “to him” in general,

we can say that it refers to the Holy One, blessed be He, that the righteous one is called Judah, and he approaches Him, blessed be His Name, in prayer, to pray on himself.

“And he said, please, my Lord, etc., and let not Your anger burn against Your servant,” only that You should always magnify Your kindness with me and not scrutinize my deeds.

“For you are like Pharaoh,” its explanation: why should You scrutinize me, since it is impossible to direct my thoughts to one matter.

And sometimes my thought strengthens to ascend in my thought to great supernal levels, in the level of the righteous, who are “like You,” for the righteous decrees and the Holy One, blessed be He, fulfills.

And sometimes my thought weakens and becomes vanity, a likeness of deceptive acts, “like Pharaoh,” which is letters of “oref,” which is a hint to the husk.

And because of this will You open Your eyes to scrutinize my deeds. Therefore act with me with righteousness and kindness. And this is sufficient for one who understands.

[NOTE Summary:

In this maamar, Rabbi Elimelech offers a radical inner reading of Judah’s approach. Since the verse says only “he approached him,” without specifying to whom, it can be understood as an approach to the Holy One, blessed be He. Judah represents the tzaddik within a person, the inner self that dares to come close to Hashem in prayer and speak honestly. The plea “please, my Lord, let not Your anger burn” becomes a request that Hashem relate with overflowing kindness rather than strict scrutiny.

The core of the teaching centers on the instability of human consciousness. A person’s thoughts do not remain fixed. At times, the mind ascends to lofty spiritual levels, resembling “like You,” the state of the righteous where the tzaddik decrees and Hashem fulfills. At other times, the mind weakens and slips into emptiness and illusion, symbolized by “Pharaoh,” whose very letters hint to the back of the neck and to the realm of the husk and concealment. Rabbi Elimelech teaches that this fluctuation is not rebellion but human limitation. Because it

או יאמר “ויגש בו” כי כמוד פפרעה. יש לומר מאחר דסתם הכתוב ולא נאמר אל מי גש רק “אליו” סתמא,

נוכל לומר דקאי על הקדוש ברוך הוא, שהצדיק נקרא יהודה והוא מגיש אליו יתש”ש בתפלה, להתפלל על עצמו

“ויאמר בי אדני כו” ואל יחר אפך בעבדך”, רק תמיד, תגדיל חסדך עמי ואל תדקדק אחר מעשי

“כי כמוד פפרעה”, פרוש למה תדקדק עמי מאחר, שבלתי אפשרי לכוון את מחשבותי לדבר אחד

ולפעמים תתחזק מחשבתי לעלות במחשבתי למעלות גדולות העליונים במדרגת צדיקים שהם, “כמוד” שהצדיק גוֹזֵר והקדוש ברוך הוא מקיים

ולפעמים תחלש מחשבתי ולהכל דמה מעשה תעותעים “כפרעה” שהוא אותיות ער”ף שהוא רמז לקליפה

וכי על זה תפקח עיניך לדקדק אחר מעשי, לכן עשה עמי צדקה וחסד. וכו”ל

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Vayigash

is impossible to permanently anchor thought at a single elevated level, a person pleads that Hashem not open His eyes to exacting judgment over these inevitable shifts. Instead, the soul asks to be met with charity and kindness, not because it deserves it, but because this is the only way spiritual growth can continue.

Practical Takeaway:

A person should approach Hashem with honesty about inner inconsistency. Instead of demanding perfection from oneself, one can pray for compassion toward the natural ebb and flow of thought and feeling. When experiencing moments of clarity and elevation, one should value them, but not despair when they fade. Spiritual work is not measured by constant ascent, but by the courage to keep returning, asking for kindness rather than harsh self judgment, and trusting that Hashem understands the human mind better than we understand ourselves. **END NOTE]**

מאמר ג

Or it may be said, “And Judah approached him, etc.” And we will preface to explain a verse in Parashat Vayetze: “And Jacob vowed, etc., saying, if God will be with me, etc., and all that You give me I will surely tithe, etc.”

And it is astonishing, that Jacob our father, peace be upon him, the choicest of the Patriarchs, should make a condition with the Holy One, blessed be He, that when He will do for him all the good mentioned in the portion, he will give Him a tithe.

But it appears to me, for behold, King David, peace be upon him, said, “The Lord God is a sun and a shield.”

