

**LIGHT
FROM
THE
FUTURE
PARSHAS VAYIGASH**

BY

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LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE- PARSHAS VAYIGASH

LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE ESSAYS ON PARSHAS VAYIGASH

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LIGHT FROM THE FUTURE- PARSHAS VAYIGASH

Dedicated to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, who, more than any Jewish leader, has prepared us for Moshiach and the imminent Redemption

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INTRODUCTION

The following collection of essays on *parshas Vayigash* was taken from the weekly Torah messages that I have been sending to hundreds of individuals over the past 22 years.

These messages were written in the spirit of the talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Several of them are actually based on or adaptations of his essays and discourses on the parsha.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe declared that we are living in unique times. He applied the words of the Midrash to our day:

“The time of your Redemption has arrived.”

The Rebbe stated further that the straightforward way for us to bring about the actual Redemption is by learning what the Torah says about Moshiach and Redemption. While learning Torah in general has the capacity to change our mindset, learning about Moshiach and Redemption has the capacity to alter of exile-constrained way of thinking and cultivating a liberating manner of thinking.

In this spirit, each one of these messages concludes with an application of the Torah lesson of that week to our

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understanding of Moshiach and Redemption, as well as to help us prepare for the coming of Moshiach and the imminent Redemption.

It is my fervent hope that these essays will contribute to the process of changing our *galus/exile* mindset into a Moshiach mindset, which is effected by the study of these themes in Torah.. And may this effort contribute to the imminent Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. Amen.

The parsha Vayigash is obviously a fundamental parsha because it deals with reunification and rapprochement; an indispensable feature of Redemption.

ESSAY ONE

THE JOSEPH AND JUDAH MINDSET

Jacob knew the challenge that lie ahead for the Jewish people in the land of Egypt.

To insure that the Jewish people would withstand the pressures of Egyptian life he needed to send someone who exhibited the power to confront royalty; the forces that were in control of the exile.

It was Judah's attitude—exemplified by standing up to Joseph—that would enable the Jews to withstand the pressure to assimilate in a foreign culture.

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ESSAY ONE

THE JOSEPH AND JUDAH MINDSET

Adapted from Essay of Lubavitcher Rebbe in year 5752-1991

The Torah and Haftorah Reading: The Reconciliation of Leaders

Joseph the viceroy of Egypt accuses his brother Benjamin of stealing his silver goblet and threatens to have him incarcerated.

Parshat Vayigash poignantly describes Judah's confrontation with Joseph demanding the release of Benjamin that led to Joseph revealing his identity to his brothers and the subsequent rapprochement between them.

Joseph is a king and Judah was the leader of his brothers. Two leaders clash and then reconcile.

This theme is echoed in the Haftorah (selections from the prophets that are read after the weekly parsha that usually echo the major theme of the parsha). Here too the prophet

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Ezekiel describes how, in the future Messianic Era, the two erstwhile rival kingdoms of Joseph and Judah will be united, and at which time: “I will render them one nation... and one king shall be for all of them... and My servant David shall be their prince forever... and the nations shall know that I am G-d.”

Closer scrutiny of these two sources will yield the perception that the Torah reading and the Haftorah discuss this theme of reconciliation in diametrically opposite ways:

Let’s read the opening verses of the parsha:

“Then Judah approached Joseph and said, ‘Please my master! Your servant now wants to say something that my master will listen to, so please do not get angry at your servant, for you are as Pharaoh.”

In this parsha, it is Judah who approaches and humbles himself to the more powerful Joseph. Joseph is the Viceroy and in control; he is like Pharaoh in the eyes of Judah. And Judah is, in servile fashion, compelled to approach and implore Joseph to free his brother Benjamin.

Now let’s review and contrast this with the opening words of the Haftorah:

“One king will be for all of them... and My servant David (who was from the tribe of Judah) will be their prince forever.”

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Here it is clear that the prophetic prediction was that in the reconciliation and unification process, it will be Judah (in the person of Moshiach, his descendent) who will predominate. And Joseph (and the tribes that are descended from him) will be subsumed within Judah.

The Real Judah

When we probe more deeply into the way Judah approached Joseph, however, we will see that even in the Torah reading Judah is the more dominant one.

When we consider the fact that Joseph was a mighty ruler and despite his powerful position Judah just walked over to him without asking him for permission, it demonstrated that Judah was far from being submissive.

Furthermore, Judah's meek and servile tone of voice belied his assertiveness. As Rashi, commenting on the words "pleased do not get angry" observes: "he spoke harshly to him."

The Midrash goes even further: "The term "*Vayigash*-and he approached" indicates he was prepared for war."

The Midrash continues:

"Joseph trembled and was terrified. He said, 'Woes is to me, he might kill me;' Joseph's apprehension,

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notwithstanding the presence of Egyptians in his court.

Judah's harsh demeanor was in stark contrast to the way he and his brothers acted so meekly in last week's parsha, where it describes how: "they fell before him to the ground."

What changed Judah's demeanor?

When Judah heard that he was going to detain his brother Benjamin, Judah's ire was raised. Judah's commitment to returning his brother safely emboldened him to even risk his life to get him released.

Thus we see that the relationship of Judah and Joseph in the Torah reading is very much consistent with the Haftorah, in which Judah is the dominant leader.

The Seeds are Sown

We can now also understand why when Jacob decided to move to Egypt he sent Judah ahead to Goshen. Why did he need to send Judah there?

Jacob knew the challenge that lie ahead for the Jewish people in the land of Egypt. To insure that the Jewish people would withstand the pressures of Egyptian life he needed to send someone who exhibited the power to confront royalty; the forces that were in control of the exile. It was Judah's attitude—exemplified by standing up

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to Joseph—that would enable the Jews to withstand the pressure to assimilate in a foreign culture.

Judah's chutzpah had even more far reaching effects. With his approach of standing tall and proud in his encounter with Joseph—whom he imagined was Pharaoh's chief representative—Judah planted the seeds for the ultimate reunification of the Jewish people in the Messianic Age—when “David My servant shall be their leader forever.”

What was Judah's Real Role?

To bring us closer to the message we are to derive from this episode we need to resolve an outstanding problem with the above analysis:

Judah's “bravado” turns out was unnecessary. Joseph was not the adversary over whom he had to prevail. It only seemed that way. And, in the final analysis, Joseph and not Judah was the real ruler of Egypt that made it possible for his brothers to survive and even flourish in Egypt. And yet it is Judah who gets all the credit!

The question therefore remains: What, in reality, did Judah's leadership attitude—expressed by his defiance in his confrontation with Joseph-- add to Josephs' leadership? Even without Judah, it would seem, the Jewish people

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would have been in control of their situation due to Joseph's role.

Two Modalities of Power over Exile Conditions: Joseph and Judah

In truth, there are two modalities for Jewish “power” to be exercised in times of Galut/exile. The first, we shall see, derives from the Joseph paradigm of leadership, and the second, is based on the Judah model of leadership. And it is the latter that is the precursor to the leadership of Moshiach, the descendant of Judah, who will incorporate within, and unify with, the leadership of Joseph.

The first form of control over our situation in Galut/exile has its limits. It must conform to the laws of nature and societal norms. This is the Joseph model of leadership. Joseph rules Egypt, but his power is based on, derives from and is limited by the system of which he is an integral part. While Joseph is indeed the “ruler over all of the land,” he occupies that position at the pleasure of Pharaoh. Pharaoh says so much when he tells Joseph: “only by virtue of the throne shall I be greater than you.” Joseph was still connected—albeit, ever so subtly—to the conventions and parameters of the world around him. And within those parameters he was able to rule Egypt and accommodate his brothers.

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The second form of control is where the Jew stands **above** the constraints of nature and, certainly, beyond the more oppressive forces of exile. This Judah dynamic can dictate to the powers that be how they should behave, just as Judah spoke with boldness to Joseph, who he thought was the thoroughly Egyptian leader.

Indeed, this Judah personality type can even alter the norms of society. Judah did not seek Joseph's permission to approach and address him, and was unfazed by palace etiquette and societal conventions. And yet, it was Judah's brazenness that brought Joseph to the point where "he could no longer contain himself." Judah's bold approach resulted in the reconciliation with Joseph and the ultimate prosperity and control over Egypt the Jews initially enjoyed in Egypt—with which this week's parsha concludes.

Precursor of the Future

We can now understand the tight connection between the Parsha—that discusses Judah's approach to Joseph—and the Haftorah—that discusses the preeminence of King David/Moshiach who will serve as the leader forever in the Messianic Age.

Judah's boldness that he exhibited in his approach to Joseph was derived from his attachment to G-d who transcends the parameters of the world. His boldness

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paved the way and is the catalyst that will bring about the ultimate Redemption at which time the full force of “My servant David shall be their leader forever” will be realized, because the full impact of G-d’s power to combine opposites—living in a physical world and transcending it simultaneously—will be manifest. And all of the world will conform to G-d’s will, as Moshiach will bring to fruition the prophetic promise: “Then I shall reverse unto the nations a clear language, that they might call out, all of them, by the name of the L-rd [and] to serve Him all together.” (Zeph. 3:9).”

There is still one outstanding question that should be addressed. If Judah’s boldness in the manner he addressed Joseph is emblematic of his superiority over Joseph, why did it manifest itself in Judah having to approach and implore Joseph? Isn’t there an inherent contradiction in being bold and humble at the same time?

The answer to this question is that, indeed, Judah was dependent on Joseph to enable him to realize his potential. In order for Judah’s preeminent power to be revealed he needed to be inspired by Joseph. By internalizing Joseph’s qualities Judah was able to actualize his own spiritual potential. Thus, despite the fact that Judah’s approach to Joseph suggests that he was in some fashion subordinate to Joseph, it did not really detract from Judah’s superiority over him. Judah was opening himself up to the spiritual

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energies of Joseph that would, in turn, expose his own unique role as the ultimate leader.

Applying Judah's Boldness to our Times

We are living in unique times. In the past, the “Judahs” with all of their unbridled courage and determination, were constrained by the various governmental decrees and restrictions. Our generation, by contrast, has witnessed an incredible change for the good. The nations of the world not only do not deter us from observing our Torah and living freely as Jews, but, moreover, they assist the Jewish people.

In our day and age, Jews do not have to limit their religious expression to the privacy of their homes as in times bygone; they can live and even influence their surroundings without any obstruction. The Jewish world is now receptive to Judaism and the non-Jewish world is receptive to their seven Noahide commandments.

As the Previous Rebbe stated, all the preparations for the redemption have been made. Now it is our mission to introduce the Redemption into the reality of our physical world and see it happen with our eyes of flesh.

[For no matter how good it is for Jews today—in terms of religious freedom—we are still in exile. Our relationship

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with G-d in exile has been likened to a husband leaving his wife after the betrothal ceremony. We are in exile, for all intents and purposes, in a tragic situation that is akin to the agunah (a woman whose husband is missing). Not until the Redemption will the marriage between G-d and us be consummated.]

We need only “open our eyes” to see that the world at large demands that every Jew should be in the state of true and complete Redemption.

Indeed, our ability to be bold and uninhibited in our Judaism is directly attributable to the fact that we are so close to the Redemption and such time when Moshiach the descendent of Judah will be in charge.

And just as Joseph served as the inspiration to Judah that enabled him to actualize his superior spiritual state, so too in our time, it is the Joseph of our generation—i.e., the Previous Rebbe, whose name is Joseph—who gives the inspiration to Moshiach, the scion of Judah, to be revealed /and whose coming is imminent!

The practical lesson therefore is as follows:

When we follow in Judah’s footsteps—in the bold way he approached Joseph—by demonstrating our unabashed, unapologetic and proud approach to Torah, that itself is the way we bring to fruition the words of the prophet in

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the Haftorah: “My servant David (who was from the tribe of Judah) will be their prince forever.”

ESSAY TWO

“I AM JOSEPH; IS MY FATHER STILL ALIVE,” SYNTHESIS

Joseph had managed to successfully synthesize the modern world (Joseph) with the tradition (“my father”).

He also realized that he was capable of losing that connection.

In order not to risk that synthesis unraveling, Joseph immediately asks for his father's coming to Egypt.

ESSAY TWO

"I AM JOSEPH; IS MY FATHER STILL ALIVE," SYNTHESIS

The Proverbial Straw

One of the most poignant episodes in the Torah can be found at the beginning of this week's Parsha. Joseph, who had been sold by his brothers, has risen to the position of Viceroy of Egypt. His prophetic dream that his brothers will one day bow down to him has materialized. He had just put his brothers through grueling times, accusing them of espionage when they had come to Egypt to purchase grain in a time of famine.

The proverbial "straw that broke the camel's back" was the discovery of Joseph's silver goblet in Benjamin's knapsack. Joseph demanded Benjamin be held as a hostage and Judah pleads, nay, demands of Joseph to let him go.

A Strange Question

At this point Joseph could not contain himself any longer, sends out all the Egyptians present, and exclaims to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?"

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Commentators are puzzled at Joseph's strange question, as to whether his father was still alive. Didn't Judah just get through telling Joseph how Jacob's life depended on the safe return of his youngest son Benjamin? No less than five times did Judah mention his father in his plea to Joseph! And yet, Joseph acts as if he was completely unaware that they were just speaking about his father.

Incredulity!

One simple answer to this question is that Joseph was really not asking whether his father was alive. What Joseph was doing was expressing his incredulity. By prefacing the words "I am Joseph;" he meant to say, "I have caused so much pain to my father because of my absence, and my father is still alive?!"

But Joseph was not just saying this to express his sense of amazement that his father was still alive, but it was a preparation for a subsequent request on his part, to go quickly to bring his father to Egypt so that his father would see him before he would die.

Modernity versus Traditional

While the entire story of Joseph and his brothers is recorded in the Torah as actual occurrences, the Torah

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wants us to realize that these stories carry an eternal message. In every generation we must seek to apply Joseph's exclamation, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" to our own lives.

Joseph, whose name derives from a root that means change and improvement, could represent the progress that our generation has experienced as a result of modern technology and the freedoms that we enjoy that are of a recent vintage.

The entire rivalry and conflict of Joseph and his brothers can be said to reflect the tension that exists between the old and the new. There is always going to be struggle between the trends of modernity with the traditional approaches. The old guard will not stand for the modern developments and will try to destroy it. If they cannot succeed to destroy it they may "send it south," to Egypt. This means that these innovations cannot be tolerated in our own environment and will have to be sent elsewhere.

By selling Joseph to Egypt, his brothers, were in effect saying, Joseph's modern approach may be good for the secular world symbolized by Egypt, but not for the progenitors of the Jewish people in Israel.

On the surface, it seems that Joseph's brothers were correct. There is no room for change within the confines of the Land of Israel. Metaphorically speaking this means that

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there must be a separation between the profane and the holy. While we might want to avail ourselves of modern technology when it comes to business and other mundane endeavors, we should not allow the modern technological advances to encroach on our “Holy Land” dimension of life.

At this point Joseph finally reveals himself to his brothers and says, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?” implying that he was amazed that he had not lost his feeling for his father; he had not deviated one iota from the teachings of his father.

Joseph’s incredulity — at his father (read: his father’s old ways) still being alive in spite of his role as the innovator-Joseph — was justified.

Despite the fact that Joseph had managed to successfully synthesize the modern world (Joseph) with the tradition (my father), he was not cocky or arrogant about it. He realized that he was capable of losing that connection if he didn’t hurry to bring his father here; to instill the values of his father in his new and modern world. In order not to risk that synthesis unraveling, Joseph immediately asks for his father's coming to Egypt.

Torah Most Modern Teaching

In practical terms this means that the ways of our fathers,

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every detail of the Torah and its commandments are as relevant today as they were 3,300 years ago, because “my father is still alive.”

Jacob, our Sages tell us, “never really died.” The G-dly teachings of Torah, can never lose their relevancy. However, this does not necessitate shunning the modern world. As long as it does not compromise the Torah, we are permitted and indeed we ought to avail ourselves of modern technology and advances for the enhancement of Torah. But, at all times we must realize that Torah must not be watered down as a result of the constant changes that occur as a result of modernity.

Chanukah Message

Chanukah, the festival we have just observed, likewise carries the message that while the Greek’s provided us with some invaluable innovations, we must never allow them to adulterate the purity of the oil (read: Jewish wisdom and observance).

No sooner do the Syrian-Greeks put their touch to our oil in the Temple, they provoked the militant response of the Maccabees.

The triumph of the Maccabees over the Greeks was a triumph for the “I am Joseph, is my father still alive”

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synthesis.

Our Generation's Challenge

No generation in history has been confronted with the “I am Joseph!” (progress and modernity) and “is my father still alive?” (tradition and fidelity to the “old” ways) syndrome as ours.

Our generation's challenge is unique because it is the generation that will merit ushering in the Messianic Age, a time when the synthesis of the old and the new will reach its state of perfection.

Moshiach must be steeped in the teachings of the Torah. When Maimonides describes Moshiach's qualifications he adds that he must be steeped in Torah “as his ancestor David.”

Torah and Technology

Indeed, the Zohar, the principle work of Kabbalah predicted that in the pre-Messianic Era, there will be a parallel explosion of secular and spiritual knowledge. The purpose is to prepare us for such time when the dichotomy between nature and the Divine will be no more.

Even today, as we prepare for Moshiach, we have seen

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unprecedented ways of bringing the teachings of Torah—including its most esoteric levels—to the widest possible audience through the advances of modern technology. Science is living up to its intended purpose to be the instrument through which G-d and G-dly wisdom can be made a part of the consciousness of the world.

ESSAY THREE

THE ROYAL YESHIVAH

**Torah is the “blueprint of creation” and has the power to
affect the natural order of the world**

**Any contradiction we find between Torah and our lives is
not real.**

**And any appearance of a conflict is a mirage. Torah is what
dictates reality.**

ESSAY THREE

THE ROYAL YESHIVAH

Start A Yeshivah!

Before Jacob makes his way to Egypt to be reunited with his son Joseph after so many years of painful separation, Jacob sends his son Yehudah ahead of the entire family to the land of Goshen.

Why was it necessary to send Yehudah? If Joseph was the Viceroy of Egypt, he certainly had the ability to make the necessary preparations and accommodations. Indeed, Joseph said that much, when he sent his brothers back home to bring their father.

Rashi, anticipating this question, answers that Yehudah was sent to start a place of study, where the teachings of Torah would be taught. Before bringing the nucleus of the Jewish people into Egypt it was crucial that they had a place where they could imbibe the teachings of Torah that were revealed to the Patriarchs and their children, even before the Torah was formally given at Mount Sinai.

