Parasha Meditation Vayigash

Bereishit 41:1-44:17

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Reaching the Meeting Point of Contention

Introduction:

Keeping our Inner Flame Alive

After Chanukah, when each of us has been invested with renewed strength of emunah (faith) and excitement for the mitzvot, we need to carry the message of Chanukah into the coldest winter month of Tevet. Now, when the warmth of Chanukah is especially needed, we read *Parashat* Vayigash, which is about keeping our inner flame alive, and bringing shalom (peace) into the fragmentation between the different segments of our people.

Entering the Meeting point of the Truest Divine Inner Self

The descent of Ya'acov's extended family into the darkest exile of Egypt was preceded by the fiery flame of Yehudah's soul confronting Yosef's inner fire. וַיָּגַשׁ אָלֵיו יָהוּדָה – "Yehudah approached him..." Yehudah penetrated the depths of Yosef's heart in order to convince him to release his brother Binyamin.² The word "Vayigash" means to draw near and to meet. The two different paths of archetypal Jewish leadership challenged and confronted each other until they both entered the meeting point of their very truest Divine inner self. This is true shalom, when each opponent draws out the very best from the other, in order to unite.

Making Inner Peace Between Our Conflicting Selves

שלום שלום אלא לשון ויגש אלא לשון שלום – Rabbi Meir says, there is no "Vayigash" except for the language of shalom.³ We too need to access and confront the Yehudah and Yosef parts of our soul until we reach our inner truth where Hashem's light shines through. When we succeed to find inner peace between these contrary aspects of ourselves, we can bring light to our darkest exile and engender outer shalom between the fragmented Jewish leadership in our Land.

Reaching the Level of "Vayigash" - Drawing Near

Sfat Emet⁴ explains that we are called יהודים /Yehudim, because we מוֹדִים/modim – admit that everything is from G*d. This is what causes us to draw near. We need to clarify to ourselves that even in the midst of darkness there is life of the will of G*d. When we nullify ourselves to the will of G*d, during the times of darkness and *hester panim* (The hiding of Hashem's face), then we reach the level of ייגש /vayigash/"He drew near."

⁴ Sefat Emet, Parashat Vayigash, Year 1871.



¹ Bereishit 44:18.

² The Mei Shiloach on Parashat Vayigash.

³ Yalkut Shimoni Bereishit, Chapter 43, Allusion 150.

Revealing the Inner Point (Tzion)

This is also called to draw near to Yosef, because Yosef is the inner point from Hashem. The *gematria* (numerical value) of the word Yosef is equal to the *gematria* of Tzion –156. Tzion is the meeting point between *yesod* (foundation) and *malchut* (royalty).⁵ This was indeed a very hard time for Yehudah, and his solution was to draw near to the inside of the matter, and accept G*d's will with happiness. When we clarify that all is from G*d, then its inner meaning is revealed. It states, "Yosef" who is the inner point, "could not refrain himself" – and the inner point was revealed. It follows then "that every man was taken out etc.," because the exterior which conceals the interior became nullified.

Taking Initiative to Approach

This week's *parasha* begins with the words, "Vayigash Yehudah" – "Yehudah approached." He did not wait to be called. He took the initiative to do something. Similarly, each of us has to get out there and use some of the new potential we have acquired on Chanukah to bring about shalom in both our personal and broader world.

Meditation:

Sit comfortably in your chair, take several deep breaths and relax.

- **1.** Breathe in Hashem's life-giving light, breath out any tension from all the limbs of your body, starting with your head and finishing with your toes.
- **2.** Allow your mind to drift as you go through the happenings of your day in your mind's eye. Which accomplishments did you achieve, and which hardships did you undergo? Did you deal with the challenges of your day the best you could, or did you fall short of acting according to your truth?
- **3.** Allow all of the happenings of your day to glide through you and accept them all, even when you didn't live up to your fullest potential. Did you have a disagreement or confrontation with anyone today or in the last few days or weeks?
- **4.** Allow your mind to focus on the last difficulty you experienced with another person. Think about why you felt/spoke/acted the way you did, where were you coming from?
- **5.** Now let your mind shift to the person you interacted with. Why did he or she feel/speak/act that particular way? What kind of criticism did the other person have of your way? Make an effort to find the kernel of truth in the other person's approach.
- **6.** Try to get in touch with your own weakness discovered by your "opponent," even if it hurts.
- 7. Breathe into the pain of your own incapability. Breathe in the word $\frac{1}{2}$ inhale $\frac{1}{2}/ga$, exhale wwwwwwwww/shshshshshshsh. Repeat four more times.