One can say the explanation: just as the sun, when it shines with great brightness, it is impossible to look at it and receive its light except by means of a shield.

That is, the windows of the house that interpose before it, and they are to the sun like a shade, and through this we can receive the enjoyment of its light to look at it.

So too the Name Havayah, blessed be He and blessed be His Name, because of the greatness of mercy and holiness, it was not possible to receive the influences of the great mercies and holiness.

Except through the name Elohim, which is the shade for the name of mercy, the name Havayah, blessed be He.

או יאמר "ויגש אליו יהודה כו'", ונקדים לפרש פסוק [ב] פרשת ויצא, "וידר יעקב כו' לאמר אם יהיה אלקים עמדי כו' וכל אשר תתן לי עשה כו'".

והוא תמוה דינעקב אבינו עליו השלום מִבְּחֵר שְׂבָאוֹת יְהִי מִתְּנָה עִם הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּאֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ כָּל הַטּוֹבוֹת הָאֲמוּרִים בְּפָרְשָׁה יִתֵּן לוֹ מַעֲשֵׂר.

אך נראה לי דהנה דוד המלך עליו השלום אמר "שֶׁמֶשׁ וּמִגֵּן ה' אֱלֹהִים",

יש לומר הפרוש כמו ששמש כשהיא מאירה בבהירות גדול, בלתי אפשרי להסתכל בה ולקבל, אורה כי אם על ידי מגן,

דהינו חלוני הבית החוצצים בפניה והם לשמש כמו צל, ועל ידי זה אנו יכולים לקבל הנאת אורה, להסתכל בה,

כמו כן שם הנה ברוך הוא וברוך שמו, מחמת גדל הרחמים והקדושה לא הנה באפשרות לקבל, השפעות הרחמים הגדולים והקדושה,

רק על ידי שם אלקים שהוא הצל לשם הרחמים שם הנה ברוך הוא,

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Vayigash

Through it we receive the influences of mercy and holiness, and this is that the righteous sweetens the name Elohim and transforms it and brings it into mercy.

על ידו אנו מקבלים השפעות הרחמים והקדושה, והינו שהצדיק ממתיק לשם אלקים ומתפכו ומכניסו לרחמים.

And this is "The Lord is your guardian, the Lord is your shade," the explanation: the One who guards Israel is the name Havayah, blessed be He, the name of mercy.

וזהו "ה' שמרך ה' צלך" פרוש השומר ישראל הוא לשם הויה ברוך הוא שם הרחמים

"The Lord is your shade," the explanation: also the shade, which is the name Elohim, which is the shade for the name Havayah, blessed be He, it too becomes the attribute of mercy through the righteous who sweetens it, and it too agrees to guard us.

"ה' צלך" פרוש וגם הצל שהוא שם אלקים שהוא הצל לשם הויה ברוך הוא, גם הוא נעשה מדת הרחמים על ידי הצדיק הממתקו וגם הוא מסכים לשמר אותנו.

And this is what Jacob our father, peace be upon him, said: "If God will be with me," meaning that He will agree with me that I will sweeten Him.

וזהו שאמר יעקב אבינו עליו השלום "אם יהיה אלקים עמדי", דהינו שישכים עמי שאמתקנו

"And guard me on the way, etc.," that He too will be for me as a guardian, as explained above.

"ושמרני בדרך כו'" שגם הוא יהיה לי לשומר כנ"ל

"And give me bread to eat," for behold, physical matters are called "judgments."

"ונתן לי לחם לאכל", דהנה הגשמיות נקראים 'דינים',

And therefore permission is given to derive benefit from this world through physical matters, namely eating and drinking and other physical matters.

ולכן נתן רשות להנות מעולם הזה מעניגי גשמי, דהינו אכילה ושתיה ושאר עניגי גשמי

In order that the righteous will sweeten them and extract from them holy sparks, to bring them into holiness.

כדי שהצדיקים ימתיקום ויוציאו מהם נצוצות קדושות להכניסם אל הקדושה

And were it not for this, the righteous would not be permitted to stop and separate even for one moment from holiness and cleaving, and to incline himself to physical matters.