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Why Yehudah?

The question, however, remains: Why did he send **Yehudah**, specifically, to establish this Torah academy? In Jewish classical sources, the tribe of Yissachar is credited with being the greatest source of Torah knowledge. Even the most arcane subject as the determination of the New Moon was their specialty. Presumably, the tribe of Yissachar inherited this trait from their ancestor Yissachar. Why then didn't Jacob send him instead of Yehudah?

Other classical sources indicate that only the Levites remained faithful to the teachings of the Torah throughout the 210 years of Egyptian exile and bondage, and they were the ones who actually maintained the “Yeshivah” in Goshen established by Yehudah. Why then didn't Jacob send Levi to establish the academy? What advantage did Yehudah have over all the other **sons of Jacob**?

The question is even more pronounced when we consider the role of Yehudah as the progenitor of royalty. Yehuda was the ancestor of King David and of a long line of kings and leaders that occupied leadership positions throughout Jewish history to this very day. And, indeed, one of Moshiach's—the ultimate leader and king—qualifications is that he descend from the Davidic line that traces itself back to Yehudah. Royalty and scholarship, while not mutually exclusive, do not necessarily complement each other. Why

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then the emphasis of Yehudah, the leader, being the one to establish a center of Torah learning?

The Three Dimensions of Torah

To answer this question we have to explore the various facets of Torah study, for Torah study possesses many qualities and objectives.

First, Torah is our guide. The very word Torah means instruction because it instructs us how to live our daily lives in accordance with the Divine plan for the world.

Second, Torah is also Divine wisdom. Even if there would be no direct lesson that we **could** [can] derive from a particular Torah thought, there is intrinsic value to studying that part of Torah. It is true that if one studies Torah as a mere intellectual or academic exercise and does not follow its dictates, this is a seriously flawed Torah study. It can be compared to the person who studies the ill effects of smoking while refusing to stop smoking[;] or the expert in the laws of theft who proceeds to steal. Nevertheless, Torah study, in and of itself, is an intrinsically positive and holy endeavor because it is Divine wisdom that is absorbed into our consciousness, making us more Divine. If it fails to guide us in our lives, it is a sign that we approached Torah not as a Divine discipline, but as a mental exercise or a cultural experience.

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The Third Dimension

There is yet another dimension to Torah study that expresses a unique and powerful feature of Torah **and** [that] is not evident in the other two dimensions:

When we look at Torah from the vantage point of it being a Divine source of guidance, it presupposes that the world precedes the laws that govern our behavior. For example, if we deal with the laws of not kindling a fire on Shabbos, we presuppose that fire exists. If there **were** no fire in existence, we couldn't be told not to light a fire of Shabbos. Or, if there **were** no commerce, we **could not** relate to the Torah's laws of commerce.

Even when we approach Torah as a transcendent Divine body of wisdom that preceded creation, one can get the impression that there are two distinct realities: the Higher reality of Torah and the lower reality of our physical existence. We can compartmentalize. When we study Torah, we are in G-d's domain and when we are in business, we are in a human and material world.

However, the third dimension of Torah is [that it is] the very power and essence of our existence. Torah is the life force of the entire cosmos. And though Torah in its pristine spiritual state transcends the universe, G-d has "unleashed" the power of Torah to create and control all [of] that exists. Torah in this context is not just a way of,

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and response to, life situations; it is the very source and essence of life.

This aspect of Torah, the Midrash refers to as its “royal” component. The royal component of Torah is based on the verse in Proverbs (8:15): “By me kings reign...” Torah confers royalty to those who master it, because Torah is the very source of royalty. Just as the king dictates and controls, so too, does the Torah dictate and control the way our universe exists. Torah, the Jerusalem Talmud declares, actually controls nature. When G-d created, and continues to create the world—He did/does so by “looking into the Torah.” In the words of the Zohar: “He looked into the Torah and created the world.” “Similarly,” the Zohar continues, “man studies the Torah and sustains the world.” The Midrash describes this dynamic of Torah as the “blueprint of creation.”

No Contradictions

Of what significance is it to know that Torah is the “blueprint of creation” and that Torah has the power to affect the natural order of the world?

One important lesson is that any contradiction we find between Torah and our lives is not real. How can the world conflict with its very source of existence? And any

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appearance of a conflict is a mirage. Torah is what dictates reality.

However, G-d also allowed for reality to become clouded and eclipsed to the point where the reality of Torah is relegated to the realm of fantasy and the fantasy of our golus/exile existence is viewed as reality.

Facing Exile with the Power of Royalty

We can now understand why Jacob sent Yehudah, specifically, to establish a center of Torah in Egypt, **rather than** his other sons. It was not necessarily due to Yehudah's superior knowledge of Torah. Rather, it was due to Yehudah's status as a leader, a monarch. Yehudah's position as the symbol of royalty empowered him to elicit the **royal** dimension of Torah; Torah's capacity to control the natural world.

As the nucleus of the Jewish nation was about to enter into Egyptian exile—the forerunner of subsequent exiles, including the one we are in—it was crucial that they **be** equipped with the power to be in control of exile conditions. If not, the exile would crush them and extinguish the hope for them to ever be liberated.

To be sure, Torah was needed as a guide for them just as it has been for Jews throughout **our** history. It is also true

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that they needed Torah as a way of introducing G-dly knowledge into their minds. And those objectives would have been well served—or perhaps even better served—by Yissachar and Levi, whose tribes boasted the greatest Torah scholars and the most G-dly people. However, as they were about to enter into the state of exile, they needed a leader and teacher who personified the ideal of kingship to **empower** the student of Torah to be in control of nature.

Wearing Two Hats

Throughout Jewish history, the two roles of the monarch and the eminent Torah Sage were vested in two different people. The king or leader was not necessarily the greatest Torah Sage and, conversely, the greatest Torah Sage was not necessarily someone who yielded great power. Two notable exceptions were Moses and Joshua, who were both kings and the preeminent Torah teachers of their generation and of generations to follow.

The reason for these two exceptions is that Moses' and Joshua's role was not restricted to teaching the people Torah to help guide them [people]. They were **also** charged with the responsibility to instill in **the people** the power of mastery over their lives and their environment—the royal dimension of Torah.

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Moses was the leader whose function it was to liberate the Jewish nation, and Joshua was the one who would lead them into the conquest of the Land of Israel, the land which exemplifies complete Torah mastery over the mundane. These two leaders, therefore, had to possess the regal power of Torah, not just its spiritual and moral authority. One cannot be freed from slavery and exile without the royal power of Torah. And one can certainly not conquer a land and transform it into the Holy Land without that aspect of Torah.

Moshiach: The Ultimate Leader

The Jewish belief in Moshiach and Redemption is that Moshiach will usher in the Messianic Age. Why does it have to come through Moshiach?

One answer is that to end the state of exile, once and for all, it requires a force that possesses complete mastery over nature. As Moses before him, Moshiach is the ultimate monarch and Torah personality. It isn't just that he is multi-talented—being a leader and a scholar; his knowledge of Torah is intertwined and permeated with the trait of royalty. Moshiach's Torah has the capacity to inspire and endow us with the royal dimension of Torah that will reveal the true nature of reality—a world that conforms to the dictates of the Torah. In the Messianic Age

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we will experience complete harmony between the Torah and the physical world.

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ESSAY FOUR

LEARNING ON THE WAY

When we travel into Galus, it is imperative that we do not cease Torah study.

Torah empowers us to overcome the darkness of exile. Indeed, our Sages state: “There is no free person other than one who is engaged in Torah study.”

One of Moshiach’s qualifications is: “he will meditate on Torah.”

Notwithstanding Moshiach’s primary role as a leader, his capacity to redeem the Jewish people out of exile derives from his toil in the study of Torah.

ESSAY FOUR

LEARNING ON THE WAY

Avoiding Road Rage

After Joseph discloses his true identity to his brothers, as the Torah relates in this week's parsha, Vayigash, Joseph them to return to Cana'an and bring their father to Egypt. One of his specific instructions concerning their trip was: "Don't argue on the way."

The Talmud (Ta'anis 10b), cited by Rashi, comments that he meant that they should not discuss matters of Halacha.

The Midrash (cited by the Tosphos commentary on the Talmud), however, maintains the opposite view. Joseph's admonition to them was that they should **not** cease learning Torah on their way back home.

The Rebbe (*Likkutei Sichos* volume 35. P. 198-205) explains that the Midrash is consistent with the Torah's own commandment to speak of the words of Torah "when you go on your way." In addition, when we travel we need added protection. Indeed, in recognition of this, there is a special prayer specifically for travelers – *Tefilas Haderech*.

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Torah study itself provides the ultimate protection at the time it is most needed.

Torah Study on the Road to Exile

The Rebbe analogized the Midrash's approach to the way we must approach Galus. There was a special need for Joseph to tell his brothers to continue learning on the road. After all, their road was to take them back to Canaan with the objective of bringing their father and all of his descendants to Egypt. When we travel into Galus, it is imperative that we do not cease Torah study. The rationale for this, the Rebbe explains, is that Torah study unifies us with Torah and empowers us to overcome the darkness of exile. Indeed, our Sages state: "There is no free person other than one who is engaged in Torah study."

Thus, the Rebbe continues, Jacob sent his son Yehudah to Goshen to establish a center of Torah so that the Jews could toil in Torah study. Only total immersion in Torah study can endow the Jewish people with the capacity to exercise control over Galus and not vice versa.

This, the Rebbe explains, is why one of Moshiach's qualifications is: "he will meditate on Torah." Notwithstanding Moshiach's primary role as a leader, his capacity to redeem the Jewish people out of exile derives from his toil in the study of Torah. His entire being is

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Torah. And since Torah preceded (read: transcends) the creation of the world, it does not have any of the constraints and boundaries of Galus. Thus, Moshiach will be the one to influence all Jews to follow in the path of Torah.

Cease and Desist from Torah Study?!

In light of the Rebbe's analysis, we may ask what conceptual basis exists for the Talmud and Rashi's approach that Joseph actually admonished his brothers not to toil in the study of Torah while they travelled?

In simple terms, the admonition not to engage in protracted discussion of complex Halachic matters was intended to protect them from the kind of mishap that can occur on the road if when travelers are distracted.

However, in light of the spiritual understanding that their trip was to bring Jacob to into exile, why would Joseph want to preclude their intensive engagement in Torah? Why should travel on the path to exile exclude their total immersion in Torah study?

Don't make Peace with Galus!

One view is that Joseph's concern was that a preoccupation with in-depth Torah study could make his brothers forget

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what their mission was. A person can approach going into Galus fortified with Torah the wrong way. One might even think that Galus is not so terrible. If Galus were to erode one's ability to study Torah, it would send a message that Galus is not the true place for a Jew. Galus, even in its most benign form—i.e., no persecution, etc. and ample opportunity for unhindered study of Torah, as appears to exist today—is still Galus. We must never make our peace with it.

Rashi, who instructs us in the simple, literal level of Torah interpretation, speaks to the simple Jew, one who could otherwise be led astray by the notion that Galus is bad only because we cannot study Torah properly. While everyone can appreciate that Galus imposes certain limits on our Torah study, no matter how much effort we expend on it, a simple person might not see the extent of what he is missing in Galus.

Joseph, the first Galus leader, therefore wanted Galus Jews to recognize that Torah study in exile is inherently lacking.

Vanity

The Midrash, by contrast, is geared to someone on a higher spiritual level who is able to see things from a deeper perspective. From that vantage point, there is no danger that a person's assiduous preoccupation with Torah study

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will signal that Galus is not so bad after all. A Jew with the Midrashic perspective probes deeper beneath the surface and recognizes that even the most profound and penetrating engagement in Torah study in Galus is deficient compared to the Torah study of Moshiach.

Indeed, the Midrash on Ecclesiastes declares that our Torah study is *hevel*-vanity compared to the Torah that will be taught by Moshiach. The “Midrash Jew” recognizes that distinction, and can comfortably understand that in-depth Torah study is not simply desirable in Galus, but is imperative because it empowers us to get out of Galus. It is what paves the way and prepares us for the new levels of Torah learning that Moshiach will teach.

Reconciliation

How can we reconcile Rashi and the Midrash? Are we to learn Torah in depth because we are in Galus or desist from it because we must not forget that we are in Galus? Second, how can we possibly be counseled not to learn Torah on a deeper level? Torah study is a Mitzvah which we cannot shirk just because we might approach it with the wrong attitude.

The answer is that even when we put all of our resources and energy into Torah study, we must recognize that we are merely skimming the surface of the Torah’s treasures.

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Its deepest secrets are elusive for us while in exile because Galus does not allow us to fathom the Torah's true depth.

One may still question the analysis of the Midrash and Rashi that sees Joseph's brothers' trip as one into Galus. If they were simply returning from Canaan to Egypt we can understand the Galus message inherent in the admonition to continue study (the Midrashic approach) or not engage in in-depth study (the Rashi approach). However, Joseph's instructions to them about Torah study came before they left for Canaan and were not explicitly about their subsequent trip back to Egypt. If the message was intended for their travel into Galus, shouldn't he have given it to them for their return to Egypt?

The True Nature of Galus

We may answer this question by understanding the true nature of Galus and the role of the land of Israel vis-à-vis Galus.

There is a mistaken notion that Galus is exclusively about living outside of our homeland, out in the Diaspora. While this is certainly true in one sense, it does not accurately state the ultimate meaning of Galus. It is a profound state of alienation from the place where we belong. As Jews we certainly belong in Eretz Yisrael. However, return to the physical land itself is not the whole story. We are, as a

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result of our physical alienation from the Land of Israel and the Beis Hamikdash, also spiritually alienated from the Divine presence. Galus causes us to lose touch with G-d, the Divine essence of Torah and Mitzvos and our own souls. Galus tempts us to do self-destructive things because we have become desensitized.

Living in Israel is a great privilege. However, living in Israel prior to Moshiach's rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash does not take one out of Galus. Indeed, in some respects the Galus can be felt more acutely in this holiest of places. When a Jew stands in front of the Kotel, the Western Wall, he or she can feel mixed joy and grief at the same time. Joy, for G-d's great miracle that has given us access to this holy place. But there is also a sense of sadness when we look beyond the Wall and cannot see the fully rebuilt Beis Hamikdash with the Divine presence resting there in its most revealed state.

We can now understand that when Joseph admonishes his brothers to either continue learning Torah (according to the Midrash) or desist from its intense study (according to Rashi) because they were on their way into Galus, his admonition included the first leg of their trip, back to Israel. The fact is that being in Israel as it exists today can also be a form of Galus.

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The Paradox

There is a paradoxical lesson that we can derive from all of the above. On the one hand, we must put great effort toward in-depth Torah study. Moreover, as the Rebbe stated on many occasions, it is imperative that we not only study Torah, we must also search for new insights (*Chidushim*) in our studies. The discovery of new meaning in Torah prepares us for the time when G-d will reveal new vistas of Torah through Moshiach. Indeed, our generation is witness to the greatest explosion of Torah study and new commentaries in all areas of Torah scholarship.

On the other hand, we must humbly recognize that our greatest Torah achievement pales in comparison with the knowledge that we will attain in the future, at which time the entire world will be immersed in the deepest Torah secrets.

ESSAY FIVE

BAR MITZVAH BEYOND FORTY!

Chassidic Masters taught us that Joseph and Judah, in addition to being real historical figures, allegorically represent the two worlds of action and study.

Joseph is study and Judah is action.

When the Torah says that “Judah approached Joseph,” it teaches us the need for us to fuse action with knowledge.

ESSAY FIVE

BAR MITZVAH BEYOND FORTY!

Confrontation

Judah took full responsibility for the welfare of his younger brother Benjamin. Jacob refused to let them return to Egypt to purchase life-sustaining food during the famine that devastated the world at that time. Only after Judah's solemn commitment and guarantee to return him was Jacob convinced to let Benjamin go.

Now, Joseph, the Viceroy of Egypt, accuses his brother Benjamin of stealing his silver goblet and threatens to have him incarcerated.

This parsha poignantly describes Judah's confrontation with Joseph demanding the release of Benjamin that led to Joseph revealing his identity to his brothers and the subsequent rapprochement between them.

Judah takes a courageous stand; putting his life in jeopardy in the presence of a powerful ruler, who could very well have killed Judah.

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This story, one of the most moving stories in the Torah, informs us of the responsibilities of every Jew. Indeed, the word Jew derives from the name Judah, who was the progenitor of the most prominent tribe in Israel.

A Jew is one who takes a principled stand even in the face of danger. This is particularly so when the well being of another Jew—his brother or sister—is at stake.

When does a Jew assume the full responsibility for others? It is at the age of Bar or Bas Mitzvah. A boy becomes of age at the age of thirteen; a girl at the age of twelve.

Vayigash: And He was a Bar Mitzvah?

Based on the above, it is therefore fascinating to discover that the idea of Bar Mitzvah is actually alluded to in the very first word, title and theme of this week's parsha—“*Vayigash*—And he approached.” This word conveys Judah's courage, self-sacrifice, leadership and ultimately the reconciliation process between him and Joseph.

Upon close examination we will discover that the word *Vayigash* is an acronym, for the words: *yud*, *gimmel*, *shanah*, *v'yom*, which means: “thirteen years and a day”—the age of Bar Mitzvah.

(A point of clarification. The meaning of “a day” is not that he has to be thirteen full years plus another twenty four

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hours, but rather to imply that the thirteenth year has to be complete. We do not regard a portion of the thirteenth year as if it was thirteen.)

What is the deeper connection between Vayigash, which, as stated, means “and he approached” and Bar Mitzvah? Judah was then beyond the age of forty. What relevance does his confrontation with Joseph have to do with Bar Mitzvah?

It conveys the message that already at the age of Bar Mitzvah we all become responsible for one another. When we see a Jew (Benjamin) who is held back from returning to his Father in Heaven (Jacob), a Jew (Judah) comes forward to demand his freedom to be a Jew and does not accept no as an answer.

Vayigash is not just confrontation. Ultimately, this confrontation developed into reconciliation, the seeds of which were planted then. The full blossoming of these seeds will occur in the Messianic Age as described vividly in this week’s Haftarah, prophetic reading.

A Jew—even as he or she enters into the stage of Bar or Bas Mitzvah—has to know that our goal is complete and total unity.

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The Synthesis between Study and Action

On a deeper level, Chassidic Masters taught us that Joseph and Judah, in addition to being real historical figures, allegorically represent the two worlds of action and study. Joseph is study and Judah is action. So when the Torah says that Judah approached Joseph, it teaches us the need for us to fuse action with knowledge.

