

The Path to Peace and Redemption

Haftorat Vayigash

Yechezkiel 37:15-28

Chanukah is really all about getting together with the family. Likewise this haftorah, is about the reunification between the brothers, especially Yehudah and Yosef whose energies can be opposed. Therefore, this Haftorah really moved me, as it alludes to how we can bring redemption and world peace by overcoming friction between the different segments within our people.

Which Direction to Take to Make “The Nations Know That Hashem Sanctifies Yisrael”?

This week's *Haftorah* describes the final *geulah* (redemption), when Hashem's presence will illuminate the Jewish people through His everlasting Temple. At that time there will no longer be any question of Israel's exclusive right to the Holy City of Jerusalem. The concluding verses of our *Haftorah* convey the vision of the final days that we await, when all of Israel will worship Hashem and receive His everlasting blessing: “I will make a covenant of peace with them...My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their G-d, and they shall be my people. Then the nations shall know that I, Hashem, do sanctify Yisrael, when my sanctuary shall be in their midst for ever” (*Yechezkiel 37:26-28*). Today, with the golden Mosque glinting behind the Wall, and the world dictating Israel to freeze building in its midst, we seem so far from this prophesy. Without a strong leadership in Israel, and a scattered and bewildered people, how will we find the path that will lead us to the covenant of peace and redemption?

Teach the Kids to Get Along and Bring Peace to the World

The beginning of our *Haftorah* gives the clue. It is so simple that it becomes difficult. It is exactly what my parents told me when I was a teenage freedom fighter in Europe: “If you kids cannot get along, how do you expect there to be peace in the world?!” The paved path to walk to reach the conclusion of our *Haftorah* begins at the beginning. It begins at home, by rising above sibling rivalry: “And you son of man, take for yourself one piece of wood, and write upon it, for Yehudah, for the children of Yisrael his friends. Then take another piece of wood and write upon it, for Yosef, the wood of Efrayim, and for all the house of Yisrael his friends, and join them one to the other to make one piece of wood, and they shall become one in your hand” (*Yechezkiel 37:16-17*). Since the time when Yosef received the multicolored garment from his father, there has been animosity between Yosef and his brothers, particularly between Yosef and Yehudah – the leader of the brothers. Our *Haftorah* describes the culmination of their reconciliation which begins in this week's *parashah*, when Yehudah approached Yosef.

Addition and Subtraction

Yehudah's approaching Yosef embodies the merging of two essentially different ways of serving G-d. Yehudah comes from the word, *hoda'ah*, which means recognition, praise and nullification. The letters of the name “Yehudah” is made up of G-d's Four Lettered Name, plus the letter *dalet* which represents one who has nothing (in Hebrew, “*dal*”). The letter *dalet* lacks sides all around, and like a pauper, is incapable of holding anything. Yosef, on the other hand, means to “add” or “gather.” He

adds and gathers all the holy sparks from the physical world, elevating them to the holiness of Hashem. Yosef also has the ability to gather all the Jewish people together. This is why he received the multicolored garment, with a color for each of the tribes. When the aspects of Yehudah and Yosef come together in the highest way, then the Temple can shine in our midst. Yehudah and his brothers must allow Yosef to be their temporary leader while gathering together all the dispersed tribes of Israel and establishing Israel's physical framework. Yosef must ultimately yield his leadership to the everlasting Kingdom of Mashiach ben David descending from Yehudah.

The Gift of the Mothers

The two main ways of serving Hashem represented by Yosef and Yehudah are gifts that they received from their mothers. "Leah held a distaff of *hodayah* and her children were masters of *hodayah*..." (*Bereishit Rabah* 71:5). When Yehudah was born, his mother Leah said, "I thank (*odeh*) Hashem," and she gave Yehudah a name that reflects her recognition that all comes from Hashem. This was always her attitude. "Leah's eyes were soft," for she was always crying her heart out to Hashem. Likewise, Yehudah's descendant, David, said of himself (*Tehillim* 22:7), "I am a worm, not a man." Despite his great accomplishments, David took no credit for himself, for he recognized that everything comes from Hashem. Yehudah you are he whom your brothers shall praise (*yoducha*) Yehuda confessed (*hoda*). There is an intrinsic connection between gratitude and admission: true thankfulness is the free admission of the debt owed. "I admit to you, I am deeply indebted."

The Gatherer of Beauty

"Yosef was beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance – this was because Rachel was beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance" (*Bereishit Rabah* 86:6). Yosef's beauty was his ability to gather and manifest the totality of creation. True beauty is when harmony and balance of the whole are expressed in a single part. Just like Rachel was buried "on the way" in order to gather her dispersed children from exile, the beauty of Yosef gathers disconnected parts together in one living entity. Rabbi Mattis Weinberg explains how Yosef's essentiality for the kingdom of Pharaoh is equally essential for *Malchut Yisrael*. Yosef allows the king to be the persona who manifests the otherwise disconnected entities of his sovereignty and transforms it to become one united kingdom. Just like Ya'acov loved Rachel because her beauty was a reflection of her righteousness, the beauty of Yosef is manifested through his righteousness, charisma and ability to forge personal relationship. He represents the source of the world's youthful fertility and blessedness. He is connected to the earth, like the ox to which he is compared by Ya'acov (Rashi, *Bereishit* 49:6). Yosef sustains his brothers and supports the entire world. His characteristics are blessed when they are rooted in integrity, reliability, discipline, and *emunah* of the *tzaddik*. However, beauty does not last forever; "Rachel died on the way," and the Tabernacle of Shilo in the land of Efrayim, son of Yosef, was also temporary. This is how the eternal kingdom of Yehudah complements the beauty of Yosef.

The Inner Power of Women Enables Israel to "Become One in Your Hand"

Hashem's *Shechinah* is present at the core of both the qualities of Yosef and Yehudah. True beauty gathers and holds everything together; without leaving any part of existence behind. The rectified Yosef infuses all of reality with Divinity, by reflecting all the beauty in the world without taking anything from this world for himself. This quality is an aspect of modesty that Yosef mastered.

Through the power of *tzniut*, he was able to rectify all relationships, and connect in the deepest way with people, yet overcome the temptation of Potifar's wife. Yosef is called "*Tzadik Yesod Olam*" – The Righteous Foundation of the World, because the power of *Yesod* (Foundation) is the Divine Emanation pertaining to relationship and sexuality, – the foundation that holds all existence together. The foundation of Yosef leads to the rectified *Malchut* (kingdom) of Yehudah, about which it is written "It has nothing of its own." By recognizing that he had nothing except what comes from Hashem, Yehudah became a pure channel for Hashem's *Malchut*. Through admitting (*hodayah*) that nothing but Hashem has real existence, the power of *Malchut* is able to take all the existence that the power of *Yesod* gathered together and nullify it to Hashem. While Yosef's ability to connect and gather all existence together is contingent on refraining from holding on to anything for himself, Yehudah He recognized (*hodayah*) that nothing but Hashem has true existence. Therefore, he did not have anything to let go of. While Yosef elevates all existence, Yehudah nullifies it all to Hashem. At the heart of both the *hodayah* of Yehudah and the gathering of Yosef is the presence of Hashem which unites them. Women pave the way to redemption because we are inner beings, and not hung up with external differences that separate people. Developing the quality of *tzniut*, teaches us to go to the core where neither looks, accomplishments or the causes we support are the source of what gives us value. With this inner power, we can unite the Yehudahs and Yosefs of our time, bring about Hashem's everlasting "covenant of peace" and allow His sanctuary to rest in our midst forever.