ואלולי זאת לא היה רשאי הצדיק להפסיק ולהפריד אפילו רגע אחת מן הקדושה והדבקות ולהטות עצמו לדברי גשמי

Only in order to bring them into holiness is he permitted to descend a little and to pause a little from his cleaving.

רק כדי להכניסם אל הקדושה רשאי קצת לירד, ולהפסיק קצת מדבקותו

And Heaven forbid, he is not permitted to separate himself except a little, for the aforementioned intention.

וחס ושלום אין רשאי להפריד עצמו רק מעט אל הכוונה הנ"ל

And the essence is to hold oneself in holiness and cleaving.

והיקר הוא לאחוז עצמו בקדושה ובדבקות

And this is "And give me bread to eat," in the manner of "and I will return in peace to my father's house,"

וזהו "ונתן לי לחם לאכל" באופן "ושבתי בשלום אל בית אבי"

The explanation: that Heaven forbid I will not separate myself from holiness through this,

פרוש שחס ושלום לא אפריד את עצמי מן הקדושה על ידי זה

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Vayigash

But rather that I will extract the holy sparks from them and immediately return them to my Father in Heaven in peace.	רק שאוציא הנצוצות הקדושה מהם ומיד להשיב אל אבי שבשמים בשלום.
"And all that You give me I will tithe, etc." And the Sages learned from here: "One who squanders should not squander more than a fifth."	"וכל אשר תתן לי עשר כו'", ולמדו חז"ל מכאן "המבזבז אל יבזבז יותר מחמש"
And seemingly, what is this expression "one who squanders," it should have said "one who gives."	ולכאורה מה זה הלשון 'המבזבז', הנה לו לומר 'הנותן'?
And according to our approach it will be explained, with the help of God, that "one who squanders" is an expression of degradation.	ולפי דרכינו יבואר בעזרת השם, ד'המבזבז' הוא לשון בגיון,
Meaning that the righteous degrades himself to pause from cleaving to physical matters.	דהינו שהצדיק מבזה את עצמו להפסיק מן הדבקות, אל דברי הגשמי
"He should not squander more than a fifth," meaning that he should not completely stop, only a little.	"אל יבזבז יותר מחמש", ר"ל שלא יפסק מכל וכל, רק מעט
Meaning that four parts should remain in holiness and cleaving, and only a fifth part is given permission to pause, hinting at a small matter.	דהינו ארבעה חלקים ישאר בקדושה ובדבקות, רק חלק חמישי נתן לו רשות לפסק רמז דבר מועט
And even this he will elevate and bring into holiness, as above, to elevate holy sparks, as above.	וגם זה יעלה ויכניס אל הקדושה כנ"ל, להעלות נ"ק, כנ"ל
And the Gemara derives it from Jacob our father, peace be upon him, who said "And all that You give me,"	ויליף לה הגמרא מיעקב אבינו עליו השלום שאמר, "וכל אשר תתן לי"
Meaning from matters of physicality, I will not incline myself except a little, as above.	דהינו מעניני גשמיות, לא אטה את עצמי כי אם מעט, כנ"ל
And this is "I will surely tithe it," meaning a fifth, as above, and since "a fifth" is not written, it also hints in his words	וזהו "עשר אעשרנו" דהינו חמש כנ"ל, ומדלא נכתב 'חמש', רמז גם כן בדבריו
That even this small amount I will elevate to You also into holiness, for "tithe" hints to holiness.	שגם המעט הזה אעלה לה גם כן אל הקדושה כי 'עשר' רמז לקדושה
And this is what Joseph said, "Here is seed for you," for it is known that Joseph circumcised and converted the Egyptians.	וזהו שאמר יוסף "הא לכם זרע", כי ידוע דיוסף הנה מל ומגיר את המצרים
And he said to them: your sowing, meaning your actions, do them for the sake of the final letter heh, which is the Shechinah.	ואמר להם הזריעה שלכם, דהינו העובדות שלכם, תעשו לשם ה"א אחרונה היא השכינה
"And you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh," its explanation: when you incline yourselves to matters of physicality, do not incline except one fifth.	"וניתתם חמישית לפרעה", פרוש כשתטו עצמכם לדברי גשמי, אל תטו רק חלק חמישית

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Vayigash

For “Pharaoh” is letters of “the back of the neck,” a hint to this world, to matters of physicality.