It is not uncommon for people who are steeped into theoretical knowledge to shun or deemphasize the practical parts of Judaism. Conversely, there are activists who perform the Mitzvos admirable but who fail to see the value of theoretical study of Torah.

The dichotomy between these two spheres is represented by the emotional gulf that existed between Judah and Joseph at the fateful moment the two of them stood face to face.

Vayigash, Chassidic thought teaches us, is when the two worlds of study and action meet.

Here too there is a connection to the allusion of Vayigash to Bar Mitzvah.

Before the age of Bar Mitzvah a boy (and likewise a girl before the age of Bas Mitzvah) learns about various Mitzvos, but cannot observe them properly. For even if they were to perform them—as they are indeed

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encouraged to do so as a preparation for adulthood—not being obligated to do them relegates their observance to a lower level on the ladder of Mitzvah perfection.

When it comes to study—the Joseph of Judaism—the pre-Bar Mitzvah child does not lack the fundamental aspect of the Torah study. While he may be lacking in the quantitative aspect of learning—his mind is not as developed as an adult—nevertheless, he is already on the inexorable road to higher levels of Torah study. Indeed, the word Joseph means to increase. All of our lives we increase in our Torah knowledge; at no point can we say we know enough.

However, when it comes to the Judah aspect of Judaism—the observance of the Mitzvos—a minor is in the Minor Leagues, not just quantitatively but also qualitatively. There is an ocean of difference between one who does a Mitzvah out of submission to a Higher will—one translation of the name Judah is submission—and one who does it voluntarily, as does a minor.

At the time of Bar Mitzvah, a boy's actions, his “Judah” approaches and matches his “Joseph,” his learning. His actions “catch up,” so to speak, with his knowledge of Torah—they are now both playing in the Major Leagues.

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Tefillin: Colliding Worlds Brought Together

This process of Vayigash—where two competing worlds meet—has yet another connection to Bar Mitzvah. Although a Bar Mitzvah assumes responsibility for all of the Mitzvos, there is one Mitzvah that stands out. When a boy becomes a Bar Mitzvah, he begins to put on Tefillin. Tefillin are connected with three parts of the person: the head, arm and heart. If there are three distinct worlds within the human being they are the mind, the emotions associated with the heart and one's actions that one executes primarily through one's hands.

These three parts of the human being are rivals in the best case scenario and outright adversaries in the worst case scenario. The mind understands, but the heart refuses to get excited about the idea. Even when one is turned on to doing the right things, they often find that there is a major blockage that does not let them execute the idea into concrete action. It is Joseph and Judah in their most antagonistic pose.

Tefillin—arguably more than any other Mitzvah—is about Vayigash, bringing these worlds together so that they function in complete harmony with one another. The heart beats in accordance with one's understanding and the emotional energy gets translated into action without any

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delay. Tefillin coordinates all of our faculties so that they form one unified front in serving G-d.

The Ultimate Vayigash

The ultimate power of unification of different personalities, ideologies and faculties eludes us as long as we are in exile. Exile is defined not just as a time of persecution and geographical distance from our Homeland. It is a state of alienation from ourselves, our fellow and our G-d. To be sure we can have all of the above forms of unity but because we are in exile these expressions of unity will be missing either in their depth, breadth or length.

In terms of depth it means that the unity will be a functional one but deep down there can still be some hidden measure of tension and separation.

In terms of breadth, the degree to which we can be united with others might be limited to those who are more like-minded. We may still find it difficult to connect to those who are world's apart in terms of their upbringing. It doesn't necessarily mean that we are in conflict with them; it just means that we do not possess the requisite energy to develop lines of communication with people who are outside our comfort zone.

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In terms of “length” the exile tainted efforts of Vayigash will suffer from our inability to extend our efforts at unity to the next generation.

The ultimate Vayigash therefore is the experience that will come only with the true and complete Redemption. Then the two powers of Judah and Joseph—with all that these two figures allude to—will be completely reunited; and reunited on all levels.

At that time we will celebrate the collective Bar Mitzvah of all the Jewish people.

Practice Makes Perfect

It is interesting that the word Vayigash is also related to the word Goshnah—to Goshen, which appears in this week’s parsha.

The word Goshnah comprises the four letters on the dreidel of Chanukah and stand for the four words: “*Nes gadol haya shom*—a great miracle happened there.” The gematria/numerical value of these four letters is 358, the same gematria as Moshiach.

Chanukah, the festival that is associated with the Dreidel and which is always followed by the parsha of Vayigash is related to the word chinuch, which means education.

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Translating the juxtaposition of Chanukah with Vayigash and Goshnah into a relevant message for us in these last moments of exile it suggests that in order for us to experience true Redemption and the ultimate manifestation of Vayigash, we must prepare for it now. In the same manner as a child prepares for his Bar Mitzvah we must direct our efforts today and condition ourselves to experience the Vayigash reconciliation dynamic in every aspect of our lives.

ESSAY SIX

FIVE GARMENTS OF THE FUTURE

Because of Judah's unique quality, Jacob sends him ahead of all the others to Goshen.

Judah was to serve as a bulwark for the Jewish people enabling them to withstand the pressures of assimilation.

Judah was not only guaranteeing their survival and prosperity in Egypt, but was also sowing the seeds of the final Redemption at which time Judah and Joseph will be fully united.

ESSAY SIX

FIVE GARMENTS OF THE FUTURE

No Preferential Treatment, Except for...

We all know the genesis of the rivalry between Joseph and his brothers. Their father Jacob showed favoritism to Joseph that was dramatized by making him a special cloak, a *ketonet passim*. From the tragedy that emerged our Sages derive the obvious lesson that one should not make any differences between children.

When we read this week's parsha that describes the reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers it is surprising to read of how when Joseph sends his brothers back to Canaan to bring Jacob and gives his brothers gifts: "He gave each one of them a set of clothes, and he gave Benjamin three hundred silver pieces and five sets of clothes."

It is incredible that after the entire ordeal that Joseph and his brothers lived through that was precipitated by his

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father singling him out for special treatment, that Joseph would do the same!

The Talmud raises this question and answers that the five garments were symbolic of the five garments Benjamin's illustrious descendent Mordechai was given in the aftermath of the Purim miracle.

But this symbolism hardly answers the question and raises a new question. Nowhere does it say that Joseph's brothers were aware of this symbolism and even if he told them it is still only natural to feel slighted when your brother is singled out for special treatment whatever the symbolic value it may have possessed.

In addition, one could ask, why would Joseph want to allude to an event that would take over 1,100 years for it to occur?

The Future is Different

Joseph was well aware of the jealousy factor in not giving preferential treatment to one child over the other. But that was true only when dealing with the past and present. When dealing with the future it is an entirely different story. When Joseph saw Benjamin he sees his potential for the future; that he would be the ancestor of Mordechai

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who would not only survive the ordeal with Haman but emerge as a proud and honored leader of his people.

A similar situation can be found in next week's parsha, Jacob puts his right hand on the head of Joseph's younger son Ephraim and when Joseph protests, Jacob explains his behavior in terms of the future. Ephraim is destined to be a greater force of leadership than Menashe. He therefore needed an "enhanced" blessing exemplified by Jacob's placing his right hand on Ephraim's head while blessing him.

Similarly, Joseph was not singling out Benjamin for special treatment because of the way he valued him in the present or the past vis-à-vis his brothers. His giving him five garments was based on how Joseph sees the Benjamin of the future. Benjamin was destined to become the ancestor of Mordechai who will lead the Jews to their salvation from the hands of the wicked Haman. Joseph realized that his giving Benjamin the extra garments were intended to give him extra strength and energy to come out of the crisis of Haman with glory.

To better understand why Joseph felt it was important to view Benjamin in terms of the future?

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Confrontation and Reconciliation

The answer to this question lies in the very essence of this week's parsha entitled Vayigash as well as its prophetic selection (known as the Haftarah) that discusses—the confrontation between the two brothers Judah and Joseph and the reconciliation between these two tribes in the Messianic Era, respectively

In this Parsha, Judah approaches Joseph and pleads with him for the return of his brother Benjamin. In the Haftarah, the prophet speaks of an era where Joseph will become unified with and subordinate to Judah. Understood superficially, in the Parsha Joseph dominates, in the Haftarah Judah dominates.

In an earlier essay (Essay One) we cited and elaborated on the Rebbe's analysis of this parsha, which sheds light on the confrontation between Judah and Joseph and will help us understand Joseph's highlighting the future role of Benjamin.

Judah's Dominance

The Rebbe demonstrates that a deeper analysis of the parsha will show that Judah is indeed the more dominant one; his pleading and submissive tone notwithstanding. In

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fact, his defiant attitude ultimately caused Joseph to reveal his true identity to his brothers and the beginning of a new prosperous era for his brothers and their families.

Because of Judah's unique quality, Jacob sends him ahead of all the others to Goshen, to serve as a bulwark for the Jewish people enabling them to withstand the pressures of assimilation. Judah was not only guaranteeing their survival and prosperity in Egypt, but was also sowing the seeds of the final Redemption at which time Judah and Joseph will be fully united.

Two Paradigms of Leadership

Employing the models of Joseph and Judah in their leadership roles we can discern two paradigms of leadership and Jewish "power" in exile: The Joseph modality and the Judah modality. And it is the superior Judah modality that is mirrored by Mordechai.

The Joseph model of leadership is a limited one, and is practiced within the parameters of general society. The Judah model is where the Jew stands above those parameters. And from this perch he can affect and even change society.

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To better appreciate the superior role of Judah we should describe three approaches and attitudes towards the understanding of our capabilities in exile:

The first approach recognizes the power of exile conditions and addresses our inability to escape the constraints of exile. This exile oriented Jew feels impotent in the face of exile pressures and feels the need to compromise on his or her Jewishness.

The second approach, while it allows us to recognize our constraints in exile—we cannot dictate how the world should conduct itself—however it also does not allow the world around us to dictate our lives as Jews.

This is the Joseph model. Joseph was in control of exile conditions, albeit within the parameters of life in Egypt and in his role as its leader.

The third approach allows us to rise above the constraints of exile and exercise full control over it. This third approach will become fully manifest in the Messianic Age. Only then will we be able to achieve a full synthesis of the natural world with our Judaism.

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Joseph Today; Judah Tomorrow

However, even now as we stand on the threshold of this age we are capable of loosening our bonds to the exile controlled world and gaining some measure of mastery over it.

When Judah defiantly approached Joseph, Judah was in effect declaring to Joseph: “Even you Joseph, the leader of Egypt, do not tell the full story of mastery over exile.”

A parallel can be drawn to the Judah approach from Mordechai the hero of Purim, who is referred to as a Yehudi-Jew, despite the fact that he was a descendant of Benjamin. He is given the title Yehudi because it reflects his connection to the tribe of Judah and to his unique approach to the forces of exile.

From this week's Torah portion we discover that Mordechai's heroic attitude derived not only from his connection to Judah but also through his connection to Benjamin.

We can now better understand why Joseph gave Benjamin five garments as a way of alluding to the future victory of Mordechai over Haman. Joseph was, in effect, acknowledging that in the future there will be a more powerful model of leadership and mastery over exile than

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the one he represented. It was meant as a concession to Judah's earlier declaration to him.

And while we will have to wait for the complete Redemption through Moshiach to fully experience this Judah/Mordechai mastery, we can enjoy some of this phenomenon even today.

Our generation is so close to the Redemption that we are thereby empowered to be like Judah and be in total control of our lives and even influence the world around us.

The practical guidance to be derived from all of the above is to emulate Judah's bold footsteps, and Mordechai's unapologetic devotion to Torah. This attitude will bring to fruition the words of the prophet in the Haftarah: "My servant David (who was from the tribe of Judah) will be their prince forever."

ESSAY SEVEN

SURVIVING IS NOT ENOUGH

A Jew is a survivor.

For a Jew it does not suffice to be just as survivor; a Jew must become an “opportunist” in the most positive sense of the word.

A Jew must harness the exile conditions to serve as a catalyst for greater growth.

ESSAY SEVEN

SURVIVING IS NOT ENOUGH

Redundant

When Joseph finally revealed his identity to his brothers, they were dumbfounded. They recoiled partly in fear and partly in shame, until Joseph comforted them with these words:

“But now, don’t be upset or angry with yourselves that you sold me to this place, for G-d sent me ahead of you to save your lives... G-d sent me ahead of you to ensure your survival in the land, and to sustain great salvation.”

After he had uttered these words of comfort, the second section (of the seven sections into which each Torah portion is divided) concludes. The third section commences with the following rather redundant statement made by Joseph:

“Now it was not you who sent me here, but G-d. He made me an advisor to Pharaoh, a master over all his household, and a ruler over the entire land of Egypt.”

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The question begs to be asked. After stating that he was sent by G-d to provide them with their sustenance and survival, it was clear that Joseph was trying to show how it was G-d who actually was responsible for his sale and that, in the end, it was a good thing that he had been sold into slavery. The next section should have then recorded Joseph's request that they return home and bring their father Jacob to Egypt to be reunited with Joseph. But instead, the new section has Joseph essentially reiterating his point that G-d had sent him to help them and the rest of the world cope with the famine by having him rise to the position of ruler over Egypt.

This question is thus a threefold one:

First, why did Joseph have to repeat that it was G-d's plan to have him become the ruler over Egypt?

Second, why would this reiteration of his previous statement mark the beginning of a new section, as if Joseph was thereby actually making a totally new point?

Third, every narrative of the Torah must be understood as not only an historical fact, but also as a message for us in our generation. What is the lesson in the above narrative and in the apparently redundant statement of Joseph.

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Two Accomplishments of Joseph

The answer to these questions is provided by the Rebbe in a lengthy discourse that has as its premise the notion that Joseph was actually making two distinct points that paralleled the two distinct functions that was served by him in his capacity as ruler of Egypt; the forerunner of all future periods of exile.

Equipped with this knowledge we will be capable of dealing with our own situation in these last days of exile, before the advent of the ultimate Redemption.

Joseph rise to power in Egypt represented two distinct accomplishments:

First, Joseph was able to withstand all the pressures of living in an alien environment and still survive as a son of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Not only did Joseph not change when he was a prisoner, but even when he achieved the ultimate by becoming the Viceroy of Egypt, his values did not suffer.

Second, Joseph not only did not succumb to the pressures of exile and the power it has to suffocate one's identity, he also became the master over all of Egypt and all that which Egypt represented. He exercised complete control over his environment. He did not just maintain the status-quo, but as his name Joseph (increase) suggests, his spiritual achievements increased.

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Joseph epitomizes the ultimate power of a leader to find inner strength to cope with all the pressures from the outside world and to survive all the attempts at destroying his people physically and spiritually.

This was the first function of Joseph that he conveyed to his brothers: “I was sent by G-d to give you the strength to be survivors. No matter how much you will be subjected to persecution and tyranny, as Jews you can and you will survive. That is a G-d given power, Joseph suggested, that is embedded within the soul and psyche of every Jew.

The Surviving and Flourishing Jew

A Jew is a survivor. It takes the inspiration of a Joseph-Jewish leader to evoke this G-d given potential. And on that note of survival the end of the second section of this parsha concludes.

The third section begins with Joseph’s second message to them. Not only can you survive, but you will also flourish.

For a Jew it does not suffice to be just as survivor; a Jew must become an “opportunist” in the most positive sense of the word. A Jew must harness the exile conditions to serve as a catalyst for greater growth.

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When we follow Joseph's example we can take the exile conditions and exercise control over them to the extent that we use them as a means to grow and prosper.

Post Holocaust Judaism

In the aftermath of the Holocaust and other tragedies of the 20th century, the Jewish people were once more challenged to express these two powers. Having been dealt the horrific blows of these unprecedented forces of evil, we can all qualify as survivors.

But, the ultimate test of Joseph's words will be realized when we take the adversity of our experience in exile—and the post-Holocaust experience in particular—and transform it into the positive energy that we need to usher in the Messianic Age. At that time, we will no longer have to be survivors. Instead, we will be able to devote all our energies to spiritual growth.

The tensions that we will experience in the Messianic Age will no longer be negative tension brought on by the threat of destruction by a tyrant or even with anti-Semitism; rather it will be the tension that goes along with spiritual “mountain climbing”—scaling infinitely greater heights.

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Refocusing our Vision

Our way of preparing for this time of continuous positive growth is to learn how to refocus our vision on the positive, even as we are still situated in exile. Instead of just surviving and coping, we must look for ways of proudly expressing our Jewish identities and practices.

Adding Light Each Night

Indeed, this was the message we conveyed when we added a new light every night of Chanukah. And this year, more than any previous year in history, tens of thousands of (public) Menoros (Chanukiyot) have graced the entire world's landscape (in addition to the millions of private ones), proclaiming to the whole world that we are a free people that is dedicated to illuminating the world with G-dly light. We will not just be content with fighting and defeating evil; we are—and will always be—obsessed with adding more light.

ESSAY EIGHT

THE SHEMA REUNION

We are presently living in an era that the prophets referred to as the "end of days."

The process that began with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons, under the supervision of Joseph, is coming to an end.

We are now on the threshold of the Messianic Age when not only Jacob, but all of his twelve sons, the entire Jewish people and indeed the entire world will proclaim the Shema in thought, speech and action.

Their legacy has kept the Jewish people going for almost four thousand years and we are on the verge of crossing the "finish line."

ESSAY EIGHT

THE SHEMA REUNION

Couldn't He Wait?

Perhaps one of the most poignant stories in the Torah is Jacob's reunion with his son Joseph after twenty-two years of separation. Yet while Joseph is overcome with emotion and falls on his father's neck and weeps, Jacob remains passive.

Rashi explains that at that time Jacob read the Shema, the declaration of G-d's unity!

Commentators point out how odd it was that of all times to recite the Shema, Jacob chose the first emotion laden moments. Couldn't he have waited a few more minutes to recite the Shema?

One explanation that can be offered is that precisely because his emotions were so intense he was concerned that he couldn't physically endure the surge of positive

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energy he was going to experience. So he had to distract himself by focusing on the Shema.

The question still remains, if he had to distract himself why did he pick on the Shema specifically?

Expression of Relief

One approach to this issue is that the Shema was really a diversion to help him cope with the overwhelming emotions that were welling up in his heart. The Shema was actually his response to the entire ordeal and saga of Joseph's separation from him. Is reading of the Shema was the most dramatic expression of his relief and joy and encapsulated all of what he felt at that time.