⁷ The continuation of the verse previously quoted.



⁵ The last two of the ten *Sefiro*t through which Hashem manifests in the world.

⁶ Bereishit 45:1.

- 8. The letter χ /gimel is derived from the word גְמוּל/gemul, which in Hebrew means giving. This is alluded to by the leg of the letter χ /gimel which expresses the running of the rich person to bestow good upon the poor.⁸ Allow yourself to take a step with the χ /gimel out of yourself, towards the person you interacted with.
- **9.** Go towards that person, to his or her inner core, to understand where he or she is coming from, and open yourself to feel deeply his or her point.
- **11.** The letter $\dot{w}/shin$ is also the secret of the three heads of the burning flame. Whereas the outer flame of the *shin* is continuously in a state of motion and change, the inner flame represents the changeless. It is your own personal fire and flame of strong belief in your path of personal truth.
- 12. אַלִּיו יְהוּדָה /"Yehudah approached him..." The Admor of Kotsk says that the "him" refers to himself: Yehudah examined his own heart. He repeated what he had already said earlier to drive the words deep into himself, in order to fulfill the ancient Jewish teaching, that "what comes from the heart enters the heart." He wanted his words to be so true and powerfully charged that they would be understood and accepted by Yosef. Go deep into your own approach, and connect with your truth that rises above the confrontation or criticism you may have received. In your mind's eye understand and visualize your true response to the truth of your "opponent."
- **13.** Allow your personal truth to come from an even deeper place a place that can answer back any criticism from others. Continue to breathe into the word $v_{\bar{z}}$ inhale $v_{\bar{z}}/ga$, exhale $v_{\bar{z}}/ga$, exhale of the letter $v_{\bar{z}}/ga$. Invigorate and feel the fire of your truth with each exhale of the letter $v_{\bar{z}}/ga$.
- **14.** Feel how the power of your truth is penetrating into the power of your "opponent's" truth, until both of you merge to unite in Hashem's higher truth. Continue to breathe into the word $v_{\frac{1}{2}}$ inhale $\frac{1}{2}/ga$, exhale wwwwwwww/shshshshshshshshsh as you breathe into this higher truth, to the true meeting place between you, and the person with which you had a confrontation. When you are ready, slowly tap your hands and feet to the table and floor and open your eyes with a renewed inner peace with yourself and others.

Notes:

"Vayigash" is a place of meeting between the darkness of exile, and the Divine light. This applies to both the global or individual exile, when we are exiled from being in touch with our personal truth. Hashem's promise to go down with us in exile includes even our individual exile when we feel estranged from ourselves and incapable of facing opposition. Within the pain of our incapability we will be able to find Hashem's light and reconnect with our inner essence in a deeper way in order to emerge with renewed light.

⁹ Bereishit 44:18.



⁸ Rav Yitzchak Ginsburgh, The Hebrew Letters.

About Us



Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work. For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's spiritual

empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.

In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion.

Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.

If you are interested in:

Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin contact **info@berotbatayin.org** or in Spiritual Healing with Rebbetzin Chana Bracha, please contact her at **director@berotbatayin.org**

or visit her blog: http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html

Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin - Holistic Torah Study for Women on the Land of Israel

At Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin, we weave together Torah studies with creative spiritual expression, connecting with the Land of Israel, and healthy, organic lifestyles. In the heart of the Judean Hills, with its serene beauty, our students experience an approach to Judaism that bridges mind, body and soul. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin is designed as a micro-community within the Village of Bat Ayin where women of all ages and backgrounds engage in intense Torah learning as part of an integrated, participatory approach to Torah living.

Come Learn With Us!

Beginner and advanced levels are offered for women of all ages and religious backgrounds. Whether your interest in Judaism has recently been ignited, or you are seeking a wider perspective, Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin offers the opportunity to improve your learning skills while strengthening your commitment to Judaism within the parameters of Halachah – all while engaging your inner creative spirituality, working the Land, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Support Our School!

You have the unique opportunity to help us continue to build and amplify the light of Torah on the Land of Israel. With your help we can increase our ability to provide women an extraordinary Torah environment where they can build a solid Jewish foundation which will have an impact for generations to come.