פי 'פרעה' אותיות 'העֶרֶף', רמז לעולם הזה לעניני גשמיות

“And four parts shall be for you,” that you should remain in holiness and grasp four parts in holiness and not stop completely.

“וארבע הידות יהיה לכם”, שתשארו בקדושה ונתאזזו ארבע ידות בקדושה ולא תפסיקו לגמרי

And afterwards you will bring everything into holiness.

ואחר כך תכניסו הכל אל הקדושה

And this is “And Judah approached him and said, please, my Lord,” its explanation: that the name “Adonai” is “with me,” meaning that I sweetened it into mercy.

וזהו “ויגש אליו יהודה ויאמר בי אדני”, פירוש ששם ‘אדני’ הוא ‘בי’, דהינו שהמתקתיו לרחמים

“And let not Your anger burn, etc.,” that anger should not be able to come, Heaven forbid, because also the name Adonai has been sweetened into mercy.

“ואל יחר אפך כו’”, שלא יוכל לבוא לידי חרון אף חס ושלום, כי גם השם אדני המתקן לרחמים

And this is sufficient for one who understands.

והנה.

[NOTE Summary:

In this maamar, Rabbi Elimelech deepens the teaching of how Divine mercy is accessed through proper spiritual mediation. He begins with Yaakov Avinu’s vow, which at first glance appears puzzling. How could Yaakov, the choicest of the Patriarchs, condition his service of Hashem on receiving material blessing? Rabbi Elimelech explains that this vow is not transactional but structural. Drawing on the verse “Hashem Elokim is a sun and a shield,” he teaches that pure Divine mercy, represented by the Name Havayah, is too intense to be received directly. Just as sunlight requires a filter in order to be usable, Divine kindness must be mediated through the Name Elokim, which functions as a protective shade.

The task of the tzaddik is to sweeten the attribute of Elokim, transforming judgment into mercy so that Divine influence can flow into the world in a receivable way. This explains Yaakov’s prayer that “Elokim be with me,” meaning that the attribute of judgment should agree to be sweetened and serve as a guardian rather than a force of restriction. Material life itself belongs to the realm of judgment. Engagement with physicality is therefore inherently dangerous, yet it is permitted only for one purpose: to extract holy sparks and return them to their Divine source. Without this mission, a tzaddik would have no license to disengage from constant cleaving to holiness even for a moment.

Rabbi Elimelech clarifies the rabbinic teaching that one who “squanders” should not squander more than a fifth. The word “squander” is read literally as self debasement. Any turn toward physical involvement is a descent from spiritual intimacy. The Torah therefore limits this descent to a fifth, meaning that the overwhelming majority of one’s inner life must remain anchored in holiness. Even the small allowance for physical engagement must itself be elevated back into sanctity. This principle is illustrated through Yosef’s instruction in Egypt. Yosef teaches that all action, even agricultural labor, must be directed toward the Shechinah. Only a fifth may be given to “Pharaoh,” symbolic of the back of the neck, the realm of this world and materiality. The

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Vayigash

remaining four parts must remain firmly rooted in holiness, after which everything is reintegrated into Divine service.

The segment concludes by returning to Yehudah's approach. When Yehudah says "bi Adoni," Rabbi Elimelech reads it as a declaration that the Divine Name associated with judgment has been internalized and sweetened. As a result, anger can no longer arise, because even judgment itself has been transformed into mercy. Everything, including descent, concealment, and material engagement, becomes part of a unified movement toward holiness.

Practical Takeaway:

A person must recognize that engagement with the physical world is not inherently negative, but it is strictly conditional. Physical involvement is justified only when it serves a higher purpose. One should limit distraction, indulgence, and self absorption, ensuring that most of one's inner energy remains anchored in spiritual awareness and connection. Even necessary involvement in the material world should be approached consciously, with the intention to elevate it rather than be consumed by it.

Chassidic Story:

It is told that Rabbi Elimelech once observed a תלמיד who was troubled by guilt over tending to his livelihood. The student felt that any time spent away from Torah and prayer was a spiritual failure. Rabbi Elimelech responded by pointing to a candle. "If the wick never entered the oil," he said, "there would be no flame at all." He explained that descent is only a failure when it is an escape. When it is done deliberately, for the sake of illumination, it becomes part of the ascent itself. The student later testified that this teaching allowed him to work, eat, and engage with the world without losing his inner bond to holiness.