Jacob knew that he was chosen by G-d to carry on the legacy of Abraham and Isaac to introduce the Shema—the idea and ideal of monotheism—to the world.

Before Abraham's arrival on the world's scene, there was no sense of unity and purpose in the world. All one could hear were the cacophonous sounds of pagan deities; each vying for supremacy. Every vice was justified because one could always find a pagan god that personified that vice. Religion was no more than the projection of one's own

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desires and passions onto a deity. The world was on a collision course that would have resulted in its destruction.

And it was into this scene Abraham was thrust. Abraham arrived to teach the world that there is only one G-d in whose image we were all created. And no matter how different we appear we are all obligated to emulate that one G-d, and translate that Divine unity in our lives. Of all the great contributions that were made from the invention of fire and the wheel to rocket science and computer technology the unity of G-d was arguably the most significant contribution, without which all the others have little value. No human being has singularly changed the world for the good as did our father Abraham.

But even Abraham could not guarantee that his contribution of unity would continue after his passing. Of his eight sons, only one—Isaac—followed in his footsteps and continued Abraham's tradition of promoting the unity of G-d and His insistence of living a moral and ethical life to the world. And of Isaac's two sons—Jacob and Esau—only Jacob chose to carry the torch of ethical monotheism to the rest of society.

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Jacob a Permanent Legacy

Jacob, however, was told that his ability to succeed in making the legacy of Abraham a permanent fixture and not just a fleeting fad hinged on the integrity of his twelve sons. If even one child would falter and no longer be a part of his circle, whether it was due to their physical demise or their spiritual degeneration, Jacob would know that his role as the progenitor of the Abrahamic ideal had come to end.

Of all his children, Jacob placed even greater trust in Joseph. Joseph was to become the leader of his twelve sons who would transform a small family into a movement that would prepare the world for its recognition of G-d's unity and all that which G-d's unity entails.

Indeed, the Midrash tells us that Jacob's grief for what he thought was the death of Joseph was not just the natural feeling of a bereaved father. His pain and anguish was also compounded by the perception that Joseph's demise was a sign of his failure. G-d's plan for the world that was passed on to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was going to die with him. His loss of Joseph—his liaison to the rest of the world—constituted the end of his world. It was a singular tragedy for him for which there was no consolation.

In Jacob's mind, the physical or spiritual loss of Joseph, G-d's unity—the ideal expressed in the Shema—would

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become an anachronism and relegated to the ash heap of history.

Thus when Jacob is reunited with Joseph and sees how he had preserved his identity and role and was the same Joseph in whom he invested so much, Jacob's reaction was to proclaim: "Here O Israel, the L-rd is our G-d the L-rd is one." This ideal for which I gave my entire life is alive and well. These words encompassed his love for and special relationship with Joseph. In effect Jacob was proclaiming; I have not lost you and all that which your loss would have entailed.

Embrace with Shema

The next time we embrace our child, we should ask ourselves, are we entitled to recite the Shema. Have we succeeded in transmitting the legacy of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

We are presently living in an era that the prophets referred to as the "end of days." This means that the process that began with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons, under the supervision of Joseph, is coming to an end. The term "end" is meant as the end of one era and the beginning of a new era. We are now on the threshold of

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the Messianic Age when the whole world will recognize the unity of G-d; when not only Jacob, but all of his twelve sons, the entire Jewish people and indeed the entire world will proclaim the Shema in thought, speech and action.

Their legacy has kept the Jewish people going for almost four thousand years and we are on the verge of crossing the “finish line.” Will we be able to be the one to cross that line with our children in tow? Or perhaps, better still, our children will lead the way proclaiming to the entire world that G-d is One!

ESSAY NINE

IT'S TIME TO MAKE HAVDALAH

Havdalah is an affirmation of the importance of the
Shabbos.

It is also the recognition that we must appreciate the need
for separation and division in our lives.

During Shabbos, we are uplifted and do not need to be
reminded of the boundaries between the holy and the
profane that must be respected.

As we take leave of the Shabbos and enter into the regular
weekdays, we must fortify ourselves with the knowledge of
what is right and what is wrong—the division between
light and darkness.

Thus, the Havdalah service is about boundaries.

ESSAY NINE

IT'S TIME TO MAKE HAVDALAH

Establishing a Yeshivah in Egypt

Before Jacob made his way to Egypt, to be reunited with his son Joseph, the Torah relates how he sent his son Judah “*I'horot*” to “show the way.” Rashi, however, citing the Midrash, translates the word *I'horot*, to mean “to instruct.” According to Rashi, Jacob sent Judah to Egypt, to establish a “House of Study,” to serve as a source for spiritual instruction and guidance.

Before Jacob would set foot on Egyptian soil, he wanted to make sure that there would be a source of spiritual knowledge that would sustain the spiritual needs of his progeny in the otherwise morally depraved land of Egypt.

The Midrash *Tanchuma*—known for the cryptic associations it makes between Biblical verses and Jewish law—cites the following discussion as a commentary on Judah’s mission to establish a House of Study in Egypt:

“When do we recite the benediction on the

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[*Havdalah*/Separation] candle, Saturday night? Our Sages have stated thus: ‘One does not recite the benediction over the candle until one has benefited from the light.’ How do we know this? From the verse ‘And G-d saw the light that it was good.’ Only after that does the Torah state: ‘And G-d separated between the light and the darkness.’”

The obvious question here is what possible connection can there be between the law concerning the Havdalah candle at the end of the Sabbath and Judah’s mission to establish a House of Study?

Setting Boundaries

To understand this rather cryptic Midrash, let us focus on the ritual of Havdalah. One can easily understand the need for the Kiddush prayer as we usher in the Sabbath. It is our way of acknowledging that this day is special and holy. But why do we have to acknowledge the significance of the Sabbath at the end of the day?

In truth, Havdalah is more than just an affirmation of the importance of the Shabbos. It is the recognition that we must appreciate the need for separation and division in our lives. During Shabbos, we are uplifted and do not need to be reminded of the boundaries between the holy and the profane that must be respected. But as we take leave of the Shabbos and enter into the regular weekdays, we must

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fortify ourselves with the knowledge of what is right and what is wrong—the division between light and darkness.

Thus, the Havdalah service is about boundaries. And the Havdalah candle that we must derive benefit from is indicative of the benefits we enjoy when we are endowed with and make use of the power of discernment between the holy and the profane, light and darkness; when our moral compass is in order.

This explains why Judah was sent to Egypt to establish a “House of Study.” If there was ever a need to provide people with the power of discernment it was when the nucleus of the Jewish people was making its home in the Land of Egypt. In that land—known, simultaneously, for its advanced culture and its degenerate moral position—it was crucial that the fledgling Jewish nation acquire this “Havdalah” mindset, to provide them with the benefit of distinguishing between the holy and the profane, so that they can navigate themselves through the murky waters of Egyptian life.

Maintain Our Balance

However, the Havdalah service and idea goes further. Much of Judaism is about balance. There are times when we gravitate towards an extreme position. We either become obsessed with the weekday aspects of life, or become

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enamored with the Sabbath dimension of existence. When we go in one direction it is usually at the expense of the other.

To assist us in this dilemma, we were given the Havdalah service. When the Shabbos ends we declare our appreciation to G-d for giving us the requisite power of discernment (Havdalah in Hebrew) to know that there are **two** distinct realities and experiences, that of the Shabbos and that of the weekday; there is a time and a place for the Shabbos experience and a time and place for the weekday experience.

To further dispel the notion that only the Shabbos experience is positive, we were given the ritual of lighting the Havdalah candle to underscore that the weekday period is also one that is part of the experience of light. Not only to we light up the world when we usher in the Shabbos and other holy days; even when we take leave of the Shabbos we light the Havdalah candle—and derive some benefit from it—to stress that the weekdays are also part of our G-dly mission. And though they differ in form, the Shabbos and weekdays are essentially the same in substance—they both enable us to make the world a “Dwelling place for G-d.”

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Havdalah Candle of Jewish History

By Judah establishing a center of instruction in Egypt, he served as the “Havdalah candle” of Jewish history. It was Jacob’s message to the future generation of Jews: “No matter where you are situated—whether it is the Shabbos oriented places or the weekday locations—your missions is to bring the light of Torah to that place or experience.

It is interesting to note that the House of Study that Judah established in Egypt was situated in the province of Goshen. The Hebrew word *Goshnah*-to Goshen employed by the Biblical text here is the numerical equivalent of the word Moshiach.

Perhaps the hint here is that the catalyst for the Messianic Age is to make Havdalah, to appreciate the boundaries between good and evil, light and darkness. But, even more importantly, the Havdalah ideal imparts the awareness of how instilling light even into weekday experiences is even more crucial to affecting the world and preparing it for the ultimate age of goodness.

ESSAY TEN

ONE FATHER TEN CHILDREN

Notwithstanding all the positive changes in the world, G-d's presence is still eclipsed.

G-d's Temple has still not been rebuilt, which implies that G-d has not yet found a "home" in our world.

G-d, our Father, is still suffering in exile, even as we are prospering materially and even spiritually.

Our prayers and actions to want the Redemption should not wane in these days of relative prosperity. There is still ample reason for us to want Moshiach.

ESSAY TEN

ONE FATHER TEN CHILDREN

Jacob's and Benjamin's Lives Intertwined

When Judah approached Joseph and pleaded with him to let Benjamin free so that he can return to his father - as recounted in this week's Parsha - Judah's argument was that if he didn't return, his father Jacob would die.

A question is raised as to why Judah only mentioned the deleterious effect Benjamin's absence would have on his father Jacob. Why didn't Judah also mention that Benjamin's children (he had ten sons, all of whom are listed in this week's Parsha) would die if they saw that their father did not return?

The Kotzker Rebbe answered by referring to an incident that was brought to his attention. A destitute father came complaining to him that his affluent children did nothing to help him in his old age and state of poverty. "After all," the father lamented, "hadn't he taken care of them and sacrificed for them? Why wouldn't they do anything to help him in his time of need?"

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The Kotzker Rebbe replied, “One father can sacrifice for even ten children, but ten children cannot even take care of one father!” And he proceeded to cite the case of Benjamin. Despite the fact that Benjamin had ten children, it was Jacob, his father that would feel the pain of his absence so acutely, not the children.

Hereditary

The Osrtovtzer Rebbe explained that this phenomenon is hereditary. We inherited it from Adam, who had no human father, but he did have children. Adam, thus, was incapable of having a natural feeling for a father, but he was capable of developing a feeling for his children which he bequeathed to his progeny. Hence, it is more natural for a parent to sacrifice for a child than it is for a child to sacrifice for a parent.

What is the possible lesson that we can derive from this in our own spiritual lives?

The Metaphor Breaks Down

Throughout Biblical, Talmudic and other sources of Jewish literature, we find that the father-child relationship is employed as a metaphor for the relationship that exists between G-d and ourselves. “G-d is our Father and we are

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His children,” is a refrain that is recited on Yom Kippur, and it poignantly describes the love that exists between G-d and ourselves.

However, there is a difference between the mutual love that we experience. G-d's love for us is unconditional. No matter how often we have antagonized Him, he is still our Father to whom we can come to at any time.

We are not always so forgiving of G-d. We frequently make our love and commitment to Him contingent on the way He treats us.

But, it would seem that the metaphor breaks down when we speak of how one father can take care of even ten children, but ten children cannot take care of even one father. How can we talk of “taking care” of our Father in heaven? Does G-d have any needs?

He Feels Our Pain; Do We Feel His?

In truth, our Sages tell us, that G-d does have a “need.” G-d's “need,” by His own choice, is to be liberated from His confinement within exile conditions of indifference. The words of the Psalmist, “I am with them in their distress,” the Rabbis suggested, refers to the fact that when the Jewish people were exiled, G-d too was subjected to

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degradation and concealment. In exile, G-d's presence is covered up. And for G-d that is suffering.

In addition to the pain He experiences, as it were, because of His own “plight,” G-d also empathizes with us. When we suffer spiritually and physically in exile, G-d “feels our pain.” G-d constantly pleads with us to do what we have to do to bring an end to this state of exile and suffering. He is always thinking of our suffering.

Yet, to the extent that we also would want to be liberated, we rarely think of the pain that G-d experiences when we are in exile.

We Want Moshiach [even] Now!

When we do feel the need to ask for Moshiach and Redemption it is usually motivated by our pain. Historically speaking, in times of distress and oppression, Jewish people began to focus more on Moshiach. As soon as the crisis passed, especially in times of great prosperity, there was a concomitant decrease of passionate requests for the Redemption. We forget that the improved conditions of exile are not synonymous with the Redemption. They are “only” expressions of G-d’s kindness to us and are a foretaste of some of the good we will experience in the Messianic Age.

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Thus when conditions of exile improved our reaction should actually have been the opposite of what it was historically. And this is based on two premises:

First, we should realize that all these changes for the good notwithstanding, G-d's presence is still eclipsed in our world and He is still suffering. G-d's Temple has still not been rebuilt, which implies that G-d has not yet found a "home" in our world. G-d, our father, is still suffering in exile, even as we are prospering materially and even spiritually. Our prayers and actions to want the Redemption should not wane in these days of relative prosperity. There is still ample reason for us to want Moshiach.

Second, the fact that we do now enjoy unprecedented freedom and prosperity, as stated, is a foretaste of the future. It should not deflate or diminish our yearning and passion for Moshiach. On the contrary, it should whet our appetite for the whole thing!

Indeed, in recent times we have witnessed an exception to the general historical pattern of asking G-d for Moshiach and Redemption in times of crisis and relegating Moshiach to a back burner in times of peace and tranquility. I am referring to the Rebbe's intensive campaign to get us to do everything in our power to bring Moshiach.

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Precisely when things have never been as good for the Jewish nation as they have become in the modern day—where there is virtually no Jew in the world that lives in a country that prevents him or her from exercising their Jewish rights—the Rebbe intensified the campaign to bring Moshiach.

The question is why? If things are so good now—and perhaps even getting better—why the emphasis on and clamor for Moshiach now, more than ever before?

The answer is that, precisely, because exile even in its most optimum incarnation is intolerable. We, as G-d's children cannot accept the status-quo of exile, where G-d is in distress. And we cannot rest until we see to it that every individual shares all of our abundant blessings! No Jew is out of exile, until every Jew is out of exile!

Another complementary answer: The reason things have radically improved in recent times—with the collapse of the Soviet Empire, and other countless modern day miracles in all spheres of life—is because we are living now in the very shadow of the future redemption. As was mentioned above, the good that we have now is but a meager foretaste and sample of what is to come. These positive developments are part of the process that helps us pave the way for the Messianic Redemption. We dare not

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open the door to Redemption and forget to go through the door.

One Lesson on Two Levels

The obvious lesson from all of the above can be presented on two levels:

In terms of the parent-child relationship, a child should endeavor to realize and appreciate the love his/her parents have for him/her. The love is so great that it is unconditional. Even when there is no reciprocation, the parent still loves and will sacrifice for the child.

(Of course, tragically, there are always exceptions to this rule, where parents abuse their children. This is not only tragic; it is a most unnatural and unfathomable form of evil. These parents must recognize their challenge to correct that unnatural pattern of abuse.)

With this recognition of the parents abiding and unconditional love, the child will remove the discrepancy that exists between the parent's love for him/her and his/her love for the parent. And while human nature is such that parents care more for their children than children care for their parents it does not mean that it must remain that way. Our challenge is to overcome natural tendencies that limit our goodness.

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Similarly, on the G-d-Jewish people plane, when we reflect on how passionate G-d is about getting ourselves out of our own internal exile, we will be moved to overcome the natural discrepancy and dichotomy that exists between our love for G-d and G-d's love for us, and show a reciprocal love and concern for Him. This would motivate us to increase our acts of goodness and kindness, devotion to the Mitzvos. With that we will liberate ourselves and our Father in heaven from exile.

ESSAY ELEVEN

TRAVELING TIPS

When we are home or when we reach our destination we are not as vulnerable as we can be when we travel.

Many of the problems the Jewish people encountered occurred especially when they were on the road. Amalek, Israel's most implacable foe, the Torah stresses, attacked us "on the way."

We experienced so many setbacks when we were in the desert on our way from Egyptian slavery to settling our own land.

ESSAY ELEVEN

TRAVELING TIPS

Avoiding Road Rage

After Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers, as recounted in this week's parsha, he sent them back to Canaan to bring his father Jacob to Egypt. Before they left, Joseph gives them some instructions about the journey itself. Joseph's final "traveling tip" to them was, "Do not argue on the way."

Rashi provides three explanations as to what Joseph meant with these words:

The first explanation is that they shouldn't engage in any legal discussions, for that will distract them and make the journey fraught with danger.

Rashi's second explanation is that they should not walk quickly (literally: "make large strides") and be sure to enter the city when the sun is still shining. In other words, don't travel at night.

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The third and simplest explanation is that they should not engage in recriminations and argue as to who was responsible for his sale.

For close to two thousand years, ever since our Holy Temple was destroyed and we were driven off the Land of Israel we have been on a journey back to the Promised Land in both the literal and figurative sense. Now, since the journey of Joseph's brothers was back to the land of Canaan, which eventually becomes the Land of Israel, and back to their father Jacob, there must be a lesson here for us on our journey out of exile back to the land and lifestyle of our fathers.

Vulnerable

Indeed, there is a threefold lesson. But before we explore these lessons some words of introduction about traveling are in order.

When we are home or when we reach our destination we are not as vulnerable as we can be when we travel. Many of the problems the Jewish people encountered occurred especially when they were on the road. Amalek, Israel's most implacable foe, the Torah stresses, attacked us "on the way." We experienced so many setbacks when we were in the desert on our way from Egyptian slavery to settling our own land.

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This is why, two of the four things for which one must say the special Hagomel blessing to thank G-d for one's miraculous escape from harm, includes traveling by sea or through the desert. Whenever we travel out of town, there is a special traveler's prayer that we recite because traveling is a time when we are less capable of protecting ourselves.

The return of the brothers to Israel was to Joseph an auspicious trip; it was to symbolize the return of the Jewish people to their land and heritage in all future times, leading to the final return in the Messianic Age.

No Torah Debates?

And it is this journey that Joseph warned required three instructions about how to travel safely that was relevant then and is just as relevant today:

First, Joseph's advice to them was, do not engage in a Torah discussion while traveling.

At first blush, this piece of advice goes against everything we know about Judaism. Study of Torah and discussions with colleagues about matters of Torah punctuated our long history and it is what is hailed as the source of our survival. How could Joseph tell them (read: us) to desist from discussing matters of Torah?

