

This is written in honor of the redemption of Rabbi Shalom Mordechai Rubashkin, the Rubashkin family, who have been shining examples of faith and belief in G-d, and all of those who worked so hard for so long to finally achieve what we have all been praying for.

Yehuda vs. Yosef

This week's Parsha, Vayigash, begins, "And Yehuda approached him [Yosef]."¹ This confrontation between Yehuda and Yosef begins in the Parsha and ends in the Haftora, which talks about the uniting of Yosef and Yehuda in the time of Moshiach. The Haftora then says, "And My servant David will reign over them...And David, My servant, will be Nassi over them forever."² David, the king from the tribe of Yehuda and the progenitor of Moshiach, is symbolic of both.

This confrontation between Yehuda and Yosef is deeper and more meaningful than just the story in the Parsha. It is two worldviews colliding, and in the end, the way of Yehuda reigns supreme. What are these two approaches?

The Zohar³ says that Yehuda's approaching Yosef is the same idea as having Geula (redemption) near Tefilla (prayer). To explain: In the morning prayer, just before the Amida, we say verses about Redemption, which end with, "Blessed are You Hashem, Who redeemed Israel." And then we immediately begin the Amida, so this is referred to as having Redemption near prayer.

The problem with the Zohar's comparison is that it seems to be reversed. You see, in Kabbalistic thought (the Zohar is a book of Kabbalah), Yosef symbolizes Redemption and Yehuda symbolizes prayer.⁴ In the Parsha, Yehuda approaches Yosef, meaning that Redemption is staying in its place,

and prayer comes near to it, showing that Redemption is superior. However, in our prayers, we bring Redemption near to prayer, meaning that the Redemption is there for the prayer, and thus prayer is superior.

Yosef is the complete Tzadik. His job is to shine light onto the world and inspire. He affects the world by flooding it with great light from above, motivating the people to be good. The problem is that he doesn't change the world intrinsically, and as soon as the light is gone, the world reverts back to its old self. This is the idea of Redemption in the form of a great light from above.

Yehuda is the king. The main job of the king is to serve the nation, in other words, to deal with the world from the bottom up, motivating the people to change themselves. This kind of change is real and everlasting. This is the idea of prayer, it is serving Hashem from the bottom up.

What is more important, shining from the top down or the service from the bottom up? The way of Yosef or the way of Yehuda?

Each of these ideas has its pros. Yehuda's approach generates real and everlasting change, but since it comes from below, it is limited; there is only so high a person can reach on his own. Yosef's approach, on the other hand, coming from above, is unlimited; even though it doesn't effect everlasting change, it can take a person to unlimited heights. When both of these approaches work together, you get everlasting change and unlimited heights. The question is, how can they work together? And ultimately, which approach is the main way, and which is there to help the main approach?

Let's revisit the story of Yosef and his brothers and it will become clear.

In Yosef's dream,⁵ the brothers are in the field, bundling sheaves: this is working in the world from the bottom up. Then, they encircled Yosef's sheaf

¹ Bereishis, 44:18.

² Ezekiel, 37:24–25.

³ Zohar vol. 1, p. 205b.

⁴ Geula is from the attribute of Yesod, and so is Yosef; Tefilla is from the attribute of Malchus, and so is Yehuda. See *Sefer Hamaamarim* 5629, p. 13 and on; 5666, p. 119 and on, 487 and on; 5672 vol. 2, p. 794 and on.

⁵ Bereishis, 37:7.

and bowed: this symbolizes that they have gone as far as they can on their own, now they need Yosef to take them to the next level.

The Yosef approach helps those taking the Yehuda approach to the next level. At the same time, because the work below is very powerful, Yosef also gains from it, and he is taken to higher spiritual realms as well.

There is another way Yosef helps Yehuda. When the brothers brought Binyamin down to Egypt, Yosef had their bags filled with grain, and he had his goblet hidden in Binyamin's bag.⁶ This is what brought them back in front of Yosef for the confrontation between Yehuda and Yosef. Yosef's hiding the goblet in Binyamin's bag is what brought them before Yosef. In other words, Yosef's approach serves another purpose: to motivate from above, to move the person to take the Yehuda approach, so that ultimately he can come before Yosef and reach unlimited heights.

The key to this working is that it has to be hidden, like Yosef's goblet. In other words, the person can't know that he is being motivated. He has to feel like it is his own effort.

This is similar to a famous debate in the Talmud,⁷ whether Torah study is more important or is doing Mitzvos more important. The Talmud concludes that "Study is greater, because it brings you to do [the Mitzvah]." This is ironic, because it is ultimately saying that the greatness of Torah study is that it will cause you to do Mitzvos, that the Torah is there for the Mitzvos. On top of that, when you study Torah to understand how to perform an actual Mitzvah, it enhances the Torah study.

Yosef symbolizes Torah, which is a light shining from the top down. Yehuda symbolizes Mitzvos, raising the world from the bottom up. Ultimately, the Torah – Yosef – is there to cause you to do the Mitzvos – Yehuda.

When Yehuda approached Yosef, he said, "Please let your servant speak words in the ears of my master...because you are like Pharaoh,"⁸ meaning, help me with my approach even though you will be lowering yourself to do so, because now you are viceroy, but through this, you will become like Pharaoh; ultimately it will raise you up to a higher level as well. So by approaching Yosef, he wasn't saying that Yosef is greater, rather, that Yosef is better off helping him facilitate the Yehuda approach. In other words, Redemption is there to take prayer to a higher level, and Torah study is there to take Mitzvos to a higher level.

When Moshiach comes, we will see the value of Mitzvos over Torah, the value of the work down here over the top-down approach, Yehuda over Yosef, as we will all be united under Yehuda, through the king from the House of David, King Moshiach. May he come soon.⁹

⁸ Bereishis, 44:18.

⁹ Maamar "Vayigash Eilav Yehuda" 5736, *Toras Menachem, Sefer Hamaamarim Meluket*, vol. 2, pp. 215–219.

⁶ Bereishis, 44:2.

⁷ Talmud, Kiddushin, 40b.