END NOTE]

מאמר ד

"Please let your servant speak a word in my lord's ears," meaning an approach for prayer, that he prays to the Holy One, blessed be He, that He accept our prayer with mercy.

"יְדַבֵּר נָא דְבַר בְּאָזְנֵי אֲדֹנָי", דְּהִינּוּ הַגָּשָׁה לְתַפְלָה, שְׁמִתְפַּלֵּל לַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ שִׁיקְבֹּל תַּפְלָתָנוּ בְּרַחֲמִים

"For you are like Pharaoh," for behold, the worlds, at the time that they have an ascent, then they are revealed and bestow downward.

"כִּי כְמוֹד כְּפָרְעֹה", דְּהִנֵּה הָעוֹלָמוֹת בְּשַׁעֲה שְׂיִישׁ לָהֶם, עֲלִיָּה, אֲזִי הֵם מְתַגַּלִּים וּמְשַׁפִּיעִים לְמַטָּה

And this is what is said: the righteous—my desire is to be "like You," at the time that the worlds are revealed and give influence.

וְזֶהוּ שְׁאֲמַר הַצַּדִּיק תְּשׁוּקָתִי לְהִיּוֹת 'כְּמוֹד' בְּשַׁעֲה, שְׁהָעוֹלָמוֹת מְתַגַּלִּים וְנוֹתְנִים הַשְּׁפָעָה

And this is "like Pharaoh," an expression of revelation.

וְזֶהוּ 'כְּפָרְעֹה' לְשׁוֹן גְּלוּי

Likewise, my desire is always to bestow downward through the name "Adonai," an influence of blessing and success and life, for us and for all Israel.

כֵּן גַּם תְּשׁוּקָתִי תָמִיד לְהַשְׁפִּיעַ לְמַטָּה עַל יְדֵי שֵׁם 'אֲדֹנָי' שְׁפָע בְּרַכָּה וְהַצְלָחָה וְחַיִּים לָנוּ וּלְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Vayigash

Amen, so may it be His will.

אָמֵן כִּן יְהִי רָצוֹן.

[NOTE Summary:

In this maamar, Rabbi Elimelech explains the double meaning of Yehudah's approach as both spiritual battle and prayer. The Midrash teaches that "approach" can signify approaching for war and approaching for prayer. These are not two separate paths, but one unified avodah. The tzaddik possesses the power to nullify harsh decrees, not arbitrarily, but because he is a spiritual warrior. His inner strength and gevurah enable him to wage the מלחמה ה', and this strength expresses itself most fully through prayer. Prayer itself is an act of confrontation, standing before Heaven with courage and resolve.

Rabbi Elimelech then explains the deeper meaning of the Divine name Adonai. While the Name Havayah represents Divine conduct beyond concealment, the Name Adonai governs this world of action and limitation. Before Avraham Avinu, the righteous related primarily to Havayah, but Avraham introduced a new mode of Divine service: engaging the world as it is, under Adonai, and shaping reality through it. This is why Avraham was the first to call Hashem "Adon." He revealed that the Divine governance of this world can be directed by the tzaddik, so that "he decrees and it is fulfilled."

When Yehudah says "bi Adoni," Rabbi Elimelech understands this as an expression of empowered humility. The tzaddik is normally steeped in deep submission, but when he must act, pray, or overturn a decree, he temporarily clothes himself in spiritual authority. He stands before Hashem with the confidence that the Name Adonai itself is aligned with him. This is the meaning of our prayer "Adonai, open my lips" that the Divine force governing this world should act through human speech.

The continuation of the maamar reframes "for you are like Pharaoh" not as comparison to evil, but as comparison to revelation. When the upper worlds ascend, they reveal themselves and channel blessing downward. The tzaddik longs to mirror this state, to be "like You" in times of revelation, constantly drawing down blessing, life, success, and abundance into this world through the Name Adonai, for all of Israel. Thus prayer becomes the channel through which hidden Divine abundance is revealed and distributed.

Practical Takeaway:

Prayer is not passive. It is an act of courage and responsibility. A person should approach prayer with inner strength, trusting that words spoken sincerely can shape reality. At the same time, one must balance humility with confidence, knowing when to submit and when to stand firmly. The goal of prayer is not escape from the world, but to draw blessing, clarity, and life into it.