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It is obvious that Rashi is not referring to Torah study, but to the divisions and conflicts into which innocent differences of opinion can degenerate. Judaism thrives on discussion and debate. Indeed, Judaism's most important work, the Talmud, is almost entirely a collection of arguments and debates between the greatest Jewish minds. Certainly, that could not be considered an obstacle in our journey. Instead, Joseph was referring to the way legitimate differences of opinion can lead to division and hatred and how, in the most vulnerable of times, we have to be mindful of the potential for unnecessary discord and strife.

Moreover, occasionally academic disputes differences actually mask personality clashes or other political divisions. Some may even use Torah interpretations as ways of advancing their own personal agendas.

Joseph realized that his brothers had ideological differences that led to their actions against him. But he also knew that his brothers harbored deep resentment to him. The question in his mind was which came first. Did they resent him and were jealous of him? And as a way to rationalize their hatred they found legitimate ideological differences between them to dignify their hatred of him. Or, perhaps, it was the other way around. Their ideological differences were so sharp that they degenerated into personal feelings of animosity. Either way it was unhealthy and led to his sale.

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Joseph thus counseled them, that when they travel and vulnerable they should desist from engaging deeply in a discussion of their ideological differences because of where it can lead. If the animosity between them preceded their differences, engaging in an “academic” debate might mask their true feelings of resentment towards one another and make it difficult to uproot these deep rooted negative feelings.

And, conversely, if they were so strident in advancing their ideological positions that it would lead to personal animosity, then it would be ill advised to engage in these discussions when they were traveling. Traveling, as noted earlier, is when we are more vulnerable and it is much more difficult to discern between one’s intellectual differences and one’s emotional differences.

No Impulsive Moves

The second piece of advice was they should not walk quickly (literally: “make large strides”) and be sure to enter the city when the sun is still shining. The meaning of “walking quickly” and “making large strides” is to not be over confident of one’s own position vis-à-vis another, which leads to impulsive decisions that can cause pain to others.

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Joseph was concerned that now that they were on their way to the reunification of Joseph and their father Jacob, they would make their decision as to how they should prepare Jacob without much deliberation. Joseph further counseled them not to travel at night. Metaphorically, this means that one should not make decisions when their minds are clouded and things are murky.

No Recrimination

And finally, Joseph's message to them was not to blame one another for their role in the sale of Joseph. Although Teshuvah (repentance or return) is a necessary part of one's return to our Land of Israel and to the reunification of all Jewish people with their father, Teshuvah requires that one takes full responsibility for one's own actions and not find fault with others.

All of this can be applied to our own final trek through the paths of exile on our way to the Promised Land and Messianic Age of Redemption.

Three Instructions for Our Journey Towards the Redemption

We have been blessed with the special responsibility of bringing the two thousand year journey to an end and it

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is only natural that we will confront some obstacles precisely because we are anxious and vulnerable.

There are three “traveling tips” of which we must be mindful:

First: We shouldn’t allow our ideological differences, though legitimate, to mask our internal divisions and personality clashes. We should certainly not allow these academic differences to degenerate into ad hominem attacks against those with whom we differ.

Second: We shouldn’t be hasty in deciding how to get others aboard especially when things are not so clear in our own minds. We must be deliberate and have a clear mind before making crucial decisions. This clarity we get from studying the teachings of the Torah concerning the Redemption and how to connect with others.

Third, we must not look to blame others when we realize how long we have been waiting for the Moshiach to take us out of exile. It is natural for us to place the blame on others for their behavior that might have delayed the process.

That is clearly not the right approach. Instead we should look at our own behavior and decide what we need to do to correct what we did wrong and to increase in our own acts of goodness and kindness to hasten the ultimate

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reunification of all the Jewish people in the Promised Land of Israel under the inspiration and leadership of Moshiach.

ESSAY TWELVE

WHEN TO WEEP

Moshiach is not just about restoring the world to its original state; it goes beyond that.

Moshiach will introduce a dimension of G-dliness that transcends the order of creation; even the state of affairs that existed in *Gan-Eden*-the Garden of Eden.

ESSAY TWELVE

WHEN TO WEEP

Weeping on Each other's Necks

The story of Joseph and his brothers is no mere family drama. The twelve sons of Jacob are the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel, and their conflicts and reconciliations, their separations and reunions, sketch many a defining line in the blueprint of Jewish history.

To be sure, these narratives as chronicled in the Torah are to be taken literally. They are accurate accounts of actual historical events. But the Torah is not a history book. Its purpose is to have us apply all of its teachings—the stories along with the legal parts—to our own daily lives.

The same is true of the tearful reunion between Joseph and Benjamin described in this week's Torah portion Vayigash (Genesis 45:14):

"And [Joseph] fell on the neck of his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck."

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The Talmud interprets their weeping on each other's neck as expressions of pain and sorrow over future tragedies in their respective histories:

“Joseph wept over the two Sanctuaries that were to stand in the territory of Benjamin and were destined to be destroyed, and Benjamin wept over the Shiloh Sanctuary that was to stand in the territory of Joseph and was destined to be destroyed.”

The Rebbe asks, Why did Joseph and Benjamin weep on each other's necks, Joseph crying over Benjamin's two destroyed Sanctuaries and Benjamin over Joseph's? Were they not distressed by the future breakdown of their own Sanctuaries?

The Function of Weeping

To address this question, the Rebbe states that we must first understand the function of weeping in general. Tears give vent to the feelings of distress and frustration that accompany the knowledge that something is not as it should be. After a "good cry," a person is somewhat relieved of these feelings, although the situation that brought them on remains unchanged.

Is weeping a positive phenomenon?

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The Rebbe provides the answer that it depends on the cause of one's tears.

When dealing with another's troubles, weeping over their lot serves to communicate one's empathy for the other. It expresses the fact that one is utterly heartbroken at the other's misfortune .

Dealing with one's own problems, however, is another matter. Instead of venting one's frustration and easing one's conscience with tears, one must act, constructively, to change that which ought to be changed, to do that which ought to be done. Don't cry and feel sorry for yourself; do something about it !

Thus, Joseph and Benjamin allowed themselves to weep over the destruction of each other's Sanctuaries. Ultimately, only Joseph can repair the destroyed "Sanctuary of Shiloh," the Josephian dimension of Israel's relationship with the Almighty; Benjamin can only encourage and assist. After contributing all he could to Joseph's efforts, Benjamin wept his agony and concern on his brother's neck. The same applies to Joseph's weeping over the Bais HaMikdash in the domain of Benjamin. Joseph and Benjamin did not weep over their own destroyed Sanctuaries, because they knew that their task was to act not cry.

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Why Cry Now?

In the thousands of years since the destruction of the Second Temple, we have been crying over its destruction.

In light of the Rebbe's analysis of when crying is in order and when action is preferred we must draw the conclusion that our task today ought to be focused on the constructive.

To be sure, we have designated times to lament the destruction, such as Tisha b'Av and in some communities there are those who recite the Midnight prayer called *Tikkun Chatzos* where they vent their sadness over its destruction.

The question arises, why should we cry over the destruction of the Temple, since it is our loss as a people and, as stated, when we reflect on our own loss we must act to rebuild rather than wallow in our grief over our loss. Why then do we even have these designated times for mourning the destruction of the Temple?

Homeless Looking for a Home

There is a twofold answer.

First, it is obvious that a person is motivated to build only to the extent that he or she realizes the degree to which one is lacking something without that building. If a person

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is homeless, for example, he or she will work harder to find a place to live. This is consistent with our Sages' comment that a person who does not grieve for the destruction of the Temple will not merit to see consolation.

On the surface it seems quite a harsh punishment for not joining our brethren in mourning the loss of our Temple.

Upon deeper reflection, it is not a punishment. Rather, it is a stark assessment of our role in the future rebuilding of the Temple. If we didn't care about the loss of the Temple, we will obviously not do our part to rebuild it. Consequently, even as the Temple is being rebuilt and its glory restored, the ones who did not care about its absence cannot be said that they will be the rebuilders of the Temple. It is not a punishment, it is a natural consequence.

Multiple Levels of Suffering in Exile

Second, there are two elements and effects of the Temple's destruction. The first is that we have lost our ability to appear in the Temple; it is therefore our loss. Second, it is also G-d's loss. The same way we suffer at the loss of our Temple and the ensuing exile, G-d too, our Sages tell us, laments His own exile and the suffering of His children who must endure exile conditions.

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Therefore, even as we must do constructive things to rebuild the Temple—by way of our observance of the Mitzvos—we must also designate times to think about G-d's "pain and suffering," as it were.

Just as Joseph wept for Benjamin and Benjamin for Joseph, we must weep for the loss of G-d's Temple and the pain we cause Him by not being ready to rebuild it. While it is true, we cannot be content with shedding a few tears for the destruction; we must act to rebuild it, the action is for our suffering and our role in the process while the prayers and tears are for G-d's tears and role in the exile.

In addition, we must weep for the loss of the Temple for the rest of Jewry, even as we dedicate our lives to constructive efforts to rebuild it through our dedication to Torah and Mitzvos, inspired by our heartfelt prayers for the coming of Moshiach and the final Redemption.

Why Focused on the Future?

Returning to the Rebbe's analysis of Joseph and Benjamin's weeping we can shed more light on an earlier Chassidic explanation of the phenomenon of Joseph and Benjamin crying over each other's future disaster.

The entire episode calls out for explanation.

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First, why were they focusing on the future? Certainly their meeting was a powerful experience in its own right, why did they have to look into the very distant future to find something to cry about?

Second, what benefit did their commiserating about the future have? They couldn't avert the tragedy of the destruction of the Two Temples as well as the Sanctuary at Shiloh, so why cry about it?

Third, why did they pick this very moment to see into the future? Simply put, one can say that this was their first opportunity to do so. But everything happens by Divine Providence. The fact that at their first meeting they had this prophetic vision and cried over it is an indication that their prophecy and crying was intimately connected to their reunion.

Repairing the Damage

The answer to all of these questions is that their actions as progenitors of the Jewish people was to not necessarily avert the tragedy but to impart to us the way through which we can repair the tragedy.

By demonstrating that the love that Joseph and Benjamin exhibited to each other—to the extent that they cried for the other's sorrow before their own—is the way to correct

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the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash and bring about the Redemption and the rebuilding of the Third Bais Hamikdash.

The power to rebuild derived from the actions of Joseph and Benjamin. They had sown the seeds of empathy and love.

A question, however, remains. If their behavior was intended to establish the primacy of unity and love as a force to avert destruction and/or to facilitate the rebuilding of the Temple, why did this even not involve the other brothers? Joseph and Benjamin were never involved in the internecine conflict and there was no need for reconciliation. Isn't the lesson about repairing broken relationships that stem from *sinas chinam*-senseless hatred?

The answer is that Moshiach is not just about repairing something that is broken. While we certainly expect Moshiach to do that, Moshiach is much more than just that. Moshiach is not just a repaired world; it is a perfect world.

More than Just Restoration

To repair all that was broken would “simply” put us back to the original state of innocence prior to the eating of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. This sin

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allowed for compromised life, both physically and spiritually. For thousands of years we are engaged in performing Mitzvos which help to repair the damage step by step.

In the Messianic Age the repair will be completed.

But then what?

Are we going to be content with going back in time to a utopian world without hatred and division?

The answer is no!

To reiterate: Moshiach is not just about restoring the world to its original state; it goes beyond that. Moshiach will introduce a dimension of G-dliness that transcends the order of creation; even the state of affairs that existed in *Gan-Eden*-the Garden of Eden.

To understand the effects of this new dimension of G-dliness that will pervade the world we must go back to the crying of Joseph and Benjamin on each other's necks. These brothers had profound love for each other even before this incident. This event demonstrated that we can bring love into love. Love for one another is a mirror reflection of love of G-d. And since our appreciation of G-d will grow day by day, so too will our love for Him grow day by day. And, by extension, so will our love for our fellow grow day by day.

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Thus Joseph's and Benjamin's crying had a double significance. It foreshadowed the destruction of the future and how to repair them and also introduced us to a more advanced state of investing love into a world of love; a more advanced G-dly awareness into an already sophisticated G-dly awareness.

ESSAY THIRTEEN

TRUE LEADERSHIP 1

The Torah's approach is that a human is essentially an intellectual being who has the capacity to control his/her emotions.

When we exercise this human prerogative we are referred to as kings.

The Hebrew word for king—Melech—is actually an acronym for: *moach*-brain *lev*-heart and *kaved*-liver.

To the extent that people exercise this capacity to have their mind control their desires they are more qualified to become actual leaders.

ESSAY THIRTEEN

TRUE LEADERSHIP I

Two Models

As our society is pondering and debating the role of leadership, this week's Torah portion providentially provides us with guidance as to what ideal leadership is about.

In fact, this week's Torah portion Vayigash provides us with two distinct and valid models of leadership; that of Joseph and that of Judah.

Judah displays leadership by confronting the mighty leader of Egypt—Joseph—and demanding of him to release his brother Benjamin without regard for his own safety. With this approach, Judah — the progenitor of King David and the long line of kings including Moshiach—sets the tone for true Jewish leadership: total self effacing devotion to all of his people.

But Joseph was also destined to be the ancestor of kings that would rival the monarchs from the tribe of Judah. What was it about Joseph's behavior as leader of Egypt that

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serves as the role model for all future leaders?

Joseph: A Combination of Strength and Empathy

Among the many qualities that are ascribed to Joseph is the one that he did not harbor feelings of revenge. Despite the fact that his brothers did the unspeakable to him, Joseph displayed love to them. Even the brothers were convinced that after Jacob's passing, Joseph would finally punish them for their cruelty. That did not happen.

This does not mean that Joseph was a "softy"; a personality type that allows everyone to step on them. On the contrary, Joseph put them through quite an ordeal so that they would realize the extent of their insensitivity and express remorse and contrition. When they finally were sufficiently humbled and demonstrated their willingness to fight to save their brother Benjamin, Joseph knew that they had gone through enough. At that point he revealed his true identity to them; showering them with warmth, empathy and love.

This rare combination of strength and firmness coupled with nobility of character is the hallmark of leadership that was displayed by Joseph.

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Definition of Being Human

Let us reflect on Joseph's ability to not take revenge and bear a grudge. Isn't the desire for revenge a most natural human feeling? And doesn't the rise to power almost guarantee that revenge will be exacted from those who opposed the new leader? Does G-d expect us to cease being human by demanding of us not to take revenge and not even to bear a grudge?

The answer to this question lies in a precise definition of what it means to be human. Conventional wisdom is that humans are driven by their emotions. When one makes a mistake, people are wont to excuse it with the refrain: "I'm [he's] only human."

The Torah's approach to the nature of humanity is that a human is essentially an intellectual being who has the capacity to control his/her emotions. When we exercise this human prerogative to have our minds control our desires we are referred to as kings.

The Hebrew word for king—*Melech*—is actually an acronym for: *moach*-brain *lev*-heart and *kaved*-liver. When one's mind controls one's heart and physical functions one is truly a king.

To the extent that people exercise this capacity to have their mind control their desires they are more qualified to become actual leaders.

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Joseph, we were told in an earlier Torah section—resisted the seductive advances of Potiphar’s wife. In this week’s Torah portion we are told that Joseph resisted the temptation to harbor a grudge against his brothers. By displaying total mastery over his emotions in both fields—between “man and G-d” and “man and man”—he demonstrated his worthiness to be a leader.

Total Mastery

Moshiach we are told will combine both leadership examples of Judah and Joseph. On the one hand he will be a fearless fighter for the spiritual and material well-being of every Jew and indeed display concern for the welfare of all humanity.

But Moshiach is also a person who must also exercise complete mastery over his own character, one who never lets his emotion control that which he knows is intellectually and morally wrong.

In one of the Biblical descriptions of Moshiach he is depicted as “a poor man riding on a donkey” The Hebrew word for donkey, Chamor, also has the connotation of that which is materialistic. Moshiach is one who exercises complete control over all of the material aspects of his life.

The difference between Judah and Joseph seems to be in

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the area of emphasis. Joseph's main attribute was his incredible power of restraint. He was also a caring and devoted leader who catered to all the needs of his people.

Judah, by contrast, exhibited the trait of self-sacrificing devotion to Benjamin. He was willing to forfeit everything—physical and spiritual—for the well being of the other. Judah also possesses the power of control over the material aspects of the world.

Moshiach: A Combination of Judah and Joseph

According to some sources—and also alluded to in the Haftara which describes the unification of Joseph and Judah that will occur in the Messianic Age—Moshiach is both a descendant of Judah and a descendent of Joseph and incorporates both of their most salient features.

This would suggest that Moshiach possesses both traits represented by Joseph and Judah in equal measure. He is simultaneously willing to sacrifice everything for his people in the mold of Judah. And he is also one who exercises total mastery over all of the material aspects of life

Igniting the Spark of Moshiach Within.

The Ba'al Shem Tov tell us that every Jew possesses a spark of Moshiach. When we ignite the spark of Moshiach within

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us it enables the Moshiach to awaken his own potential to take us out of exile.

What does it entail to arouse our own spark of Moshiach?

In light of the abovementioned analysis of the two traits of Judah and Joseph embodied by Moshiach, we can ignite our spark by expressing our own Judah-like commitment to the welfare of others and the Joseph-like nobility of character.

By doing so we create the environment most conducive for the immediate arrival of Moshiach and the onset of the age of Redemption.

ESSAY FOURTEEN

TRUE LEADERSHIP II

Throughout Jewish history, true Jewish leaders, followed in Judah's footsteps and were prepared to give everything they possessed, both physical and spiritual, in the interests of every Jew.

ESSAY FOURTEEN

TRUE LEADERSHIP II

Why did Judah Stand Up for Benjamin?

One of the most poignant narratives in the Torah is Judah's approach to Joseph, when he pleads with, and subtly demands of, him to release Benjamin, who had been accused of stealing Joseph's "magical" goblet.

Why did Judah take responsibility to plead for Benjamin more than all his other brothers?

Judah himself answered this question:

"Your servant has taken responsibility for the youth."

He was referring to his promise to his father, in last week's Torah portion, that he would return Benjamin. Judah went as far as saying that if he would fail to accomplish this he "will have sinned for all time." Our sages comment that Judah meant that if he will fail he would forfeit his life in this world as well as his life in the next world!

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Leader Prepared to Forfeit Everything for His People

Judah was the ancestor of King David, King Solomon and the entire Davidic dynasty of kings and leaders throughout Jewish history, up until and including Moshiach.