END NOTE]

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Vayigash

מאמר ה

“Please let your servant speak a word in my lord’s ears, and let not Your anger burn, etc.” And Rashi, of blessed memory, explained: “Let my words enter your ears.”

And it is difficult: what is this expression of entering into ears, and we do not find in the entire Torah that Moses said to Israel or in other matters that Scripture would use this expression, “entering ears.”

And it appears, for behold we find that the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses, “Write this as a remembrance in the book and place it in the ears of Joshua.”

And seemingly one must understand: since it will be written in a book, then whoever wishes will read it, so how does “place it in the ears of Joshua” apply?

And also, what is this expression “in the ears,” etc., is he to place them in his ears?

And it appears to explain, for behold it is written: “And he said: it is not the sound of response of might, nor is it the sound of response of weakness; the sound of response I hear.”

And seemingly, could he not understand whether it was a sound of joy, which is a sound of victory, or whether it was a sound of weakness, which is fleeing and a cry of woe?

Rather, it appears that Joshua guarded his ears, that he would not hear any matter that was not fitting at all.

And behold, “might” refers to the verses of praise, which are to subdue tyrants and might, and they too need to be sweetened with might at their root, therefore they are called might.

And “weakness” hints to prayer, in accordance with what the Sages said: “One who prays for his fellow must weaken himself,” which is weakening of strength.

As it is written: “And Moses weakened,” teaching that he weakened himself.

And this is what Joshua said to Moses: a sound I hear in the camp.

“יִדְבֹר נָא עִבְדְּךָ דְּבַר בְּאָזְנִי אֲדֹנִי וְאַל יִחַר אַפְּךָ כּוּי.” וּפֶרֶשׁ רַשִׁי וְז”ל “יִכְנסוּ דְּבָרֵי בְּאָזְנִיךָ”

וְקוּשָׁה מֵה זֶה לְשׁוֹן הַכְּנָסָה בְּאָזְנִים, וְלֹא מִצִּינּוּ בְּכָל הַתּוֹרָה שְׁאֵמֵר מִשָּׁה לִישְׁרָאֵל אוֹ בְּשֹׁאֵר דְּבָרִים שִׁיכְתֹּב הַלְשׁוֹן הַכְּנָסָת אָזְנִים

וְנִרְאָה דְּהִנֵּה מִצִּינּוּ שְׁאֵמֵר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְמִשָּׁה “כְּתֹב זֹאת וְזָכְרוֹן בְּסֵפֶר וְשִׁים בְּאָזְנִי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ”

וְלִכְאוּרָה יֵשׁ לְהִבִּין, כִּינּוּ שִׁיחִיָּה כְּתוּב בְּסֵפֶר אֵם כֵּן כָּל מִי שִׁיִּרְצֶה יִקְרָא בּוֹ וְהִיאֵף שִׁיף וְשִׁים בְּאָזְנִי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ?

וְכֵן מֵה זֶה לְשׁוֹן בְּאָזְנִי כּוּי, וְכִי יִנְיָחוּם בְּאָזְנֵי

וְנִרְאָה לְפָרֶשׁ דְּהִנֵּה כְּתִיב “וַיֹּאמֶר אֵין קוֹל עֲנוֹת גְּבוּרָה וְאֵין קוֹל עֲנוֹת חֲלוּשָׁה קוֹל עֲנוֹת אֲנָכִי שְׁמַע”

וְלִכְאוּרָה הֲלֹא יָכוֹל לְהִבִּין אֵם זֶה קוֹל חֲדוּהָ שֶׁהוּא קוֹל נִצְחוֹן, אוֹ אֵם הוּא קוֹל חֲלוּשָׁה שֶׁהוּא נִיסָה וּצָעָקָת הוּי?

אֵלֹא נִרְאָה שִׁיחֲוִשָׁה הִנֵּה מִשְׁמַר אָזְנֵי שְׁלֹא יִשְׁמַע דְּבַר שְׁאִינוּ הִגּוֹן כָּלֵל

וְהִנֵּה גְבוּרָה נִקְרָאִים פְּסוּקֵי דְזִמְרָה שֶׁהוּא כְּדִי לְזַמֵּר עֲרִיצִים וְהַגְּבוּרוֹת וְצָרִיךְ לְהַמְתִּיקָם גַּם כֵּן בְּגְבוּרָה בְּשִׁרְשָׁם, לָזֶה נִקְרָאוּ גְבוּרוֹת

וְחֲלוּשָׁה רָמַז לְתַפְלָה, עַל דְּרָף שְׁאֵמֵרוּ חַז”ל “הַמְתַּפְּלֵל עַל חֲבֵרוֹ צָרִיךְ שִׁיחֲלָה עָלָיו” שֶׁהִיא חֲלִישַׁת כֹּחַ

כְּמוֹ שֶׁכְּתוּב “וַיַּחַל מֹשֶׁה – מִלְּמַד שֶׁחֲלָה עַצְמוֹ”

וְזֶהוּ שְׁאֵמֵר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ לְמִשָּׁה קוֹל אֲנִי שׁוֹמֵעַ בְּמַחֲנֶה

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Vayigash

"It is not the sound of response of might," meaning the song of tyrants, which is the sweetening of judgments.	"אין זה קול ענות גבורה", דהינו זמר עריצים שהיא המתקת הדינים
"And it is not the sound of weakness," which is prayer that requires weakening oneself.	"ואין כו' קול חלושה" היא תפלה שצריך להחליש עצמו,
"The sound of response I hear," meaning that I do not understand, for I have never heard such a sound, for he guarded his ears not to hear anything that was not fitting.	"קול ענות אנכי שומע", ר"ל שאיני מבין, שמעולם לא שמעתי קול כזה, שהיה משמר אזניו שלא ישמע דבר שאינו הגון
And behold, one can give a reason for praise why this expression "book" is used, that the Torah is called a book.	והנה יש לתן טעם לשבח מה זה לשון 'ספר', שהתורה נקראת ספר
And it appears that "book" is an expression of border regions that stand on the border,	ונראה שהספר הוא לשון מדינות העומדים על הספר
Just as the border guards the country so that no enemy will enter the country,	כמו שהספר שומרת את המדינה שלא יבוא שום שונא על המדינה
And if a person needs to enter the country he must go by way of the border,	ואם צריך אדם למדינה צריך לילך דרך הספר
So too the Torah is our border, which guards us, etc.,	כך התורה היא הספר שלנו, שהיא משמרת אותנו כו'
And when we need to cleave ourselves to the Creator, exalted be He,	וכשצריכין אנו להבקע עצמנו בבורא יתעלה
We need to cleave ourselves by way of the Torah, which is the book.	צריכין אנו להבקע עצמנו דרך התורה שהיא הספר
And it is known that "this" is called the Shechinah,	וידוע ד'זאת' נקראת השכינה
And this is what the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses, "Write this as a remembrance in a book,"	וזהו שאמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה "כתב זאת זכרון בספר"
Meaning, when you study Torah you will see that the Shechinah rests in the Torah, which is called book, as above.	ר"ל כשתלמד בתורה תראה שתשורה השכינה בתורה הנקראת ספר כנ"ל
"And place it in the ears of Joshua," meaning that you should not study Torah with one who does not have clarified ears like Joshua,	"ושים באזני יהושע", ר"ל שלא תלמד התורה עם מי שאין לו אזנים ברורים כמו יהושע
And this is by way of hint, like "in the ears of Joshua."	והוא דרך רמז כמו באזני יהושע
And this is also the explanation here,	וזהו גם כן הפרוש כאן
For Judah saw with his pure vision that this was the level of Joseph,	כי יהודה ראה בראיתו הנוקה שזה הוא מדרגת יוסף
Even though he did not know that this was Joseph himself,	אף על פי שלא ידע שזה יוסף עצמו

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Vayigash

Even so, he saw and understood with the eye of intellect his great holiness.

אף על פי כן ראה והבין בעין השכל קדושתו הגדולה,

Therefore he said to him, "Please, my lord," meaning speak with me.

לפיכך אמר לו "בי אדני", פרוש דבר עמי,

And if it will be difficult for you, how can you speak with me, for I speak on my very high level,

ואם יקשה לך איך אתה יכול לדבר עמי שאני מדבר במדרגתי הגדולה עד מאד ואיך אפשר שתדבר עמי

To this he said to him, "Please let your servant speak a word in my lord's ears," meaning I see that you have clarified ears and my words will enter your ears.