To appreciate Jewish leadership and what distinguishes it from other forms of leadership; we would do well to reflect on Judah's action on behalf of his brother Benjamin.

Judah was prepared to forfeit everything for his brother. Not only was he prepared to give away his physical existence as many martyrs have done throughout history, but, he was even prepared to sacrifice his soul's future - his share in the World to Come.

In Hebrew the term for self-sacrifice and martyrdom is "*Mesiras Nefesh*." Technically, however, the word *Mesiras Nefesh* does not mean giving one's life but giving one's soul. It is a far greater sacrifice for a spiritual individual to forfeit his soul's needs and wants than to surrender his life to G-d. Even this Judah was prepared to do.

Throughout Jewish history, true Jewish leaders, followed in Judah's footsteps and were prepared to give everything they possessed, both physical and spiritual, in the interests of every Jew.

In other cultures and societies, there have been many dedicated and selfless leaders who gave life and limb for

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their people. What distinguished true Jewish leadership, as exemplified by Judah, was their desire to sacrifice *everything* – the physical and the spiritual – not only for the nation as a whole, but for *every* individual.

A Story of the Ba'al Shem Tov

A story is told of the Ba'al Shem Tov who was asked to intercede with prayer to save a certain Jewish community from annihilation at the hands of government inspired anti-Semitic attacks. The Ba'al Shem Tov traveled with his faithful disciples to that city where he prayed for their salvation. Indeed his prayers were heard by G-d and the terrible decree that hovered ominously over this community was rescinded.

The Ba'al Shem Tov was asked why he had made the arduous journey to pray for their welfare. Couldn't he have prayed at home? Doesn't G-d hear our prayers wherever we are?

The Ba'al Shem Tov answered that if he would have been successful in annulling the decree, that would be great. But, if G-d forbid, his prayers would not have succeeded, he wanted to perish with them...

It was this degree of **total** self-sacrifice on behalf of **every** Jew that gave these great leaders their spiritual "clout."

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The Force that Annulled the Decree

The very fact that the Ba'al Shem Tov was willing to give everything away – his life, his disciples' lives, his very movement and life's work – for a remote and “insignificant” community, was the force that broke the otherwise sealed heavenly gates, and saved the Jewish community.

This explains why the Jewish religion believes that the ultimate Messianic age of Redemption will be ushered in by a human leader called Moshiach, who must be a descendent of King David, who traces his lineage back to Judah.

Moshiach's Distinction

What will distinguish Moshiach from all other leaders is his absolute devotion to every single individual, in the tradition of Judah. Moreover, he will demonstrate that indeed every one of us is a Judah (actually the word Jew is a shortened version of the name Judah) who is prepared to give everything for the welfare of every other. By his example and inspiration, Moshiach will bring out the best in all of us, enabling us to unite in the spirit of Ahavas Yisrael to make the world a dwelling place for G-d.

ESSAY FIFTEEN

CHILD'S PLAY?

Our task as Jews is to be a “light unto the nations,” to preserve and regenerate the purity and holiness that existed before people began to soil and despoil the world.

There is no time where this mission can be realized as much as it can during Chanukah, where light is not just a metaphor, but a tangible reality.

When we light the Chanukah candles and gaze at the small, but, pure, flames, we are reminded of the message of Chanukah.

This message is to find and recapture the Moshiach-purity and light within ourselves, and to allow the whole world to bask in the glow of it.

ESSAY FIFTEEN

CHILD'S PLAY?

Post Chanukah, Chanukah

If you thought Chanukah was over, think again. Though the formal celebration of Chanukah has ended at the culmination of its eighth day, the spirit of Chanukah thrives until at least the Shabbat afterwards.

Indeed, this week's Torah portion, Vayigash contains a hint to the dreidel, the children's adorable toy that is so closely associated with Chanukah. And lest we forget, Chanukah is a children's holiday. The very word Chanukah derives from the Hebrew word "*chinuch*" which means education. Whether it is the Chanukah Gelt/money (not chocolate money, but the real thing it is customary for) children receive from their parents, the sizzling Latkes, the beautiful and mesmerizing sight of the burning candles, Chanukah—with all of its light and joy, song and fun—

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leaves an indelible imprint on the minds and hearts of every Jewish child.

Of all the Chanukah traditions, the dreidel is the most obvious juvenile oriented one. The dreidel has embossed on its four sides the four Hebrew letters: *Nun, Gimmel, Hei, Shin*. They are actually the initials of the four words, “*Nes gadol haya sham*-A great miracle occurred there,” referring to the great miracle of Chanukah which transpired in Israel over 2,200 years ago.

The Four Letters

It is significant that these letters, rearranged, spell the word “Goshna,” meaning “to Goshen.” This refers to the verse in this week’s Parshah which tells us (according to Rashi) of Jacob sending Judah to establish a place of Torah in Goshen, the area in which the Jews would reside during their stay in Egypt.

This dovetails with the popular idea that Jewish children used the dreidel during the time of Chanukah as a way of concealing their Torah studies (which were banned by the Greeks). The children would secretly study Torah, and when a Greek soldier was noticed approaching, they would hide their books and bring out their toy “tops,” claiming

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that they were really playing. The letters on the side of the dreidel hint at the dreidel's connection to our dedication to Torah study, which goes as far back as Goshen.

Tradition even shows a thoughtful message contained within the numerical value (gematria) of the dreidel's letters: they add up to 358, the same value as the word "Moshiach." (Incidentally, in Israel, the final letter on the dreidel is a *pey*. There the sentence reads: "*Nes gadol haya **poh***, A Great miracle occurred **here**." The numerical value of this phrase is 138, which is the equivalent of the name *Menachem*, the name, the Talmud (Sanhedrin 98b) assigns to Moshiach!)

Moshiach Captured by the Innocence of a Toy

But why is the age-old belief in Moshiach linked to Chanukah through such a seemingly insignificant thing as a child's toy? The answer lies in a better understanding of what the nature of children is and what we can learn from them.

The Talmud (Shabbat 119b) tells us that when the Bible warns "Do not touch My anointed ones (*Meshichoy*, *lit. "My Moshiach's"*), it refers to children, whose innocence and purity sustain the world.

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The Messianic Age can best be described as childlike, a time of purity, holiness and pristine innocence. Chassidic thought teaches that everyone has a spark of Moshiach inside of them, but this is most true of children. Their purity is so close to the surface that they are obvious expressions of the Messianic Age.

Indeed, it is taught that at the time of creation—when the world was in a pure and childlike state—the “the spirit of G-d” “hovered above the waters.” This “spirit of G-d” Ba'al Haturim states actually referred to the spirit of Moshiach. Indeed, he writes the words “The spirit of G-d hovered” has the same numerical value as the words “this is the spirit of Moshiach!” G-d's plan to make a peaceful serene world with the coming of Moshiach was most evident back then when the world was in its most innocent child-like state.

The Adult Child

The goal and objective of the world is not to remain that way, just as one cannot and should not forever remain a child. The purpose of creation was to give the human being the challenge of re-introducing purity and holiness into a world that is plagued with corruption and evil. The challenge of adulthood is to reclaim the innocence of childhood within the framework of maturity.

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Our task as Jews is to be a “light unto the nations,” to preserve and regenerate the purity and holiness that existed before people began to soil and despoil the world. There is no time where this mission can be realized as much as it can during Chanukah, where light is not just a metaphor, but a tangible reality.

When we light the Chanukah candles and gaze at the small, but, pure, flames, we are reminded of the message of Chanukah. This message is to find and recapture the Moshiach-purity and light within ourselves, and to allow the whole world to bask in the glow of it.

The great miracle of Chanukah which occurred “there” is not only a reference to the miracle of the victory over the Syrian Greek forces, or the miracle of the lone cruse of oil which lasted for eight days. It refers primarily, perhaps, to the internal miracle that occurred then.

The miracle was that the Hasmoneans acted like children. They could not tolerate the loss of G-dly purity at the hands of the forces of assimilation that tried to extinguish the internal, pure and unadulterated flames of their souls. The Moshiach component within them was unleashed and the tiny band of Macabees did not rest until they liberated the land from the encroachment of alien values.

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Restoring the innocence and re-introducing the pure light of G-dliness which prevailed at the beginning of creation, is the miracle we are celebrating today, because it is *that* miracle which was the catalyst for all the other miracles that followed.

Our goal now is to ignite the spark of Moshiach within us. In the aftermath of Chanukah and particularly on the Shabbat afterwards, as we read about the hint to the dreidel with its emphasis on children, purity and miracles, is a time most suited for achieving this goal.

Searching for Purity in Goshen

We must still try to understand why the allusion to Chanukah is connected to the word Goshnah, which is the part of Egypt the Jews settled in when they lived in Egypt.

When we look for Moshiach purity, it is natural to find it in the most holy of places. The Land of Israel is where we expect to find holiness and purity. Living in exile would be contraindicated as a source of child-like purity.

The message of the dreidel—with its association to Moshiach-purity is that even when we are in exile, we can—nay we must—search for that purity. True, the emphasis of the dreidel is that a “great miracle happened

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there,” with the emphasis on the word “there,” suggesting that the miracle of purity is connected to “there”—the Land of Israel, in the Sanctuary of the Holy Temple. Nevertheless, we can and must be able to recognize that even as we are situated in Goshen/exile.

There is one caveat. Goshen, although a province of Egypt, was actually an extended part of the Land of Israel. The Midrash relates that as compensation for the suffering our Matriarch Sarah endured as she was abducted by Pharaoh, the land of Goshen was given to Abraham and Sarah as a gift. As a result, when the Jews were settled in Goshen by Joseph it was actually in a place that is considered to be an extension of the Land of Israel.

Moreover, when Jacob set out to go Egypt he sent Judah ahead to establish a place of Torah. Jacob wanted to transplant the spirit of Israel in Goshen.

The lesson from the above is that while we can and must search for Moshiach-child-like-purity-and-innocence even as we are in exile, the most conducive place for it is in the extensions of Israel in exile. A Synagogue or a House of Study is a miniature Holy Temple, our Sages tell us. These are places that capture the spirit of holiness and purity characterized by the Holy Temple. And it is in and through these places that we generate the yearning to be back in

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the Holy Land with Moshiach so that the purity and innocence will be unfettered.

So when your child asks you to play “dreidel,” the “spin” (pun intended) you are to place on this innocuous juvenile exercise is that it is an inspiration and challenge to us to find that miracle “there” deep down within ourselves. The spin of the dreidel is about children, purity and Moshiach.

The spin of the dreidel is about searching within so that we can be transported **there**—where the inner and outer dimensions of life will merge and the outer innocence and purity will be a reflection of the inner..

May we all merit to light the Chanukah lights together with the restoration of the Beit Hamikdash in Jerusalem, in a spirit of purity, holiness and true peace.

ESSAY SIXTEEN

DISTRESS BUT NO FEAR

There is no reason to fear exile, because G-d gives us all the resources we need to cope with it and to prevail over all the obstacles life in exile poses

The exile experience was even instrumental in our development as the great and holy nation we are.

On the other hand, we should never make peace with the fact that there is pain and suffering in the world and that the third Temple has not yet been built.

When we reflect on all the negativity associated with exile, we then cry out to G-d, "*Ad masai*—How much longer do we have to stay in exile?

This cry itself is a catalyst that hastens the process of Redemption.

ESSAY SIXTEEN

DISTRESS BUT NO FEAR

Sudden Apprehension

In this week's Parsha, the Torah relates how Jacob was informed that his son Joseph was still alive and that he was a ruler in the land of Egypt. Joseph, at the behest of Pharaoh, sent wagons to bring Jacob and his entire family to settle in Egypt. Jacob eagerly and excitedly agreed to travel to Egypt to see his son Joseph.

Strangely enough, as Jacob embarks on his journey and arrives in the city of Be'er Sheva and offers sacrifices to G-d, he is visited by G-d in his dream who tells him, "Do not be afraid of descending to Egypt, for I shall establish you as a great nation there. I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up; and Joseph shall place his hand on your eyes."

It is apparent from these words, that Jacob was apprehensive about going to Egypt, which begs the question, why? Just a short while earlier he expressed such joy at the prospect of being united with his son Joseph.

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What happened all of a sudden when he arrived in Be'er Sheva that prompted G-d to comfort Jacob?

Rashi's interpretation is that Jacob was distressed about the fact that he had to leave the Land of Israel. Notwithstanding the fact that Jacob knew at the very outset that he was going to leave the Land of Israel, his initial reaction was joyous, because of his anticipation that he would be united with Joseph. However, as he arrived in Be'er Sheva, which is situated at the southern boundary of Israel, the fact that he was actually about to take leave of the Land of Israel became a stark reality to him and therefore generated these feelings of anxiety.

A Tale of Two Departures

The question however arises, why did he not have these feelings previously when he left the Land of Israel to go to *Charan*, when he fled the wrath of his brother Esau?

A simple analysis of these two departures—Jacob's leaving the Land of Israel to go to Egypt now and his earlier departure to *Charan*—will show that they were two distinct situations. When Jacob left for *Charan*, he left as an individual. Now, he was the head of a family of seventy souls that constituted the nucleus of the Jewish people.

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Jacob could not fathom how the Jewish nation, as opposed to Jacob as an individual, could develop in any land other than the Land of Israel, the land that was promised to the Patriarchs and that was destined for the Jewish people. How could a fledgling nation grow in foreign soil?

G-d's response to him, therefore, was that he should not fear. G-d promised him that, on the contrary, the Jewish people will flourish and develop into a great nation precisely in Egypt.

Distress: Good or Bad?

There remains one question. The Torah states that G-d told Jacob not to **fear**, whereas Rashi states that Jacob was **distressed**. Why doesn't it say that G-d told him not to be distressed that he was leaving Israel?

The answer is that G-d wanted to assuage his fear, but not his distress. Jacob had no reason to fear the fact that he would be going into exile, because he was assured by G-d that He will always be with him in exile and He would eventually get him out of exile.

There is, however, no reason to remove his distress. Being distressed at having to leave Israel and to enter into a state of exile is a positive emotion and reaction. Indeed, it is this feeling of distress that eliminates the need to fear.

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As long as a person begins to feel comfortable in exile and is not anxious about being away from the Promised Land, then there is reason to fear that living in exile will eventually destroy one's connection to his people and his heritage. This fear is magnified when one thinks about the "seventy souls", i.e., our extended family and the Jewish people as a whole. Jacob reasoned that they can never survive spiritually, if he the father and progenitor of the Jewish nation begins to make peace with the idea that he was living in exile.

Jacob's distress was actually the basis for G-d's assurance that he has nothing to fear.

Feel the Pain of Exile

The lesson for our generation is clear. On the one hand, we must realize that there is no reason to **fear** exile, because G-d gives us all the resources we need to cope with it and to prevail over all the obstacles life in exile poses. Moreover, the exile experience was instrumental in our development as the great and holy nation we are.

On the other hand, we must always feel the pain of our stay in exile. We should never make peace with the fact that there is pain and suffering in the world and that the third Temple has not yet been built. When we reflect on all the negativity associated with exile, we then cry out to G-d,

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“Ad masai-How much longer do we have to stay in exile?
This cry itself is a catalyst that hastens the process of
Redemption.

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

OLD WINE FOR OLD MEN

The Messianic Age will not be a throwback to ancient times.

On the contrary, we will experience the greatest advances and strides in science and medicine. But the spirit will be one that is timeless.

At that time we will be reunited with our ancestors and we will all be delighted.

Our forebears will marvel at how we were able to preserve the old wine in new vessels, and we will be delighted at seeing how similar our values and practices are to our ancestors.

ESSAY SEVENTEEN

OLD WINE FOR OLD MEN

Why Aged Wine?

When Joseph sent his brothers to inform their father Jacob that he was still alive, the Torah in this week's parsha states that Joseph sent him: "ten male donkeys carrying Egypt's finest produce." The special produce, the Torah states, was in addition to a shipment of "grain, bread and delicacies."

What exactly does the Torah mean when it says that he sent him the finest of Egypt? It could not mean the finest grain or other staples of life because that is mentioned separately.

Rashi quotes the Talmudic interpretation that Joseph sent him "aged wine which is enjoyed by old people in particular."

The question has been raised, why Joseph would send his father aged wine. True, old people enjoy old wine as the Talmud states, but Jacob was certainly more excited about

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the fact that his beloved son was alive than sipping aged wine. If Joseph would have sent him nothing, Jacob would have been just as thrilled knowing that his beloved son was still alive and that he would soon be reunited with him.

A Coded Message

One answer to this question sees the sending of aged wine was a coded message that Joseph sent his father. It was intended to allay the fear Jacob may have harbored that Joseph had forgotten his old father and his teachings. Otherwise, Jacob could reason, why would Joseph, the Viceroy of Egypt, have kept his whereabouts a secret from his father for all these years? It would have seemed obvious that Joseph wanted to put the past out of his life and start a new life—the life of an Egyptian ruler.

The fact that Joseph was now notifying his father of his existence, could have been misinterpreted by Jacob as a sign that Joseph felt secure in his new Egyptian identity and that he was not afraid to meet his old father. Or perhaps, Jacob might have thought, Joseph might have felt sorry for his aged father and his suffering and wanted to see him again out of a sense of sympathy and not because he identified with him. Or perhaps it was his way of assuaging his guilt for ignoring his father all these years, so he decided to see his father before he dies.

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But, it was likely that neither of these scenarios would have made Jacob feel good about seeing Joseph. Jacob was looking for his family to be whole again, not pity or the pleasure in having a son who enjoyed that much power. He wanted a family united in its purpose of carrying on the legacy of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, not a family of aristocrats and viceroys.

No Change; Just Improved

To allay Jacob's potential fear, Joseph sent aged wine. The symbolism he conveyed with this gift was that Joseph's wine, i.e. his inner spirit and joy, was one that was aged. It was the same wine he had imbibed in his youth when he lived with and served his father Jacob.

Joseph might have looked like he was a member of the modern age, but he was truly a product and faithful follower of the old generation. This realization was sure to warm Jacob's heart because it would let him know that Joseph remained his loyal son.

To be sure there was a major change that did take place. Joseph was not totally the same Joseph. However, the only change was the venue in which he was partaking of and serving the "old wine." Instead of teaching the age old values of his father in a conducive atmosphere, to members of the earlier generation, Joseph was bringing the timeless

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message of Judaism to a modern, cutting edge generation. Joseph was thus true to his father Jacob and true to his name that means to increase. Joseph was the ultimate fusion of two worlds. As much as he changed, he still remained the same.