לזה אמר לו "ידבר נא עבדך דבר באזני אדני", פרוש אני רואה שיש לך אזנים ברורים ויכנסו דברי באזניך,

"For you are like Pharaoh," and seemingly why did he not say "for you are Pharaoh"?

"פי כמוך כפרעה", ולכאורה למה לא אמר 'פי אתה כפרעה'?

But the matter is thus: he said to him that your holiness stands opposite Pharaoh,

אף הענין כך, אמר לו שהקדושה שלך היא זה לעומת זה של פרעה,

Just as Pharaoh is in the husk, so you opposite him are in holiness.

כמו שפרעה הוא בקליפה, כן אתה לעומתו בקדושה,

And therefore I know that my words will enter your ears. Understand.

ולכן יודע אני שיכנסו דברי באזניך. והבן.

[NOTE Summary:

In this maamar, Rabbi Elimelech focuses on the inner meaning of hearing and receptivity in avodat Hashem. Yehudah's words, "Let your servant please speak a word in my lord's ears," together with Rashi's explanation "let my words enter your ears," raise a difficulty. Nowhere else does the Torah speak in this unusual language of "entering ears." Rabbi Elimelech explains that this phrasing signals a special kind of spiritual hearing, not mere physical reception of sound, but an inner openness purified from improper influences.

This idea is illuminated through the verse where Hashem tells Moshe, "Write this as a remembrance in the book and place it in the ears of Yehoshua." Since the matter is already written in a book, why must it be "placed in the ears" of Yehoshua? Rabbi Elimelech explains that Torah is called a "sefer" not only in the sense of a book, but like a border region that guards a country. Just as entry into a land must pass through its border, attachment to Hashem must pass through Torah. The Torah guards the soul and serves as the only proper gateway to Divine attachment. When Hashem says "write this in the book," He is revealing that the Shechinah rests within Torah itself. "Place it in the ears of Yehoshua" means that Torah must be taught only to one whose ears are refined and guarded, capable of receiving holiness without distortion.

Rabbi Elimelech then explains Yehoshua's statement at the sin of the Golden Calf, when he says, "It is not the sound of might, nor the sound of weakness; it is the sound of confusion that I hear." Yehoshua could not identify the sound because he had trained himself never to hear anything improper. "Might" refers to psalms of praise that sweeten judgments, while "weakness" refers to prayer, which requires self weakening and humility.

The Rebbe, Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk

Noam Elimelech

Parshas Vayigash

Since Yehoshua guarded his ears from unrefined sound, he could not immediately recognize a voice that did not belong to either holy category.

Returning to Yehudah's encounter with Yosef, Rabbi Elimelech explains that Yehudah perceived Yosef's spiritual stature even without knowing his identity. With spiritual clarity, Yehudah recognized that Yosef possessed refined ears capable of receiving elevated speech. This is why he says, "bi Adoni," meaning "speak with me," and reassures Yosef that his words will be received. The phrase "for you are like Pharaoh" does not mean identity, but contrast. Just as Pharaoh represents the extreme of impurity, Yosef stands opposite him in holiness. Because of this spiritual polarity, Yehudah knows that his words will enter Yosef's ears and be understood correctly.

The maamar thus presents refined hearing as a spiritual faculty. True hearing is the ability to receive holiness without contamination, to listen only where words lead to truth, humility, and Divine service.

Practical Takeaway:

A person must guard not only what they say, but what they allow themselves to hear. Spiritual growth depends on cultivating inner discernment, choosing carefully whose words enter one's inner world. Torah and prayer require refined receptivity. Exposure to speech that is cynical, coarse, or spiritually empty dulls this sensitivity. By guarding one's "ears," one becomes capable of receiving Torah deeply and engaging in meaningful prayer.

Chassidic Story:

It is related that Rabbi Elimelech once advised a תלמיד who complained of confusion during prayer and learning. Rabbi Elimelech asked him about his daily conversations and the environments he frequented. When the student admitted to regularly listening to idle chatter and mockery, Rabbi Elimelech told him that the problem was not his mind, but his ears. "A vessel that is filled with noise cannot receive subtle sound," he said. The student resolved to limit what he listened to and to immerse himself more in Torah speech. Over time, he reported that prayer became clearer and learning more alive, as if his inner hearing had been restored.

END NOTE]