Two Approaches to Exile Life

The lesson for our time is obvious. Being in exile means that we are forced to make some concessions to the place and time in which we live. We live in a modern age and we cannot escape that reality. But there are two approaches to living in exile and being “confined” to modernity. One approach separates us from our past and makes it impossible for us to be redeemed. The second approach synthesizes the “old wine” with new vessels. We utilize modern technology. We speak the same language as the people in whose country we sojourn. But, we do not alter our mindset. Our beliefs, practices of Mitzvot and values do not change; only the tools through which we transmit these hallowed ways change.

No Throwback

The Messianic Age will not be a throwback to ancient times. On the contrary, we will experience the greatest

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advances and strides in science and medicine. But the spirit will be one that is timeless.

At that time we will be reunited with our ancestors and we will all be delighted. Our forebears will marvel at how we were able to preserve the old wine in new vessels, and we will be delighted at seeing how similar our values and practices are to our ancestors.

Indeed, one of the things we will be doing in the Messianic Age is to drink the “preserved wine.” Joseph’s wine that he sent his father Jacob was a foretaste of the future. Whenever we participate in a celebratory event and say Lechaim on so wine, it is our way of saying that while we’ve come a long way, it—the joy and the wine—is the same wine and joy of our ancestors and it is a sample of the wine and joy we will experience in the future. May we all celebrate this occasion imminently!

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

NO MORE MEDIATION

The entire contentious relationship between Joseph and his brothers foretold deep divisions within the Jewish people.

From the split of Israel into two kingdoms after King Solomon's passing, to the many conflicts that have sadly punctuated Jewish life throughout history, division has become a staple of Jewish existence. It all began with Joseph and his brothers.

Similarly, the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers was a potent of the future period of Redemption when the two houses of Judah and Joseph will be united into one, under leadership of a single leader, Moshiach.

ESSAY EIGHTEEN

NO MORE MEDIATION

“No Man Stood”

The most powerful Biblical drama is arguably the poignant moment Joseph tells his brothers that he was Joseph! But before he utters these powerful words that brought about the rapprochement between Joseph and his brothers, the Torah relates the following:

Now Joseph could not restrain himself in the presence of all who stood before him, so he called out, “Remove everyone from before me!” Thus no man stood with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

Two questions have been asked:

First, why does the Torah have to say that “no man stood with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers?” Isn’t it obvious that no one was there after he had ordered that all the Egyptians to leave the room?

One could offer a simple explanation that Joseph’s aides were concerned that his safety was endangered. After

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hearing the powerful words of Judah who was pleading for the freedom of his brother Benjamin, they were concerned that Judah and his brothers might attempt to use force against their master, Joseph. Thus, the Torah emphasizes that they did follow his order and left.

However, the question can still be raised why does the Torah have to tell you that there was no one there, it should have stated that they left.

Second, why does it say that no man “stood”? Does it make a difference if they were standing or sitting? It should have said, “There was no man there,” or better still, “and they left.”

Not Even Angels

The Chassidic work, *Shem Mishmuel* addresses both questions and explains that the word “man” here does not apply to the Egyptians who were in that room. Obviously, they would have complied with his order to leave the room. Instead, the man it refers to was an angel. In an earlier parsha when Joseph searches for his brothers in Shechem, he is met by a “man” who directs him to his brothers. This man, the Midrash states is none other than the angel Gabriel. We see that the Biblical word “man” can actually be referring to the guardian angel Gabriel.

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One would have perhaps entertained the notion that the same guardian angel, who sent Joseph on his way to his brothers, which initiated the entire ordeal of Joseph's slavery and subsequent rise to power, would also be there when this sad chapter of the rivalry between Joseph and his brothers was achieving closure.

The Torah thus underscores that no one was present; not even an angel, including the angel Gabriel.

Standing Room Only!

To buttress the argument that the word "man" here refers to an angel, the Torah uses the word "stood," which alludes to angels who are referred to in Biblical literature as "standing beings" because they do not possess the human capability of growth. We grow as a result of meeting the challenges we confront and surmounting the obstacles placed in our path. Angels have no evil inclination and do not have any challenges and are therefore destined to remain standing on one level.

We now have to understand why the angel could not be there to guide Joseph as he had done at the beginning of this entire episode? If the angel can inaugurate a dynamic process which involved a conflict between brothers, the progenitors of the Jewish people, why couldn't the angel

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also be involved in the resolution of that struggle, which had far reaching effects on Jewish unity?

Portent of the Future

The *Shem Mishmuel* addresses this question as well and explains that this fateful meeting of reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers was a portent of the future redemption for which no angelic involvement was necessary.

The premise for this assertion is that all that has happened to the Jewish people, all the twists and turns of their history, has already occurred in some fashion in the lives of the Patriarchs, Matriarchs and the 12 Tribes.

For example: When Abraham was compelled to go to Egypt because of the famine in Cana'an, it foretold the descent of the Jewish people into Egypt. Likewise, Joseph's suffering was a portent of the ordeal the entire Jewish people would eventually endure in exile.

The entire contentious relationship between Joseph and his brothers foretold deep divisions within the Jewish people. From the split of Israel into two kingdoms after King Solomon's passing, to the many conflicts that have sadly punctuated Jewish life throughout history, division has

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become a staple of Jewish existence. It all began with Joseph and his brothers.

Similarly, the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers was a potent of the future period of Redemption when the two houses of Judah and Joseph will be united into one, under leadership of a single leader, Moshiach. Indeed, all of the conflicts, large and small, will be healed in the Messianic Age.

The seed for reconciliation was already planted in Joseph's rapprochement with his brothers that occurred precisely at the moment he identified himself to his brothers and had everyone leave including the angels.

No More Mediators

With the above premise we can understand why even the angel was asked to leave.

In the Messianic Age there will no longer need to have angels assist us in our relationship with G-d. Although we may never make an angel our intermediary with G-d; the angels are needed to energize us and serve as our "advocates." They take our prayers, remove their imperfections, "polish" and beautify them; to make them more appealing to G-d.

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This function of the angels is alluded to in the dream of Jacob where he sees a ladder situated on the ground reaching into the heavens; angels going up and down the ladder.

The Zohar explains that the ladder symbolizes prayer that connects those of us who are situated on the ground with G-d above. However, to help us in our climb to the heavens, we avail ourselves of the spiritual forces known as angels. The angels also help to bring Divine inspiration down from the heavens into our earthly consciousness.

Now just as the angels assist us in our relationship with G-d, so too the angels can serve as mediators that help to bring two human parties closer to together; to help heal the rifts between people.

However, all this may be true in the pre-Messianic Era, when there exists a natural propensity for separation. Ever since G-d divided the lower waters from the upper waters on the second day of creation, the dynamic of division and conflict have become part of the human condition.

It is certainly true that the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai was intended to heal and reverse that division. However, G-d wanted us to be a part of that process, so that immediately after the revelation at Sinai, when G-d initiated the healing process by “descending” on Mount Sinai, He then “withdrew” and charged us to bring about

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that unity. While G-d empowered us to accomplish that unity; it is we who make it happen.

Every Mitzvah we do chips away at the natural propensity for separation—separation of ourselves from G-d and separation of one person with another. The cumulative efforts of thousands of years of Mitzvos will finally bring about the total reversal of the barriers that separate us from G-d and from each other. All this will be fully implemented with the coming of Moshiach, the final Jewish leader, who completes the task initiated by Moses, the first leader.

When the Messianic Age unfolds we will thus no longer need the support of the angels. Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers, which portended the ultimate reconciliation, did therefore not need any outside support. It did not even need the support from the spiritual forces known as angels.

In exile there are two forces that unite us: Either anti-Semitism and persecution or spiritual support and inspiration. By Joseph sending out all the Egyptians as well as the angels, Joseph was conveying a powerful message that in the end we will need neither of these supports to engender unity.

How does the Messianic Age change our interpersonal relationships?

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The reason we have division today is based on the way we view one another. When we look with eyes of flesh, we see flesh. When we look with physical vision we see only the physicality of others. Since the physical is, by definition, limited and flawed, we see only the flaws in and limits of others.

When our eyes will open to see beyond the physical by seeing the Divine in everyone, there will be no division because we will see the inherent unity in everything.

The Wedding of the Future

With the above analysis of the *Shem Mishmuel* we can better appreciate the custom of breaking a glass at a wedding. The stated reason for this custom is to temper our joy so that we don't forget the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash.

However, one may suggest a deeper reason. A wedding is a model of the future marriage with G-d that will be made complete. The broken glass, conversely, symbolizes the fact that in exile our relationships are precarious and subject to breaking, precisely because we are still in exile.

This conveys a twin message:

As long as we are in exile, albeit on the cusp of the final Redemption, we are vulnerable and we can use all the help

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that we can get from our families, friends and angels to keep our marriage strong.

And conversely, we should reflect on the joy of the wedding, the greatest joy known to us, and project this joy into the future. We must realize that this is but a sample and taste of the perpetual wedding celebration of the future, where glass will not break and the broken glass will be reconstituted. The more we think of and introduce the future into the present, the more powerful our marriage will become and the closer we will come to the final Redemption!

ESSAY NINETEEN

THE JOYS OF MONOTHEISM

When we realize that we have one G-d who is our Creator and Provider, we feel a kinship that makes us feel that we are part of one family.

And even though family members often feud and can be just as fractious as total strangers, there is obviously a natural propensity to feel connected to a close relative.

Belief in one G-d does not preclude division; it simply puts our relationships with one another in perspective.

ESSAY NINETEEN

THE JOYS OF MONOTHEISM

Jacob's Seventy Soul versus Esau's Six Souls

When the Torah records the number of Jacob's progeny that entered Egypt it uses the singular form for souls: "*shivim nefesh*-seventy soul." By contrast, when the Torah listed just six of Esau's progeny it employs the plural form of "souls." Rashi, citing a Midrashic interpretation offers the following explanation:

Jacob's progeny worshiped one G-d, they are thus referred to in the singular; Esau's progeny by contrast worshipped many gods, therefore they are referred to in the plural.

This interpretation calls for further clarification. Granted that Jacob's family members were monotheists and Esau's were not, but what has that to do with the way they are counted? A large family is still a large family and a small family is still a small family. Shouldn't the language of the Biblical text reflect that fact? In other words, what does their belief system have to do with the way they are characterized?

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Theology of Monotheism

There are three ways we can look at monotheism vs. polytheism, and appreciate why the Torah considered the former to be so superior an approach over the latter. The first is theological, or the way we relate to G-d. The second is sociological, or the way we relate to others. And the third is psychological, or the way we relate to ourselves.

From a Theological perspective, polytheism, at the very least, is a most blatant lack of loyalty to G-d. Having more than one G-d is not simply false—for there is only one G-d—it is like adultery. It means that you don't even have one G-d. For this reason, on the two tablets given to us by G-d, the commandment not to have other gods parallels the commandment to not commit adultery.

Monotheism: A Sociological Perspective

Sociologically, when we realize that we have one G-d who is our Creator and Provider, we feel a kinship that makes us feel that we are part of one family. And even though family members often feud and can be just as fractious as total strangers, there is obviously a natural propensity to feel connected to a close relative. Belief in one G-d does not preclude division; it simply puts our relationships with one another in perspective.

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Moreover, when we have one G-d, our mode of behavior is directed towards serving that one G-d the way He prescribed. The unity of purpose and conduct engendered by the belief in one G-d has the salutary effect of having us share experiences and goals thus further cementing our unity.

The belief in many gods was frequently a worship of oneself. Instead of believing that we were created by G-d in His image, the polytheist creates gods in his many images. The polytheist takes his human passions and projects them on a god. In many instances it was the person's way of justifying his vices. If he was a bloodthirsty murderer, he can look to the pagan god that symbolized bloodshed. If he was a person with the loosest of morals, he had a convenient god that stood for that.

When a person's religion is really a means to rationalize and even worship one's own instincts and vices, there will inevitably be serious clashes between one human being and another. One cannot coexist with others when each one has deified his or her own interests and passions. Inevitably the self-worship is going to lead to serious divisions and undermine the stability of a society.

Belief in one G-d, on the other hand, provides us with the ability to transcend our own selfish interests. This doesn't mean that we can never follow our interests, needs and

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desires; it just means that when there is a clash between our desires and G-d's, G-d's will prevail. And since our theological foundation is not self-serving, there is more room for people to get along with each other since we are not all egocentrics.

The Psychology of Monotheism

And this unity is also good for our psychological health.

Life is so difficult and hard to cope with to a large extent because of how we are pulled apart and in so many different directions. Furthermore, life is made difficult when we have a hard time dealing with so many conflicting emotions that arise because of the lack of unity in our lives.

When our lives are coordinated and harmonized by a belief that all of what we do leads towards one goal—serving and relating everything we do to one G-d—it instills a comforting sense of harmony in our lives. We are not going in opposite directions for everything leads towards one uplifting goal. Without the sense of fragmentation we can then even enjoy the changes, vicissitudes and variety of experiences in our lives.

Jacob's children, while they numbered seventy souls, are therefore described as having one soul, because their belief in one G-d affected the way they related to one another

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and the way they related to themselves. By having many gods, Esau's children, could not enjoy the benefits of unity in their social and personal lives.

The Shema and Jacob's Children

We can now also appreciate why—of all the positive things the Torah tells us will occur in the Messianic Age—the one that is highlighted is the fact that all humanity will worship one G-d. It is the belief in one G-d and following in His commandments that will bring the most cherished unity that will bring all the other blessings in its wake.

And it is this unity that was possessed by Jacob and his progeny as they entered Egypt. It was the first time Monotheism was introduced to the world not just as the belief of one or several iconoclastic idealists, but it had become the very nucleus of a nation that will ultimately expose this revolutionary idea to the whole world and pave the way for the Messianic Age.

The seventy souls—or soul in the singular—is said to parallel the seventy nations of the world. With the ideal of unity promulgated by the seventy roots of the Jewish people, all the seventy nations of the world will ultimately come to the realization of one G-d as well.

We can now understand why—according to the Midrash—

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when Jacob gathered his children before his passing to tell them about the future Messianic Age, something strange occurred; the Divine presence left him and the time for the Messianic Age eluded him. According to the Midrash, Jacob was concerned that perhaps, it was due to his children's lack of fidelity to Monotheism, the ideal for which he and his father Isaac and grandfather Abraham dedicated their lives. Perhaps, in the few years that his progeny lived in Egypt the ideal of Monotheism with which they entered Egypt had been compromised.

In response to Jacob's consternation at the possibility that his children had strayed, his sons said to him, "Hear O Israel." They were addressing their father by his name Israel. "G-d is our G-d, G-d is one."

There is a tight link that is made here between the Messianic Age and the affirmation of our belief in one G-d. Thus Jacob was concerned that his inability to reveal the date of Moshiach's coming to his sons implied that they were far from the ideal of Moshiach which is the unity of G-d.

In truth, they were loyal to that belief. The reason G-d removed the information as to when the Moshiach would come was to make them realize that they had their work cut out for them. There would be thousands of years of effort before the entire world would acknowledge and

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embrace the belief in one G-d.

ESSAY TWENTY

SITTING IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

The path to Redemption includes our mastery over all aspects of Egypt (read: exile, environment, dominant culture, fads).

Rather than allowing it to influence the way we think and act, we harness the “wagons,” the vehicles that move us from one place to another in our lives, to follow in our direction—the direction of Judaism, that will lead us inexorably to the ultimate Redemption.

ESSAY TWENTY

SITTING IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

The Subtle Sledgehammer

Jacob had grieved for his son Joseph for the last twenty-two years. And now it was time for Joseph's brothers to break the good news to Jacob that Joseph was still alive.

Obviously, there was concern that the good news would be too much for Jacob's frail heart to take. Yet, the words Jacob's sons used to convey the exciting news, in this week's parsha, were rather blunt: "Joseph is yet alive, and that he is ruler over all the land of Egypt." At first, Jacob did not believe them. Only after showing him the wagons that Joseph had sent to transport him to Egypt, did Jacob realize that indeed, Joseph was still alive.

There are several questions that come to mind. First, wasn't the statement, "Joseph is yet alive and that he is ruler over all the land of Egypt" not exactly putting the good news subtly?

Second, even if we are to assume that they didn't want to beat around the bush, they did not have to "schmaltz" the

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news by adding that he was the ruler over Egypt. Moreover, they even emphasized that he was not just the ruler over Egypt, but that he was the ruler over **all** of Egypt. Why was that embellishment necessary?

Third, how did the showing of wagons convince him that Joseph was indeed alive?

Unhealed Wounds

Jacob's grieving for Joseph was arguably the most pronounced illustration of grief that we find in all of the Torah. Twenty-two years go by and Jacob is as much troubled and saddened by the loss of his son Joseph as he was on the first day. Our Sages comment that the passage of time that always heals the wounds of the loss of a loved one, only applies to one who has actually died. Since Joseph was still alive, Jacob could not be consoled for the loss.

This premise, however, raises a question. Didn't Jacob realize that the reason his wounds did not heal is precisely because Joseph was alive? Furthermore, did Jacob not harbor any suspicion that perhaps Joseph had not died, but was kept prisoner somewhere, as was indeed the case?

Uncomfortable Truths

The truth is that, most likely, Jacob did have a gnawing

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sense that Joseph was still alive. But that knowledge, in and of itself, was far from comforting. If Joseph was indeed alive, the likelihood was that he had been so alienated from his father's way of life, that Joseph was lost to his father and his people.

Moreover, Jacob had the greatest hopes for Joseph. In his mind, Joseph was to him as he was to his father Isaac, and as Isaac was to his father Abraham. Joseph was groomed to be the next link in the chain of tradition that would lead to the creation of a Jewish people who would receive the Torah at Sinai.

But, alas, Joseph was ripped away from him. Would that mean that the chain that began with Abraham had come to an abrupt end, and G-d would have to find someone else from whom the Chosen People would descend? Would Jacob forever be denied the privilege of being a Patriarch of the Jewish nation? Would all of the past efforts of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs be for naught?

These thoughts were perhaps almost as disconcerting to Jacob as the prospects of Joseph having been killed. The only difference between the two was that whereas there is a healing process for the physical loss, there is nothing that can heal the ongoing feeling of illegitimacy that Joseph's loss entailed.

So when Jacob's sons had to break the news to Jacob,

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merely telling him that Joseph was still alive, would not necessarily be as comforting to Jacob as it sounded. Nor would it be so shocking. If Joseph was physically alive, but was living under the domination of Egyptian culture—the dominant culture of that period—he would not be alive in the true sense of the word.

Who Ruled Whom?

Thus, Jacob's sons added that Joseph was the ruler **over all** of Egypt. They stressed that he was the ruler **over** Egypt. Joseph was not just their ruler; he exercised his influence over them rather than Egypt exercising its influence over him. Furthermore, Joseph's mastery over Egypt was complete; he was the ruler over **all** of Egypt. There was not one area of Egyptian influence that compromised Joseph's spiritual integrity.

Jacob was not shocked by the news, because upon hearing that Joseph was physically alive he was not taken by surprise. He always had a feeling that he might be alive. And even when he heard that Joseph was the ruler over all of Egypt, he found it hard to believe that that was possible.

Seeing the Wagons

How did Jacob finally realize that Joseph had not changed

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when he saw the wagons?

One explanation of this lies in the function of a wagon. A wagon, while enabling us to go anywhere, goes only where its master wants it to go. Joseph was hinting to his father that he was the driver in control over Egypt-the wagon.

The Two Moshiachs

One of the names the Jewish people have been given in the Bible is Joseph. We are all named after Joseph. The Joseph characteristic of each and every Jew is the one that our forebears—the “Jacobs” of the Jewish people—have invested much hope. And every so often, we drift away from our roots and wander off into the “Egypt” of our day and age.

In the Talmud, and particularly in the literature of Kabbalah, there is a reference to two Messiah's. The first, who will pave the way for the second Messiah, is identified as the Messiah, the son of **Joseph**. According to the Zohar, this Messiah represents the initial phase of the Messianic Redemption. There is some debate among the classic commentators as to whether the Moshiach ben Yoseph is an actual personality who **must** precede the real Moshiach, or is he a stage in the unfolding of the Messianic drama. According to some, Moshiach ben Yoseph is actually one and the same as the Moshiach; it is an earlier phase in

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Moshiach's revelation.

Whatever scenario the Moshiach ben Yoseph phenomenon presents itself, it certainly convey a timeless message to us as to what our mission is in preparation for the coming of Moshiach.

Moshiach ben Yoseph: We are in the Driver's Seat

Translated into practical terms, the path to Redemption includes our mastery over **all** aspects of Egypt (read: exile, environment, dominant culture, fads). Rather than allowing it to influence the way we think and act, we harness the “wagons,” the vehicles that move us from one place to another in our lives, to follow in **our** direction—the direction of Judaism, that will lead us inexorably to the ultimate Redemption.

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

DOUBLE POWER

When Shabbos ends we recite Havdalah to acknowledge the separation between Shabbos and weekdays.

The goal of Havdalah is to provide us with a way station, a moment of repose during the transition from Shabbos into the weekdays. Those precious moments connect Shabbos to the weekdays.

It can be daunting, or exhilarating, or even both, to experience this point of balance between the disparate energies.

ESSAY TWENTY-ONE

DOUBLE POWER

A Night Vision

Jacob has learned that his son Joseph is alive and well. In fact, Joseph is thriving as the Viceroy of Egypt. Jacob experiences a revival of his spirit and expresses his strong desire to see Joseph again before he dies. Jacob, to whom the Torah refers by his newly acquired name, Israel, begins his journey to Egypt. When he reaches Beer-Sheba Israel offers a sacrifice to the G-d of his father, Isaac.

At that point, G-d speaks to Israel but addresses him as Jacob:

G-d spoke to **Israel** in night visions and He said:

"Jacob, Jacob."

And he said, "here I am."

And he said, "I am the G-d—G-d of your father, have no fear in descending to Egypt, for I shall establish you as a great nation there. I shall descend

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with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up..."

Alternating Names

In the verse preceding his departure for Egypt the Torah calls him by his original name, Jacob. No sooner does he begin the journey than the Torah refers to him as Israel. However, when G-d addresses him directly He refers to him as Jacob. After G-d appears and reassures him, the Torah reverts to using his original name Jacob, even while referring to his children as the children of Israel.

And here two questions arise:

Why does the Torah alternate from Jacob to Israel? And why does G-d specifically address our Patriarch as Jacob?

Furthermore, Rashi explains that G-d's doubled reference to "Jacob" is an expression of His affection. There is an irony here. In the very verse in which G-d goes out of His way to express love and affection for our Patriarch, He addresses him as Jacob, a name which contains the word *heel* and connotes his lowly status, rather than the name Israel which contains the word *rosh*-head and connotes mastery over G-d's angels and people.

The question thus is: why, when trying to show affection, does G-d switch from calling him Israel to Jacob? Wouldn't

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it have expressed greater affection to address him by the superior and more pre-eminent name, Israel?

Name Repetition

Another question:

Why does G-d repeat Jacob's name specifically at this point and in this place? We see G-d address Abraham by double name only **after** he passes the test of the Akeidah, the binding of Isaac. Before passing that test, G-d only addresses Abraham by mentioning his name once. The reason is self-evident. When Abraham demonstrates unflinching fidelity to G-d's will, G-d responds with a show of affection. Why then does G-d repeat Jacob's name to indicate love and affection precisely at this moment? Jacob has not done anything unusual yet. He is simply traveling to Egypt to see his son. Why does that warrant G-d's affection and endearment?

And a fourth question:

From G-d's words of reassurance—"have no fear of descending to Egypt..."—it is clear that Jacob was anxious about going there. Why then did this vision of G-d's reassurance take place in Beer-Sheba, after he had already embarked on his journey and not at the outset?

A fifth question:

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When Jacob reaches Beer-Sheba he brings an offering to “the G-d of his father Isaac.” Why is Isaac highlighted in his offering? Was G-d not also his own personal G-d? And, if he wanted to include his father, why not add his grandfather and state “the G-d of Abraham” as well?

The Nexus

Jacob’s trip to see Joseph is much more than a personal journey by a grief-stricken father to see a beloved son before he passes. As poignant and powerful a story as this is, and it is, a story that can move and melt the hearts of even the coldest of individuals, Jacob’s journey was infinitely more. Jacob was at the nexus between the Land of Israel and the Diaspora. His successful transition would eventually empower us to reconnect back from the Diaspora to the Land of Israel.

To be sure, when Jacob left his home to go to Egypt, his intention was simply to see his son. The unification of father and son is a positive and holy endeavor in its own right. It would be a time of healing wounds and restoring family unity and functionality.

However, as he approached the southern border of Israel and was on the verge of entering into the Diaspora stage of his life, Jacob was overcome with a sense of foreboding. He realized that his trip was of epic proportion. This journey

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was going to connect him with the future and the future with him. This journey was the linchpin between the Land of Israel—the epitome of Holiness - to the Land of Egypt - the nadir of depravity. Realization of the daunting nature of his journey hit him precisely when he was at the border, alternating between the holiness characteristic of Israel and the impurity and depravity of Egypt.

Havdalah

We experience this transition ourselves every week. When Shabbos ends we recite Havdalah to acknowledge the separation between Shabbos and weekdays. In truth, it goes far beyond a temporal separation. The goal of Havdalah is to provide us with a way station, a moment of repose during the transition from Shabbos into the weekdays. Those precious moments connect Shabbos to the weekdays. It can be daunting, or exhilarating, or even both, to experience this point of balance between the disparate energies.

It is for this reason that many people have the custom of reciting a hymn after Havdalah with the refrain “Do not fear, my servant Jacob.” This echoes G-d’s comforting words to Jacob in our parsha this week except that the hymn’s Jacob refers to the weekday life of the Jew.

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This explains why the Torah alternates between the names Jacob and Israel; these two names express the two foregoing states of mind, of Israel and the Diaspora.

Jacob's Anxiety

Jacob, upon realizing the enormity of the moment and the daunting prospects of this trip, offers a sacrifice specifically to the G-d of his father Isaac. Unlike Abraham and Jacob, Isaac was never allowed to leave the Land of Israel. He was designated as a sacrifice and could never be allowed to leave the Land's holy domain. Jacob, thus, appealed to G-d in Isaac's name as one who is vested in the Land of Israel, where there is no compromising of its integrity, and no adulteration of its sanctity.

Making an offering to the G-d of Isaac was Jacob's way of entreating Him to allow him to not lose the sanctity of Israel when he crosses the border into the land of depravity.

G-d senses Jacob's conflict, distress and anxiety, and so addresses him by repeating his name in a sign of affection.

The question remains, however, what did Jacob/Israel do to deserve the unusual outpouring of G-dly affection?

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The answer is that Jacob wanted nothing less than the preservation of the holiest, which was more than enough to make him deserve G-d's approval and love.

Moreover, the repetition of Jacob's name signaled more than just affection; it was a form of empowerment. A double expression, the Midrash teaches us, is a sign of Redemption. It conveys a message that G-d is giving us a double measure of power to enable us to break through all the boundaries that keep us confined.

We can now also understand why He refers to him by the name Jacob. G-d shows him that His love will not diminish even when Jacob has entered the Diaspora; Jacob is his name in Galus, which he is about to enter. On the contrary, G-d's love, protection and empowerment will increase precisely because he is a "Jacob," in exile.

Crisis Mode

We can now also understand why, when Jacob begins his journey, he is called Israel. At the outset, Jacob did not recognize his journey as a transition between the holy and the profane. To him, it was a joyful reunion of father and son and the unification of his family, with all that it entailed. His mindset was an "Israel" one. He was not troubled by the prospect of entering Egypt because it was not the right time for him to meet that challenge. A

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spiritual person deals with each challenge at the appropriate time. He or she does not go into crisis mode until it becomes necessary.

However, once he was about to cross the border he had to deal with this new challenge.

Don't Fear the Return Trip

We also live in a period of profound transition. Only it is the reverse of Jacob's transition, moving us from Galus to Redemption. But despite the difference in direction between these two transitions, they are both periods of great anxiety. And just as G-d gave Jacob the physical and spiritual strength to make his transition into Galus, so too does He give us the strength to make the transition back home. G-d expressly told Jacob: "I shall descend with you to Egypt, and I shall also surely bring you up." G-d has the same uplifting message for us.

Just as we get the power to make the successful move from Shabbos to the weekdays from our practices at the conclusion of Shabbos -Motza'ei Shabbos, so too does our experience of that time strengthen and prepare us to make the final move from exile into the state of Redemption. This includes reciting Havdalah and partaking of the Saturday night repast known as the Melava Malkah-escorting the Shabbos queen. It is also known as the "feast

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of King David, the King Moshiach” because of its relationship with the days of Moshiach. May those days be truly imminent!

ESSAY TWENTY-TWO

WHAT MAKES US HUMAN?

The mode of speech that distinguishes us from other creatures' communication is the form of speech that has the capacity to reveal our inner being; our very soul.

This mode of speech is what makes us eminently human.

And the ultimate expression of the human capacity for genuine and unmitigated self-expression is prayer.

Prayer, in its ideal and unadulterated form, expresses the innermost feelings and aspirations that emanate from the depths of the human soul.

ESSAY TWENTY-TWO

WHAT MAKES US HUMAN?

Joseph's Revelation

In one of the most poignant events recorded in the Torah, Joseph, the viceroy of Egypt, is finally ready to divulge his identity to his brothers.

The Torah introduces his revelation that he is their brother whom they sold into slavery with the following words:

Now Joseph could not restrain himself in the presence of all who stood before him, so he called out, "Remove everyone from before me!" Thus no man remained with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. He cried in a loud voice. Egypt heard, and Pharaoh's household heard.

And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?"

Many questions arise when we examine this powerful incident.

First, why did he want everyone else to leave?

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Rashi explains that Joseph didn't want the Egyptian members of his household to see how his brothers would be embarrassed.

Rashbam explains that Joseph realized that he would not be able to control his emotions in public as he had done so successfully in the past. The suggestion here is that he, as a monarch, could not allow himself to weep in public.

Ramban explains further that Joseph did not want the Egyptians to know that his brothers sold him into slavery.

However, we still need to understand why the fact that he wanted the Egyptians to leave, was crucial to the story.

Second, after recounting that Joseph ordered everyone out of his presence, why does the Torah add, "Thus no man remained with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers." Is it not self-evident that his orders would be carried out by the Egyptians? At the very least, the Torah could have stated succinctly, "and they all left."

Third, if everyone departed how was it that Egypt and Pharaoh's household heard his cry?

Fourth, why does the Torah repeat Joseph's name in the verse, "Thus no man remained with him when **Joseph** made himself known to his brothers?" Why not use the pronoun "him" and state "...no man remained with **him** when **he** made himself known to his brothers."

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Every story in the Torah has to teach us a moral lesson and every detail is important. What does Joseph's revelation to his brothers tell us?

The Human Being: A Two Tiered Communicator

Human beings are known as *midaber*, speakers or communicators. What makes us unique in this world is not our intelligence but our ability to communicate.

This raises an obvious question: Animals, even birds and plants, also communicate. While they do not have vocal chords they still communicate through other means. Why then do we describe only human beings as *midaber*?

It is not sufficient to answer that our level of communication is unique because it is far more intelligent and sophisticated. If that were the case, humans should have been called *sichli*, an intelligent being. After all, it's not communication per se that makes us unique; it is the intelligent aspect of our communication skills that does.

The answer lies in the two modes of human communication:

The first mode of speech occurs when we are in a public setting, whether teaching students, conversing socially or just chatting with friends. The presence of an audience makes us sensitive to what others will think and say about

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our spoken words. One, who speaks, consciously or unconsciously, tailors his words to please his audience, and, at the very least, no one within hearing should be offended or turned off by the remarks.

In effect, public forums inhibit our ability to bear our souls and reveal our true inner selves.

This mode of public speech is primarily utilitarian. It gets us what we want to get. The benefit may be accolades we receive from listeners or some concrete favor, or just the pleasure of being in a social setting. It does not, however, reveal the true essence of our being.

This mode of communication is, qualitatively speaking, not much different from the communication skills of other species. They too communicate for utilitarian purposes; to get their food, to protect their brood or to defend themselves. Obviously, the content of human speech is frequently more profound and more interesting than that of other species, but fundamentally it is not very different. This is not the mode of speech that distinguishes us from other creatures.

There is a much deeper form of speech, which differentiates us from all other of G-d's creations. It is the form of speech that has the capacity to reveal our inner being; our very soul. This mode of speech is what makes us eminently human.

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Prayer: the Ultimate Form of Human Speech

The ultimate expression of the human capacity for genuine and unmitigated self-expression is prayer. Prayer is sometimes referred to as *nefesh*, which means soul. This is based on the paradigmatic prayer of Chanah: “I poured out my soul before G-d.” Prayer, in its ideal and unadulterated form, expresses the innermost feelings and aspirations that emanate from the depths of the human soul.

The Talmud (*Bava Kamma* 3b), in discussing the meaning of the word *maveh*, cites an opinion that it means a human being. To prove this assertion it cites a verse in the Book of Isaiah (21:12) which discusses one who beseeches G-d for Redemption: “Says the watchman; morning comes, and also night; if you beseech [*tivayun*], beseech.” The word for beseeching in this verse is etymologically related to the word “*maveh*.” Thus, according to our Sages, a human being is a beseecher; one who prays is one who beseeches and prays, and more specifically, one who prays for the Redemption.

This is precisely what we mean when we refer to man as a *midaber*-communicator. What qualifies us to be considered fully human? It is when we allow the deepest sentiments and aspirations of our soul to come to the fore through the medium of speech. The most powerful expression of the

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soul is channeled through the medium of speech, not thought or action.

Inhibitions!

Humans have physical needs that often eclipse the soul's desire for expression. We also have inhibitions that cause us to conceal our innermost feelings. The reticence about venting our true emotions through speech is greatest when we are in the company of others. This explains why many mystics preferred praying in seclusion. This assisted them in getting in touch with their true essence.

This also explains why the Talmud says that a person without a home is missing an aspect of his or her humanity. This was not intended to shame poor people who cannot afford a home. Rather it is the Talmud's way of getting us to appreciate what a home does for our dignity. To be human (*midaber*) in the fullest sense of the word one must be capable of shedding all inhibitions and be free to express one's innermost feelings. Otherwise one's soul is in a virtual prison. A home is where we can be ourselves, thus enabling us to communicate on a human level.

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Joseph's Desire for Redemption

We can now understand why Joseph wanted all the Egyptians in his court to leave.

Joseph was about to communicate his deepest feelings of connection with his brothers and reconnect with his father as well. Joseph did not want this communication to be on a stage as it would have watered down the intensity of the experience. He wanted his communication to be totally human because he would be able to bare all of his soul's passion.

Moreover, Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers was a portent of the ultimate Redemption when there will be a total rapprochement of all segments of Jewry, as represented by the two kingdoms of Joseph (Ephraim) and Judah mentioned in this week's prophetic selection, the Haftarah. Joseph's words were thus more than just prayerful. Underlying Joseph's cry to his brothers was his desire for unity and Redemption. Even as the Egyptian exile was beginning, Joseph was laying the groundwork for, and planting the seeds of, the unity that is synonymous with Redemption.

We can now understand why asking the Egyptians to leave was crucial to the narrative. They represented the forces of exile. He didn't want his expression of love and solidarity with his brothers, which represents Redemption, to be

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tainted in any way by watering down his soul's passion for unity.

This also tells us why the Torah adds, "Thus no man remained with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers." Two questions we raised above remain unanswered: wasn't it self-evident that the Egyptians left after being ordered by Joseph to do so; and why does the Torah repeat Josephs' name?

Upon deeper reflection, we realize that this was to underscore that the Egyptians' departure was not just a physical change of location; it represented a total change of the prevailing narrative in that room. They moved their intrusive inhibiting presence out of the Redemptive soul of Joseph. With his outburst and cry, Joseph here made himself, his essence and core, known to his brothers. He was not just talking to them, in his "pronoun-ian" state, this was speaking to them in his essential Joseph state.

And this also answers another question raised above, that if everyone departed how was it that everyone still heard his cry?

The answer is powerful. When one expresses his or her innermost cry for Redemption it reverberates throughout the cosmos and has an impact on the entire world. Everyone can feel the "fallout" from the "nuclear" explosion that is the passion for Moshiach.

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We are living at the tail end of the process that began with Joseph. *Sefer Yetzirah*, the early work of Kabbalah states, “the end is wedged in the beginning, and the beginning in the end.” We must now give voice to our deepest sentiments by crying out to G-d, “*ad masai*” how much longer?” even as we seek unity with our fellow Jews and reconcile and reunite with our Father in heaven.

When we use our human power of speech in its most pristine and powerful form our cries will reverberate throughout the entire world. All nations of the world will also clamor for Moshiach and the final Redemption, when true peace will reign.